



The Village School

Montessori Education | est. 1977

Lower Elementary (6 to 9 years old)

The Montessori approach of our classrooms provides the framework for students to become academically strong, proficient and curious learners. Students are expected to become knowledgeable in content areas and are taught how to think, rather than what to think. They actively engage in building a strong academic foundation necessary for all future learning. They are becoming lifelong learners. For details of our curriculum please see the descriptions of the individual areas below.

The Lower Elementary Program is designed to address the child's complete development. Children in this age group explore their environment with an insatiable curiosity, accompanied by a growing imagination that is ready to move from concrete experiences to a gradually more abstract perception of their world. They are searching for an understanding of who they are and where they fit into the world of their classroom, family and society at large. This is the time for big questions and learning about their world and the universe through a story-telling format.

This is an important period where children are developing a strong sense of morality and fairness. Class group meetings encourage open dialogue among members of the classroom community. Grace and courtesy lessons and role modeling form as important a part of children's experiences as any other aspect of their learning. Through teacher modeling and facilitation, students develop conflict resolution skills and learn to use active listening and "I" statements to come to mutually respectful and acceptable agreements with peers.

The individual academic, social and emotional aspects of a child's development are inseparable and hold equal importance in their growth and learning. The Lower Elementary classroom provides an environment in which the child is given the opportunity to explore the rigorous academic curriculum within a framework of respect and support. Individual learning styles are supported through the use of concrete materials, as well as varied teaching methods that most appropriately address the individual's needs for success. Students are given the opportunity to work individually, in small groups, or with a partner on various assignments. They learn time management through use of individualized weekly work plans. This is accompanied by a growing expectation of responsibility for completion of homework assignments in a timely and thorough manner. Each child is considered a contributing member of the community by fulfilling classroom responsibilities and participating in larger volunteer community projects.

Language

Communication

Language is the vehicle through which students explore their world. The Lower Elementary Language curriculum integrates the individual areas of Reading, Grammar, Writing, Spelling, Vocabulary. Oral Communication and Penmanship.

Reading

A balanced literacy program provides students with a phonics background, along with other strategies to grasp meaning from text. Students read independently during silent reading periods, with a partner and in small groups. Stories come alive while listening to stories being read aloud. Students gain fluency as they transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”. Students are exposed to different literary genre and become involved in author studies, where a particular style of story writing is explored.

Writing

Students learn all aspects of the writing process as they move through the three -year cycle of the Lower Elementary program. From construction of simple sentences to short paragraphs and longer writing pieces, students develop organization and clarity in expressing their ideas. Writing is integrated throughout the curriculum, with the cultural and science areas providing many individual motives for students to express and share what they have learned in short reports. Journal writing provides opportunities for free expression of ideas and feelings on a personal level. Creative story writing taps into the inner drive to give form and life to ideas, emotions and mental images that are a part of a child’s imagination.

Research

The rich and stimulating curriculum of the classroom provides many opportunities for the child to pursue particular areas of interest through independent and partner research. An introduction to the five subclasses of vertebrate animals, for example, may provide the incentive for a student to learn more about a particular animal of interest. The classroom library contains a wide selection of books at different reading levels to support student research. Classroom computers and visits to the technology classroom allow students to conduct their search for information as they learn to use technology in a productive manner. Research becomes a natural process of learning at greater depth, based on curiosity and interest.

Grammar and Vocabulary

The six to nine year-old child is developmentally at a sensitive period for learning the structure and complexity of language. Children are fascinated by new and interesting words as they study new topics in history and science. Through concrete experiences with the Montessori grammar materials, students progress from learning about the parts of speech to analyzing simple sentences. Learning the meaning of words transcends mere definitions to encompass the many ways in which they may be used, forming a rich foundation for development of interesting and descriptive writing.

Oral Presentations and Performances

The confidence in speaking before an audience grows naturally and gradually in our students by having many opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings in a variety of formats. From informal class group meetings, to sharing newly learned information in small groups, to holding up pictures as part of a larger presentation during a school assembly, to reading researched information aloud for a program level presentation, students become very comfortable speaking before a large audience. Students know and feel they are part of a supportive and respectful community where each person’s work is valued.

Mathematics

Mathematics

Mathematical concepts are presented in a logical sequence, beginning with the concrete and leading to more abstract concepts. Students have the opportunity to process new concepts through use of a variety of materials which support the development of a mathematical mind. Understanding takes

precedence over memorization, which develops through repeated work with the four operations. Student work and practice lead to recognition of patterns, probability, and practical applications of mathematics.

The three-year curriculum includes practice with the four basic operations, word problem solving, work with fractions, time measurement and reading, value of monetary denominations and simple exchanging, graphing, estimation, solving for the unknown, positive and negative integers, mixed numbers, squares and cubes of numbers, perimeter and area study. Through their work with the Montessori and other supporting materials, students are introduced to advanced mathematical concepts and learn to gradually make the connection between the concrete representation of the idea and the application of the concept on a wider scale.

Geometry

Geometrical concepts that are introduced at the sensorial level in the Primary Program are explored further through the use of Montessori materials. The study of lines, angles, basic shapes, plane figures, polygons and quadrilaterals form an important foundation for further exploration of geometrical concepts.

Science & Cultural Studies

This area includes the interdisciplinary study of history, geography, geology, physical science, zoology and botany and forms the core of the Lower Elementary curriculum.

Geography

Students learn about all the continents, including the biomes of each, as part of a three cycle. They develop an understanding of the climatic impact upon the plants, animals and people living within each region. Mapping skills, familiarity with landforms, the composition of the Earth, and the effects of wind and water also form an integral part of the cultural studies curriculum.

History

History is taught through impressionistic stories, intended to inspire and spark imagination. Children learn to construct the concept of time through guided lessons, stories and classroom materials, which include the nomenclature related to time measurement on a small and large scale. The history of mankind's accomplishments, such as the histories of writing, math and measurement are studied using a timeline approach.

The history of the Earth is explored through narrative presentations, hands on demonstrations, use of models, picture and nomenclature cards and a variety of classroom activities for individual student practice and exploration. A study of the fundamental needs of humans and the interdependence among all human beings develops over the three years cycle, with many lessons, projects and opportunities for students to explore and internalize these concepts at a level that matches their period of development.

Biology

Students are introduced to observable external features of the five vertebrate classes and the external parts of plants. The study of body functions of animals and plants follows the observation of external features. Classification of different life forms follows this simpler introduction to the study of living things. Recording observations of class pets helps students develop skills associated with objective and detailed observations.

Physical Sciences

Introductory topics of study include the solar system, weather, food chains, geology and chemistry. Students learn about the scientific method through observations and conducting simple experiments.

Field Trips

Day trips for students at the Lower Elementary level make it possible for children to directly experience concepts presented in class. Trips to the Sterling Hill Mining Museum, the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, Great Swamp Nature Preserve, the Turtle Back Zoo, the Newark Museum Planetarium, and NJPAC are some of the places we visit over the three-year cycle of the Lower Elementary Program.

Community Service

The Lower Elementary Program has been responsible for coordinating the Baby Basics Program at our school over the past seven years. Students make posters and fliers to be displayed throughout the school, and collect and organize the donated items for the Children's Aid and Family Services. The older third year students tally and categorize the types of items and load the van used to transport the supplies to the agency. Students develop awareness of the needs of others in their community through engagement in service activities of this nature.