

Montessori Monitor



Winter-Spring 2005 Issue

Grow Up at MMS

A Most Important Gift to Give Your Child!

by Elizabeth Hamilton

“The child’s first instinct is to carry out his actions by himself, without anyone helping him, and his first conscientious bid for independence is made when he defends himself against those who try to do the action for him” (Maria Montessori, *Absorbent Mind*, 1995, pp. 90-91).

Independence and autonomy are important traits we must foster in children. Piaget (1973) reminds us that it is only as we encourage and guide children in the development of these two traits from an early age that oral autonomy in adulthood will be developed.

Like many Montessori environments, our school provides the environment necessary for the fulfillment of this inborn drive.

To understand that school and home should complement each other in their approach to your children, it is helpful to look at Maria Montessori’s insights about children’s development and see how these relate to family life, as well as school life. They will not be implemented at home in the same way as at school, but the underlying dynamics will be the same - for it will take the combined efforts of both parties (two distinct, yet complementary roles) to create an optimal environment for children’s growth and development.

Maria Montessori believed that independence and autonomy/self-direction are of prime importance for children to develop. Children will need these characteristics in the world in which they live. As educators, we rely on these characteristics for an optimal environment in which for the children to grow and develop (“work”).

As we first enter the toddler classroom, we see that it has been designed to meet the needs of very young children: the furniture and shelves are sized appropriately so the child can choose and return work independently. Activities of Practical Life are the child’s first introduction to independence: first in the toddler and early childhood classes and continuing throughout the elementary and upper elementary years. With each increasing year of advancement, the children are given more opportunities to work without direct interference from adults. They instinctively choose work helps them master the skills they need.

Whether the community is at school or at home, the child’s autonomy and independence must always be within limits for the group as a whole. There are implicit and explicit rules and behaviors - both inside and outside of the classroom. Behavioral expectations also must operate at home. Implicit rules of behavior such as bedtime and meal routines need to be consistent. Children quickly understand the ground rules of home just as they learn the behavior expected at school. Most behavioral ground rules are modeled and learned by repeated practice. It is absolutely necessary for children to follow the rules for the well-being of our “school family” as well as our “home family”.

A Most Important Gift to Give Your Child, cont.

In some settings where time and routine are not in place, children are often unsure what to expect or how to act. Well defined rules provide security for the child. It is within the safety of routine that the child can learn to make appropriate choices, to have independence and to be responsible.

From their early childhood years, the children will automatically apply the skills they have learned from the Practical Life activities - leaving their minds free to concentrate on more complex social/emotional and academic issues. As Maria Montessori pointed out, "the child becomes less dependent on the persons about him, till the time comes when he wants also to be mentally independent. Then he shows a liking to develop his mind by his own experiences and not by the experiences of others. He begins to seek the reasons for things" (pp. 89).

We can simulate this environment at home by learning much from Maria's prepared environment used in the classroom. Maria Montessori found that children need to have order and consistency where things can be found, clear expectations of how to care for things, how to put them away when finished working with them, how to have respect for other's privacy and how to appreciate their own and other's work without receiving external rewards.

It is important that parents respect their children's efforts - even if done imperfectly in the adult's eyes! Young children do not yet have the judgment to be independent in some areas, but we need to find those areas in which they can make successful decisions and begin to allow them to practice. For example, one way we can foster independence is to allow the children to choose their clothes each day. What difference does it really make if the child chooses to wear colors/patterns that do not match?

As educators and parents, we help children through this journey into independence, explaining situations as well as being there with the love and nurturing they need! Even during the sometimes rough communication times of adolescence, it is important that students are guided in their development of their own sense of responsibility. As Maria wrote, "independence is not a static condition; it is a continuous conquest, and in order to reach not only freedom, but also strength, and the perfecting of one's powers." Fostering independence and beginning autonomy, we must guide our children towards being responsible and independent. Children will begin to assume responsibility for their own thinking and for their own actions. They will then be able to move along the path to becoming more mature and responsible adults.

As a parent of three teenage children, I can tell you that the continuous effort to allow independence and provide guidance will be (and has already been) rewarding for our children and for us as parents.

SENIOR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Ms. Christina Miller's 4th/5th/6th Grade Class

The upper elementary and the middle school classes are a team-teaching dynamic. There are eleven subject-area teachers who work with the students in ability level or grade level small groups, depending on the subject area.

In upper elementary, the students still have work plans (contracts) and time is built into each day for this independent work cycle. The students can also choose to do their homework during these (IW) time blocks. Teachers are available to assist the students one-on-one during (IW). Usually, one or more grade levels are working with a subject-area teacher while one or two grade levels are in (IW). This affords the

SENIOR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Ms. Christina Miller's 4th/5th/6th Grade Class, cont.

students a smaller group needing teacher assistance with their work plans and/or homework.

Math is taught in very small ability-level groups. Grammar, literature, and composition are taught in grade-level groups. The largest grade-level group consists of fourteen students.

