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The Montessori School’s culture is devoted to helping each child grow toward independence by building confidence, competence, self-esteem and respect for others. More than an approach to education, Montessori is an approach to life. Our program, both in philosophy and pedagogy, is based on the scientific research work of Dr. Maria Montessori and on AMI Montessori training. Montessori classrooms are designed in a multi-age mix which allows for both individual and social development. The classrooms are beautiful by design and are set up in an open style, with work areas throughout the room and materials available on shelving accessible to the children. Most lessons are given to small groups or individual children while other children are working independently. The School uses stories, Montessori materials, charts, timelines, objects of nature, treasures from the wealth of cultures around the world and, at times, conventional tools to teach the children. Guided by the teacher, Montessori students actively participate in planning their time and taking responsibility for their work.

Our relationship to the outdoors is an integral part of our educational approach and is based on Dr. Montessori’s vision for the extended classroom and the respect and responsibility inherent in meaningful encounters with the land. Gardening, composting and other elements of care of the outdoors are introduced at the earliest stages of the program. At the Elementary and Middle School levels, the student’s experience with the outdoors grows through the added dimension of outdoor expeditions, such as camping trips, rites of passage and further afield adventures.

The Montessori School’s Specialty Program is an essential and vibrant component of the Elementary and Middle School curricula. Led by a cadre of experts in their individual fields, the specialists, like the Montessori classroom teachers, are committed to the importance of learning as a lifetime habit of curiosity, observation and thought. We offer art, chorus, drama, physical education and foreign language as well as intramural sports and an array of After School Programs. The School has a learning specialist for children with special needs. Committed to diversity of all kinds, The Montessori School community is inclusive and depends on the tenet of respect. We believe in sharing what we have with those in need and encouraging children to learn to live responsibly in the world. At The Montessori School, students are inspired to live both passionately and compassionately in a global community.

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—Molly Marion, Parent of a Montessori Alumna
Single moments of joy multiply and extend themselves toward the inevitable destination of human kindness and well-being. It is no wonder then, our school is a place of peace.
From the earliest days in Montessori a child practices the habit of proactive, self-directed learning. The child has an idea, discovers what he needs to gather to explore the idea, then sees his project through its completion.

Shriya, a five-year-old Primary student, was on her second hour in the hallway at The Montessori School. Was she in trouble? No. She was in deep
concentration, working independently on her study of the Blue Jay. It began that morning as she chose Bird Watching work. She had watched elders in her class choose this work; it captivated her. Peering through binoculars, she sat on a stool, intently observing the birds through the floor-to-ceiling window in the hallway. When ready, she moved a small table and chair, gathered a pot of colored pencils, a sheaf of lined paper and the bird field guide.

The Foundation of Independence
Trevor, 20 months old, chooses the work of peeling and slicing a hard-boiled egg. He puts on an apron, washes his hands and finds the tray that contains the necessary tools: a cup to transport the egg, a dish to hold the pieces of shell, an egg slicer, and a serving plate. He places his tray on a table and carries the cup to the refrigerator for a hard-boiled egg. Taking the egg to his tray, he rolls it gently to create the cracks that allow him to peel away the shell. Once it is free of shells, he lifts the handle of the egg slicer and places his egg underneath, pushing down gently to create slices. He then transfers the slices to the serving plate. Cleaning up follows by carrying used dishes to their designated place and returning the tray to the shelf. Finally, he wipes the table and sweeps up bits of shell that have fallen to the floor.

The whole process is long and he is willing to invest that time and energy in quiet purposefulness. Beyond the obvious task of preparing food, this exercise focuses on practicing logical and sequential order in harmony with small motor refinement and social connection: Trevor is preparing food that he will share with others.

People often express amazement at seeing children so young accomplish tasks so detailed. Said a student to his parents: “Thank you so much for my Montessori education beginning with the Toddler class. As I graduate, I realize that those years were probably the most important of my life.”
We went outside to school at one o'clock.
Being on Fire about Mathematics

“I’ve always considered math and science my best subjects,” begins a Montessori School graduate. “I remember doing advanced square roots in Upper Elementary, and after Montessori I was in honors math, asking my friends, “You mean you’ve never done the square root of 7,422? Really? You’ve got to do it ... it’s the best!”

