

**Chenal Valley Montessori School
Elementary
Middle School
HANDBOOK**

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Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori was born in Ancona, Italy in 1870. Against the wishes of her family, and contrary to expectations for women of her time, she attended the University of Rome, and in 1895 became the first woman in Italy to obtain the degree of Doctor of Medicine. This scientific background and the techniques of observation, testing, and retesting led Dr. Montessori to the development of theories that have had a profound impact on modern education.

Her early medical work was with children who were institutionalized because of their mental handicaps. She designed materials that helped them to surpass normal children in standard examinations. In 1907, Dr. Montessori opened her first "Children's House" in San Lorenzo, a suburb of Rome. Her students were young children who were residents of a new public housing development, and Montessori was hired to keep them occupied during the day while their parents worked. Here, using materials and techniques primarily of her own design, she created an atmosphere that fostered children's natural desire to learn. The children blossomed, and word about the Montessori Method spread. Schools following her method were established throughout Italy and Europe.

In 1912, the first Montessori school in the United States was established in the home of Alexander Graham Bell. Maria Montessori visited the United States in 1915, as the guest of Thomas Edison, who was a great admirer of her work. She set up model classrooms at the San Francisco World Exposition. Montessori schools continued to proliferate throughout the world, and Montessori herself became an outspoken advocate for the rights of children and woman. She considered education a preparation for life, not merely a quest for intellectual skills, and felt that schools should foster exploration and discovery in an atmosphere of encouragement and respect.

Montessori actively worked to promote peace, and spoke out against the rising tide of militarism. In the late 1930's at the outbreak of World War II in Europe, the Fascist regime in Italy closed Montessori's schools and banned her books. She left Italy and became a resident of Amsterdam, Holland. While visiting India during this period, she was detained as an Italian national. Although she was not allowed to travel in India, she was allowed to teach, and hundreds of teachers were trained in the Montessori Method during her stay there.

At the war's end, Montessori returned to her home in Amsterdam. She continued to write, lecture, and teach until her death in 1952. Montessori's son, Mario, continued his mother's work until his death, and her granddaughter Renilde remain active in the movement today. There are now more than 3,000 Montessori schools in the United States, and thousands more worldwide.

General Information

Those of us at Chenal Valley Montessori School hold as our primary mission, maintaining an educational program to develop the whole child – intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially. Our program is based on the Montessori Method, which will enable each child to reach his/her full potential.

Whom Do We Serve? *Chenal Valley Montessori School serves children and their families. The children are between the ages of 3 months and 14 years. They come from many different communities; most live within a ten mile radius. We do, however; have children who live as far as thirty or forty miles from the school. CVMS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin in the administration of its admission policies.*

School History *Chenal Valley Montessori School was founded by Dorothy and Lawrence Moffett on March 16, 1996. The school was incorporated on April 16, 1996. Chenal Valley Montessori School's first class, for seven children, was held in the white Williamsburg home-like structure located on Taylor Loop. In 1996, CVMS became a fully affiliated American Montessori School. In the spring of 1998, the Little Rock Zoning Commission granted the school permission to start an elementary class and increase the number of students to forty-eight. The school enrollment continued to rapidly increase making it necessary for the school to lease another facility. In 2007, land was purchased and a new campus was planned. The new campus opened in August of 2007.*

Affiliations and Licensing *CVMS is an American Montessori Society (AMS) affiliated school. AMS has over two thousand schools located in the United States, Canada, England, and throughout the world. In addition, the school is licensed by the State of Arkansas. It meets all the necessary space, zoning, fire, and health regulations.*

School Program

Infant & Toddler & Primary (see General Brochure)

Kindergarten Class *This class offers advanced materials for those children who are 5 1/2 to 6 1/2 years of age and for those children coming from traditional schools who might need to strengthen math and/or language skills.*

Elementary & Middle School Classes *For children who are from 6 to 14 years of age. Our elementary program is divided into lower and upper grades according to age and/or abilities.*

School Hours *The school is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Elementary classes meet from 8:15 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Children may arrive from 7:30 A.M. to 7:55 A.M. for a charge of \$25 a month.*

Late Charges *From time to time, there will be occasions when parents have to work late or have an appointment, and they may need to pick up their child later than 3:00 P.M. Late charges begin fifteen minutes after pick-up time.*

