

Lowcountry Montessori School's Secondary Educational Program FAQs

What is Montessori Secondary?

Montessori Secondary is a continuation of the Montessori philosophy applied to grades 7-12. Montessori Secondary Education has been developed and refined over the last 30 years following cutting-edge research in the physical and cognitive development in order to address the developmental needs of adolescence. Montessori adolescent education continues to stress the significance of the community and how to contribute towards the entire community. While younger Montessori students work almost exclusively with tangible, concrete materials, secondary students use that concrete knowledge learned in the younger ages and apply it towards learning more concrete subject matter, such as: algebra, philosophy, ethics, et cetera. In middle school (grades 7-9), students work independently and on small group projects daily to build independent work skills as well as social and cooperative skills. In high school, the students study course material in class groups, but the importance of individual work is stressed. Throughout high school, students will work on independent research projects and implement their research towards serving the Beaufort community. In their senior year, students will work throughout the year on a culminating research project based on a topic or issue of their choice.

How does LMS define and determine academic proficiency?

As in the younger years, LMS will judge the proficiency of the students based on their knowledge of the subject matter using non-traditional testing methods. In middle and high school, students will submit work (i.e. essays and written tests), and they will need to demonstrate at least 80% proficiency in order to continue to new subject matter. Those students who do not demonstrate this right away will have extra time and opportunity to progress, whether at home or after school. In middle school, emphasis will be placed more so on the *process* than on the *product*. When younger students focus more on the quality of the *process*, the quality of the product increases in later years. In high school, more and more emphasis will be placed on the quality of the *product*.

Are there any grades or credit given?

Yes. Traditionally, grading goes against the Montessori philosophy, because it does not truly or fully describe the quality of a given students' work. While work will be graded, progress reports will include more than a students' grade, such as the teachers' close observations and assessments of the student throughout the semester. While 9th grade students are still technically in middle school, they will begin to take high school courses and earn credit for those courses as per state requirements. LMS will integrate the Common Core Curriculum into its educational program so as to prepare students for state proficiency tests and to cover state-mandated requirements; however, the curriculum will also include more than the minimum state standards and will be taught in an authentic Montessori fashion.

How is Secondary education different from other developmental stages?

In early Montessori stages, students do work for the sake of work – for the love of it. In secondary, students do their work with a bigger picture in mind. In essence, they ask: How will my work affect the school or the community at large? Can I turn my idea into a business? How is my research innovative and how can it benefit everyone? Adolescents all have an inherent desire to use their work for their community and for their world as they see fit. Montessori secondary allows adolescents to explore and to discover their vocation.

How is the curriculum implemented?

The curriculum is implemented in “cycles.” There are five (5) subjects: Natural World (science), Social World (history, social studies, philosophy), Math, Language (reading, writing, grammar and Spanish), and Personal World, a subject unique to Montessori secondary where students will work on self-construction as they reflect on issues that are important to them (i.e. the nature of good and evil, love, art, meditation, music, etc.). It is structured so that they learn the important issues of adolescent development and how their brains and bodies are beginning to work differently. Students will also enjoy electives, which may include subjects such as engineering, playwriting (or other creative writing), technology, astronomy, botany and horticulture, wood working and other subjects that the students will eventually vote on. Electives are designed to reflect the interests of the student body.

What are “Immersion Periods?”

“Immersion Periods” come from the concept of the time lost during the switching of classes in traditional school. Because our students will remain within one classroom, they save at least 5-10 minutes per subject. At the end of every month, this adds up to about a week of in-class time. We use this week to apply our learned knowledge towards a project of some sort – something that will serve our community.

What is a “Land Lab?”

Middle and high school students will work to upkeep and maintain an organic community garden known as a “Land Lab.” It is different than a community garden in that students from the entire school will use the garden to study different plant and insect species and to conduct experiments. Older students will also use the garden to study and practice organic farming techniques. The food grown in the land lab will be used for school picnics or as a donation to a local food pantry or shelter. We hope to have this resource available within the first two years of operation.

Any more questions?

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