

Greensboro Montessori School Mission Statement

We nurture children to be creative, eager learners as they discover their full potential and become responsible global citizens.

About Our Middle School

Welcome to the Middle School. The Greensboro Montessori School's Middle School educates students in grades 6, 7 and 8. In accordance with the Montessori philosophy, we provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment that enables children to develop within themselves habits, skills, attitudes and ideas essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

Dr. Montessori recognized that the only "valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child." Children move themselves to learning. The teacher prepares the classroom with materials to stimulate the child's curiosity. The teacher may direct the activities, but it is the child who acquires the knowledge through his or her own experience.

Montessori methods and practice incorporate proven, developmentally appropriate activities introduced to multi-age groups. Student work is presented in a linear fashion with work gradually increasing in complexity. A Montessori classroom offers choice within limits, an approach which promotes critical thinking and self-expression. Our program expands opportunities for students to pursue individual interests and creates an environment that encourages a multifaceted approach to studies.

Montessori methods and practice also stress the importance of being responsible global citizens. As students acquire the ability to think more abstractly, they are able to see themselves as part of the larger whole. As students work in the community, they see themselves as contributing members of society.

Thematic Studies and Cosmic Education

The Greensboro Montessori School prides itself in offering a Cosmic Education which continues through the Middle School years. Cosmic Education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, emphasizes the interrelationship and interdependence of each of the elements of our environment, and is presented in an engaging, multi-sensory format that challenges and inspires.

Throughout the elementary years, students are introduced to Cosmic Education through the Great Lessons. These lessons are integrated by exploring the fundamental needs of all humans. Maria Montessori places these fundamental needs into two groups: physical and spiritual. The Middle School will build upon these lessons that are at the core of the elementary classroom by taking an integrated approach to the study of science, math, social studies, English, Spanish, art, performance, and garden. This approach teaches students by examining these common needs.

Our curriculum weaves the above subjects together under common themes in a three-year cycle. These themes are: Origins, Survival, and Possibilities. Students revisit the Great Lessons in greater detail than they have previously. Each subject area and how it relates to a particular year's theme is discussed in the curriculum section of this handbook.

Work Expectations

Dr. Maria Montessori said, "The hand is the chief teacher of the child." Children learn by doing. Teachers serve as guides, helping students clarify, problem solve and brainstorm. Teachers observe each student at

work to determine how best to guide the student. With this in mind, it is important that each student completes her or his work. In this way, students practice the new skills being presented, and the teachers have the opportunity to observe how the students' skill levels are building.

It is essential that the work be done to the best of each student's ability (neatly, completely, etc.). Students are expected to seek help when they do not understand an assignment, concept, or directions.

It is also important for work to be completed in a timely manner. Students and teachers will have conferences to best determine the amount and type of work a student needs to do in order to build various skills. If a student is unable to complete work by the date it is due, he or she needs to communicate this fact to the teacher as soon as possible. After conferencing with the teacher, a student may have the opportunity to submit late work. If the student does not meet his or her obligations regarding late work, no credit will be earned. If a teacher feels that a student is having difficulty completing work, parents will be contacted and a conference with student, teachers and parents may be necessary.

Student Responsibilities Regarding Work

Each student is given a planner in which he/she writes assignments for the week. Each classroom teacher posts assignments on the board and students are expected to record exactly what the expectations are in his/her planner. Weekly updates will be sent to families on weekends, describing current work in each subject area, advisory, and grade level groups. This approach encourages each student to take responsibility for his or her learning as well as enabling the teacher to better individualize instruction. Students are expected to contact the teacher prior to class, preferably by e-mail, if further clarification is needed on an assignment. It is our expectation that parents provide an appropriate time, place, and atmosphere and the supplies necessary to allow the student to complete high quality work at home when necessary.

Students have scheduled times during the week that they are expected to use wisely to work on assignments, conduct research, and obtain assistance. Papers and long term projects are assigned from time to time and often require a student to spend time out of class conducting research, rehearsing, etc. It is reasonable for a Middle School student to complete unfinished work and/or extra practice work at home. It may also be necessary to have weekend work. The time needed to complete work at home will vary from student to student based on individual study habits, skills, and abilities.

Evaluation

Dr. Montessori believed that the goal of education is to help children develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning. To this end, Middle School students play an active part in the evaluation of their work.

Teachers evaluate students through observation and in a variety of other ways, depending on what is most appropriate for the student and the coursework. Progress reports are sent home three times a year. An overview of the students' strengths and next steps in October, written progress reports are sent home in January and final, written progress reports are sent home at the end of the year. Conferences with students and parents occur in October and January.