Extended Care *Children may arrive as early as 8:00 A.M. and stay as late as 5:30 P.M. We ask parents to please arrange to be at the school no later than five minutes before closing. **There is a late charge of \$1.00 a minute after 5:30 P.M.***

School Philosophy

Children Learn at their Own Pace *The Montessori program offers a child the opportunity to explore a variety of approaches using dynamic and colorful manipulatives. The elementary child moves from the vivid materials experience to the abstract by visualizing mental concepts once demonstrated by the concrete materials.*

The Montessori Elementary Classroom *The teacher structures the environment, presents key lessons, and acts as a resource person and facilitator. The school day is organized to include a balance of individual, small group, and large group activities. The open classroom, with interest areas, group work tables, and individual work stations, encourages social development and the sharing of information among students. The atmosphere is one of sharing, caring, and cooperation, instead of competition.*

Multi-Age Groups *Children are grouped in multi-age classrooms. This affords maximum stimulation for the child, enabling him to imitate and internalize skills before he has even received a lesson. The older children provide leadership, reliable friendships, and academic learning which peers do not always provide. The older children benefit from helping the younger. Multi-age grouping means more group options respective to ability and interest: there is a wider range for a child's individual pace.*

The Teacher as a Generalist *The Montessori teacher is a generalist trained point to point with a very detailed curriculum. The children have the same instructor for a minimum of three years; this allows for an intimate knowledge of each child and her strengths and weaknesses. The teacher strives to meet the needs of each individual and affirm each one's uniqueness while carefully orchestrating the children to work together well as a community.*

Social Development: Making Friends One of the most important assets CVMS has to offer our elementary children is the opportunity to participate in a small class where everyone knows everyone. Older children help the younger children, and the younger children learn from watching the older children do their work. Since in Montessori classes, children are not given seat assignments but are allowed to move around, they have the opportunity to exchange academic facts and make discoveries. Adding to the community spirit is parent involvement. The school is a community and all parents and students are encouraged to participate with events such as field trips, picnics, discussions, and celebration of our national holidays.

School Policies

Enrollment Policies Enrollment is a yearly process for all students, both new and returning. The completed application form and NON-REFUNDABLE fees must be submitted to the office by the date indicated on enrollment information.

Withdrawal from School It is expected that a child who is enrolled in the school will attend the whole year. The parent is responsible for the year's tuition. If a parent is transferred to another state or if a parent becomes seriously ill, they should submit a letter of consideration to the Board of Directors.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES: Regularly scheduled conferences occur at least twice each year. If a teacher sees a need for a conference in addition to these two, she will ask you to come in. If you would like to schedule a conference at any other time, please call the school or contact your child's teacher to make an appointment for this. It is necessary that parent and teacher work together for the benefit of the child.

PARENT EDUCATION: Parents must attend two parent/teacher conferences, two open houses, and one additional parent gathering. If you do not attend each, there will be a \$50 penalty for each non-attendance.

In addition, each new students' parents are required to attend a Montessori overview before the first parent/teacher conference. Please call the office to schedule.

Tuition There are three options for paying tuition: (1) pay entire amount when the child is enrolled (2) pay half of the tuition at the first of the school year and the remainder will be due in January or (3) pay the tuition in ten monthly payments. These payments are due at the first of each month. Payments may be made by check, cash, or credit card. Most debit cards are also accepted. **There is a fifteen dollar late fee for payments received after the fifth of the month. There will be another fifteen dollars added if payment is not received by the fifteenth.**

Possible Additional Costs *There are extra costs for optional hot lunches and/or pizza, special supplies, field trips, and book club purchases.*

Responsibility for Damages *Children are expected to treat school property and other children's belongings with respect. Lost or deliberately abused materials or equipment will be replaced by the student.*

Comings and Goings *Please follow these guidelines when dropping off and picking up your children. The first car pulls up to the front door. This procedure should be followed during the following hours: 7:30 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. and 2:45 P.M. to 3:30 P.M. Arrival: **Classes start at 8:15 A.M.** Arriving on time is very important to the classroom. If your child is tardy, please remind him/her to enter the classroom quietly without disrupting classmates. Remember to always drop your children off at the front door (the front passenger's door will be towards the curb). The drop-off line is a moving line only. Parents who will be entering the building must use the parking lot. Elementary students should enter the classroom alone. If a parent needs to speak with the teacher, please wait at the front desk for the teacher to come to you. This ensures privacy and fewer distractions for the children. Dismissal: Classes are dismissed at 3:00 P.M. Anyone staying in extended care may stay no later than 5:30 P.M. Please remember to use utmost caution in our parking lot, as children are present.*

