

Middle School Program

Though few Montessori secondary programs exist, Lowcountry Montessori School's Middle School program will operate within the framework established by Dr. Elisabeth Coe's School of the Woods in Houston, TX – the first Montessori Middle School program accredited by AMS (The American Montessori Society); however, LMS recognizes many differences between the setting of School of the Woods and Lowcountry Montessori School, especially in terms of location, student population and background, and public and private sectors. Therefore, while operating within the framework established by Elisabeth Coe, Lowcountry Montessori School individualizes its approach to optimally serve the Beaufort County community.

While elementary and other younger Montessori programs heavily emphasize the exploration of tangible objects, middle school serves at the setting where students use the tacit knowledge that they have acquired in their younger years in order to explore the abstract universe. Consistent with their cognitive development, Montessori middle school encourages students to begin to explore the abstract, and in many cases, complex subjects such as: the nature of love, hatred, the existence of evil, moral virtue, politics and economics, chemistry and advanced algebra. Below is a description of LMS's Middle School program:

Daily Schedule

State laws and regulations require that school programs operate on a schedule of at least six (6) hours per week day, or on a weekly average consistent with these numbers. Before and after care will be available to students on an hourly basis. Middle school students will be required to arrive by 8:30am and to continue until 3:00pm:

8:00-8:15: Optional breakfast and/or brief exercise and social time

8:15-8:30: Arrive and lay out work for checking

8:30-9:00: Community Meeting

9:00-10:45: Independent Work Time

10:45-11:05: Snack

11:05-12:00: Lesson/Class

12:00-1:00: Lunch/Recess

1:00-1:30: Personal Reflection

1:30-2:30: Small Group Work

2:30-3:00: Clean/Restore Environment

3:00: Dismissal

The middle school schedule will vary slightly depending on the day of the week. For instance, on Fridays, small group time will consist of student presentations, and every five (5) weeks (the week following every 4-week cycle) will consist of an “Immersion Week,” where students will use the knowledge that they acquired and apply it to real-world situations; thus, immersion weeks are usually comprised of field trips, field studies and student projects. The idea for “Immersion Week” comes from time saved during the school day. Whereas, in traditional schools, students spend an average of five to ten minutes between 45-minute class periods, students in a Montessori classroom do not. Every four weeks, the time saved using the same classroom amounts to almost a full week of useable class time. Students do not disregard this saved time, however. Rather, they instead consider this time to be an opportunity to apply the concepts they learned during the work cycle.

The seventh and eighth grades will operate on a revolving two-year cycle, Year A and Year B. Year A and Year B will alternate as the set of curriculum used in the classroom for seventh and eighth grade students in order that every student goes through each year of curriculum material and subject matter. The six cycles within every year exist as a cohesive theme of subject matter. For instance, if the theme for a given cycle is called “Interdependence,” then the material within all subjects will correlate according to that theme. This way the students can already begin to apply their knowledge and their approach to learning from a broader, more applicable perspective. As an example, Year A is outlined below:

Year A

Cycle 0 – Orientation

Cycle 1 – Connections

Cycle 2 – Exploration

Cycle 3 – Identity

Cycle 4 - Systems

Cycle 5 – Interdependence

The subject matter is organized as follows:

- Math – Pre-algebra, algebra, geometry, trigonometry and precalculus.
- Natural World – the study of the natural universe: Biology (classification, anatomy and genetics), Chemistry (elements, molecular bonds, Bohr model), and evolutionary science.
- Social World: The nature and history of human civilization.
- Language – Grammar, literature, poetry, study of conventions. Spanish Immersion.
- Personal World – A daily period of reading and reflection centered on identifying the self.

- Fine Arts – Students will have weekly classes and projects in the areas of visual, performance and language arts.
- Physical Education – students will have physical education class three times per week. They will also be asked to incorporate an exercise or something else they learned during PE class into at least one recess period per week.

Social development is the center of focus within the middle school curriculum, and it is therefore that certain subject matter concerns the student navigating his/her way to comfort within the self and the community. Middle school is generally known as the period of social discomfort, because the adolescent brain begins to shift focus introspectively and become much more self-aware. Montessori middle school curriculum harnesses this stage of development as the ideal period to allow students to explore themselves, and hence, feel more comfortable about themselves and their places within their community in their coming years.

