

# **OAK MEADOW MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

## **CURRICULUM OVERVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The following is an overview of the Oak Meadow Montessori School curriculum. It includes a brief narrative description of the subject areas, including language, math, history, geography, science, Spanish, sensory training and practical life skills which are taught from Children's House through Middle School. It also includes a list of desired curriculum outcomes by subject and level, as well as a scope and sequence, which attempts to document the skills the typical student will be learning in Children's House, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary and Middle School. Because our students progress, in each subject at their own pace, it is not possible to divide the curriculum by grade. In addition, Cultural/Humanities topics are taught on a three year cycle in Upper Elementary and a two year cycle in Middle School, making the Cultural Scope and Sequence more of a "menu" of possible areas of study, than a definitive road map.

The Montessori curriculum is organized as a series of lessons, carefully created to meet the developmental needs of every age level, from Children's House through Elementary. It is supported by an extensive collection of materials, which were developed by Dr. Montessori to isolate and teach one concept or skill at a time, in the sequence she believed children could best master them. Lessons given simply and concretely in early years at Oak Meadow are reintroduced several times over succeeding years, with increasing degrees of abstraction and difficulty. Building upon these lessons, Oak Meadow's Middle School curriculum has been developed to meet the developmental needs of our seventh and eighth grade students, taking into account both state and national content standards, current adolescent brain research and Montessori pedagogy.

Ours is an integrated and thematic approach. Studies of the physical universe, the world of nature and the history of mankind are the catalyst for much of the learning that takes place from Children's House through Middle School in such areas as math, language, literature, art, music, history, science, economics and foreign language. Through these studies, students are encouraged to pursue their particular interests, while acquiring the necessary skills to think clearly, to apply that thinking to practical use, to communicate skillfully and to work well with others.

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### LANGUAGE

The Montessori classroom provides many rich experiences which foster the growth and development of receptive and expressive language in even the youngest child. The language curriculum is designed to promote and augment the acquisition of listening, reading, speaking and writing skills.

#### Pre-Reading

Attentive listening is important preparation for reading. A variety of activities, designed to enhance sensory training, teach Children's House students to listen for and distinguish between different sounds, laying the groundwork for phonetic recognition. Tactile materials, such as the sandpaper letters, are used to reinforce this learning. Immersed in a language rich environment, these children develop a sophisticated vocabulary and are encouraged to articulate their thoughts and feelings from an early age. All students benefit from the classroom's three year age span; the youngest from being exposed to older children who have already begun to read, emergent readers from helping and reading to classmates who are just beginning to learn. Everyone enjoys listening to the many stories and poems that are shared aloud.

#### Reading

We begin to "teach" reading as soon as a child expresses an interest in learning. Word building or the construction of words with moveable letters is the first step. Using the "sandpaper letters", children learn to recognize the shape and phonetic sounds of the alphabet. This activity is followed by the use of the "movable alphabet", a series of activities which help the child to match letters and sounds to create words. Gradually the child moves from sounding out simple three and four-letter words to more complex, irregular ones, using the skills in phonics he has acquired. Matching word and picture exercises reinforce sight word recognition.

Even as emergent readers, children are encouraged to select books of interest to them, which have been especially prepared to meet their developmental needs. In this way, they learn early the joy of reading and the power of the written word to answer questions they might have. Comprehension, reading aloud and group discussion skills are further developed at the Lower Elementary level, with the use of the "Junior Great Books Series", the guided discussions and written responses to questions they provoke. Upper Elementary Literature Group selections are made to accompany the Cultural curriculum being studied. Comprehension, reading aloud and group discussion skills are reinforced, as well as techniques for literary criticism introduced. In Middle School, selections from the writings of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, Buddha, Gandhi and Eleanor Roosevelt are among those chosen as examples of humanity's quest for self-knowledge (one of the central tenets of Montessori Middle School pedagogy). Reading and analysis of well-

written historical and classic novels provides students with both perspective and a deep, analytical study of literature. Original sources from history are also utilized in support of the Humanities curriculum, as well as carefully selected chronological accounts of various periods in time. Students are encouraged to use the library and different reference books for research and for pleasure.