UNIFORMS

Uniforms *CVMS uniforms are available at the following stores: THE TOGGERY SHOP and LANDS END CATALOG (available at the school).*

GIRLS: *Girls in the lower elementary class (six to eight years old) wear plaid jumpers with knee socks. Elementary girls must wear the school plaids. There are two styles of jumpers; both are acceptable. Walking shorts or pants may be worn on Wednesdays. Walking shorts must be bought at one of the uniform suppliers or be approved by the school. Young ladies should wear discreet shorts under their skirts/dresses. Fridays are free clothes days.*

Girls in the upper elementary class (nine to fourteen years old) may wear plaid, navy or khaki shorts/pants, or plaid jumpers that are fitted at the waist. Elementary girls must wear the school plaids. Girls in the upper elementary may wear walking shorts and knee length socks or long pants on Wednesdays. Young ladies should wear discreet shorts under their skirts/dresses. Fridays are free clothes days for students who have completed their weekly assignments.

Shirts White cotton tailored blouses (see Lands End catalog) either short or long sleeves. Knit shirts must have a collar and may be white, navy, or burgundy. School logos are preferred.

Shoes Can be black or brown loafers or dress shoes (T-Straps) (see Lands End catalog). Low cut tennis shoes are also acceptable. Sneakers may be worn on regular school days. Please no flip flops, sequined, or brightly colored or decorated shoes. Please see below for uniform policy pertaining to dress uniform days.

Socks Can be purchased at most stores. Knee length white, navy, or burgundy must be worn with jumpers, skirts, skorts, and walking shorts. On very hot days ankle length socks may be worn. Please no bright colored tights or printed tights.

Sweaters These can be cardigans or pullovers. They must be solid navy or burgundy. They may be purchased at any store. Lands End has sweaters and shirts with the CVMS logo. All elementary/middle school students must have one pullover cardigan style sweater with the school logo embroidered on it for dress uniform days. It may be worn anytime but should be kept in nice condition.

Jewelry No excessive jewelry is permissible. Small hoop or post earrings may be worn.

Hair Accessories Bows, barrettes, and ribbons should coordinate with the uniform.

BOYS:

Shoes Shoes for boys are to be brown or black leather or suede loafers or oxfords. Low cut tennis shoes are also acceptable. Sneakers are acceptable on regular school days. Please see below for policy regarding dress uniform days.

Pants Navy, khaki, or twill short or long styles. No blue jeans.

Shirts White oxford dress shirts short or long sleeved. Chambray shirts or knit shirts with collars must be navy, white, burgundy, or khaki. School logos are preferred.

Ties Burgundy, plaid, or stripes should coordinate with our uniform.

Sweaters Cardigans, pullovers, vests, and turtleneck sweaters may be worn. They must be solid and burgundy or navy color.

For lower elementary boys, Friday is a free-clothes day. For upper elementary boys, Friday is a free-clothes day if the student has finished all weekly assignments.

DRESS UNIFORM: All elementary/middle school students will need: a white dress shirt (short sleeves for the warmer weather and long sleeves for the colder weather), a burgundy v-neck pullover sweater with the school emblem, dress shoes such as loafers, Mary Janes, or oxfords. Shoes may be black or brown and should be polished. Boys will wear navy long pants and girls will wear the pleated plaid skirt. Boys will wear plaid ties that match the girl's plaid skirts. Girls will wear plaid ties that crossover the top button of blouse. Shirts, pants, and skirts should be freshly washed and ironed. (You will always be informed with plenty of notice before needing to purchase/wear the dress uniform.)

P.E. UNIFORM: All elementary/middle school students need a pair of solid colored shorts and a t-shirt to keep at school for P.E. days.

It is a good idea for all students to have a pair of spare clothes or a spare uniform in their cubby in case of accidents. (Accidents can happen at any age, they are not limited to younger children. A child can easily fall in mud, spill something at lunch, get drenched in a sudden downpour, etc.) It is a good idea for elementary children to bring old shoes for outside use. These shoes may be left at school.

Please write your child's name on all articles of clothing (shoes, jackets, sweaters, etc.) that are brought to school. It takes just a few minutes for these items to become mixed-up.