Curriculum of Self-Identity

For this reason, the subject “Social World,” allows them a personal time to de-stress, to concentrate their attention internally and to regroup. Middle school students also enjoy “community Meeting” time, a highly-organized, student-run meeting in which students enjoy themselves while exercising practical rules and limits of effective dialogue and cooperation. This is also a time where students get to share things about themselves that they might otherwise share during valuable work time.

5-Week Cycles

Each cycle will operate according to a 5-week schedule. During the first two weeks, students work on Math and Natural World. During the second week, students work on Language and Social World. Personal World is the only subject applied to a daily schedule. During the fifth and final week – “Immersion Week” – students work on projects and field exercises that not only integrate all subjects together, but also apply those subjects to the broader perspective of a world community.

Montessori Three-Period Lessons

As consistent with the Montessori approach to education, students in Early Childhood through High School learn in the fashion of three-period lessons. During the First Period, the child is given a lesson or instruction on a certain topic and is then asked a “Guiding Question,” about that topic. During the Second Period, children pursue possible answers to the guiding question based on their research and learning based on that subject. The Second Period is particularly individualized, and therefore presents

the greatest challenge to students, parents and teachers; however, the best possible approach for teachers is to “coach” the students with other questions or bits of advice and to then carefully observe the direction and progress of the students’ learning. During the Third Period, students demonstrate mastery in their fields of study on the subject through a variation of individual and small group projects and through assessments. Students must demonstrate an 80% proficiency in each subject in order to progress.

Class Business

Students will also run a class business that they will use to run a class business. Maria Montessori once noted that young children are capable of “doing work far beyond our dreams and expectations in all fields, including the intellectual and the abstract, provided his hand [is] allowed to work side by side with his intelligence.” Whereas younger Montessori students depend upon tangible objects to apply their knowledge, so do adolescents depend upon real-life application of their knowledge in order to learn effectively. In this sense, the “hand” translates from sensorial touching of objects to the physical application of tacit knowledge. The Montessori middle school approach recognizes the extreme importance of the student’s work being recognized and appreciated within his/her own community. That, along with the drive for self-improvement, is the single most important foundation of adolescent learning. In running a business, students do exactly that – they use their knowledge of currency, economy, marketing and human incentive to earn support for a cause of their choice. In this way, both the students and their communities immediately benefit from education, and this alone serves as a clear model of Maria Montessori’s vision of education to become the driving force for human progress and improvement.

Course Electives

Lowcountry Montessori School will use the expertise of its teaching staff to offer a choice of elective courses for middle school students on a single-semester basis. For each semester, students cast votes about which subjects should be included in a list of elective courses. During a staff meeting, lead teachers will choose which subjects individual teachers would be capable of instructing, based on their background education and experience. Once a list of electives is drawn, students will “elect” which course they choose to take. Montessori recognizes that, by simply offering a choice, the students’ learning incentive increases exponentially. Course electives also offer students a path towards more specialized pursuits in education, because adolescence serves as a crucial period in which students begin to decide what they would like to pursue during their lifetime.

9th Grade

LMC 9th grade students are in a unique position in that they operate as leaders in one community of students and as inductees within a community of older students. While 9th grade students enjoy a leadership position in the middle school classroom, their curriculum is based on a high school design. They also have plenty of opportunities to work and socialize with high school students. The 9th grade curriculum will consist of the following courses:

Language and Communication – Focuses on convention and its effect on the writing process. This course is more reading-intensive than middle school language courses, and involves a larger creative writing aspect to it.

Math – Students will take either Algebra I or Algebra II, depending on their progress.

Science – During the first semester, students will have an introduction to advanced biology and human anatomy. During the second semester, students will have an introduction to advanced chemistry (stoichiometry, atomic theory and chemical reactions).

Social World – World Cultures and Geography is the study of the origins of our physical world, its diverse cultures, and geopolitics. Emphasis is placed on physical geography, the interactions of people and their environment, the world economy, and current global concerns. In addition to the primary text and workbook, students utilize the internet and media publications for research and work on the identification of major geographical markers on a world map using a variety of learning modalities. Working in groups, students develop projects, make presentations, and approach synthesis questions dealing with global issues.

Spanish – Spanish immersion. Study of and speaking the Spanish language. The cultures of Spain and Spanish influence.

Personal World – On top of the personal reflection that the middle school students enjoy, 9th graders will also take a course called “Personal and Social Responsibility.” This course focuses on the four different kinds of awareness: Self, Community, Environmental and Cultural. Each quarter of the year of study will focus on a single kind of awareness.