### Composition

The acquisition of writing skills begins even before a child has mastered handwriting. Using oral dictation and the movable alphabet, even the youngest students learn to transform their ideas into written words with the help of an adult. Once handwriting has been introduced, this skill continues to develop. Children progress from writing words and sentences to stories and poetry, which they are encouraged to share with their classmates and other members of the school. In Lower Elementary, simple research reports give students another opportunity to practice their composition skills. Essay writing, introduced in Lower Elementary, is emphasized in Upper Elementary, as well as different writing styles. Research and report writing are incorporated throughout the curriculum at the Upper Elementary level. Essay writing, research and creative writing skills continue to be reinforced each year in Middle School.

### Grammar

Recognizing the three to six year old's natural fascination for language, we introduce the study of grammar shortly after a student begins to read and write. Through stories, games and exercises, children learn the function of different parts of speech. Using geometric symbols to represent each element of grammar, children begin by analyzing simple sentences, which progress in complexity, as they become familiar with the function of words. Sentence analysis and diagramming, the recognition of simple and compound sentences, clauses and verb voices begin at about 5 years old. Using manipulative grammar materials which often require interpretive actions as well, students begin to master these skills early. The study of grammar continues through Middle School.

### Spelling

As preparation for reading, Children's House students learn the phonetic sound made by each letter, one letter at a time. Using these sounds and the Movable Alphabet they are taught to sound out and spell simple phonetic words. Children move gradually from composing three letter words to four and five letter words with consonant blends, such as fl, tr, st, double vowels, such as oo and ee, silent e's and so on. Using the Bottino "Spelling, Writing and Vocabulary Series", elementary students learn to recognize and spell words involving phonograms, such as ei, ai and ough, and other non-phonetic words. In addition, they use Montessori materials to perform a variety of exercises, involving the study of compound words, contractions, singular and plural, masculine and feminine words, prefixes, suffixes, synonyms, antonyms and homonyms. Frequent

writing assignments in every subject offer Middle School students many opportunities to hone their spelling skills.

### Handwriting

At the same time that they are learning to associate letters of the alphabet and the phonetic sounds they make, the youngest children perform a variety of exercises designed to help them gain control of the hand, in preparation for writing. Dr. Montessori spoke of the child's "explosion into writing", which occurs quite naturally when the child realizes that he is able to make words and numerals using his hands. First, by tracing letters in a tray of sand, then by writing on a small chalk-board and finally, with a pencil and paper, children acquire and practice their handwriting skills. Cursive writing is generally introduced at the elementary level, as is word processing.

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### MATHEMATICS and GEOMETRY

At Oak Meadow Montessori School, children learn the basic concepts of geometry and mathematics using hands-on learning materials which were designed to help them learn abstract concepts in a clear and concrete manner. In this way, learning comes earlier and more easily to students and develops in them a deep understanding that is the foundation for future work in these subjects.

#### Introduction to numbers (Ages 3-6)

Children in a Montessori classroom are generally introduced to numbers at age three. They learn the numbers and their symbols, from one to ten, using a variety of developmentally appropriate materials, including the “red and blue rods”, the “sandpaper numerals”, the “spindle boxes” and others. These materials were created to develop one to one correspondence when counting a quantity and to lead students to the discovery of math facts.

#### Introduction to the decimal system (Ages 3-6)

Beginning at age three or four, children are introduced to the “Golden Bead” material, which illustrates concretely the decimal system and the concept of place value. Using gold colored beads, children learn the meaning of “units”, “tens”, “hundreds” and “thousands”. A single golden bead is used to represent a unit; a bar of ten units, a ten; a square of ten bars of ten, a hundred; a cube of 10 hundred squares, a thousand. Using these, children learn to build quantities, starting with simple numbers, progressing to more complex ones, as well as to read and write them.

#### Introduction to linear counting (Ages 3-6)

The “Thousand Chain”, made up of 100 ten bars is used to teach children to count by tens to 1000. This material also helps the child to learn basic number facts.

