



Adolescent Program 2024-2025



When the child was very small it was enough to call him by name for him to turn around. Now we must appeal to his soul. To speak to him is not enough for this; it is necessary to interest him. What he learns must be interesting, must be fascinating. We must give him grandeur. To begin with, let us present him with the world.

~Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence

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Introduction

The primary focus of Village Montessori Middle School is to guide the early adolescent towards becoming a strong, secure, confident 15-year-old ready to shine forth into the world. Young adolescence is a developmental stage where the habits and values that will characterize one's entire adult life are being formed. This stage is, as Montessori says, "the birth of the adult into society." This age can be the time when many insecurities, anxieties, and poor patterns of behavior really begin to take root and express themselves in the human person. It is also, not coincidentally, the age where neural pathways are created or lost in the brain at the faster rate than at any point beyond infancy. Add into the equation that this is also the time during which parental influence over their child wanes dramatically, and the seminal importance of an outstanding educational institution led by the highest quality teachers becomes evident.

Program Overview

Maria Montessori's model for education during early adolescent years (12-15 years old) emphasizes **the need for meaningful work and social relationships in a land-based program to supplement, and often provide the basis of, an academic program.** These components of the curriculum require a set of experiences that challenge students to grow in a relatively safe environment. The safety is provided by being a part of a very tightly knit learning community where students are held accountable to each other, and teachers guide with the proper strength, compassion, and awareness to handle this delicate age group. We believe that the right approach to dealing with the potentially damaging social issues that can dominate the middle school period is for thoughtful adults to cultivate and oversee an intimate learning community that overcomes insularity by integration into a broader community. The challenges are offered in the form of engaging in meaningful work on campus and exploring the region in a wide variety of learning experiences. The initial intimacy of our program allows us to be highly mobile and assimilate easily into a wide variety of surroundings, creating powerful occasions for engagement with the community. **Service will be an integral part of the curriculum, as students will expand their horizons of awareness, understanding, and compassion by locating their own service opportunities in the community and volunteering at these institutions on a regular basis.** And as time in nature is an extraordinary opportunity for growth, I envision taking a multiple night backpacking trip during the school year, as well as an expedition to a nature center or a major cultural center to conclude each school year.

In order to gain a taste of economic independence, a key goal of the Montessori adolescent vision, students will run a small business from the school, perhaps selling eggs, providing drive-thru coffee service to the parents at Village Montessori, or taking on a major fund-raising project as their economic activity. Our campus also provides numerous opportunities for projects, such as building greenhouses, compost bins, fences, and trails, as well as taking care of the chickens. Breaking up the academic day with projects, service, outings, and work outside of students' previous range of experiences creates important occasions for personal growth and might spark

an interest that turns into a passion or even a vocation.

The curriculum features uncompromising academic standards, while maintaining the core Montessori principle that work that is freely chosen is always going to be the most valuable. Students will have as much freedom in their academics as they can handle. A Montessori teacher's role at this stage is to set up structures within individual academic areas that encourage meaningful exploration and provide appropriate challenges, but students will do skill development work in reading, writing, math, and logic every day to develop habits of intellectual and academic excellence. Every student will need a laptop, and some of the academic materials will be digitally accessed. Students will research, experiment, write essays, give presentations, peer teach, develop superb critical thinking skills, learn how to write computer programs and create webpages, engage in creative expression, and gain the skills required for excellence in high school and on standardized tests. Every student will be invited and challenged to their fullest capacity, and some students will be doing college level work in areas of particular interest and talent by graduation. We will tap into our community resources to find individuals willing to share their passions and expertise with students for particular units of study. Working in this intimate, highly individualized learning environment, students will make astounding academic progress, and more importantly, deepen a lifelong desire to understand and a willingness to work for the actualization of their intellectual desires.

In addition to academics, service, and work, food preparation will be woven deeply into the web of everyday life. Starting with choosing the meals that we will prepare for lunch on a rotating basis, students will learn how to develop a food budget, read a recipe, double it, and prepare lunch for the group. This opportunity to plan, budget, cook, serve, and break bread with their peers is an experience that teaches students how to care for themselves and create community through the fundamental cultural activity of eating. Additionally, these practices provide important learning opportunities regarding the sense of taste, nutrition, and how our food choices are connected to a myriad of environmental, social, and economic issues. Cultivating our own garden will allow students a first-hand experience of how the issues regarding the health of humans, animals, plants, soil, water, and air are really one, big, interconnected web that must be understood and addressed within this deeper sense of interdependence.