Electives – 9th grade students will have a choice of high school electives.

Intercessions – Instead of the middle school “Immersion Week,” 9th grade students have 3 high school-style intercessions per year. For the first intercession, 9th grade students will participate in team-building activities, reflection on their middle school experience thus far, and recommendations for improving the middle school program and/or facilities. During the second intercession, 9th graders will work in small groups with 10th grade students design and implement community service programs. During the final intercession, 9th graders will work independently or in small groups with all high school levels to focus on in-depth studies and field exercises on topics such as: Global Studies, Human Impact and Sustainability, Science and Engineering, Fine Arts and Outdoor Education.

High School Educational Program

Montessori’s vision for education is more clearly defined for the younger stages of child development; however, Maria Montessori passed away before all of her work was finished and she left her legacy

somewhat hazy in terms of defining an approach to adolescent education. One approach she did clearly define, however, is called “Erdkinder.” In her book, *From Childhood to Adolescence*, Montessori explains that we call the program “‘Erdkinder’ because they are learning about civilization through its origin in agriculture. They are the ‘land-children.’” She stressed the importance of adolescents working the land so that they can continue to physically interact with their environment and to be able to physically observe the impact of their work on a broader community of living things. Montessori further argues that adolescence should not constitute a continuance of exams and other graded assessments, but simply the achievement of a higher level of freedom and independence and the ability to actively contribute to the community.

There are many schools that still read Montessori’s texts from the perspective of inerrancy, and literally translate her writings into their educational programs. Such Montessori programs operate on working farms and within farmhouses so that adolescents are constantly immersed in the workings of the land. This model, when conceived, was consistent with its time and place in that it prepared students for their integration into an agricultural and industrial society. Adolescents would learn the skills necessary in the Erdkinder program, which would in turn, help adolescents develop into contributing members of society. This was Montessori’s intention, for education to be culturally relevant and “to serve those special traits that have proved to be tendencies of man,” (*Human Tendencies and Montessori Education*, Mario Montessori Jr.). As our understanding of human development enhances, so must our educational methods; as the cultural values and world economy and environments change, so must our approach to understanding them.

LMS believes that there are many elements of the Erdkinder model that are still extremely relevant and useful today, including lessons in: mechanics, engineering, agriculture, ecology and sustainability; however, we also believe that a fully agricultural education would be culturally irrelevant within the Beaufort County student population, and that implementing such an emphasis within our program would not fully prepare students for the more diverse career opportunities available in today’s job market. Our mission at LMS is not to prepare students for a job, however, but to prepare them for their vocation – their internally driven purpose in society. The High School program is therefore designed with a great deal of student choice involved. We believe that, if we provide the student with the optimal environment and instruction, students will discover what drives them to become successful in their pursuits. This can only occur if the students are given choices in their pursuits. LMS strives to maintain relevancy within its curriculum design and will consistently update its curriculum to suit the preparedness of its students to successfully enter into society upon graduation.

Lowcountry Montessori “Land Lab”

Montessori Secondary consists of both Middle and High School, and therefore, many aspects within LMS’s Secondary program are intertwined so as to create an interconnected, interdependent community of educators and learners. The all-encompassing representation of this interconnected system will be LMS’s “Land Lab.” Consistent with Montessori’s vision for adolescents to interact with and learn from their natural environments, LMS’s “Land Lab” will be the source through which our Secondary Program incorporates Maria Montessori’s concept of the “Erdkinder.” The “Land Lab,” will

not only operate as an agricultural system that provides for the school, but also as a laboratory where students may conduct their own observations and scientific experiments. While High School students hold the ultimate responsibility for maintaining a healthy and productive Land Lab, it will run in collaboration with Middle School students and will be enjoyed by the entire school. The purpose of the land lab is to teach the practical applications of the concepts of: recycling organic material, the science of photosynthesis, botany and horticulture, entomology, the effects of human consumption and waste, organic farming, sustainability and community support. Organic waste will be collected within the school and used within the land lab. Students will study how to effectively collect rain water and how to harness solar energy in order to water plants and run equipment. Eventually, Secondary students will harvest the organic produce and use it to devise a menu for a school-wide picnic lunch or other gathering.