*Backpacks are unnecessary for our elementary/middle school children. If your child insists on bringing a backpack, it must be a **SMALL** clear backpack. In accordance to DHS policies backpacks must be checked each day. If your child brings a backpack that is not clear, it must be submitted for search each day.*

Discipline Policy

If a group of people of any age is to function happily together they must agree to abide by some rules. We try to have a set of rules for the classroom that are few and easy to understand.

MINOR OFFENCES: *When a child at Chenal Valley Montessori School behaves in a way that is detrimental to the materials, himself, or others, we will intervene. Initially, the child is shown an acceptable way to handle the situation. **The child is given the benefit of the doubt. It is assumed that he/she did not break the rule deliberately, but merely made a mistake – hence, many reminders.** If a child insists on repeating unacceptable behavior, discipline usually consists of isolating the child from the thing or person involved in the behavior (time out)*

for a short time. We do NOT spank the children. If the disruptive behavior continues over a period of time, the parent will be contacted.

MAJOR OFFENCES: Major offences include, but are not limited to, such behavior as: persistent defiance of school authority; cruelly attacking others, whether verbally or physically; willful destruction of property; consistent lack of cooperation; using inappropriate language; any activity which requires an inordinate amount of time and attention from school personnel. If a child is persistent in engaging in such behavior, we feel that he has some unusual problem and we recognize that we are not trained nor do we have the personnel to handle these situations. In such cases, we will discuss the problems with the parents, and if no solution is soon apparent, we will require the parents to withdraw the child and hopefully get professional help elsewhere.

Other Policies

Lunches Children bring their own lunch to school from home each day except for Pizza Day (usually Fridays) or Hot Lunch/Catered Lunch Day when a hot lunch is offered. Both are optional. During lunch, students are learning good table manners and etiquette. They use plates and utensils which are provided in the classroom. We strongly recommend foods from the four food groups for lunches such as:

1. Dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, cream cheese, etc.)
2. Lean Meats or other high protein food
3. Beans and grains (whole grain breads, baked goods, granola bars, etc.)
4. Fruits and vegetables

Please do not send CHIPS, CANDY, GO-GURT, GUM, or SOFT DRINKS. Baked chips are acceptable, as are Sun chips, pretzels, and baked tortilla chips (such as blue corn). We will serve milk for \$12 per month. Children staying for the extended care program are served a snack in the afternoon. There is not enough room in the classroom refrigerator for each child's lunchbox. If there is something in your child's lunchbox that you feel would be a health hazard if not kept refrigerated, please let your child know and he/she can put the item in the refrigerator.

Playground Time The children will almost always go outside for recess if there is no precipitation. During colder and hotter weather, the outside time will be shortened. Please send your child with adequate clothing for the weather outside. Even in very cold weather, the children are refreshed if they can bundle up and go out for five minutes or so.

EMERGENCY CLOSING During severe weather conditions (such as ice or snow); our school will be closed if the Little Rock School System and/or Pulaski

County Special School District closes and in some cases we may close regardless of those two districts' status. Our closing will be announced on the local TV stations Channel 7, KATV and Channel 4, KARK. A message will also be recorded on the school's voicemail in the event of closing.

Babysitting Teachers, assistants, and staff members are discouraged from babysitting children from the school. Please honor this policy.

Absences If your child is unable to attend school, please call and let us know he/she will not be attending that day. If we do not receive a phone call, someone from the office may call you to inquire about the nature of this absence. State laws require that children attend school for a certain number of days each semester. For this reason, the school watches the attendance records including tardies. Our primary purpose at CVMS is to educate children, so it is essential that every child arrive on time. The morning activities set the tone for the child's day at school. If a child arrives late, these activities are disturbed.

Children who arrive after 10:00 A.M. or are picked-up before 2:00 P.M. will be counted absent for a half-day. These times are essential to the child's learning process. Please call the school if one of these circumstances must occur so that we can prepare your child for an early dismissal.

As an incentive for your child to arrive on time, the school will acknowledge children with no tardies and/or absences at the Graduation Program or other Spring Program.

The state only allows so many unexcused absences for each semester. Please let the school know about the nature of all absences so the attendance records will indicate whether the absence is excused or unexcused.

