



The Montessori Connection

Winter 2012

www.athensmontessori.com

Dear Parents,

My sincerest wish and ambition is to help our community become united in its service to the children. Maria Montessori felt that a sound teaching system; “must go beyond the intellect which judges and divides, and on to the realm of spirit which unites.” She goes on to say: “The child is the spiritual builder of humankind, and obstacles to his free development are the stones in the wall by which the soul of humanity has become imprisoned.”

In contemporary struggles to reform and to transform education we still witness the struggle for the free development of our children’s potential. The high stakes testing culture of today still emphasizes a competitive community of learners in spite of the developmental, brain-based and creativity research supporting a holistic model with a diminished emphasis on rewards and punishments. Maria Montessori declared: “Transmitting knowledge doesn’t work. It is a waste of words. Get to the inner power of the child, to reveal a better way”. Our children are our teachers. A lesson difficult to remember at times but evident upon reflection on our maturation process.

The emerging model of evolution, biology and psychology based on the quantum theory of physics offers up a potential for harmonic convergence for nature and for human society. Montessori anticipated this new scientific construct and its promise for education when she said: “When education becomes a narrowly focused professional endeavor, schools do not allow children to be ‘fully human’. Love and caring should be the central organizing values of a classroom”.

Please take time to reflect on what values, observations and joyful exchanges with your children, brought you to the doorstep of Athens Montessori School.

Warren

“Education should no longer be mostly imparting of knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking **the release of human potentialities.**”

Maria Montessori

The Life skills of a Montessori Education

Jonathan Wolff is the Founder and Director of the Learning for Life and Montessori Leadership Institute. He provides retreats, workshops, consultations and coaching for parents, educators, leaders, Boards of Directors, community organizations and learning communities around the globe. Recently he held a workshop at AMS about the qualities that students learn in the Montessori classroom that will prepare them for the life skills they will need as adults.

Individuality- The opportunity and means to discover and develop ones unique abilities, gifts, talents and potential.

Independence- The ability to function as a self confident, self-reliant, self-empowered human being.

Interdependence- The ability to function as a harmonious, cooperative, contributing member of the community, society, and planetary neighborhood.

Integrity- The ability to think and act from the basis of respect, responsibility and reverence for life.

Initiative- The ability to create one's own destiny, be a self-starter, make choices, make change, make commitments, and see it through.

Inter-Disciplinary Knowledge- The ability to not only access and recall necessary information, but more importantly, the ability to make connections between various fields, forces, and faculties, and understanding how the whole puzzle of life fits together.

Imagination/Innovation- The ability to creatively self-express, problem solve, and resolve conflicts.

Involvement in the betterment of the world- Helping others though community and worldwide services.

Interpersonal Skills- Communication, friendship and team work

Information Access Skills- Research skills, through print, multi media and internet sources.

Intellectual Processing Skills- Reading, writing, math, and critical thinking.

All of these skills are put into practice in the AMS classrooms every day. The students are learning to be kind, independent thinkers and contributors not only within the AMS community, but in the local and global communities as well.

Montessori Middle School Education: A Preparation for Life

By Melody Mosby

At the time of adolescence, there is a departure from childhood into a period of social preparation for adulthood. It is as if a dramatic metamorphosis takes place, and the outgoing nature of the child transforms to the introspective, hypersensitive nature of the adolescent.

Due to their new brain development, adolescents are able to move from concrete to abstract thinking, to reflect, plan ahead, and analyze experience. They are also egocentric and with the onset of puberty, they are prone to mood swings, and experience changes in their physical body.

This period of early adolescence, ages 12-15, is one of the more dynamic and critical stages of development in which the individual begins to acquire his or her adult personality. All the noble characteristics that would prepare humans to be social begin to emerge. There is a chief tendency toward creative work and a need for strengthening self-confidence.

Because adolescents are highly vulnerable to criticism, it is essential for the Montessori guide to maintain a milieu of respect at all times. Adolescents do not respond well to sarcasm or instructors with sharp edges. Dr. Montessori's advice to the teacher of adolescents was "to treat the adolescent with greater value than he actually shows, than to let him feel that his self-respect is disregarded". *From Childhood to Adolescence.*

Montessori Middle School environments and programs are developmentally responsive to the needs of the adolescent. Some of the key elements that meet those needs and are included in our program are:

- Community Meetings/student leadership/Activities in social life
- Interdisciplinary curriculum/meaningful work
- Large periods of time for in-depth learning and research
- Real and Relevant work tied to projects
- Mastery Learning/Portfolio based assessment
- Teachers as Facilitators
- Economic Enterprise
- Internships/Apprenticeships
- Creative Expression/Electives
- Technology as Tool
- Service Learning
- Career Education
- Personal Reflection and Outdoor Education
- Practical Life Skill/ Field Studies

It is a strong program that is time tested and proven to provide the most optimal learning environment for adolescents to become lifelong learners prepared to lead our world.