#### Understanding of mathematical operations (Ages 3-6)

Using the numbers they create with the “Golden Bead” material, young children learn to perform the basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in a concrete fashion. Similarly, this material helps children to visualize the concepts of exchanging and regrouping.

### Memorization of math facts (Ages 5-9)

Internalization of basic math facts is aided by a variety of concrete math materials. Memorization of them, without materials, begins around age five. While many children leave Lower Elementary with a good grasp on these math facts, students are encouraged to practice them regularly through Upper Elementary.

### Developing an abstract understanding of mathematical operations (Ages 5-9)

In Lower Elementary, children are presented with a wide variety of lessons meant to deepen their understanding of the mathematical operations introduced to them in Children's House. Manipulative materials such as the "Stamp Game", a color coded system of wooden "stamps" representing the decimal system and the Small and Large Bead Frames, color coded abacuses, enhance the mathematical skills they have begun to acquire and move them toward an abstract understanding of the concepts.

Color coded bead chains similar to the "Thousand Chain", are used to introduce students to simple skip counting, as well as to the concept of squaring and cubing. Two sets of chains for each number, one through ten, are used; one which represents the squares of that number (for example, a chain of five bead bars of five) and one which represents the cubes (for example, a chain of twenty-five bead bars of five).

When they are ready, children are introduced to more advanced manipulative materials, such as the "Division Board", the "Multiplication Checkerboard" and "Division Test Tubes", which assist them in mastering more complex mathematical problems and require them to show their understanding of the concepts on paper.

### The study of fractions (Ages 7-12)

Using the "Fraction Circles", a set of ten metal frames divided into halves, thirds, fourths, etc., children begin to explore the concept of fractions in Lower Elementary, a study which continues through Upper Elementary. Children become familiar with a variety of concepts including terminology and equivalencies, as well as the basic skills of adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions.

The study of decimal fractions is generally introduced at the Upper Elementary level.

### The study of money (Ages 6-12)

The study of money, its history, units, and equivalent sums is introduced in Lower Elementary. (Discussion of foreign currencies is often integrated into cultural studies that are taking place.) Upper Elementary students explore the concepts of interest, principal, rate and time, using real life problems involving investment accounts, credit cards and loans.

### Practical applications (Ages 7-12)

Beginning around age seven and continuing throughout their Oak Meadow experience, children are asked to use their skills to become problem solvers. From the simple word problems they encounter in the classroom to the complex measurements they are required to take in preparation for building a play house on the Children's House playground, to surveying the community as part of a research study, students have many opportunities to apply the mathematical procedures they are learning in practical ways. It is not uncommon to observe children of all ages, inside and outside the classroom, measuring, graphing, and gathering information for use in coming up with answers to a variety of real life situations.

### Other topics (Ages 9-12)

In addition to all of the above, students in Upper Elementary are presented with lessons and work in measurement, ratio and proportion, percents, graphing, tables and charts, rounding and averaging, as well as pre-algebra exercises. While knowledge of these skills and concepts is achieved by the use of Montessori math materials, it is expected that the Upper Elementary student will be progressing towards abstraction. The Upper Elementary math curriculum is designed to ensure that all students are able to progress at their own pace, while being mindful of the need to prepare them for the next stage of learning.

### Pre-Algebra (Middle School)

The Pre-Algebra course marks the beginning of the focus on abstract reasoning and algebraic thinking in the middle school mathematics curriculum. In pre-algebra, students further develop the abstract reasoning, problem solving skills, pattern identification, and mathematical fluency that is required for higher mathematics. They begin to work with algebraic concepts such as graphical and tabular representations, writing equations, comparing patterns of change, and describing particular types of relationships. For example, in pre-algebra, students use their knowledge of rational numbers (fractions, decimals and percents) to work with proportional reasoning and to evaluate and solve algebraic equations.

Students are required to work both in groups and on their own. Discussions and sharing of ideas is important in the development of the students understanding of the subject matter. In addition, students are required to communicate their understanding in written reflections. Students are exposed to concepts through problem solving.