Take-Home Assignments As a Montessori school, we try to keep homework assignments to a minimum. However, teachers often send home small assignments to help teach responsibility. If a student does not return their homework in a timely fashion, the teacher may assign a "detention" to take place during recess, after school, or before school. It will be the parent's responsibility to make sure that the child is present at this time. Also, all students in the elementary classes are required to read at least one chapter or one age appropriate picture book per night. This should be recorded on a journal page in the child's folder. Folders are returned to class each day and not returning a folder carries the same consequence as a missing homework assignment.

Dismissal Time In order to keep the traffic situation under control, the school has decided to stagger dismissal times. Toddlers are dismissed at 2:30. The primary children are dismissed at 2:45 P.M. Elementary children are dismissed at 3:00 P.M. If your elementary child has a sibling in the primary program at the same building, the younger child will wait until the older children are dismissed at 3:00 P.M. Please do not arrive before 3:00 P.M. to pick-up your elementary child as this will disrupt the traffic flow of the primary dismissal line. If you do, please line up at the west side of the driveway across from the red fire hydrant. If your

child must be picked up before dismissal time, please let your child's teacher know so that your child will be ready and your arrival will not disturb the classroom or carpool line.

Birthdays *We have a very special birthday celebration to acknowledge each child's birthday. We ask that you send on the day prior to the birthday, a list of significant occurrences in the child's life for each year since his birth. We like to emphasize something the child has learned to do each year. We will use this information for a celebration of the milestones he has passed. If you would like to send a small treat for your child's class, please discuss it with the teacher of your child's class.*

ELECTRONICS: *Cell phones and electronic devices are to be checked into the classroom teacher first thing in the morning. It will be stored in a locked cabinet in the classroom and given back to the student at dismissal. If a cell phone or device is found in the possession of a student the phone/device will be confiscated and the parent will need to pick it up from the office. An exception to this policy is an electronic reader, which may be brought to school and used as a reading device only. Access to the internet on such devices is prohibited. Misuse of the reader will result in the same consequence as listed above, with possible additional consequences depending on the nature of the violation. The school will not be held responsible for lost or damaged readers. It is strongly suggested that these devices be stored with the teacher when not being used.*

HEALTH: *Do not send your child to school with a severe cold or if he/she has had any episodes of fever, vomiting, or diarrhea at any time during the PAST 24 HOURS.*

If your child needs to be given medication during the school day, we are required to have your instructions in writing and the medicine, in its original labeled container, in a zip-lock bag (please include a spoon if needed). The container must have the name of the medicine as well as the child's name on it. This should not be in your child's lunch box, but should be handed to school personnel. Medicine authorization forms are available in each classroom and always available in the office. A new form must be filled out EACH DAY the medicine is given.

Emergency Sickness or Injury *If your child develops symptoms of illness while at school or if your child is injured at school, first-aid treatment will be given, and the parent will be notified by telephone. Please be sure to notify us if any emergency information (such as phone numbers) changes during the year.*

Communicable Disease Control *Serious communicable diseases all start with similar symptoms. Therefore, a child should remain at home if he shows any of the symptoms listed below:*

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>chills</i> | <i>vomiting</i> | <i>skin rash</i> |
| <i>ear ache</i> | <i>diarrhea</i> | <i>red/discharging eyes</i> |

fever stomach ache ringworm
impetigo

Students excluded because of suspicion of a disease requiring isolation may be readmitted only if a physician certifies that they are not suffering from such a disease.

Students excluded because of acute contagious conjunctivitis (pink eye), pediculosis (head lice), scabies, pinworm, ringworm, or impetigo shall not be readmitted until the child is free of contagion.

Tuition Policy Tuition fees are based on the entire 10-month period that school is in session. Parents are given the following options for paying their child's tuition:

- A. Full tuition amount may be paid at the time of registration, and a 5% discount will be applied.
- B. Half of tuition paid in August and half in January.
- C. Tuition payments are divided into ten equal payments, starting in August and ending in May. When parents choose this way to pay their child's tuition, the following guidelines must be followed: the first payment is due at registration, the school mails out statements before the first of each month starting in September and ending in May. The payments are due on the fifth of the month. **Late charges will be assessed if paid after the fifth.**

*Parents are responsible for the full tuition regardless of which of the above methods they choose. However, if a parent is transferred from Arkansas (or over fifty miles from the school) or if a parent becomes seriously ill, the school will consider the seriousness of the situation in regards to tuition reimbursement. **If for any other reason a child is no longer attending CVMS, the parent is responsible for the remaining tuition until the vacant spot is filled.**

The Educational Program

Program Philosophy

As in the Montessori preschool, lessons are individually structured to keep pace with the child's developing skills and interests. A broad range of resources - manipulative materials, movies, videotapes, books, computers, time lines, charts, collections of specimens, worksheets, workbooks, and the community itself – helps each child increase his knowledge of the world in which he lives.

