



Upper Elementary 4/5 Curriculum Overview

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, that 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 or concretely in early years at Oak Meadow are reintroduced several times over succeeding years, with increasing degrees of abstraction and difficulty.

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 in areas such 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.

The Upper 4/5 Elementary Program is made up of two classrooms of 16-17 students each. Each classroom is multi-aged (UE4, &UE5) and has a lead teacher and full time assistant.

The Whole Child

Our environment supports the child to strive towards these broad cognitive, social and emotional outcomes:

Cognitive:

- Students are developing initiative, self-motivation, focus, concentration, and perseverance.
- Students are developing inquisitiveness and actively seek knowledge, choose their work, and work independently.
- Students are asking questions, seeking answers, thinking critically, and communicating effectively.
- Students are learning to be effective problem solvers who understand their own cognitive approach and strengths.

Social:

- Students are learning to contribute and become socially responsible members of a larger community.
- Students are actively demonstrating grace, courtesy, and respect for others and the environment through their daily work and responsibility.

- Students are collaborating and cooperating, acting as leaders and peacemakers, and working on active listening and clear communication.

Emotional:

- Students are continuing to develop self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-respect.
- Students are continuing to develop compassion and empathy.
- Students are experiencing opportunities to feel satisfaction, joy and the awareness that they can make a difference.
- Students are continuing to develop patience and a sense of calm, serenity, and the ability to regulate their emotions.
- Students are increasing their awareness of their own creative potential.

Practical Life

The Practical Life curriculum is a series of simple, everyday activities designed to help 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 for UE children may include planning and participating in community service activities, planning and preparing a meal or lunch, making a shopping list, mastering test taking strategies, gardening, or promoting a charity. Student interests are nurtured and given the opportunity to grow and will be supported within the classroom.

Instruction in “Grace and Courtesy”, that begins in Children’s House and continues through Middle School, is another important component of the Practical Life Curriculum. Students learn the importance of 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. Social skill development is an integral part of our program. Time is taken to address the needs of our students, and conscious planning takes place to integrate these skills in a way that is developmentally appropriate and captures students’ interests.

A focus on the development of executive functioning takes place during the Upper Elementary years. Developmentally, students at this age are coming to a place of abstraction. The concrete materials are used to introduce concepts and support students in their transition to understanding abstract concepts. Each child moves at his/her own pace from materials to abstraction. It is an exciting time in students’ lives because their abilities are continuing to expand and grow.

It is also a time to pay particular attention to how a student is organizing his or her work, day, movement and plans throughout the day. To this end, teachers observe closely and work with students to develop planning and organizational systems that support their growth. Each student has a way to track his/her assignments (both classwork and homework) and reflect regularly on his/her work, executive functioning, and collaboration within the classroom.

Upper Elementary students participate in weekly Skills classes with Ms. Wright (UE6 Teacher, Program Director, and Learning Specialist) as well as weekly lunch bunch groups. Guiding students to understand their unique approaches to learning and their roles as community members through targeted discussion and responsive, real-life applications is paramount to students developing true

understanding of the core competencies for Social Emotional Learning. These competencies include the following: Self-Awareness; Self-Management; Social-Awareness; Relationship-Management; and Responsible Decision Making. Students are supported by the entire Upper Elementary team to apply what they have learned in Skills class throughout their school days, building a consistent and shared vocabulary across classrooms and settings, such as recess, lunch and specialist classes. This allows students to reinforce and solidify their problem solving abilities and independence as individuals and community members, as they increasingly take ownership and responsibility for their education. Mindfulness practices, taught and put into action, work hand in hand with this work.

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 and application of listening, reading, speaking, and writing skills.

In Upper Elementary, the curriculum is focused on 4 areas:

Reading:

The Upper Elementary classroom provides a variety of reading opportunities. Students participate in reading groups, independent silent reading, read aloud, and partner reading. Reading Group book selections are made by student choice and each unit focuses on a central theme. Comprehension and analyzation skills are the focus of the book group units. Students also have opportunities to learn and practice group discussion skills during these Literature Blocks. Reading Group follow-up work is assigned, reviewed, and sometimes completed during Literature block times. Students also add assignments to their work plans and work on them during work cycle times as well.

In addition to reading groups, students also have set times and flexible times within the day to silently read their books of choice. Silent reading provides students with natural breaks in their work cycles. In addition, students are expected to be reading at home and complete monthly “book talks” inspiring others to read new types of books

All students practice the skill of reading for information during classwork in various subject areas such as cultural, math, and writing. Reading is a universal skill in which UE students practice throughout their day.

Writing:

UE Students continue to build upon the writing skills introduced in Lower Elementary. They engage in cross curricular writing on a daily basis. The Writing program in the Upper Elementary focuses on both narrative writing and expository writing.

During Writers’ Workshop times, students participate in writing structure and creative writing lessons. Students keep a writing journal that they use to brainstorm ideas (seeds), take notes, and create drafts of their original work. Students explore a variety of writing genres including personal narratives, autobiographies, realistic fiction, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy and poetry. The students later select pieces to “publish” and share with our parent community twice a year at our Authors’ Breakfast.