This enthusiasm for learning is common for a Montessori School student. Third Year Lower Elementary students Ethan and William were on fire about long division. They had mastered the Stamp Game and Group Division manipulative materials and were working on the abstraction of division by trying long problems on paper. They discovered that by gluing many pieces of graph paper together, the sky was the limit for the size problem they’d solve. “Let’s do a really big problem,” they decided. They immersed themselves in the calculation of 475,635,682,186,267,936,949,243,510,382,683,925,773,245,160 ÷ 534,723,961 discovering along the way the language to express numbers beyond trillions.

They showed their work at Gathering, a monthly all-student assembly for sharing work, original compositions, artwork and music. As they unfurled their 3 ft. x 2 ft. detailed calculation, describing the process and proclaiming the answer to the 150 students and teachers there, the enthusiasm was infectious: “Say again the numbers you used and the answer,” implored one 5-year-old Primary student. “I remember doing a problem like that when I was in Lower El,” reflected a soon-to-be graduating Middle School student. “It’s really cool, isn’t it?”

cards. She drew, colored and wrote about the bird she’d watched that morning. Many passed her in the hallway—children, parents, staff—some lingered to observe with her and others to comment on her progress. After acknowledging them, she resumed her work, drawn by an inner force.

“The idea of being able to choose work and pursue it until you’re satisfied is amazing because you never get stuck in something discouraging,” reflects Dagan, a
film-maker and ‘97 graduate. “If you’re doing something you love, when it gets difficult it makes it more exciting because you’re involved in a process that you really want to see all the way through.”

From Primary research projects to the science labs and field work of our Middle School, our students have a solid grounding in applied scientific method across their years and their work.

Ethics: The Human Experience

“Socrates said: ‘Wisdom begins in the definition of terms’”, philosophy teacher, Alexa Kantgias, says to the small group of Eighth Years gathered. The seminal question in this Ethics course is: What does it really mean to be well-educated?” Kantgias, along with Head of School and phenomenologist Mary Zeman, make way for dialogue and debate. “An educated person has not necessarily gone to college”, reflects one student. The group considers the difference between academic and personal success and Mark Twain is quoted: “I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.”

With a mix of the Socratic approach and plenty of space for personal reflection, the discussion takes on momentum.

Conversation of a similar pitch took place another day when the opening challenge was to “think of a time you really messed up”. Reluctantly, stories unfolded. “When I was seven I stole something from the hardware store…” “I used to lie about practicing piano…” One of the adults gently intervened: “While this is all very interesting and somewhat entertaining… do you know what’s the most interesting part of all these stories? It’s what happened next. What happened after you messed up?”

Students shift to a deeper level of self-awareness. Memories of forgiveness and lessons-learned begin to fill the room.

The expression of opinions and risking new thoughts are valued in our school, and they are brought to deeper consciousness with practice. In the small environment of The Montessori Middle School, there is always a context for being heard and known.
Nico has helped in the Toddler playground since age eight. As a 12-year-old, his experience deepened during his Toddler Class Internship which is a Human Development course for all final year Elementary students.

The experience begins with observation—his own objective view of the classroom: There was the Toddler who sat in a chair with a book; the girl who
put her work away independently and the boy who delivered a long sentence with one decipherable word. This leads to a dialogue about learning styles and work cycles. Nico is then introduced to some of the learning materials and learns about how the materials are handled. Then the real fun begins! Each intern spends time helping in a variety of ways: Some days it’s reading books or taking an impromptu field trip to the out-

Integrated Learning

Samara, a Sixth Year student, welcomes younger students to her storyboard on Afghanistan: “Like the United States, Afghanistan is a diverse country. It is made up of different land forms: valleys, deserts, plateaus, and mountains.” She speaks with poise and intelligence, an expert on the topic now. On display behind her are original essays on Afghanistan’s cultural development, stories of survival, war and occupation, the persevering and courageous spirit of the Afghani people. Samara proudly gestures towards a Sunni-inspired dwelling structure she created: “For example, the nomadic people live in yurts or tents made out of goatskin. And the Sunni people live in mud-brick dwellings like this.” From literature, to mathematics, philosophy, science, and art, Middle School students invest deeply in their research focus. “By the end, you know your topic inside out!” Max, a Seventh Year, says. As parents move from one exhibit space to another, younger students arrive for lessons from their elder peers. Samara offers the students hospitality with traditional Khatai cookies she baked for today. “On August 20th, Afghans line up to cast their votes. And this is important because...” Samara’s eyes light up as she describes challenges and struggles that have shaped the Afghani people, this time adjusting the details and her rhetoric to match the ages of her younger group.