The Montessori child has the unique opportunity to become actively involved in his own learning – not just repeating information dictated to him by a teacher, but discovering, visualizing, and finally abstracting information from materials he has chosen. Learning is a joy rather than a job, and the student becomes a self-directed, independent thinker and problem-solver.

The teacher structures the environment, presents key lessons, and acts as a resource person and facilitator. The school day is organized to include a balance of individual, small group, and large group activities. The open classroom, with interest areas, group work tables, and individual work stations, encourages social development and the sharing of information among children. The atmosphere is one of caring and cooperation, instead of competition.

Freedom also means responsibility. The children have daily or weekly contracts and are expected to complete assigned work on a timely basis. Classroom and special subject groundrules set clear standards for behavior.

The Montessori classroom fosters the development of self-confidence and positive social values. And, as the child moves from the concrete materials of the preschool years into the abstract concepts of elementary and middle school, he develops his imagination and reasoning powers. He will carry all of these qualities with him into adolescence, and later into adulthood, becoming a responsible, contributing member of society.

Curriculum

In addition to all of the basic subjects (reading, language arts, writing, mathematics, geometry, natural and physical sciences), the school has a strong cultural orientation. There is extensive exposure to the humanities and social sciences, as well as practical life skills, computers, and research and reporting techniques.

Language Arts

The Montessori approach to language is balanced, and includes the broad areas of oral language skills, reading, literature study, grammar, phonics, word study, punctuation and capitalization, spelling, composition, and creative writing. An individualized reading program is designed for each child, using a combination of readers, SRA kits, and a variety of other support materials. Much language work is connected to other areas of the classroom: children write reports in the areas of science and social studies, learn geometrical and mathematical terms, use the computers, illustrate their stories, and share information with class members in both written and oral formats.

Mathematics

Mathematics instruction and activities include the broad areas of arithmetic process (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division), math facts, geometry, decimal work, time and measurement, money, fractions, and algebraic concepts. Montessori classrooms have a wonderful array of manipulative (hands-on) mathematics material, which aid the child in the sequential development of math concepts. Using these materials, children move logically from concrete objects to abstract mathematical applications. Computers are also used to facilitate math instruction, both in concept development and in drill and practice.

Practical Life

Practical life activities for the elementary children, as in the preschool, are focused in three areas: care of self, care of environment, and grace and courtesy. Children help to maintain their classrooms, using materials with care and helping keep the area neat and clean. They monitor the needs of classroom plants and animals. Attention is given to health and hygiene, as well as manners and interpersonal relationships. Skills such as cooking and needlework are also part of the practical life experience for elementary students.

Social Studies and History

Social studies in Montessori schools is a comprehensive and interesting area. Because of the international nature of the Montessori philosophy, there is much awareness of other cultures, and geography study begins in the preschool years. Its continuation in the elementary involves the use of beautiful materials – landforms, wooden maps, flags of many nations, and sets of cards for research. History comes to life beginning with the story of the universe and culminating with the yearly Cultural Study in which the fundamental needs of man become the basis for the analysis of civilizations. Children make personal time lines and discuss current events. Social studies, like other areas in a Montessori class, does not stand alone. Art, writing, reading, research, oral reports, and computer work are integrated into the program.

Science

Natural sciences – botany, zoology, health and the human body, earth science, and physical science are all part of the Montessori curriculum. The emphasis is on scientific observation and discovery, beginning with simple classification (ex. living/nonliving; magnetic/non-magnetic), and moving to scientific time lines, specimens, and classification charts. Experiments in chemistry and physics principles are part of the science curriculum as well. Ecology is an ongoing concern and subject of study.

Handwriting

Cursive writing is taught beginning in first grade, as a natural continuation of d'Nealian printing of the preschool years. Since only seven letters must be

relearned – the others only require connectors – children make the transition easily.

Special Subjects

There are additional resource teachers for art, music, physical education, computer, and Spanish/French. Each of these additional classes are attended by the children at least once a week.