The following teachers work with the upper elementary (4th, 5th, 6th) grades:

Christina Miller: lead teacher upper elementary, math group #76, grammar (all levels), and fourth grade FL history

Susan Salvatore: work plans (all levels), math group #87, language conventions, spelling and weekly homework folders, study hall, sixth grade world history.

Susan Hansen: literature (4th grade), composition (6th grade), math group #65, lunch and recess supervision, and fifth grade US history.

Martha Horter: Florida Writes (4th grade), literature and composition (5th grade), literature (6th grade) and Media (all levels)

Robert Mulgrew: Science (all levels)

Alina Dragne: technology (all levels), math #65

Christina Eckstein: Music (all levels)

Trish Petty: Art (all levels)

Coach Corey: PE (all levels)

Sue Hatch: Drama-speech-debate (6th-8th)

Madeline de Paz: Spanish (all levels)

A Note From the MMS Music Department

By Christina Eckstein

The students of MMS contributed to the holidays by performing seasonal music on December 17th, 2004 at Unity church in Gainesville, FL. There were a total of four shows and the programs were designed to showcase a variety of musical styles and genres. The students worked diligently for two and a half months and gave successful performances. We appreciate the parental support as the shows were very well attended.

The Florida Music Education Association conference was held January 5th through the 8th at the Tampa Convention Center.

The title of this year's conference was "Putting It Together! Music Assessment: Southern Division Leading the Way". I heard many excellent performances, as well as clinicians discussing areas of assessment, improvisation, and implementation strategies.

March is Music in our Schools Month. MIOSM began as just a daylong event in 1973 but developed over the years and became an entire month in 1985 and has been celebrated ever since. The purpose of

A Note From the MMS Music Department, cont.

MIOSM is to raise awareness of the importance of the school music program, music education, and its benefits. The theme for 2005 is *Music: The Heart of Education*. The National Association for Music Education provides many activities for schools to take part in, and we hope to do something special during March 2005.

The first through eighth grade students will soon begin working on music for the end of the year show. The production this year will be "School House Rock". It proves to be an exciting and challenging musical. The production will take place on May 20th, 2005. See you at the show!

PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Ms. Karen Ramey's 4.6-6 Year Old Class

Welcome to Ms. Karen's and Mr. Jacob's Class. We have a class of twenty-six preschool and kindergarten students, ages 4 1/2-6. In the Preschool/Kindergarten Class, the children are expected to be more independent with regard to choosing and completing work, especially the kindergartners as they prepare for the transition to the first grade classroom. As in all other classes, students are given lessons as they are ready and are guided and directed to these works and lessons when necessary.

On a typical day in our class, we begin with Circle Time. This is a time when we learn about the calendar and practice saying the date. We also count the number of days we have been in school each day and learn about place value. We sing songs, have sharing time, guess what's in the mystery bag, and read about each child's happenings with Daisy and/or Jay Jay, our class "pets." We then begin our Work Cycle. This is a time when the children work on lessons they have had, in all areas of the classroom. We strive for a balance so that the students will be well rounded with their skills, but the teachers also encourage students to complete math and language lessons daily to practice and reinforce these skills, so they are ready for future lessons. The teachers are giving lessons at this time as well. Some students may also be working on journal writing or handwriting. After our Work Cycle, the students go to the playground for some fresh air and free play. Our next Circle Time is a time when the teacher gives lessons on the unit study for that particular time. In the afternoon, we have another Work Cycle. Parent volunteers are incorporated during this time to lead the children in activities and projects related to the unit study. Sometimes the students are read to in small groups. The children may also participate in outdoor activities on the patio such as chalk, painting, and the sand/water table.

This year we have had a busy time in our class! Many lessons have been given and the students have become settled and are doing a wonderful job during the work time. They have become more focussed and are able to concentrate for longer periods of time. The students have progressed nicely with the lessons in the math and language areas and many have learned about abstract skills and concepts. With regard to our unit studies, in the fall, we learned about basic geography terms and concepts, rocks and minerals and space. The students really enjoyed our space unit. We learned about each planet, the sun

PRESCHOOL/KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM IN THE
SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Karen Ramey's 4.6-6 Year Old Class, cont.

and the moon. The children were able to create their own solar system model. We had our wonderful parent volunteers come in and help the children complete projects, lead them in various activities and read books to them. In November we learned about the election process and what it means to be president. In December, we learned about Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, and shared our own family's holiday traditions and customs. We recently began a unit on weather, learning about what weather is, about the different kinds of weather and seasons and weather instruments. As we approach spring, we will also be learning about birds, light/color/sound/magnets (physical science), and butterflies/insects.

We look forward to the rest of the year and the many opportunities of learning to come. We have seen so much growth and learning take place since August and we are excited about the coming months.