Research is now confirming that Montessori adolescents enjoy what they are doing in school. And if they enjoy what they are doing, then they are engaged in what they are learning instead of looking at learning as "drudgery". They have a deep and satisfying community life and will very likely look forward to their careers and social interactions in the future.

High School and University professors tell us that Montessori students, because they have learned to be responsible for their work and are self-directed, motivated, and good communicators are usually better prepared for high school and university environments than students who have had their education "poured into them".

Further, the outcome of a two year research project completed in 2005, which focused on a comparison between traditional public middle school models and Montessori Middle Schools indicated that there was a basis for a more highly motivated and socially healthy learning experience within the Montessori educational plan. (Rathunde & Csikszentimihalyi, American Journal of Education, 2005).

A more complete summary of the research can be found on the website: www.Montessori-Namta.org

Practical Life

Practical Life is a vital part of the Montessori Classroom. The work a child performs in this area does so much to develop the child. By working in practical life a child is learning:

Order: Every process, from putting on your clothes, to writing a thesis has order. To successfully accomplish anything we need to know how to set a goal, begin the work, persevere through the work, and complete it. This valuable lesson is deeply entrenched in all practical life activities.

Concentration: Developing the ability to focus and concentrate on a task is an art that is sadly lost on most children today, especially in our fast paced world of technology. Practical life nurtures the crucial development of mental focus.

Coordination: All of the activities are designed to strengthen both the gross and fine motor skills. This prepares the child for a lifetime of writing.

Independence: The child is learning how to do for him/herself. This brings a great deal of satisfaction and confidence to a child as they learn they are strong capable beings.

Grace and Courtesy: A common practical life activity is the preparation of food. The child is given the opportunity to prepare and serve food to others in the classroom, fostering a sense of a graceful, harmonious community.

Respect for self, others, and the environment: The children are consistently given lessons that help them learn to care for themselves, others around them, and the environment in which they live.

Practical life lessons develop the whole child not just to be effective learners, but to be strong capable caring members of society.

Classroom Happenings

The winter semester Middle School students were offered an opportunity to experience some of the lessons of the working world through our week long Work Internship Program and Financial Project. For one week, half of the class is placed with an approved local business based on the student's interest. Their job sites become their classroom and their job site supervisor becomes their teacher. The other half that is not interning, participate in a week long financial project. These week long projects are a highlight for the Middle School students. A portfolio of their work is compiled and presented to the class and is on display during the Silent Journey. Some of the local businesses where students interned were:

- Barber Creek Veterinary Clinic
- Athens Clarke Co. Library
- WUGA Radio Station
- DePalmas Italian Restaurant
- Classic City Chef
- UGA Dept, of Biochemistry
- Silver Lining Cupcake Co.
- Vision Video
- Madison Animal Hospital
- Central Oconee Animal Clinic
- Boulevard Animal Hospital
- Ike and Jane's
- Jittery Joes Roasting Company

Thank you to all the local businesses that participated and made the internship program so successful.



A Middle School student "depositing a check" as part of their financial project.

The AMS performing groups have been out around town in the last few months. The Strummer's Club recently played for shoppers at Trader Joe's and at Earthfare, led by Vicky and assisted by Lucy Tavernier, an AMS alumnus. The Junior Ukulele Group staged their first performance at the recent Green Life Expo at the Classic Center in January. This group of 30 strong is led by Susan Sellew and Melissa Cappi and helped by alumnus Emmet Cappi.



The Junior Ukulele Group practicing for their performance at the Green Life Expo

There has been a lot of music happening on campus as well. The Aces played a variety of different instruments and sang songs for the primary students, a local Klezmer band, and the Atlanta family group Laughing Pizza returned to perform for the whole school.



The Aces performing for the Primary students

The Aces have continued their study of the world by exploring Europe and Australia. Students have completed maps of these regions and written imaginary trip journals describing their travels through five countries. Students also completed reports on life in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Local author Betty Jean Craige and Cosmo, her African Grey Parrot came to visit the class and everyone was enthralled by the presentation which included several video clips of Cosmo recognizing herself in the mirror and playing tricks on Betty Jean. The students learned that while Cosmo is a wonderful companion, owning a parrot is a serious commitment not to be undertaken lightly.

The Comets finished their studies of Europe and Ancient Greek and Roman mythology with their play **Persephone and the Changing Seasons**. One performance for the parents, and another for the entire school.



The Comets play Persephone and the Changing Seasons



Celebrating the Year of the Dragon on the front field.