High School Academics

LMS's High School program teaches and encourages student use of the following habits of mind outlined in Curriculum 21: Education for a Changing World (2010), 212-213:

16 Habits of Mind:

- Persisting
- Managing impulsivity
- Listening and understanding with empathy
- Thinking flexibly
- Thinking about your thinking (metacognition)
- Striving for accuracy and precision
- Questioning and problem posing
- Applying past knowledge to novel situations
- Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision
- Gathering data through all senses
- Creating, imagining, innovating
- Responding with wonderment and awe
- Taking responsible risks
- Finding humor
- Thinking interdependently

- Remaining open to continuous learning

Drug and Sexuality Education

In today's society, throughout the world, exposure to drugs and sexual behavior are very real dangers presented to our student population. LMS recognizes how crucial it is to teach students about the reality of these dangers and to properly prepare them for any possible encounters they may have. Therefore, drug and sexuality education will be an integral part of LMS's High School program. The significant factors in helping students make good choices for themselves are: decision making strategies, goal setting and planning, constructive ways of having fun, stress management, good peer relations, self confidence, responsibility for their behavior, respect for others and the deferral of immediate desires. These elements are on-going skills that will be practiced in health class two times per week, and some will be practiced within the classroom. LMS reserves the right to drug test any student suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

In order that the Middle School and High School programs maintain the opportunity to work together, similar daily schedules will be implemented. While the daily schedule may vary according to the day of the week or the time of year, it will operate above the state minimum of six (6) hours per school day:

8:00-8:15: Optional breakfast and/or brief exercise and social time

8:15-8:30: Arrive and lay out work for checking

8:30-9:00: Community Meeting

9:00-10:45: Independent Work Time

10:45-11:05: Snack

11:05-12:00: Lesson/Class

12:00-1:00: Lunch/Recess

1:00-1:30: Personal Reflection

1:30-2:30: Small Group Work

2:30-3:00: Clean/Restore Environment

3:00: Dismissal

The LMS High School Academic Program seeks to instill a sense of diversity amongst its subject matter, but above all, teaches the interconnectedness of all academic subjects. High School students will focus on recognizing universal patterns amongst natural, linguistic, mechanical and other kinds of systems so that they may develop their skills in problem-solving. LMS believes that, if students can recognize the interconnectedness of systems within our universe, that they will also hold the knowledge and creative tools necessary to become our society's next generation of pioneers and innovators. The High School curriculum will therefore be designed as follows:

Academic Courses:

Language Arts:

- English I: At the 10th grade level, greater attention is paid to working analytically, both in reading and in writing. Students focus on developing their skills in formulating and supporting coherent arguments about texts read in class. These texts are mostly dramatic in nature, covering Greek, Shakespearean, and contemporary plays. In addition, a quarter of the year is devoted to the study of poetry as a form of expression. During the last quarter, students write a research paper and are expected to marry their own ideas about texts to the information gleaned from the literary criticism they read. The Sadlier-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop is used to guide our vocabulary study, although the students are encouraged to internalize the words through creative activities, such as one-act "vocabulary plays," short stories, etc.
- English II: 11th grade students engage the American literary tradition by querying history, identity, and expression throughout our country's 200-plus years of existence. By engaging with varying genres, styles, and themes, we aim to open students' eyes to the multitude of literature produced by Americans and to provoke them to question canonical works in a fresh way. Vocabulary study is a student-driven process in which unknown words in texts become vehicles for class discussion and discovery as well as a formal approach using the Sadlier-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop. Texts are viewed from a writer's perspective, and emphasis is placed on students becoming lifelong writers who initiate writing in their own lives for a variety of purposes and audiences. Within these writing studies, students are guided through a cyclical and revision-focused writing process, while simultaneously engaging directly with the grammatically functional aspects of smaller (sentence-level) and larger (essay-level) discourses.
- English III: Senior students interact with a comprehensive overview of literary tradition that is designed to give students a preview of what they should expect in college literature and humanities classes. Students are introduced to works from complex intellectual movements and thought to a variety of literary genres and modes; and the theme of man's search for meaning continues to be addressed. In their writing, students practice creative writing skills and exercises and continue to refine personal style.