MMS FALL BOOK FAIR

The Fall Scholastic Book Fair was another smashing success! Big thank you to all who helped set up, worked during open hours, or helped pack up. To all who made purchases we express our appreciation as well. Through the efforts of all, our sales total was \$7,058.36. You ask, so how did MMS benefit? Here's a summary:

Cash Earned	\$1,664.70
Books	\$815.88
Vouchers	\$110.00
Promo Books Received	<u>\$100.00</u>
Grand Total	\$2,690.58

Thanks to Everyone!!

EARLY CHILDHOOD/BEGINNER'S CLASSROOM IN THE
SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Crystal Sorrows 2-4 Year Old Class

In the Beginner's class, or "Little House" as it is lovingly referred to by parents and staff, schooling begins with a combination focus on Montessori education and socialization of the young child. The Little House is just that, a classroom that stands as an independent structure, providing a small personal environment for the class of twenty-three children that inhabit it during the day. The class is also the only class at MMS to have its own separate playground. The students begin their day by walking down the sidewalk to where it ends at the Little House. The remainder of the school day is spent learning, socializing, and working in the specially prepared environment.

EARLY CHILDHOOD/BEGINNER'S CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Crystal Sorrows 2-4 Year Old Class, cont.

When parents first decide to place their child in a school it can seem very daunting. Parents have many understandable worries and the children themselves may have fears or tendencies towards separation anxiety. When parents decide to place their child in the Beginner's Class at MMS great care is taken to make the transition as easy as possible for the students as well as the parents. Students enrolled in the Beginner's Class often have no other school experiences. Some students have never been away from their parents. Some have never even had a sitter or been to a playgroup. Making these children feel comfortable in their new environment with new people takes some time. Through this period of time, often referred to as the normalization period, teachers work to establish routines and expected behaviors. The routines in the classroom are what help children develop comfort levels. Knowing what to expect each day is important for the young child. Parents help their child normalize by talking about the school day with their child. Since many children this age are non-verbal or partially verbal, monthly class calendars, weekly newsletters, and information on special events are sent home. This helps the parents communicate with their child about their day and their class. The class schedule is followed as closely as possible each day so that students are able to recognize the order of the day and feel comfortable with established routines. When a special event is coming up that will disrupt the usual order of the day, the event is discussed during line time often, and in advance of the actual event, so students are aware of the change in routine. Routine is the best way to help a child normalize and display expected behaviors. Daily eating and sleeping routines are recommended at home for helping children recognize expected behaviors at these times. Parents are sometimes surprised how much a bedtime routine helps children fall asleep and stay asleep in their beds. Routines at dinner time can help children learn proper manners and expected table behaviors.

The classroom is a mixed age classroom and some of the students in the Beginner's Class are returning students from the previous year. These students help the new children learn the expected behaviors through example. These returning students are learning how to be leaders. They enjoy assisting the new students, showing a skill they have mastered, or lending a hand. They are often more verbal than incoming students and help provide a rich language environment. During work cycle they help explain the routine of the day, by moving through work cycle largely unassisted. They have already been exposed to, and are mastering, the cycle of choosing a work, taking it to a space, working on it with concentration, and returning the work to its proper place. They show this expected behavior to the new students. Returning students are already comfortable with the teachers and the environment. They have friends returning as well and have already developed some socialization skills. These returning students help the classroom environment be peaceful, industrious, and exciting. The younger incoming students look to the returning students for cues on expected behavior and routine and are provided with wonderful examples.

The day begins in the Little House with work cycle. Quiet contemplative music is playing while students come in from the morning care program or walk in with their parents or a safety patroller. Students upon entering may immediately choose a work from the shelves. Practical Life and Sensorial areas are the main areas of focus in this classroom but beginning math, language, and science works are also to be found. The term "work" is used even at this young age to distinguish it from play. This work they are engaging in takes focus and concentration as well as enjoyment and an active mind. The work they are doing is important. They are refining their gross motor skills, developing fine motor skills, and increasing their attention span and their ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. They are engaging the materials through all of their senses and are being rewarded with impressions that will be built upon as they grow developmentally and academically. Upon entering the classroom you may see students stirring

EARLY CHILDHOOD/BEGINNER'S CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Crystal Sorrows 2-4 Year Old Class, cont.

rice, pouring water, or moving objects from one bowl to another, with fingers or utensils. What the Montessori trained teacher is seeing in these children is the learning of directionality that will be used later in reading and writing, the development of the pincer grip needed for proper handwriting, and the lengthening of concentration that is crucial to later "large" works in math, science, geography, and language. Each lesson a child is shown has many aims that are important in the young child's development. Children are given individual lessons on work in the Beginner's Class, as well as small group lessons. Some works build on others, with a child showing mastery on one work then being exposed to a more complex variation. This keeps the work fresh and engaging to the young child. Young children also need repetition. Repetition is often looked down upon as many adults imagine that boredom will ensue from repetition. However in young children repetition helps them develop confidence in their abilities and knowledge and helps them refine their sense of order. Montessori believed that work calls to children for specific reasons and that they are fulfilling needs within themselves, that they cannot express, through repetition.