This is the Montessori way: Enthusiasm for sharing information in story form is met with earnest attention. What joins the teller and the listener is delight in the peer-to-peer connection and the passion that grows by loving what we learn.
“Booc Fare for Charutee”

In the spring, signs appear in the School’s hallway, written in a child’s hand: Booc Fare for Charutee. Five-year-old Primary student, Karina, wanted to raise money to help others by hosting a book fair. After discussing her idea with her teacher, she set to work planning the details. She organized the other older children in her class and they wrote a letter to class parents asking for gently used books. Donations poured in. They decided on pricing for the books, learned about making change, created posters advertising their event and made freshly-squeezed lemonade for Book Fair Day. It was a success all around. Karina’s mom beamed, “This sort of thing happens naturally in Montessori because the children’s voices and opinions are encouraged from such an early age.”

“Montessori not only focuses on learning, but also on living,” observes Richard Judge, grandfather to three Montessori School graduates. “The approach to basic intellectual skills is innovative and solid, and there is also an obvious emphasis on social development, responsibility, independence and artistic sensitivity…. designed to maximize the individual student’s opportunity for self-development. In my day, anyone who could afford it could go to college. The break point was there. You flunked out or graduated. With our children the break point had clearly moved to the high school experience. If you fell behind there you had a hard time catching up. Now I believe that break point is even earlier. Children seem to be getting ‘turned on,’ or ‘turned off’ at the elementary level. An ideal insurance for avoiding the latter is a Montessori experience.”

door compost area. Another time there is snack to help prepare or singing and dancing to enjoy. Perhaps there’s even a moment to observe again.

“The most gratifying part is the simple ‘miracle’ of relationship that makes the internship program work”, reflects Mary Reinhardt, Toddler Directress. “It happens whether the intern is reserved or extroverted. Reflections come
in many forms: a parent of an intern reports that dinner table conversation is dominated by tales from Toddlers; eloquent words about the internship are part of a graduation speech. Daily, older students say hello to their Toddler friends.”

For Nico, working in “Toddlers” brings back memories of his own early years. His circle of community widens as does his sense of responsibility. This
plays out in many ways—academically, on the athletic field and also, strikingly, in his relationships. He has grown more sensitive to Toddler needs and, when he arrives at school at the same time as 16-month-old Noah, Nico rushes ahead to open the door for him.

“The Montessori community inspired me to be myself without fear of being judged, and my experiences gave me a love for intellectual as well as physical pursuits. The Montessori School had a powerful influence on all I am today.”

—B. Greer Sallick, The Montessori School Class of ‘10, Phillips Academy ‘14, Andover, MA

Engaging Curiosity

It began the day the clocks in Upper Elementary were covered with paper. How did humans keep track of time before anyone wore a watch? Puzzling over how in the world they were going to know what time it was, their teacher suggested a venture outside to see if the sun’s position in the sky might help. Did she give the answer? No; she posed the question so curiosity and imagination could take over. Lessons of geometry, angles and degrees of a circle, geography, latitude and longitude began to fill the room. And what about the seasons? Protractors were pulled out and calculations began that would help determine the time of day at different times of the year. In the coming days, the students gained a greater sense of the passage of time. By week’s end, a lesson on the History of Time was presented with revelations of the vast and varied collection of sundials used across the centuries. Small groups began to design unique sundials which were presented to the class and a panel of selected experts (an artist, an art teacher and a carpenter). A few days later, one student suggested that making a sundial would be a brilliant contribution to the school’s annual fundraising auction.

From the flame of one question, curiosity was ignited. “Our role is to ask the questions, not to give the answers,” remarked the teacher. “The children’s answers will always be more interesting than ours because once they engage and work for them, the answers end up belonging to them. And that’s the true practice of education.”
The Hong Kong underground train shot farther and farther out of the city center and Ramani DeAlwis, Middle School Director, sat patiently among the students. Soon Martin shouted out, “Hey! We’re going in the complete opposite direction!” The students gathered together, making a new plan. Thankfully, they were as adept at making adjustments with the Hong Kong subway map as using their compasses the following week on their trek through
the Himalayas. The group had spent the past year preparing for this trip. Outdoor expeditions of hiking and orienteering had given them the strength to meet physical challenges ahead. They engineered fundraising initiatives to raise money for the costs.