Students examine and reflect on their own progress by creating presentations at their conferences. Because Middle School students lead their own conferences, these days are mandatory and counted as contact days. The conference dates are published on the school's website, under the calendar section.

Transition to High School

During the time students spend at the GMS Middle School, they learn to adjust to a new and different school pattern from the more traditional Montessori classroom of younger students. Middle School students move from class to class and generally have a different teacher for each core subject.

Middle School may be the first time Montessori students are introduced to percentage-based grades, yet emphasis continues to be placed on experiential work that is evaluated in a more subjective way via teacher observation. The percentage-based grades earned during the Middle School years, especially at the 8th level, may be an important factor in deciding acceptance into private schools or specific magnet school programs. The Middle School faculty helps students transition into the “grades-based” environment present at many non-Montessori schools through a gradual increase in the emphasis placed upon grades from 6th level through 8th level.

The GMS Middle School places a high priority on teaching skills related to time-management, organization and prioritizing. Students who gain and practice these skills at the Middle School level exhibit a higher degree of academic discipline and often experience a smoother transition into high school.

In order to teach and encourage the use of these skills, the GMS Middle School employs a set of general expectations concerning how a student manages time, organizes work, and prioritizes activities. Skills are introduced and/or reviewed during the first weeks of school. We encourage all students who are new to the Middle School (this includes all 6th level students) to use this strategy during the first trimester. After this initial period, students conference with teachers and develop a more personalized plan based on areas of strength and weakness. Teachers observe the students’ implementation of these plans and students evaluate how well these strategies help them to manage time, organize work, and prioritize activities.

Expectations are as follows:

- Students will enter buildings and classrooms in a quiet manner, in order not to disturb the work that is taking place.
- Students will be on time for class.
- Students will maintain a binder with all needed supplies and will carry this binder to every class.
- At the beginning of each class students will have the following items on their desks within easy access: work, pencil, binder, planner, textbook (if applicable), and other materials as required by the nature of the work.
- Students will maintain a planner.

Community Standards

We promote and maintain a positive atmosphere where students, visitors, and staff feel respected, welcome, and safe. This creates an environment where everyone is able to work to the best of his or her abilities. We expect all students to do their part to maintain our community standards.

If an individual is not respectful of others, unable to follow school rules as stated in the GMS Community Handbook, or disruptive to the educational process, the teacher will send a message directly to the parent. If the problem continues, the teacher(s) will schedule a conference.

We encourage a student who has had difficulties to start fresh the next day, yet if teachers observe that a student continues to be challenged in the area of courteous behavior and a pattern emerges, further conferences may be called.

If a student must leave class due to undesired behavior, the student is still responsible for any work missed

and it is the student's responsibility to obtain all necessary resources.

Discipline Policy

Please see the GMS Community Handbook for the school's complete discipline policy.

Cell Phones

We understand that it is sometimes necessary for a student to contact his or her parent. There will always be sufficient phones available for student use if deemed necessary by a teacher or GMS staff member. Under no circumstances are students allowed to have cell phones on campus or at any school-sponsored event for any reason. If a student brings a cell phone to school, it must be checked at the front desk and retrieved at the end of the day.

Dress Code

Our dress code is designed for two primary reasons: safety and respect of others and the learning environment. Middle School students must keep in mind that they are seen as role models for the younger children, and they represent the school to visitors and the outside community.

The following code applies to all school functions including field trips:

- No spaghetti straps or revealing décolletage
- Undergarments cannot be visible
- Clothes cannot be distressed: torn, ripped, etc.
- Stomachs must be covered (including when arms are lifted to reach inside lockers)
- T-shirts must not be offensive
- Shorts' and skirts' lengths should reach to the fingertips when the arms are held straight down by the side
- Gray T-shirts, black shorts, and non-marking tennis shoes are required for PE (Students without proper attire may not participate in that day's activities. Repeat occurrences may affect their overall grade).
- Hats and sunglasses are allowed outside only
- No baggy pants

We strongly recommend that students wear closed toed shoes and all shoes have a back strap on them. Flip-flops are not considered appropriate footwear on the GMS campus and are prohibited on the Land.

Students who do not meet the dress code requirements will be given appropriate clothing to wear. Repeated offenses may result in a parent conference to help resolve the issue

Punctuality

Punctuality is one of the most important practical life skills that students can obtain. In most cases, the business world demands it. Being punctual for the beginning of the school day, as well as, the beginning of each class is important for several reasons.

First, when someone comes into the classroom late, no matter how quiet he or she tries to be, it will be a distraction for those focusing on their work. A student's uninterrupted work-time is highly valued in Montessori education.