Students during work cycle work at tables or on rugs that they place for themselves on the floor. The rugs define the individual student's space so other students know not to walk there or interfere with the other child. Students are also taught to "use their words" with each other. They are given phrases to use such as, "please don't touch my work" and "this is my space". This is the first step in establishing non-violent problem solving skills that they will need throughout life. Students at MMS are not permitted to strike out in physical ways. This is often the way a young child, especially a non-verbal young child, will first try to solve conflicts. Giving young students specific words to help them problem solve with others gives them power over frustrating situations. Teachers are always at the ready in the Beginner's Class to facilitate these verbal exchanges and ensure that the problem is adequately addressed. Students are not expected to share a work they have selected. When students select work is it theirs until they are ready to return it to the shelf. Students are not allowed to take work from others or touch work that is being used by another student. Thus bullying and the defensive techniques that follow are not learned as strategies in this environment.

During work cycle other activities may also be taking place. Art projects occur each week and are largely done on a one-to-one basis. Art projects often center on the monthly unit study or an upcoming holiday. Art materials are also available in the classroom every day for the child to choose as a means of creating developmental art, what some people refer to as free art. On nice days large Montessori works such as table washing, or large-motor art activities, such as chalk, may be taking place on the patio of the Little House. Every other week the class attends Media in the school library. Here they listen to our school Media Specialist, Ms. Martha, read a story and then they are allowed to choose from a variety of books at which to look. Spanish is also presented twice a week in the Beginner's Class.

Following work cycle everyday is line time, what some people refer to as circle time. Each day line time includes snack, calendar, singing, and a discussion or lesson about a subject of study. Students are expected to say "thank you" upon being given their snack, and a student is selected to collect the snack cups everyday with a trash can as a way of helping maintain the environment. Students are expected to sit at line time quietly with their legs crossed. If they have something to contribute they are taught how to raise their hands. The returning students demonstrate this behavior appropriately. Calendar follows snack each day, exposing students to the days of the week, rote counting, and weather terms. Students are selected each day to place the new day of the week, number of the day, and weather on the calendar. The

EARLY CHILDHOOD/BEGINNER'S CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Crystal Sorrows 2-4 Year Old Class, cont.

calendar is then re-hung on the wall where students may view it. Attendance is taken and songs are sung as a group. The songs may change monthly, depending on impending holidays and unit studies, but some songs are sung all year to provide a sense of continuity. Lessons are given in Grace and Courtesy, helping to further socialize the students, or a lesson may be given on a specific material every student may use, or on a topic of the unit study. At the end of line time students are called to line up politely for playground time. Students in the Beginner's Class are expected to learn how to walk quietly in a line with their hands to themselves. Often walking in a line is a new experience for children beginning school, and it takes some time for children to understand the concept and display proper line behavior. Since everyone wants to enter the playground first it takes a level of self-control to walk in a line to the playground.

Playground time is when students may socialize freely. There is plenty of open space on our playground so that students may develop their gross-motor skills. Running, hopping, and other large motor activities are encouraged. Sand toys are available for use in the sand box. Students are encouraged to learn to "pump their legs" on the swings, furthering their physical independence. Aggressive behavior is not allowed on the playground and any potentially dangerous physical activities are redirected. Students have free play on the playground for 45 minutes to an hour each day that the weather allows.

Playground is followed by departure for the half-day students and by lunch for the full-day students. Students wash their hands upon leaving the playground, collect their lunchboxes, and choose seats at the outside lunch tables. Students are expected to spread their napkins or placemats on the table, creating a defined space for their food and to place their food nicely upon this space. The students then try to open their own containers and teachers help students who need assistance. Healthy food is to be eaten first and a variety of food is encouraged. Proper table manners are shown and expected. Students sit on their bottoms and take small bites. Students may talk at lunch but are encouraged to eat if talking becomes their primary focus. Students when finished pack up their own leftovers and containers and proceed inside for nap. Nap time in the beginner's class is a quiet and peaceful time. Each child may bring blankets and an animal or doll from home to have for the week. Quiet rainforest or piano music plays on the stereo while the two star lamps remain lit, providing a soft light in the quasi-dark room. Teachers may sit with a child if he/she is especially restless or is upset, but the nap routine typically makes this unnecessary as the year progresses. Students who don't fall asleep lie quietly on their mats, daydreaming.

The end of the day is a routine in arising from nap and getting prepared to go home. A short line time occurs at the end of the day when the class sings a good-bye song and the next day's special events or normal routine may be discussed. Students walk, in a line, to the pick-up area, each carrying their own lunch box to await parents or care givers.