**The Sun is shining it's a beautiful day
 The warblers are singing their hearts away
 The bees are buzzing like never before
 A kingfisher sits nearby the shore
 Drawn by the ocean where the water is deep
 Seals flop and play on the sandy beach
 Then back to the water
 Where they go when they sleep**

*By Atticus
 Stars Class*

**Horses running
 Wind blowing
 Like a feather
 in the wind.
 Birds soaring
 all around.
 Diamond rings
 Pretty things.
 Everybody loves
 Everything.**

*By Lucia
 Stars Class*

The Chinese New Year brought us together for one of our whole school events. This year every class took part in the parade. Some waved banners, some carried masks or dragons on sticks, and many were in costume. The Aces let off bubble wrap 'fireworks' and the Middle school did cartwheels and flips. The green room sent out a lion dance and the Orange class made a dragon. The Vikings all wrote about the festivities as reporters. One student reported that the "Lunar New Year parade was a celebration sensation!" "Students dressed in costumes and danced as the Dragon and Lions passed by". "Dragon masks were decorated and spring rolls and dumplings were served." Happy year of the Dragon!

The Primary classes all celebrated the 100th day of school in different ways, some counting various items in the classroom to going walking 100 steps.

The Orange class had a parents day which a great success.. The parents were invited into the classroom and received lessons from the students. It was an eye opening experience for many of the adults.



Orange Class parents getting lessons from the children

Local musician Dodd Ferrelle visited the Blue Class to share his expertise in guitar, songwriting, and song recording. He wrote a song called "Happy Hands Dance" which was inspired by his son and daughter. He even included the names of all the students in the class. They felt like stars being named in such a great, fun song.

The Yellow class used their sponsorship of a Parents' Night Out evening as an opportunity to practice their life skills. First they counted their money (math). Then, since they always give this money away (community service), many discussions were held to find a suitable recipient (language). The students decided to donate the whole amount to Bear Hollow to use for the new Groundhog habitat. (animal and environmental science) On February 2nd the Extended Day students were invited to a Groundhog celebration at Bear Hollow where they were treated to a special tour and met with the press! (science, etiquette and PR!)

Congratulations!

Jamey Sellow, who is a student in the Aces, has been climbing at Active Climbing in Athens for two years. He recently qualified for the USA Climbing's American Bouldering Series National Championships. He will travel to Colorado Springs, CO with two other team mates for this prestigious event in March. Best of luck Jamey!



Jamey- with some of his AMS climbing friends at Athens Active Climbing

Montessori Accrediting Council completes an on-site visit to the Middle school

In October, Melody Mosby, director of our Middle School and Warren McPherson, Director of AMS met with the on-site accrediting team to review and evaluate our Middle School learning environment and program of study. After a three day intensive review and assessment, the Accrediting Team recommended our program for re-accreditation for another seven years.

During the previous seven years through the Montessori Teacher Institute teacher education program, Melody has been successful in training staff for Public, Private and Charter Schools in three states here in the southeast. Currently, our Teacher Education Institute is corresponding with a Montessori School in Mexico considering training for their teachers.

Congratulations to Melody and the Athens Montessori Teacher Institute for receiving this recognition!

Wynn Walter has now completed her Primary Montessori Training. She studied with Dr. Feland Meadows Pan American program at Kennesaw State. Congratulations Wynn!

Alumni News

Elizabeth Wilkins stopped by to talk to the Middle School students about navigating their way through High School. She will be graduating this year and plans to take pre-med in college. At present she is still considering, UGA, Emory and Carlton.



Alumni Elizabeth Wilkins with Melody and Warren returned to AMS to speak to the Middle School.

AMS alumnus Rebecca Corey was interviewed for the recent Flagpole magazine. She studied at Clarke Central and at UGA, winning many honors along the way. She travelled to Tanzania to work with Kiva, an organization that gives small loans that make a big difference. A serious car accident brought her back to Athens. While she was recovering she planned a project to rescue and restore a library of music tapes from Radio Tanzania. She was joined by several friends (including Adam Klein another AMS alumnus) and they succeeded in raising money from a kick-start campaign to acquire the equipment to begin this project. She is now back in Tanzania. You can follow her progress at Radio Tanzania Heritage Project.

Alumnus Gwyneth Moody studied Environmental Science at UGA. She has traveled the world but has just accepted a position here with the Georgia River Network as a community coordinator. Her duties will take her around the state, but we hope there will still be time for her to continue to teach her lively salsa classes in Athens!

AMS Website

Please be sure to check out the AMS website on a regular basis. www.athensmontessori.com. You can stay up to date on everything that is happening on campus.

If you are not getting notices from the AMS list serve, please email Sabrina at garciaclan@monroeaccess.net Upcoming events, and important information from the office are sent out via the list serve.

For additional Montessori resources visit Warren's website at www.montessorisynergies.com