Students also work on expository writing within the Upper Elementary classrooms. This writing may be through answers to writing prompts, comprehension open responses, writing lab reports or cultural essays (shared during our cultural museum open to the Children's House and Lower Elementary classrooms). Upper Elementary students also engage in mathematical writing activities designed to show their thinking or explain complex mathematical solutions to problems.

Students are active participants in the crucial stages of editing and revising their written work. They meet with teachers for individual writing conferences; engage in peer editing, and practice sharing their writing aloud to partners and classmates.

Grammar:

Work continues in the 4th and 5th years on the parts of speech, types of sentences and parts of sentences. After the traditional Montessori work with materials which help students analyze sentences for subjects, predicates and clauses, students translate this base knowledge into traditional diagramming. Grammar work supplements writing lessons through word usage practice and developing an awareness of tense and form. Lessons on transitional words and sentences further develop a student's writing.

Spelling and Vocabulary:

Upper Elementary 4th year students use Evan-Moor Spell and Write workbooks in class; a new unit is assigned each week. Spelling quizzes for 4th years are given on Friday mornings. Each classroom is equipped with materials and resources to further develop phonics rules for students who need this support. Upper Elementary 5th year students use Sadlier Vocabulary Workshop books in class; a new unit is assigned each week. Vocabulary quizzes for 5th years are given on Friday mornings. Students are also learning new vocabulary through literature.

Math

At Oak Meadow School, children learn the basic concepts of mathematics and geometry using hands-on learning materials which are designed to help them learn abstract concepts in a clear and concrete manner. This develops a deeper understanding that is the foundation for future work in these subjects. The main focus in Upper Elementary is acquiring the base of knowledge of rational numbers (fractions, decimals, and percents), pre-algebra topics and the ability to problem solve.

Students in Upper Elementary are also 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 are introduced using Montessori math materials, the Upper Elementary students ultimately will move toward 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.

Students are grouped in three levels according to their skill levels. The groupings are flexible in that students from different grade levels can be in the same group and students can move from one group to another during the same school year. A broad range of follow-up options are available for student use during work cycles. Some of these options include using materials, follow-up activity cards, skills packets, creative projects, and word problem practice.

Geometry

Geometry is one of the foundational concepts taught within Montessori Schools. Children are exposed to the geometric shapes at the Children's House level and these materials travel with the child from level to level. Within the UE classroom, students are exposed to complex geometric concepts through material lessons and then transition to abstract geometric thinking.

Students demonstrate ability in measuring angles, identifying triangles and polygons according to angles and sides, determine area and volume of two dimensional and three dimensional shapes, determining area and circumference of circles.

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Geometry lessons are given weekly within the UE classroom. Students are grouped in three grouping levels that meet them where they are at and support their continued growth. As in math, students are introduced to new geometric concepts, first with Montessori Materials and then they transition from the concrete to abstraction at their own pace.

Cultural

Comprised of the study of **history, geography and science**, the Montessori Cultural Curriculum was designed to inspire a sense of awe in our students. Montessori Great Lessons as impressionistic lessons are a springboard for further research. 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.

Students will have the opportunity to delve deeper into cultural topics. They will research using primary and secondary sources, practice note-taking and paraphrasing skills, work collaboratively and practice presentation skills in their Upper Elementary cultural classes.

Ancient Civilizations:

At the beginning of the Ancient Civilization course, students engage in lessons about the building blocks of civilization. We define together the differences between society and civilization. The follow-up work focuses on each stage of building a civilization and relating the steps to real-world everyday experiences. As a class, we take a close look at Mesopotamia. Students begin to examine what made Mesopotamia a civilization (Geography, Everyday Life, Cultural Activities, Political, Economic, and Social Relations). Next, students select one of the Ancient Civilizations to research and later present to their peers within the cultural museum. Some of the civilizations they have to choose from include Sumeria, Egypt, India, Aegean(Minoan, Mycenaean), and China (Shang Dynasty).

Biology-Vital Function of Animals:

Students begin the unit with a general overview of the Animal Kingdom where they explore the classification of animals, the similarities and differences between vertebrates and invertebrates, and

the vital functions required for all living things. Students engage in lessons on the structure and function of systems such as respiration, circulation, nutrition, movement, reproduction, and interaction with their environment. Students apply their knowledge of these vital functions to compare and contrast various groups of animals. Students also demonstrate how the vital functions evolve and become specialized in more complex life forms.

Geography:

Students investigate the shape of the world today from a physical, political, and cultural point of view. They explore such topics as map skills, types of maps, and the use of latitude and longitude to determine specific location on a map or globe. Additionally, students engage in activities that introduce them to the continents of Europe and Asia. In culmination students choose and explore in depth a particular country, introducing them to elements beyond physical geography.

Science Fair:

A capstone assignment is the yearly Science Fair, when students from LE3- MS8 choose a science topic of personal interest, develop and conduct an experiment, and present it to the Oak Meadow community. Beginning in UE6, interested students are invited to participate in the State, Regional and National Science Fairs upon qualifying.

Specialist Classes:

All Upper Elementary students participate in Nature, Art, Music, Physical Education and Spanish as part of their program.