Independence is highly encouraged in the Beginner's Class through all periods of the day. The independence encouraged is age-appropriate but often requires repetition and practice of a skill. Manipulating one's own clothes, dressing one's self, opening one's lunch containers, washing one's hands, and blowing one's nose are all skills that a child this age should be practicing and developing mastery in. Students are encouraged to try for themselves before asking an adult for help, thus fostering their confidence in the true nature of their abilities. The child is invited to try new skills but is also encouraged to continue practicing developing skills. The delight in a child's voice and face when that child is able to accomplish something independently that before required help is a beautiful thing to experience. The cry of, "I did it by myself" has so much joy and confidence and awe enclosed within that one can not help but

EARLY CHILDHOOD/BEGINNER'S CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Crystal Sorrows 2-4 Year Old Class, cont.

feel moved. These statements of independence, these expressions of self-worth, help the students learn an appreciation for their abilities and skills that is critical. This knowledge of one's true abilities allows the child be self-motivated, enjoy learning, and find the reward in the achievement.

Monthly unit studies provide new vocabulary, cultural experiences, and changing work within the environment. January's unit study for 2005 in the Beginner's Class is Japan. This unit study has included exploration in geography, in language, in art, in culture, and in Practical life materials. Students have been busy practicing developmental art with a "Buddha Board", push pinning the flag of Japan, learning to use chopsticks, and pouring from a porcelain tea pot into a cup, among other activities. Students will parade through older classrooms near the end of the unit study with art they have made relating to Japan. Origami hangs from the classroom's ceiling, displayed after a discussion and performance of origami folding. The students are learning to count to ten in Japanese, using as a basis a counting song they already know in English. They have compared and contrasted the geography of the United States and Japan. They have a better understanding of the term "island" through Montessori lessons with the landforms. They have chosen to color artists renderings of Mount Fuji, the place most represented in Japanese art. They are able to try on a Happy coat as a practical life activity, which not only shows them a cultural difference in clothing, but also allows them to practice the skill of putting on and taking off a jacket. They have practiced Ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arranging, with fresh flowers and have practiced stirring rice, while learning about its cultural and economic significance to the people of Japan. They will taste sushi as part of the unit study, will learn how respected a chef is in Japan, and will try hot tea made in a traditional cast iron tea pot, a tetsubin. Their vocabulary has grown during this unit from exposure to new words in English as well as Japanese. They have decorated "carp" as an art project, which they now know is a type of fish. They have also stenciled a "scroll" and seen examples of "calligraphy". This daily exposure to new vocabulary helps provide the young child a rich language environment in which to flourish. The unit study as a whole provides new opportunities to challenge each child's mind and further their academic and cultural development.

Respect, while an abstract term, is a set of behaviors and thoughts that are verbalized and demonstrated each day in the Beginner's Class. Students are asked to respect themselves, respect each other, and respect the environment. By providing a respectful example teachers help facilitate words and actions that demonstrate respect for others. By being invited to actively participate in every aspect of the environment, including cleaning, students are invited to demonstrate respect for their classroom environment. Their sorrow at accidentally breaking an item in the classroom shows their love of what they encounter every day, the small, special, beautiful, and simple works in the Montessori classroom that call to them. This class was developed for them, changes to meet their needs, and embraces their inner desires to be independent and self-reliant. This class celebrates the young child in all aspects.

Overview of the Middle School Curriculum

Meeting the Needs of Adolescents

Early adolescence is a time of dramatic change and growth, when young people are open to the influences of peers, family, school, and community. The middle school years are a crucial time for making life decisions. Yet many adolescents are faced with the prospects of attending large, impersonal schools and a curriculum that is out of touch with their intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal needs.

The middle school program at Millhopper Montessori School was designed according to Maria Montessori's philosophy of "improving the individual in order to improve society." It is our goal at Millhopper Montessori School to create an environment for adolescents that challenges their ever-expanding intellect and shows them that they have the means within themselves of making significant contributions to society.

The middle school design is an integration of the current research in human development, the trends and issues in education, and the Montessori philosophy. The mission of the program is to provide opportunities for adolescents to be self-confident and gain self-knowledge, to belong to a community, to learn to be adaptable, to be academically competent and challenged, and to create a vision for their personal future.

The program structure offers a learner-centered environment, a developmentally responsive curriculum, a teaching team of Montessori teachers and special area teachers as resources, parents-teachers-student partnerships, multi-aged grouping of 11-15 year olds, blocks of uninterrupted learning time, and peer and cross-age teaching. The early adolescent is an active, self-directed learner, a vital member of the class, school, city, and global community, a vital member of the teacher-student-parent team, responsible for keeping commitments and being honest and respectful.

The curriculum and instruction include learning how to learn strategies, personal learning plans, exploratory activities, long term cooperative learning projects, sense of community and social interaction with peers, meaningful and challenging work, activities for self-expression, self-knowledge, and self-assessment, activities that incorporate a variety of learning styles, activities to foster interdependence and learning economic independence, and school and community service projects.