Second, the community of learners is also something that is important to our philosophy. When everyone

begins work at the same time, the ability to learn and share with others is facilitated. Students weave their ideas together creating an understanding where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Third, as the oldest members of our Montessori student community, it is every Middle Schoolers' responsibility to be a good role model for the younger students.

We have prepared a morning environment that facilitates the student's transition to school and encourages punctuality. The doors open at 8:00 am and students should go to the Media Center at that time. Middle School officially begins at 8:15 a.m. We expect all students to be in the Media Center at that time.

Community meeting is consistent with Montessori philosophy and is considered a class. Students are required to lead the class on a regular basis. Tardies and absences can interrupt the continuity of our program. This time is crucial to build community, to discuss/problem-solve issues, conduct school business, and update students on important details.

Attendance

Please refer to The Greensboro Montessori School Handbook for the attendance policy.

Technology

We are fortunate to have access to a variety of technologies, including computers, the Internet, overhead projectors, DVD players, etc. We expect students to use these items responsibly and only for schoolwork.

Students are allowed to use the Internet to research class projects and assignments. They are not allowed to use school computers to access e-mail or to do other personal projects. Students are not allowed to change settings, load software, or make adjustments to computers. They are expected to follow the technology rules as discussed by the System Administrator. Students are required to sign a Technology Use Policy.

Students are required to sign in before using a computer and a teacher must be present during study.

Students who do not respect the technology guidelines will receive a warning. Students who violate these guidelines repeatedly will lose technology privileges.

Students may use their own technology if it has been recommended in writing by a licensed professional.

Any new technology, software or hardware, must be evaluated by the Middle School team prior to implementation.

Parent-Teacher Communication

Parents drop off students in the morning outside in the parking lot near the Upper Elementary and Middle School building. Doors will be open at 8:00 a.m. The school day begins at 8:15 a.m. Pick up is after school at 3:30 p.m. in front of the Lower Elementary main entrance.

Parents are able to contact the teacher by voice mail, e-mail (preferred) or send in a note with the student. General questions should be directed to the student's homebase teacher. Teachers will get in touch with you as soon as possible within a 48-hour period. If a parent has a concern, he or she should schedule an appointment for a meeting with the teacher(s) involved. Please discuss any concerns with the Middle School faculty directly. The Head of School or Associate Head of School will be involved when necessary. If a conference is needed at any other time during the school year, parents will be contacted by the teacher on a

case-by-case basis. Parents may initiate a conference at any time by contacting the Middle School faculty.

Teacher Contact Information

GMS Web site <http://www.thegms.org/>
GMS Telephone 336- 668- 0119 (Individual extensions listed below)

E-mail address MiddleSch@thegms.org (preferred address)

Margaret Borrego - Division Team Coordinator
Ext. 258 - margaret@thegms.org

Ericka Estrada – Spanish
Ext. 253 – ericka@thegms.org

Deirdre Kearney - English
Ext. 257 - deirdre@thegms.org

Morgan Kratovil - History/P.E.
Ext. 255 - morgan@thegms.org

Sandra Lee – Spanish
Ext. 246 – sandra@thegms.org

Jon McLean – Liberal Arts
Ext. 259 - jon@thegms.org

Jenn Phillips - Science
Ext. 251 - jenn@thegms.org

Pete Turner – Library/Technology
Ext. 248 – library@thegms.org

Doug Williams - Math
Ext. 252 - doug@thegms.org

Extracurricular Programs

A variety of extracurricular programs are available to Middle School students and may include: basketball, volleyball, cross country, soccer, flag football, CASA, and after school clubs.

Students are expected to follow the same guidelines after school as during the school day when participating in an activity affiliated with the school. Students must remember that they are representatives of the Greensboro Montessori School to the outside community.

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Students are required to sign in before using a computer and a teacher must be present during study.

Students who do not respect the technology guidelines will receive a Behavior Warning. Students who violate these guidelines repeatedly will lose technology privileges.

Fieldtrips

The Middle School expands the students' knowledge of the world by bringing special programs and resources, including guest speakers, to the school. Middle School students also go out into the community for first-hand experience. These events are planned in conjunction with the curriculum and therefore are designed to enrich classroom studies.

All fieldtrips are announced in advance and all students must have a signed permission form on file at the school in order to attend the trip.

Occasionally, parents are asked to assist on fieldtrips and teachers are always grateful for the help. Often this means driving and always it means being willing to help with the supervision of the students. Guidelines for chaperones are included in the GMS Community Handbook.

Week long fieldtrips at the end of the school year are by grade level. Field trip information sessions take place within the first half of the first trimester.

As always, students are expected to be on their best behavior and to follow all guidelines as set forth in the GMS Community Handbook and the GMS Middle School Handbook.