From their earliest days at our School, students are travelers with colored pencils as they trace the edges of the continents. They draw the borders of countries, label their capitol cities and color their

Playing with Class

Athletic strength and self-confidence among Montessori School graduates manifests in many ways, including the varsity level teams our graduates often join during their freshman and sophomore years of high school… even for sports they’ve not previously played. “If you think about the traits that make a good athlete, they are exactly the characteristics that we stress each and every day in the culture of our school and our sports, academic and extra-curricular programs,” reflects Athletic Director, Jason Brasher. “Since Montessori students develop habits of time management and self-responsibility at an early age, they are quite naturally organized players. They are comfortable being leaders, even as they understand the important role of collaboration. They develop and refine skills as individual athletes and those such as cooperation and sportsmanship for team endeavors. And when they get to their final years in Elementary and then into Middle School, the Outdoor Expedition Program challenges them to do things they’ve never dreamed possible. They must rely on themselves and their classmates in a very real way as they rappel down rock faces, shoot down rapids and trek at high altitudes. Because the culture of personal best is so prevalent during the school day, it necessarily extends to the playing fields.”
Art is Life!

Students assembled to hear Upper Elementary students play the wooden flutes and didgeridoos they made as part of a two-week immersion in Native Cultures with visiting artist, Hawk Henries. The eldest Elementary students had been researching Indigenous Peoples of North America as part of individual long-term research projects. All Elementary students had been immersed in the culture and music of Native American tribes in chorus and class. “Together we learned and sang about the earth, the sky and the elements of water, air, earth and fire that are central to Native American spirituality. All this study culminated in our work with Hawk,” recalls Music Director, Rob Silvan.

Earlier in the Spring, Elementary Art students created elaborate sculptures that depicted their own personal heroes while they were invited to write about their heroes in their language art work. About that same time, Middle School students were imagining how to manifest personal statements of social belief though sculpture as they crafted to scale cardboard maquettes which would eventually become a full-scale metal sculpture.

“Art is Life” proclaims a calligraphed wall at our Middle School campus. Curriculum integration ensures that the interrelation of subjects with the disciplines of art, music, self-awareness and physical well-being is an extension of our mission and of Montessori’s mandate to Educate for Life. In a place that boldly proclaims and takes great pride in its mission, it cannot be anything less.

flags. By and by, they hold the whole world in their hands. With similar daily practices in academics and service, our students grow to see themselves as citizens of a world beyond their classrooms and their school. Having gained a reliable inner compass, they are ennobled to sort out confusion in places as far away as the Hong Kong underground or the schoolyard of Arusha, Tanzania where they extend themselves in friendship and renovation work.

From a puzzle map to a pass-
port with a visa for Nepal, Argentina or Tanzania, the annual graduation trip culminates an approach to education where character and kindness are as important as academic strength. When Masai elders began a tribal dance with punctuated, vertical jumps, our students joined right in. “I was physically ready but didn’t know if I was emotionally prepared before this trip,” said Sam. “I put myself into the world and found I had the strength and confidence to jump.”

Indirect Preparation

“Indirect preparation is the key that unlocks the magic of Montessori”, says AMI Trainer, Annette Haines. When three-year-old John places the final cube on the Pink Tower, it is evidence of much cognitive development—of a growing sensory perception and motor control. It is a concrete expression of the ability to sort, order, grade and pattern; such abilities are the core of all mathematical work. The simple activity of stacking the cubes of the Pink Tower provides sufficient cognitive and motor challenge to the three-year-old. Both the design of the material and the actual activity are indirect preparation for more complex and abstract concepts in science and math: metric volume, base ten and cubing, to name a few.

This indirect preparation for future work—while meeting immediate developmental needs—can be seen throughout the Montessori curriculum at all age levels. The activities at each stage build the foundation of concepts and skills that enable the child to be prepared for future challenges. While tracing the shapes of the geometry cabinet, the child is also indirectly preparing his hand for writing and his mind for algebra and geometry; by following the carefully sequenced steps of table washing, the child is developing the sense of order and sequence which is essential to all work in language and math. Beyond the immediate purpose of each activity are lessons for life—a sense of purpose, self-worth, persistence, organization, problem-solving, responsibility, focus and commitment.
Montessori School
Mission Statement

To respect children as self-directed individuals and foster their growth toward independence and social responsibility.

To adhere to the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori and maintain the standard of The Association Montessori Internationale.

To create a joyful, diverse, and family-oriented community which provides an atmosphere that supports the growth of the child.

To inspire the child to live both passionately and compassionately in a global community.
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