The middle school program was established in 1998. While the curriculum is highly academic and exceeds the standards set by the Florida Board of Education and the Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS), it is also designed to meet the needs of the students. The curriculum and instruction is designed as a two-year program. Mathematics, Language Arts, Spanish, Physical Education, Chorus, Art, and Technology are courses of continuous progress. Natural Science, Physical Science, American History, and World Culture/Geography are taught on alternating years. Since MMS does not offer high school courses and there is no Montessori high school in the Gainesville area, MMS believes that the middle school program should not only offer a high-quality Montessori education, but also an environment that will enable its students to transition smoothly into a traditional public high school setting. The teachers are facilitators for learning, consultants for the students, creators of a positive climate for learning, communicators with parents, and community role models.

Course Outline

Year A

Language Arts
Mathematics -Computational Math,
Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Informal Geometry
Physical Science
World Cultures & Geography
Spanish
Physical Fitness

Overview of the Middle School Curriculum

Year B

Enrichment Classes

Language Arts

Mathematics -Computational Math,
Pre-Algebra, Algebra I, Informal Geometry

Natural Science

American History

Spanish

Physical Fitness

Academic Programs

Language Arts:

Language arts include the study of vocabulary, literature, grammar and mechanics, and a variety of composition. Vocabulary is presented across the curriculum and is formally approached by learning the word elements and the Sadlier-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop. Literature is taught in small ability-level groups and includes the study of literary elements and the reading of various genres of literatures including poetry, short stories, novels, autobiographies, newspaper and periodical articles, etc. The main area of focus is expository, descriptive, and comparative essay writing, as preparation for high school and collegiate compositions. Students compose two research papers a year as a part of an independent study. This writing follows a format of rough draft, edit, revision, and final draft. Feedback in revising and editing is received from peers as well as teachers.

Mathematics

The senior elementary and middle school students have formal math instruction in small ability-level groups. These groups occur at the same daily time block allowing for the integrity of developmental placement and a wider breadth of math levels to be offered. The students are placed in the appropriate math group by means of placement tests at the beginning of each school year. The lowest level offered is a fifth/sixth grade Saxon Math grouping using the Saxon 65 text. The levels progress through Saxon 76, Saxon 87, Pre Algebra, Algebra I, and Informal Geometry.

Science

The Physical Science curriculum includes the study of the structure of matter, forces of motion, energy and waves, work and machines, and chemistry. The Natural Science curriculum includes the study of plant and animal classification, human biology and anatomy, cell structure and theory, ecology/biome study/geology, and astronomy. Students do personal work and group work in these themes.

Social Studies

This course includes World Cultures/Geography and American History. The Geography curriculum includes the study of the themes of location, place, movements, regions, and interaction of people and their environment. The American History curriculum focuses on the progress of the American governmental systems and the American people from the end of the Civil War up to the present. Current events are natural inclusions into many topics of discussion and are used as connectors to previous events in American History.

Independent Study - History and Science Fair

Students will complete two independent studies a year focused on history and science. In the fall the focus is a topic of history. In the spring of each year, student will create a project to present to the class

Overview of the Middle School Curriculum, cont.

on science. There are specific guidelines and due dates along the way. A research paper is expected. This work is to be done individually.

Spanish I

In the middle school, The Spanish program includes a variety of proficiency-building activities as well as substantial supplementary cultural materials. Spanish 1A is covered over a two-year period. The basic objectives of the program are threefold. The first objective is to help students attain proficiency in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The second objective is to aid the students in acquiring a firm linguistic base, which is the foundation of effective communication and meaningful language proficiency. The final goal of the program is to present the target language within the context of the contemporary Spanish-speaking world and their cultures. Students learn to speak, read, and write Spanish.

Computer Literacy

This computer literacy course includes the use of a word processor, spreadsheets, database, graphics, academic programs, and simulation games. All of these activities are integrated into all subject areas. Students also have the opportunity to work with other equipment such as scanners, use the internet to gather data and communicate with other schools.

Career Education

Seventh grade students spend one week as an assistant in a Montessori classroom and eighth grade students spend the week working in a business of their choice. The supervising teacher completes an evaluation form. For both experiences, students prepare a business letter stating their goals and verifying arrangements. Students also prepare a resume to include. The supervising adults then complete an evaluation form. Students do other spontaneous service activities based on need and interest.

Physical Education

Physical education is an important part of a holistic education. MMS is fortunate to have a partnership with the University of Florida Physical Education Department where we employ a student who is working on a master's level. These university students are trained in the latest and most state-of-the-art techniques and are experienced in the use of the Sunshine State Standards. The PE curriculum includes a variety of team sports, fitness through the National and President's Council of Physical Fitness. The students become competent in physical education literacy and develop a level of personal physical fitness promoting a physically active lifestyle. The physical education class focuses on team sports, individual sports and aerobic activities. Students also participate in cooperative games. All students are included in all activities. Health is the study of issues pertinent to the needs of early adolescents. Students explore topics such as belonging, friendships, adolescent development, stress management, self-esteem, peer pressure, drug education, sexuality, nutrition, and balanced living.