This is an incredible opportunity for students to become the foundational building blocks for an extraordinary Middle School Program at Village Montessori. We will begin the school year by visiting other schools to figure out what ideas and practices we want to incorporate into our own program. This process affords students an amazing opportunity to take responsibility for their education at a foundational level, and just as significantly, to help craft the culture of a nascent institution. Just as they are beginning to emerge into the world as adults, so are we going to be emerging as a program. And just as the students will not fully understand the value of this remarkable education while it is in process, so will they not fully understand the value of what they are building until they come back ten years later to appreciate the program that they helped create. These acts of creative self-discovery, on both an individual and social level, will provide us a wellspring of energy to direct towards fulfilling our mission.

Finally, in the true spirit of Maria Montessori's deepest beliefs about education, this school aspires to nothing less than to be a site for the evolution of the human being, individually and collectively. **We believe that the best kind of education is one that develops a reflective relationship with the defining issues and values of human life.** This requires attention to mundane things like learning appropriate cell phone etiquette, which in turn, opens space for reflection on profound issues like how we can make technology work for us instead of controlling us. It also means learning to understand how human civilization can progress and consume less at the same time, by being a part of a school that is **modeling a path towards greater sustainability.** And perhaps most importantly, it means introducing the power of a contemplative practice as a means for handling life's vicissitudes and creating genuine pathways of peace. These aspirations represent the culmination of the movement from the sensorial to the abstract and back again that defines Montessori's pedagogy, and they set our sights on the highest level as we concentrate on the tasks before us.

Snack & Lunch

Snack

Each student will bring a healthy snack from home. Students may bring snacks to leave at school to share or to label for private use. We have a refrigerator and plenty of cabinet space. They may bring teas in to make hot or cold tea.

Lunch

Please help your adolescent pack a nutritious lunch daily unless otherwise notified. No energy drinks, coffee, soft drinks, etc. We always have whole milk and water available. No junk food of any type is allowed or outside fast food. There is always food at VMS that can be provided for your child if it is forgotten one day.

Electronic Devices

VMS has a NO personal electronics policy for students.

No electronic devices such as but not limited to phones, I-watches, laptops, tablets, I-Pod, etc. shall be permitted to be in the possession of VMS students while in class or on school property.

If a student defies this rule and has any such device at school with-out turning in, it will be taken away and held in the office until a parent picks it up and meets with the student and administration. At the discretion of the administration the student may also be subject to after school detention or suspended for non-compliance with this policy.

If a student needs a phone for afterschool that phone may be turned into the front office

with a note or prior notification to administration. The phone will be kept in the front office until dismissal.

Only cameras may be taken on “field exploration” trips. No phones are allowed to be used as cameras or for music

Teachers always have cell phones with them that may be used in emergencies. Teachers have parents’ phone numbers and emails stored in their phones. There is also a land line in every classroom.

Public Displays of Affection

VMS supports healthy age-appropriate friendships. It is at the discretion of the teachers and administrators to decide when Public Displays of Affection have crossed the line into sexual behaviors. Typically, such behaviors as prolonged hugging front to front, leaning on another, holding hands, kissing on the mouth, inappropriate touching, etc. have been considered inappropriate PDA and is not allowed at school or on outside trips.

Leaving School

Students who are ill should notify their classroom teacher. Teachers will then notify parents if it is deemed necessary for the student to go home. Students are not permitted to email, phone, or otherwise contact parents while at school or on a school trip without express permission from a teacher.

Physical Education

Everyone must participate in all Physical Education activities unless a note is provided by a physician, not a parent.

Dress Code

Clothing:

- Items depicted on clothing should be of reality - no cartoons, characters, political statements, advertisements, or other distracting images.
- **Straps must be three fingers in width - no spaghetti straps or visible bra straps.**
- Shorts and skirts must be fingertip length.
- Shorts should be worn under skirts for all ages.
- No hats allowed for anyone inside.

- No hoodies with hoods up inside.
- No flashy hair color, i.e. bright or florescent colors.