ART history, art appreciation, and a variety of media and techniques are part of the program. Children learn about color, line, and perspective, sometimes doing individual work, and sometimes collaborating with classmates on larger projects. The art teachers also assume primary responsibility for some of the school's special events, including the recognition of various international holidays, the cultural study, and plays.

MUSIC includes rhythm and movement, the use of percussion instruments, notation and chording, pitch and hand signals, singing, and dance. Composers and their music, instrument families, the orchestra, opera and other performance media, and music history are part of the music curriculum. The music director also researches and teaches the children of songs and dances that are part of each year's cultural study, arranges for musical performers to come to the school, and is responsible for the musical portion of school celebrations.

The **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** program emphasizes fitness, skill building, and conditioning, rather than competitive sports, although games such as volleyball are taught and played. The physical education program is instrumental in emphasizing positive social values, and helps the children learn how to deal with issues of fairness and competition. Children also participate in the American Heart Association Physical Fitness Program.

SPANISH/FRENCH study is a combination of oral and written work, with the emphasis on verbal communication. Common phrases, vocabulary, history, and culture are all part of the program. Children in lower elementary continue Spanish. Upper elementary school students study French.

Cultural Study

Each year, the children undertake an in-depth study of an ancient civilization. They trace its history from the earliest beginnings to the present day, and analyze the culture based on the needs of man (food, shelter, clothing, transportation, recreation, religion, etc.). This study is organized by the art teachers, who together with music and classroom staff, coordinate the activities involved. The culminating event is a play in which all children participate.

Musical Instruments

All children are exposed to the school's collection of Orff percussion instruments (rhythm instruments, glockenspiels, metallophones, xylophones). Upper elementary children also learn to play the recorder. Children showcase their musical knowledge in a year-end program.

Computers

Computers are an integrated part of the CVMS curriculum. Each classroom has several computers that are constantly available to the children. The computers are used on a daily basis for mathematical process, math facts, typing instruction, word processing, problem solving, language arts, history, science, and social study research and communication skills, and other applications (determined by child readiness and teacher preference). The goal is not just computer confidence; we see computers as an aid to the learning process in a number of subject areas, and as a means of effectively transmitting information. iPads are available for use in our classrooms also.

Research Skills

Research is essential in a Montessori program, which uses a combination of media, rather than textbooks, in most subject areas. It is the basis upon which the children build their studies. Clearly, children must have language skills in place before they can be effective researchers; thus, the emphasis in first grade is to solidify reading, handwriting, and verbal communication skills. Like everything else in the Montessori curriculum, research is developmentally appropriate. The children begin with simple tasks; complexity increases as skills develop. Research is often a collaborative process, with each member of a small group of students investigating one facet of a larger topic. The information is then pooled, organized by the group, and shared with the whole class. Frequently, group research results in an impressive presentation, including child-made charts, illustrations and models. The children learn to use effectively the diverse skills of group members. Children are given information about research and problem-solving techniques, and they use books, encyclopedias, articles, computers, interviews, visual media, and hands-on experience to gather information.

Health-Related Topics

Elementary children receive information about various health topics, always at an age-appropriate level. Major topic areas include communicable diseases, substance abuse, child abuse (all with emphasis on prevention), and human growth and development. When the subject matter touches on “sensitive” topics, parents are always informed in advance and given the opportunity to preview the material.

Field Trips and In-House Presentations

The elementary children are exposed to a wide range of “extras.” These vary from year to year, and may include visits to museums, nature centers, science centers, and theatres. Recent outings of other types included Indian mounds, theatre productions, and singing at a nursing home. Occasionally, the older lower elementary children, upper elementary children, or the middle school children participate in overnight outings. The children have benefited greatly from exposure to this wide range of programs.

Leadership

The elementary students are also strongly encouraged to be involved in the school community. This may involve helping students or teachers in other classrooms, assisting with office tasks, or many other activities where the student is not only learning about lifelong skills but also about being a good steward of the environment and school community.

Summary *CVMS has established a school which offers concrete techniques for removing controls, assignments, coercion, and teacher domination from the elementary environment and in their place the Montessori teacher builds an environment filled with materials which motivate the child's interest. The "great lessons" inspire the child to work independently and allows teacher intervention without domination. This Montessori interdisciplinary structure allows a teacher to inspire learning instead of required learning.*