Mathematics

- **Algebra II:** Algebra II emphasizes the use of linear and quadratic expressions, powers and roots, and functions. Students study logarithmic, trigonometric, and polynomial functions both for their abstract properties as well as a tool for modeling real-world situations. Students learn to use technology for graphing, problem solving, and record keeping. Students take quizzes for feedback and master comprehensive tests. Students are assessed in the areas of mathematics skills, problem solving skills and group projects.
- **Geometry:** Geometry focuses on the study of proofs and serves as the introduction to abstract thinking, especially formal logic and deductive reasoning. The study of geometry includes both Euclidian and non-Euclidian geometry. Mathematicians and important contributions to math will be studied along with geometric principles. Geometry uses the text Geometry by Richard Brown.
- **Pre-Calculus:** Pre-calculus focuses on the use of statistics, limits, discrete mathematics and trigonometry. At the end of the course, an introduction to Calculus is covered. Students are taught to use computer and calculator graphing capabilities. The course includes problem solving and critical thinking opportunities.
- **Statistics:** Statistics focuses on both descriptive and inferential statistics. This course uses examples and case studies from politics, economics, psychology, sociology, the natural sciences and medicine. Topics addressed include samples, populations, central tendency, distributions, variance, experimental design and much more. The course uses a combination of homework problems, tests and student-created experiments to assess proficiency.
- **Calculus:** Calculus focuses on limits, derivatives and integrals. It promotes critical thinking and problem solving skills through applied problems and projects. Students must master tests, and are assessed in the areas of mathematics and problem solving. Calculus will involve a significant commitment to extra study outside of class.

Natural World

- **Chemistry I:** Chemistry I curriculum includes the study of atoms (atomic theory, chemical bonds, elements, stoichiometry, periodic table), chemical reactions, and acids and bases. The focus is on using great ideas to look for patterns in science and integrating this information into all disciplines and developing scientific inquiry techniques. Students conduct a wide variety of laboratory experiments.
- **Physics:** Physics curriculum includes the study of the basic properties of matter (mass, charge, momentum and energy), the location of matter in space and time (displacement, velocity, and acceleration), and the behavior of matter in bulk (heat, current, resistance, and pressure). The focus is on using great ideas to look for patterns in science and integrating this information into all disciplines. Students conduct laboratory experiments and make presentations. Emphasis will be placed on the origin of the Universe and the physics principles associated with its study. Students will work in small groups to

create a presentation for lower school students about their learning. All students are assessed both individually and as members of a group.

- **Environmental Science:** The Environmental Science curriculum includes the study of ecosystems and biodiversity, sustainability, cycles (water, air, and land), and energy (past, present, and alternatives for the future). The focus is on using great ideas to look for patterns in science and integrating this information into all disciplines. Assessment for this course will consist of both personal and group work, including reading and vocabulary quizzes, dialogues on major environmental issues, and complete laboratory investigations and reports.

Social World and Humanities

- **World History:** The World History course provides a way to understand history and a foundation from which to view the complexities of today's world. Its emphasis on "effect-cause thinking" and interactions provides a framework that is especially important for the 21st century. The course is shaped by the four guiding questions: How do we survive? How do we thrive? How do we evolve? How do we devolve? The long term objective is for learners to begin to have an understanding of how the big picture of world history assists in understanding the complexities of today's world. Learners will have the opportunity to improve their analytical abilities and critical thinking skills in order to understand historical and geographical context, make comparisons across cultures, use documents and other primary sources, and recognize and discuss different interpretations and historical frameworks.
- **US History:** There is a history to everything. History informs the present and offers us knowledge and wisdom as we envision and create the future. The overriding approach to the study of US History will be thematic and covers chiefly the period from 1865 (post Civil War) until events occurring today. Students will regularly examine primary source material and utilize other resources available in the classroom, the internet, and public library. Emphasis will be on using primary sources, detecting credibility and bias in secondary sources, discovery of connections by looking at effects and their causes, examining some of the literature and arts of different time periods, and overall, determining lessons that can be learned.
- **Economics:** This single-semester course available to seniors will cover the fundamentals of the discipline including major concepts in micro and macro economics, the principles upon which the U.S. system of economics were founded, and tenets of sustainability that explore the immense possibilities in the world of economics that exist today. Emphasis will be on practical application of and involvement with basic economic concepts and on critical thinking skills, developed by examining different perspectives and approaches to the field of economics. The textbook for the course is *The Economic Way of Thinking* by Heyne, Boettke, and Prychitko supplemented throughout the course with current economic thought through a variety of resources.

- US Government: This single-semester course available to seniors will explore the role of government as well as the fundamentals of our system of government by examining more deeply the major primary sources which define our system, then exploring the major principles as they manifest in today's world. Students will be able to identify and explore in greater depth government decisions and practices relevant to their lives and to their interests, highlighting the vibrancy and relevancy of these fundamental documents.

