

WLMS Montessori Inspired Elementary

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According to the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the American Montessori Society (AMS), some essential elements of a Montessori classroom that separate a Montessori program from other educational models are:

- 1). Mixed-age classrooms (ranging from a 3-year span to a 6-year span)
- 2). Uninterrupted blocks of work time
- 3). Student directed learning within a prescribed and limited range of options
- 4). Learning through the hands-on use of materials, not just instructional time.

These components of a Montessori program serve to foster responsibility at a young age, help children solidify their own learning by having an opportunity to teach younger children, and allows for maximized learning at crucial periods of a child's developmental growth. Our Pre-K classes are purely Montessori and guests who observe our Montessori classroom often remark on the calm environment, and express surprise at the way in which such small children go about their work with independence, focus and interest. Many parents and students of our school have had the opportunity to experience our Montessori Pre-School and Pre-K and the reviews have been great.

While our Elementary Program is not Montessori, there are elements of the Montessori model that we use to help enhance student learning, discover children's interests and strengths, and foster responsibility. Our Elementary classrooms are mixed-age classrooms. Students learn many important skills by sharing a classroom with children in different grades. Younger children are able to learn from older children and have mentors closer to their age, while older children are able to reinforce their learning by applying their knowledge and passing it on to a younger child in a way that resonates with the younger children in which adults are rarely able to do. This is an essential skill to master that will serve them well, not just throughout their education, but into adulthood. The ability to socialize, teach, and learn from people of all different ages, strengths and dispositions is a skill that is essential both in school and in life.

WLMS's Elementary classrooms allows for freedom and choice (within limits) that other models are not able to accommodate. For instance, the Elementary students' literacy block, known as "Daily 5", allows for choice within limits. Students are able to choose the order in which they accomplish their five daily literacy activities, as long as each activity is completed. This gives children the opportunity to learn prioritization, personal ownership of their learning, and feel a sense of autonomy.

Our math curriculum, Singapore Math, also has elements of the Montessori approach. Children first learn concrete concepts through the use of didactic materials. Once they have mastered the concepts they then move from the concrete to the abstract. This way of learning takes into consideration a child's developmental needs, and allows for a deeper and more lasting understanding of mathematics.

Taking personal responsibility for one's person, belongings, and learning is a crucial component of both Montessori and WLMS's Elementary program. We want our students to take ownership of their actions and behaviours, their learning, and their classroom. In a multi-age system students will likely spend more than one year in a classroom. This gives them the opportunity to make the classroom their own, form long-lasting bonds with their teachers and friends and help set the tone of the environment within which they will work and learn. Montessori referred to the primary classroom as a "Children's House". This philosophy carries over into WLMS's Elementary program. Our students are given tasks and roles that help them maintain their classroom "house". Their teacher is not a babysitter or a lecturer, but a partner in helping them learn and grow.