### Algebra (Middle School)

The algebra curriculum in the middle school math program spirals; problems are first solved using an intuitive approach and then later solved on a more abstract level. Throughout the course, concepts are revisited; this allows students the opportunity to master them at different times depending on their level of understanding.

Students are required to work both in groups and on their own. Discussions and sharing of ideas is important in the development of the students understanding of the subject matter. Students are exposed to concepts through problem solving. The curriculum includes problems which students are expected to try to solve prior to any exposure to the concepts involved. This helps students formulate or develop the rule for a particular problem rather than using a given rule to find the solution. Problem solving strategies are not only for understanding mathematics, but also a vehicle for learning mathematics.

### Geometry (Ages 3-6)

Three to six year olds learn to recognize a variety of simple figures, using plane and solid geometric materials whose simplicity and color call out to the small child to explore them. Children learn to name them, as well as to order them by size and degree.

### Geometry (Ages 6-12)

Using color coded, hands-on materials to construct geometric figures, Elementary children discover for themselves the names and definitions of the different angles and shapes. Topics such as point, line angle, surface, solid, congruence, similarity, equality and equivalence, as well as area and volume are also explored in this way. Practice using a compass and protractor begins in Upper Elementary.

### Geometry (Middle School)

The Middle School Geometry curriculum is built around problems, ranging from routine review to problems designed to teach concepts, to short writing assignments which ask students to integrate and design. Algebra, advanced algebra and geometry is woven together through out the course to continually strengthen the students understanding of new and old concepts. Algebra II concepts are sometimes introduced if the students show a readiness in that area. Students are not expected to master concepts on the first encounter, in fact the major principle of this course is “mastery over time.”

The daily work centers on homework problems and group activities. The problems presented focus on teaching problem solving strategies which are used to help develop many of the major concepts in geometry. Students are expected to take part in daily discussions by presenting and communicating ideas and strategies.

Since the number of students in the geometry class is very small, each student has the opportunity to show his or her work on a daily basis. This allows each student to describe their own efforts both orally and in writing which promotes confidence in their own thinking. The classroom is a safe environment to challenge one another.

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### CULTURAL SUBJECTS

Comprised of the study of history, science and geography, the Montessori Cultural Curriculum was designed to inspire a sense of awe in our students. It was created to help them answer such questions as, “Who am I?”, “Where did I come from?” and “Why am I here?” Impressionistic lessons lay the groundwork for future learning, by capturing the children’s imaginations. The cross-curricular nature of the topics reaches them in a manner that capitalizes on their interests and learning styles. The broad scope of the curriculum develops students who are culturally aware and have a true appreciation for the diversity and wonder of the world around them. The Middle School Humanities and Science programs are built upon this base, incorporating Montessori principles and methodology, as well as state and national content standards.

#### History

History is taught at every program level, using story telling and timelines. Timelines are the concrete representation of the abstract concept of history. In Children’s House, students are asked to create a timeline of the history they know best, their own. Using storytelling and timelines, elementary teachers help children to trace the evolution of our planet and its many life forms, as well as an overview of human history. These impressionistic lessons are meant to peak students’ curiosity and inspire them to do further research of their own. Upper Elementary studies include early humans and ancient civilizations, as well as humankind’s achievements which have affected their development. Middle School students continue the study of historical events, focusing on the impact of individual contributions and philosophies throughout time.

#### Life Science (Biology)

Oak Meadow students learn early to become good stewards of the earth. Teachers work hard to incorporate the study of nature into their lessons, both inside and outside the classroom. At every level, children are given responsibility for the care of classroom plants and animals. Gardening is an activity that begins in Children’s House and extends through Middle School. Three to six year olds tend the flower beds outside their classroom doors, while Elementary students anxiously watch as seedlings develop under grow lights each spring. Middle School students have many opportunities to “go to the land,” to study first hand, the characteristics of the plant and animal life there. Observation of nature is encouraged at every level.