Spanish Language

- Spanish I: Students will be introduced to the language and culture of Spanish speaking countries in order to develop their ability to communicate in Spanish, and gain an increased awareness of Spanish speaking people. The students will read, write, converse and listen to the Spanish language. Spanish will be spoken in class as much as possible. Grammar concepts are introduced in context and practiced in class. Daily review, conversation, and short story reading are included in class time as are group activities to develop vocabulary, dialogues, reading and listening comprehension, verb usage, and cultural information. Presentations will be assigned. Periodically a written and oral exam will be given to demonstrate understanding and mastery of the material.
- Spanish II: Students will continue to develop their use and knowledge of the Spanish language. Students will read both independently and as a class group. They will write stories as a class and independently as well. Basic skills will be reinforced and more complex grammar concepts will be introduced in context. Students will continue their study and appreciation of Spanish culture. Spanish will be spoken in class as much as possible. Students are encouraged to use Spanish to communicate and participate actively in class. The four skills of reading, writing, speaking, and understanding will be further developed with group activities.
- Spanish III, IV: Spanish III is a required course. Spanish IV is an optional course. Students will further develop their ability to communicate effectively through speaking and improve their listening, reading, and writing skills. Spanish culture, history, and daily life will be further examined. Students are introduced to readings that develop vocabulary and are a basis for discussion. Advanced grammar concepts are looked at in context and are applied and used in speaking and writing assignments. Group activities improve dialogues, verb and vocabulary usage, reading comprehension, and listening.

Health and Wellness

- As part of the health curriculum, students spend thirty minutes two times a week before lunch in a variety of healthy activities. Dr. Montessori felt that adolescents have a quest for self-knowledge,

which in turn helps adolescents develop their identity. In our hurried society, we want the students to learn to spend time reflecting on goals, reducing stress, and creating a personal vision. At this time students will work by themselves on guided self-knowledge activities that are recorded in a journal, take a power nap to regain their energy and focus, do creative arts, yoga, walking, meditation, or Tai Chi. A student chooses a balance of these activities during the quarter. This will alternate every other day with Physical Education.

Self-Construction

- **Communication Application:** Communication Application is the challenging 10th grade level class of the self-construction strand. The class has two overarching goals: to expand students' understanding of what communication is and to introduce and to allow students to practice skills that can improve their communicative abilities. These two goals mean that students come back to again and again and revise their responses to two fundamental questions: what is communication? and how do I communicate well? Central to this class is the exposure to and examination of the many branches of communication studies, which includes, among other things, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication, rhetoric, linguistics, and mass communication. With the two main questions as a guide and through the use of a variety of sources and methods, students emerge from this class more empowered both academically and personally. Also, they are better prepared for the work of Theory of Knowledge and Senior Thesis. Skills of dialogue; observation; logical, creative, and critical thinking; reflection; listening; public speaking; presentation; along with a number of other communicative skills are employed throughout the course. Students are stretched beyond their present capacities by practicing skills that are new and, consequently, uncomfortable and a bit of a struggle at times. Also, their understanding of communication and its role in the world around them are expanded. The work students do in order to achieve this understanding may be challenging. However, as a result, by investing themselves in the class, students will emerge stronger and more empowered.
- **Theory of Knowledge:** This course includes Western and Eastern thought. Students study Theory of Knowledge in their 11th year. The fundamental questions of what we know and how we know will guide the year-long curriculum. Central to the course will be exposure to and examination of major Western and Eastern philosophical thought, along with the wisdom associated with indigenous peoples from around the world. This course serves to expand the student's knowledge of how the basic philosophical questions have been explored historically and how they are being explored today. Through the use of a variety of sources and methods, students will discover more about themselves and their interests and emerge more prepared to identify a topic for their Senior Thesis in the following year. Skills of logical thinking, dialogue, observation, reflection, creative thinking and critical thinking are employed throughout the course.
- **Senior Thesis:** The over-arching theme of Senior Thesis is "The Future." Seniors will already be hearing a great deal from parents and extended family members, peers, teachers, and college

admissions officers about their "future." The senior class works together to find interdisciplinary approaches to the nature and potential of the future as a basis of their work together and then work individually on defining what questions they would like to examine more closely in their final work here at Woods High School. Senior Thesis is both a culmination and a commencement. It represents the culmination of their work by giving students the opportunity to apply interdisciplinary knowledge to original research. All of what the student has learned and experienced will be brought to bear on their final paper. Senior Thesis is also a commencement, the start of work the student may continue in the years ahead. The goal of Senior Thesis is to afford students the opportunity to do lasting, meaningful work that they will continue to pursue at the university level. The final paper is 25—30 pages in length and consists of a literature review that puts the student's unique question in the context of the history of thought and current research.