Footwear:

- A pair of sneakers to leave at school.
- Rain boots to leave at school
- Work-out clothes to leave at school. (We have a washing machine)
- Some sort of indoor shoes/slippers to leave at school

Jewelry and Accessories:

- Simple hair ornamentation such as barrettes, elastics, and plain headbands may be worn.
- Small jewelry pieces are permitted as long as they do not distract from work.

*It is at the teacher's discretion whether students will be permitted to participate in school activities based on their attire for safety or health reasons.

It is a good idea to have an extra set of clothing to leave at school.

Tuition & Fees

Payment of Tuition and Fees is expected when due. All tuition must be up to date before any one is allowed to go on a trip. Students whose parents do not have tuition payments up to date, or have not made financial arrangements with the school, will not be allowed to graduate with the class.

Student-Led Conferences

- Please refer to our school calendar for conference dates.
- The teachers will determine how to divide the conferences to the greatest benefit of each family.
- Conference schedules will be emailed to you two weeks prior.
- If you cannot make your scheduled conference time, we ask that you try to switch with another parent and then inform the school and your child's teacher at least a day in advance.

Conferences are very important, so if for any reason you are unable to meet for your conference, please let the teacher know so that a new date can be scheduled.

Attendance

Arrival and Departure routines:

Drop-off → 8:00 – 8:15

School starts promptly at 8:15 with a class meeting. This is a very important time for the class to meet together and announcements for the day are made.

Tardiness and Absenteeism:

- Adolescent children still need a dependable schedule. The classroom is a collaborative community that has a definitive schedule. It is upsetting to a child if he/she is often “out-of-sync” with the rest of the class. **Please avoid unnecessary late arrivals**, which can be frustrating for your child and disruptive to the class. It is vital that your child arrives at school on time.
- Arrivals after 10:00 will require a note from a doctor verifying an appointment.
- Families are to contact the school the first day your child is absent.
- After two days a doctor’s note will be required for the absences to be considered excused.
- After 5 unexcused absences (in total) the school will contact you. If we do not receive a response after the second attempt, a certified letter will be sent to your home. **Fulton county requires us to make them aware of excessive unexcused absences.**
- Partial day absences will be excused when accompanied by a specialist letter (e.g. doctor, dentist, therapist etc..)
- Should your child require an extended absence for any reason please contact the teacher to discuss prior to missing any school.
- Tardiness also has an impact on your child’s learning and the classroom environment. Please be respectful and ensure your child arrives promptly.
- A student must have a written note from the parent or legal guardian after an absence.
- Excessive absences or tardiness will result in meeting with administration and the child’s teacher.
- Records are kept daily and reported to the state as required.

Medication, Health, and Safety

Immunization records:

- **Due the first day of school; attendance prohibited without form**
 - **GA form 3231 revision 1/100**

Medication:

- First aid for minor incidents will be administered.
- DHR prohibits regular dispensation of medicine; however, a parent may fill out a waiver for special circumstances. The forms are available in Front Office.

Health:

Village will adhere to DHR guidelines for all sicknesses; complete chart is in the front office.

- No rashes, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat or green mucus will be allowed in school.
- Must be fever and/or symptom free for 24 hours without the help of medicine.
- Please notify school of any diagnosis
- If your child is diagnosed with a communicative disease, you must have a doctor's note to re- enter school.

Please see the Parent Handbook for more information

Direct Communication with Teachers and Staff

- Communication between parents and Village Montessori teachers and staff is crucial.
- Teachers are often unable to speak at length during school hours while children are present.
- An appointment can be set up after school.
- Please send in a note or call the office and leave a message to schedule an appointment.
- Teachers may be reached by e-mail.

Summary

Thank you for taking the time to read our Parent Handbook and Addendum. Village Montessori School reserves the right to revise this handbook.

Village Montessori School is dedicated to exploring and maintaining the principles of an AMI Montessori education in a warm and nurturing environment that is meticulously prepared to meet the needs of your child. In addition to our commitment to your child, we are also dedicated to family support. We provide parent conferences, study groups, parenting classes and Parent Association to support Village Montessori families. We encourage parental involvement and allow many opportunities to volunteer. Look for our newsletter each month to keep you informed.

We at Village Montessori School welcome all our families and are looking forward to another great school year!