Children’s House students are introduced to the nomenclature of the visible parts of plants and animals, using puzzles and nature card sets which lay the groundwork for further study in Lower and Upper Elementary. Many such elementary lessons spring from the story of life on this planet which the children have heard. Students learn about the families of the animal kingdom, including vertebrates and invertebrates, their

classification, their basic characteristics, and the way they function and survive. They also learn about different plant groups, from mosses to flowering plants.

In the Middle School, students may study bacteria and plants, animals, cells and heredity, human biology, and environmental science. Habitats, ecosystems, biodiversity, biomes, waste disposal and recycling, fossil fuels, nuclear energy are topics included in their study of environmental science. Students study the different systems of the body and learn how various foods affect the body. In the study of cells and heredity, topics include cell structure and function, cell processes and energy, genetics, and Darwin's Theory.

### Physical Science (Chemistry, Physics)

Like many other areas of the curriculum, the study of physical science is introduced at the Children's House level and reintroduced several times throughout a student's eleven years at Oak Meadow. Using developmentally appropriate models and materials, designed to be handled and manipulated, Children's House and elementary students are introduced to and explore the following topics: chemistry, the periodic table, states of matter, light, sound, magnetism, simple machines, the water cycle, weather, and the solar system. Hands-on experiments and demonstrations help to reinforce the concepts being learned. The "scientific method" is taught at the elementary level and children in the third year of Lower Elementary and beyond are given an opportunity to practice it at the Science Fair each spring.

The Middle School science program, which is centered on student inquiry and the development of excellent scientific skills, promotes a deeper understanding of the scientific concepts learned in earlier grades. Students are actively involved in investigations, observations, and experiments that require them to learn and apply rigorous scientific habits of work and mind. They make careful observations, recognize control and variables in experiments, record data, analyze results, draw sound conclusions, and communicate their findings. They also undertake background research and seek to recognize and regulate bias in experimental research. Students are expected to conduct individual and small group work, engage in pair and small group discussions, give formal presentations of their research and results, and contribute to whole class conversations and activities. Students write formal lab reports to communicate their investigative work to others. They use higher-order thinking skills and creative thinking to solve problems, develop ideas, and communicate understanding. Topics may include motion, forces, Newton's Laws of Motion, energy, chemical building blocks and interactions electricity and magnetism, and sound and light.

### Earth Science (Physical Geography)

The study of physical geography begins in Children's House, with the use of materials that have been specially prepared for use by that age group. Brightly colored globes and puzzle maps help children to learn the continents of the world, the countries of North and South America and Europe and the other continents, as well as the states of the U.S.A.

Elementary students gain knowledge about basic land and water formations, such as an island, isthmus, peninsula, strait, lake, cape, bay and archipelago by making three dimensional models of each and finding examples of them on maps. Other work includes an introduction to longitude and latitude, use of a compass, the study of the different flora and fauna, as well as the people, of the different continents. Such topics as formations of the oceans, rivers, lakes, the water cycle, the atmosphere, continental drift and tectonic plates, volcanoes, earth quakes, the ice ages and the formation of mountain ranges are addressed with story telling, hands-on experiments and research.

In Middle School, students study the Earth's changing surface and understand how weathering and erosion affects the Earth's surface, understand the role of plants and animals in soil formation and study the geological time scale. In addition, students study the Earth's waters (this reinforces what the students learn in the elementary level), weather and climate (answers questions as to how the climate is governed by the Earth's atmosphere), astronomy, and the nature of science and technology.

### *Cultural Geography*

Cultural studies begin in Children's House and continue through Middle School. Using age appropriate activities, students learn about the geography, climate, flora and fauna of different regions and the effect of these on the people who live there. In addition, children benefit from the experiences of our multicultural community, as they explore regional foods, dress, music, art, religion and traditions.

### *Economic Geography*

Beginning in Lower Elementary and continuing through Middle School, students are asked to consider the common needs of people around the world, over time and how these needs have been met. "Interconnectedness" is an underlying theme, as children explore man's use of the earth's natural resources and the development of trade.

