

## **Characteristics of an American Montessori Society Secondary Program**

An AMS Secondary Program is based upon Maria Montessori's writings and philosophy which include the importance of meeting the developmental needs of the adolescent learner, the importance of establishing a prepared learning environment for adolescents and the importance of the teacher/guide's on-going self-reflection and observation practices.

Procedures and practices for each area listed below are specifically taught to adult learners by AMS teacher education programs. These are further developed by the teachers/guides during and after the AMS secondary teacher education program; each secondary program individualizes based upon the program location and the school culture.

Below you will find what are considered ESSENTIALS for starting a Secondary Program. A complete list of curriculum, teaching practices, student behaviors, and overall program focus follows.

### **Montessori Secondary Program Five Essentials**

1. Core faculty members hold, or are in the process of earning, a Montessori secondary teacher education credential.
2. A structure that allows uninterrupted work periods that honors student choice.
3. A structure of multi-age groupings within the same plane of development in classrooms for lessons and activities. Various combinations of grades 7th – 12<sup>th</sup>.
4. A student-centered, constructivist approach as evidenced by students being able to manage time, have choice, organize, and make whole-group decisions within their environment.
5. A strong, respectful community demonstrated by student-led community meetings and opportunities for collaborative work.

Ultimately each AMS Secondary program will show evidence of the following:

#### **Understanding of the Third Plane of Development: The Adolescent, ages 12-18**

- environment conducive to adolescent developmental characteristics
- thoughtful use of technology with larger portion of the school day spent in learning practices and activities that do not require the students to use a computer or other screen device
- valorization as demonstrated by joy, optimism, confidence, dignity, self-discipline, initiative/motivation, independence, helpfulness, mindfulness, and the ability to work with others
- executive functioning tasks: time management, organization, and decision making
- self-construction of the individual: offering opportunities to explore many avenues of interest and expression

#### **A Peaceful Community**

- daily student-led community meetings
- community of learners and collaborative work
- seminar and activities that encourage diversity of styles, perspectives, and thoughts
- multi-age groupings within same plane of development in classrooms for lessons and activities \*
- compassionate, respectful, sustainable, and just society for all; evidence of grace and courtesy

#### **The Nobility of Work**

- work of hand, head, and heart
- developmental themes and integration of disciplines
- differentiation and choice within the curriculum
- engagement and focus
- mastery learning
- uninterrupted work period\*
- student-centered
- advanced three period lesson – whole to parts to whole learning
- questioning, dialogue, and reflection
- micro-economic experiences - mini-society opportunities that create meaningful ways for students

to earn money to contribute to necessary expenses

### **Curricular Connections to Cosmic Education**

- studies and lessons that build upon the earlier (early childhood & elementary) curriculum
- student self-evaluations (rubric or other) are used for major projects, processes, and papers as well as for leadership skills, seminar participation, and homework completion
- opportunities to cultivate sense of global citizenship, kinship and harmony with the universe
- experiences on land that provide a micro-community
- studies and lessons that enhance the adolescent sense of hope in the progression of the human spirit
- spirit of generosity and abundance, awe and wonder
- service in action and service learning

### **Curriculum Areas**

- rigorous coursework that prepares students for the post secondary education in which they aspire; this may be college or trade school. note: rigorous coursework may include honors courses or Advanced Placement (AP) courses provided that students are not separated by ability.
- core subjects of language arts (in primary language), mathematics, sciences, social studies, and additional/world languages
- projects that integrate core curricular areas and electives courses, where possible.
- 12<sup>th</sup> grade senior thesis project that includes formal research paper and presentation
- visual and performing arts, health, fitness, academic and non-academic electives.
- field studies linked to themes, academic work, service learning, and adolescent. Field work includes land labs/camping, internships, community service, entrepreneurship, adventure trips, and the like.

### **Teacher as a Guide**

- fosters teacher/student/peer interactions that exhibit respect, grace and courtesy
- serves as appropriate and inspiring role model
- has the capacity to see and support the development of positive qualities in the adolescent
- observes and responds to adolescent needs
- demonstrates dispositions of maturity and wisdom, caring and thoughtfulness
- demonstrates mastery in conducting whole group lessons, mini lessons, individual coaching
- creates work that helps students synthesize learning
- fosters and supports cooperation and collaboration
- addresses deep connection, the longing for silence and solitude, the search for meaning and purpose, the hunger for joy and delight, the creative drive, the urge for transcendence, the need for initiation in various learning experiences

\* as described by AMS Standards for School Accreditation

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All people named have an AMS Secondary I – II credential.

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