In addition, we will be learning library procedures, techniques of computer research, compiling references, and methods for finding, evaluating, and recording material. Students become familiar with the major writers and works within their particular area of research. Students will also work with experts in their field or subject of interest. The Senior Internship is closely coordinated with Senior Thesis to provide for one-on-one guidance with a mentor. Students present their thesis to the faculty and presentations are open to the public.

Electives

Course electives will be offered in a variety of different subjects so that the students are free to explore their areas of greater interest; however, some requirements within the electives portion of the student's portfolio will be established. Students will have to take at least one course in Physical Fitness or Education, at least one course in Fine Arts, and either Business Entrepreneurship or Personal Finance. By graduation, students will have accumulated a total of 8 completed elective courses. While students will vote on a pool of electives, below are some options that may be available at LMS:

Physical Education:

- Foundations for Personal Fitness
- Mountain Biking and Rock Climbing
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Team Sports

Fine Arts

- Dance
- Photography
- Yearbook
- Architecture and Design
- Drawing
- Painting
- Sculpture
- Drama and Theatre
- Stage Band

Academic

- Personal Finance
- Business Entrepreneurship
- Debate
- Gender Studies
- Psychology

Intercessions

Along with the 9th grade students, LMS High School students will also enjoy Intercession Weeks, where students will immerse themselves in their environment and their community and use their knowledge and creativity to explore how to make improvements:

Intersession 1:

- **10th Year Intersession:** This intersession focuses on exploring the metroplex of Houston. Students take the lead in planning for these five days to learn more about our city (pedagogy of place) in order to determine ways of serving/supporting the areas they visit. Students are divided into five small groups. Each group determines the itinerary for one of the five days. They work within the confines of a budget and then execute their plans during that week.
- **Juniors in DC Intersession:** This trip is designed to explore District of Columbia's financial, historical and cultural heritage. Sights include visiting the White House, Capital Building (where they will sit in on a House in session), the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Holocaust Museum and Arlington National Cemetery
- **Senior Retreat Intersession:** The seniors will retreat to the beautiful, serene surroundings of their own land lab. It is also the week where seniors prepare for the remainder of their high school experience and their transition to college.

Intersession 2:

- **9th and 10th Grade Service Learning Intersession:** This course is designed to have students learn through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet a genuine community need. There are three parts to service learning: preparation, participation, and reflection/application. The young people participate in the planning and decision-making of the activities. It provides opportunities to use newly acquired academic skills and knowledge in real life situations in their community. It extends student learning beyond the classroom and helps to foster the development of a sense of caring for others. Students write in their journal throughout the week and use entries to write a final essay on what this experience has meant to them.
- **11th Grade College Week:** This course is designed to give juniors the practical life experience of living on their own at college. During this course, students will compile a list of colleges and universities that they would like to investigate further, complete a sample application, write a college essay, and participate in a mock college interview. There will be a portfolio of the work the student has accomplished including an essay reflecting all they have learned.
- **Senior Internship:** Seniors serve a week-long internship in a field that will support the research that they are doing in preparation for writing their senior thesis. The internship will give the student an opportunity to mentor with an expert in the field who will ideally become a member of his/her senior thesis committee. The mentor is asked to complete an evaluation of the student. Students are responsible for preparing a resume, interviewing and securing placement on their own. Guidelines are established in their senior thesis class.

Intersession 3: Students separate into individual or small groups to conduct one-week in-depth studies and field experiences in these categories: Global Studies, Cultural Immersion, Sports and Athletics, Science and Engineering, Fine Arts, Government, and Outdoor Education.

LMS's High School Program will be designed according to a credit-based system. LMS's curriculum planning committee will later assign credit values to the above courses, and will determine how many and which kinds of credits will be required before graduation from LMS. While our goals are to have its students successfully complete a rigorous academic program, LMS reserves the right to slightly alter its curriculum design in order that it may better suit the needs and capabilities of its teaching faculty and student body.