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### SPANISH

At Oak Meadow Montessori School, the study of Spanish as a second language is taught to students from Children's House through Middle School. Using repetition, music and movement, the Children's House Spanish teacher introduces students to simple vocabulary and phrases. In addition, she draws upon familiar story books, which she reads to the children in both Spanish and English, until they become familiar enough with the Spanish words to understand. The use of puppets and stuffed animals to role play is also important in helping children to acquire a foreign language at this age.

Music and movement continue to play an important role in helping older children to learn a second language. In Lower and Upper Elementary, auditory and kinesthetic learners respond to the use of *TPR* (Total Physical Response) and *TPRS* (Teaching Proficiency Through Storytelling). In *TPR*, children respond to oral commands (Simon Says) kinesthetically. *TPRS* begins with introducing vocabulary coupled with a specific gesture (often borrowed from American Sign Language). Students are engaged by playing games with the new vocabulary, using it in the context of sentences in which, more often than not, they are actors. Once the vocabulary starts to be automatically recalled, a visual component is included. Props, pictures and signs are used to tell stories, in which the students play an active role creating, embellishing, acting out and narrating. Multiple writing and reading activities related to the story, which was created, told, and retold, follow.

In the Middle School grades, students use interactive CD-ROM activities that complement their textbook. These provide multi-modal input of the language, and give students an opportunity to practice oral and written communication. Students receive instant feedback on their performance, including any necessary corrections to their answers.

Instruction is given in a variety of formats, from individual and small group, to large group. Students have opportunities to work independently on projects of their own choosing. An example of this might be demonstrating their command of prepositions of location. Projects ranged from an original story, to a flap picture book, to a board game, and a diorama.

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### PRACTICAL LIFE

The Practical Life curriculum is a series of simple, everyday activities designed to help very young students develop a sense of independence, self-confidence and responsibility, while indirectly strengthening their coordination, developing a sense of order and lengthening their concentration. This area focuses on skills that allow children to take care of themselves and their environment. Lessons begin at Children's House and continue through Middle School with more and more advanced tasks.

Early lessons include:

- 🍂 Dressing oneself
- 🍂 Learning one's address and phone number
- 🍂 Pouring without spilling
- 🍂 Carrying without dropping
- 🍂 Using knives and scissors safely
- 🍂 Using simple tools
- 🍂 Dusting, polishing, washing
- 🍂 Sweeping, vacuuming
- 🍂 Flower arranging
- 🍂 Caring for animals and plants
- 🍂 Table setting
- 🍂 Table manners
- 🍂 Napkin folding
- 🍂 Using thread and needle
- 🍂 Using household tools (tweezers, tongs, eyedroppers)
- 🍂 Simple food preparation

Lessons for older children also include:

- 🍂 Preparing a menu
- 🍂 Making a shopping list
- 🍂 Planning a budget
- 🍂 Maintaining a checkbook
- 🍂 Mastering test taking strategies
- 🍂 Child care
- 🍂 Furniture refinishing
- 🍂 Gardening
- 🍂 Running a small business

Instruction in “grace and courtesy”, which begins in Children's House and continues through Middle School, is another important component of the Practical Life Curriculum. Students at Oak Meadow learn early the importance of using everyday manners. Acting with kindness and respect is expected classroom behavior and is modeled by the adults in

the building. As the children grow, teachers present a variety of age appropriate lessons to reinforce the importance of these interpersonal skills.

Service to the community is another “practical life” concept. Instilled in students from an early age, it takes on an increasingly important role in Elementary and Middle School. Like “grace and courtesy”, this emphasis on community service is meant to help students understand and accept their responsibilities, as members of a greater community, as well as to help them develop a clear sense of values.

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### SENSORIAL

Children discover the physical world around them through their senses. The Sensorial Materials, designed by Dr. Montessori to help students sharpen these senses and develop their power of observation, create in them an awareness of variations, such as the wide spectrum of color in nature, the broad range of tones the bells make, the feel of rough tree bark and smooth, the sound of silence. These works are designed to help children learn to focus their attention. They ask children to distinguish, to categorize and to relate new information to information they already know, skills critical to the development of judgment and decision making. They also involve the acquisition of new vocabulary.