Fine Arts

The fine arts are an important part of a holistic curriculum. Students integrate their artistic knowledge and skills to the on-going projects and use it as an avenue of self-expression. On Friday, students work with the school's art teacher who uses the Florida Sunshine State Standards as a scope and sequence format.

Overview of the Middle School Curriculum, cont.

Assignments

Students are expected to keep up with class work and if necessary complete assignments at home. Students are welcomed to remain in class at the end of the day to work on assignments or ask the teacher for help. If a student repeatedly misuses class time or interferes with the work of his/her classmates, a conference is held and an action plan is set up with the family. This action plan remains in effect until the student shows a consistent pattern of appropriate behavior.

Homework consists of in-class assignments that require completion at home in order to be turned in by the due date. The formula for calculating acceptable homework time is fifteen minutes per grade level. Therefore, a seventh grade student should expect approximately an hour and forty-five minutes worth of homework and an eight grade student should expect approximately two hours worth of homework. Realistically, the amount of time a Millhopper Montessori Middle School student spends on homework assignments depends upon how the student utilizes in-class work time. The students typically have an hour each day to work on any of their assignments and to solicit help from the teachers. If a student utilizes this time effectively, she or he may only have forty-five minutes to an hour's worth of work to complete at home.

Parents are asked to support their adolescent by providing a family schedule that allows time and space each evening for schoolwork. For concentrated learning to occur, students should study without the distractions of television and telephones. Syllabi are given out at the beginning of each quarter. Also, students are required to keep a daily planner which they use to write their assignments in. Thus, students know their assignments' due dates so they can learn to plan ahead and avoid conflicts or late night studying. When students are not prepared for class (i.e. assignments are not complete or necessary belongings are not brought) the time spent at school is non-productive. Therefore, when a student does not complete his/her assignments or bring required belongings to school the student will fill out a homework notification, which is then signed by the student, teacher, and parent.

A Well-Rounded Adolescent

Millhopper Montessori Middle School students pursue interests outside of the school environment. They are accomplished musicians, participants in theater and drama groups, and active members of various church and civic groups. Others are members of the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. Many are involved city and select athletic leagues throughout Alachua County. M3S students love to go to movies and concerts, talk on the phone, chat with each other over the web, and generally get together and socialize. In conclusion, M3S students are active people. They balance the demands of their academic responsibilities with those of their social interests. They are responsible young people who offer valuable contributions to their community.

Middle School Internship Discussion Panel

In preparation for internships, the students took part in a panel discussion with community business professionals, and MMS parents, Melissa Akey, Julie Christian, and Charles Schiele. Our guests spoke to the middle school students about the qualities of a responsible and productive employee. They offered the students invaluable tips for setting a good first impression during an interview, completing assigned tasks, and handling employee disputes. Our panel also discussed the need to be articulate, organized, and self-motivated. The discussion was very successful and insightful. Much of the information could be used by the students during their internships and future employment.

Middle School Internship Discussion Panel

Middle School Internships

The seventh and eighth graders at Millhopper Montessori Middle School spent December 6th-10th interning in various classroom settings and in the business community. Internships offer the students the experience of working in a setting that requires them to put to use the skills and knowledge they have been acquiring in the classroom. My three main goals for the students are the following:

To internalize knowledge

When students take information they know and apply it in a new situation, learning becomes meaningful and purposeful.

To refine communication skills

Learning to choose the appropriate behavior and language according to the situation is important in a wide variety of experiences.

To enhance self-esteem

Opportunities to contribute to society encourage students to give as well as receive from the community.

Over the past five years, 8th grade students have interned at Veterinarian clinics, Shands Pediatrics, UF Paleontology Department, financial businesses, and lawyer's offices. The 7th grade students intern in a MMS classroom.

Internships have been wonderful opportunities for the middle school students to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired in the classroom and apply it in meaningful ways.

Spanish at MMS

Second & Third Grades

We have wrapped up our food unit. The children learned several words like queso, leche, pan, etc.. They learned them through musical videos, games like "the angel" and "papa caliente", and worksheets. They made Christmas cards for the holidays and wrote their message in Spanish. We are now well into the family unit. They created a family album with the names of some of their family members. They are learning words like, tío, abuelo, mamá etc...Once the family unit is wrapped up, they will be introduced to animals, people and finally descriptive words (adjectives).

Fourth, Fifth & Sixth Grades

During our food unit the children studied a list of vocabulary words. They also learned conversational skills by practicing through skits. They rehearsed how to place a food order in a restaurant. To wrap up the lesson we embarked on a field trip to Las Margaritas Mexican Restaurant. There was one caveat in order to participate: the children had to order in Spanish. They all did great. We had a wonderful time.

