



### **“Wicked Smart” Students**

One of Maria Montessori’s greatest discoveries was that there is a powerful constructive force, deep within children, which builds the adults they become. But, historically, most attempts at education have neglected this power. The traditional approach, which pushes children to memorize skills and facts apart from interest, suppresses this constructive power. Conversely, the more recent, progressive approach—which claims to recognize this constructive power—fails to give it the curriculum, support, structure, and coaching it needs.

*The Montessori Method, alone, recognizes and supports a child’s natural, constructive power.*

Today, almost all schools—both public and parochial—use the traditional method. The best case scenario in this system is for a child to persevere through boredom to achieve good grades, get into a top college, and collect the required certificates for passage into financial security. Once they emerge from this tunnel, those bulbs which remain bright will have “learned” a lot—but *their learning will be empty: void of meaning, power, and practical utility.*

The mission of Atlas Academy is to discover a better way. To cash-in, fully, on the promise offered by Maria Montessori’s discovery—to lay secure footing for the immense constructive power within children to realize its highest potential.

Over the next decade, as the academy advances into Middle School and High School, we will, of course, make sure that our students have the necessary keys for entrance into adult society—things such as AP courses, leadership opportunities, extra curriculars, and top SAT scores. But these activities will be taken up as a necessary evil—as important but unfortunate detours from the construction of a fiery intelligence.

Our main work at Atlas Academy is to help children to construct a passionate, powerful intelligence; in other words, to help them become “wicked smart”. To quote Maria Montessori: “We claim that the average boy or girl of twelve who has been educated till then at one of our schools knows at least as much as the finished High School product of several years’ seniority.” Wow! Just think of that: **an 8th grader who is much smarter than a typical high school graduate** (and who is also mentally healthy, good natured, and socially responsible); that’s our aim, and at the moment we’re right on track.

(continued...)

How many adults know the geometric proof of the pythagorean theorem (and can construct it using a compass and ruler)?—our 3rd and 4th graders are discovering that now. How many adults know how long it takes for Jupiter to pass through the zodiac constellations—or why Venus is sometimes a ‘morning star’ and other times an ‘evening star’?—our 3rd and 4th graders are discovering that now. How many adults can: (1) diagram sentences with subject, predicate, modifiers, and objects, (2) find the most powerful intervals in a piece of music, (3) multiply multi-digit numbers in their head, (4) add base-12 numbers such as  $3,B43 + 1,2A4$ , (5) outline the general course of events from the birth of the universe to the present day, (6) construct definitions of vocabulary terms using the genus/differentia method, or (7) name the 6 main orders of mammals?

These are all things that our 3rd and 4th graders are working on now, and will have mastered by the time they graduate from Elementary School. (And this is all on top of working on mastery of the basic skills such as reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic.)

**Just imagine how much more our students will be able to learn, and how smart they might become, if they remain at Atlas Academy through Middle School and High School.**