Early lessons include:

- ✿ Distinguishing length, width and height
- ✿ Distinguishing volume
- ✿ Distinguishing dimension
- ✿ Distinguishing color tone
- ✿ Distinguishing shape and size
- ✿ Distinguishing sounds
- ✿ Distinguishing musical tones
- ✿ Distinguishing textures by touch
- ✿ Distinguishing weights by touch
- ✿ Distinguishing temperatures by touch
- ✿ Distinguishing smells
- ✿ Solving abstract three dimensional puzzles

Lessons for older children include:

- ✿ Nature walks
- ✿ Journaling
- ✿ Descriptive writing
- ✿ Cooking
- ✿ Art appreciation
- ✿ Music appreciation

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### ART

#### Children's House

Third year full day Children's House students come to art once, every other week, in small groups. They are exposed to a wide range of materials and processes. The goal is for them to enjoy and explore a variety of projects. The emphasis is on the process of making art in a personal way. They work independently on projects of their own choosing within a framework that is set up by the art teacher. Lessons are given on materials, their care and use.

#### Lower Elementary

Lower Elementary students receive art instruction by grade level once a week. They are exposed to a wide range of materials and processes. The goal, at this level, is for students to begin to develop a deeper understanding of how art materials can be used and manipulated to create unique, personal expressions of their creativity. Experimentation is encouraged and mixing mediums and coming up with original ideas is encouraged. They work independently on projects of their own choosing within a framework that is set up by the art teacher. Awareness of the history of art and art from cultures all over the world is emphasized through projects focused on specific artists, styles, periods or methods.

#### Upper Elementary

Upper Elementary students receive art instruction by grade level once a week. They are exposed to a wide range of materials and processes. The goal, at this level, is for students to continue to develop a deeper understanding of materials and processes so that they are able to independently pursue projects of their own interest as well as to achieve competency working on class projects. Exposure and awareness of the history of art and art from other cultures continues to be important at this level.

#### Middle School

Middle School students receive art instruction by grade level once a week. They are exposed to a wide range of materials and processes. The goal, at this level, is for students to continue to develop a deeper understanding of materials and processes so that they are able to independently pursue projects of their own interest as well as to achieve competency working on class projects. Exposure and awareness of the history of art and art from other cultures continues to be important at this level. Some self-evaluation is done at this level as well as preparing work for display.

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### MUSIC

#### Children's House

Children's House students receive music instruction once a week in groups of ten. Through clapping, movement, and the use of rhythm instruments, they learn to understand the concept of "beat". In preparation of musical literacy, they are taught to read, clap and speak simple rhythmic notation and to sing do, re, mi...using Kodaly/Curwen hand signs. In addition, they are introduced to some familiar themes from classical music, such as Haydn's "Surprise Symphony", "Morning" from Grieg's "Peer Gynt Suite", and Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf". Children at this level also learn to recognize some of the string, woodwind and brass instruments, both visually and aurally, after having the opportunity for hands-on experience with them. Each spring, Children's House students perform a collection of songs and dances, in a whole class presentation for their parents.

#### Lower Elementary

Lower Elementary students learn to sing more complex songs, including two to four part rounds, with light head voices and increasing tonal accuracy. They are able to read and clap rhythmic notation, as it occurs in songs, to understand G clef, measures, time signatures and key signatures. Their understanding of "beat" expands to include 2/4, 3/4, 4/4 and 6/8 time. They become familiar with themes and short selections from classical music, such as "Eine Kleine Nacht Musik" by Mozart or a movement from a symphony by Beethoven. They expand their ability to recognize instruments, both visually and aurally and learn to identify simple forms in music, such as a Rondo. In addition, they learn and perform circle, partner and line dances. Each spring, Lower Elementary students perform a collection of songs and dances, in a whole class presentation for their parents.