Fourth graders enjoyed a visit from Manuel's grandparents who came from Spain. They talked to the children about the customs and traditions of Spain. As they spoke (in Spanish), Manuel served as translator.

Spanish at MMS

The students have learned the gender of nouns. Yes, all Spanish words have a gender. They have also been introduced to basic present-tense verbs and their conjugation. In addition, they are learning adjectives, cognates and finally prepositions. This will enable them to write complete sentences.

During the holidays, the children were introduced to learning the basic steps of salsa dancing. The girls loved it. The boys? I guess you can imagine!

Seventh & Eighth Grades

We have finished chapters 1-3 from the textbook. They are now able to tell the time, show their likes and dislikes, say how old someone is, class schedule and sequence events. The students have also studied an extensive list of present-tense verbs. In addition, they have been assigned to do research on either an event or person from Latin America in which the United States has had some involvement. They have also successfully translated a contemporary song from the Colombian artist Juanes. During the holidays, the students practiced salsa dancing; we had a great time.

We are planning a field trip in the upcoming months. Parents will soon be notified on the particulars of this event. Chapters 4-6 are next in the agenda.

Thank You Volunteers!!!

MMS would like to thank the parents who volunteer at the school - we appreciate your time!!!!!!

Addie Atkins
Ana Arreola
Angelica Villegas
Beth Mills
Brian Baltunis
Caitlin Trunnell
Cammy Abernathy
Casey Adolfsson
Chandrasekaran Nataraj
Chris Pinks
Colleen Verne
Deborah Strickland

Dena Lehr
Donna Bernal
GiGi Tajalli
HB Long
Hillary Tuchman
Irma Alvarez
Jacqueline Baltunis
Jenna Bolton
Jessica Calderon-Enos
Jim Elwart
Joel Shugar
Jonna Howell

Judy Wiglesworth
Karen Arnold
Laura Trefry
Lei Xiao
Liman Chen
Lise Youngblade
Lonnie Phillips
Lynda Kopkowski
Mamiko Fujikawa
Marie Kima
Michael Stiber
Michelle Simmons

Patricia Kemp
Patricia Petty
Patty May
Peter Kima
Shannon Hall
Stephanie Spence
Sue Hatch
Sylvia Aslanian
Tom Pernice

*We Appreciate You!
Thank You!
¡Gracias!*

Honor Roll

All A's

4th Grade

Kathryn Horter 2nd Quarter
Lauren Strickland 2nd Quarter
Melissa Hatch 2nd Quarter
Sarah Schiele 2nd Quarter
Tabong Kima 2nd Quarter

5th Grade

Alex Carter 2nd Quarter
Alice Pauly 2nd Quarter
Kathryn Ramey 2nd Quarter
Kayleigh Bush 2nd Quarter
Meghan Verne 2nd Quarter

7th Grade

Kelly Wright - 1st & 2nd Quarter
Anna Long - 1st & 2nd Quarter
Elizabeth Kessler - 1st & 2nd Quarter
Cullen Schiele - 2nd Quarter

8th Grade

Cody Sledge - 1st Quarter

All A's and B's

4th Grade

Aimee Gauvin 2nd Quarter
Akshaya Nataraj 2nd Quarter
Carl Hyler 2nd Quarter
Manuel de la Puerta 2nd Quarter
Marguerite Mills 2nd Quarter
Sean Calderon 2nd Quarter
Shereen Tajalli 2nd Quarter

5th Grade

Amanda Elwart 2nd Quarter
Victor Ng 2nd Quarter

6th Grade

Eric Diehl 2nd Quarter
Kate McCarter 2nd Quarter

7th Grade

Cullen Schiele - 1st Quarter
Rich Hatch - 1st & 2nd Quarter

8th Grade

Johnny Horter - 1st & 2nd Quarter
CJ Francis - 1st Quarter
Molly Cellon - 1st & 2nd Quarter

Teachers Blue for Helping Out

by Mr. Richard

You may have noticed several times this year a member of the staff at MMS wearing blue jeans to school. These are special days designated as a “fund raiser day” for special purposes or causes. The teachers agreed to pay a certain amount of donation money for the privilege of wearing blue jeans to work. So far, we have raised money for Breast Cancer Research, The Forrest Hunsaker Fund, and Tsunami Relief. We have several more dates set aside for “Blue Jeans Day” with the thought that, not only are we happy to be able to wear jeans but also knowing that we’re raising money for a good cause.

MMS Elementary Spelling Bee

Fourth Grade

First Place Winner

Akshaya Nataraj

Second Place Winner

Carl Hylar

Fifth Grade

First Place Winner

Kathryn Ramey

Second Place Winner

Alice Pauly

Sixth Grade

First Place Winner

Zachary Severs

Second Place Winner

Kate McCarter

Seventh Grade

First Place Winner

Elizabeth Kessler

Second Place Winner

Cullen Schiele

Eighth Grade

First Place Winner

Johnny Horter

Second Place Winner

Sean Smith