#### Upper Elementary

All Upper Elementary students learn to play a musical instrument. Fourth year students learn to play a C or F recorder, to read notes using their absolute pitches and to play together in unison, duets or trios. By the end of the school year, recorder students should be able to read and play songs using up to twelve different notes.

Fifth and Sixth year students learn to play stringed instruments. They may choose violin, viola, cello or acoustic guitar. Beginners learn the proper way to hold and use their instruments. More experienced musicians play together in the orchestra, for which they learn new notes and techniques, as needed in the orchestral music they are preparing. Upper Elementary students perform in a whole class presentation for their parents each spring. In addition, the Oak Meadow orchestra performs periodically throughout the year at all school meetings, graduation and other events.

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### DRAMA

The drama curriculum integrates the components necessary to create and sustain believable characters and situations, as well as the willing suspension of disbelief. The students work on relaxation, concentration, imagination and transformation. Through exercises that combine vocal warm-ups and physical movement, the class learns proper breath control, enunciation, body awareness and flexibility. Students experience theatre games and improvisations that enhance focus, observation, trust, bonding and energy. These exercises also expand the imagination, as students practice quick thinking, mental agility, 3-dimensional and abstract thinking. Often they work in pairs and groups where they learn respect, communication, cooperation and morale building. In solo presentations, the student demonstrates risk-taking and makes thoughtful, specific choices. Many of these workshop challenges include props, music, masks and lead-ins on index cards that establish first and last lines, constant actions, themes, acting styles and locations. There is also side-coaching, where the instructor gives helpful adjustments and the audience (the student body observing) offers constructive feedback.

Students perform scenes from a variety of contemporary playwrights. These scenes begin as cold readings, and after class discussion and rehearsal, are presented as polished work. In class, students studied and performed readings such as *Inherit the Wind* and *The Rememberer*. The classes also explore writing monologues. Initially, a student chooses a poem to be performed solo, and then writes an original one-person presentation.

The seventh and eighth grade classes perform a final production that is rehearsed throughout the second half of the year. In the past, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *The Comedy of Errors* has been performed. Leadership skills, camaraderie and responsibility are some of the tools students learn when working on a play. As students delve into their roles, they apply both the concepts and techniques that they encountered in class. Students examine and discuss their parts during the rehearsal process. The group also interprets the play's meaning, historical significance and relevance to today's world.

The play's final performances are open to the general public, and are regularly attended by the entire school. Ultimately students experience the joy, excitement and self-affirmation that come with the study of drama.

# OAK MEADOW MONTESSORI SCHOOL

## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

#### Children's House

Full day Children's House students receive physical education once a week for thirty-minutes. Each class of twenty students is split into two smaller classes of ten. The objective is to develop gross motor skills, body awareness, control and coordination. Students are encouraged to explore new movements through the use of music and acquire a greater sense of direction and spatial awareness. Students are introduced to simple team games and cooperative games always enforcing good sportsmanship.

#### Lower Elementary

Lower Elementary students receive Physical Education by grade twice a week for a total of ninety minutes. One goal at this level is to introduce muscular development through strength, endurance, flexibility and cardio-respiratory endurance. (Physical Fitness Testing)

Students are introduced to team and group games. They are encouraged to strategize and use their own knowledge and skill to work together to achieve a certain outcome. They practice and build on skills that have been introduced in the Children's House.

#### Upper Elementary

The Upper Elementary students receive Physical Education by grade twice a week for a total of ninety minutes. The Upper Elementary also attends class by grade. As in Lower Elementary, students at this level continue to refine simple locomotor skills. They focus on improving knowledge and specific sport skills needed to perform and participate at individual, group and team sports. Students also continue to improve on and develop greater muscular strength, endurance, flexibility, and cardio-respiratory endurance. (Physical Fitness Testing)

#### Middle School

Middle School Physical Education classes are held by grade twice a week for ninety minutes. The main focus is primarily on building a greater self-image and increasing self-confidence by setting attainable goals and working hard to achieve them. Muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and cardio-respiratory endurance are important factors for life long health and well-being. These factors are improved upon during team related sports and games, individual challenges and cooperative games.