In response to our strong enrollment and demonstrated interest from our families, Mountaineer Montessori School will extend its unmatched educational program through the eighth grade in an environment that meets the unique needs of adolescent students.
MISSION STATEMENT

Mountaineer Montessori School holds fast to the child-centered philosophy, principles and practices that were originated by Dr. Maria Montessori. The staff at Mountaineer Montessori School is committed to value, respect and nurture human potential and celebrate its diversity and encourage a life long love of learning.

VISION STATEMENT

Dr. Maria Montessori understood that adolescence is a time of profound creative and social change. It is a time of identity formation and self-confidence building. Dr. Montessori laid out a plan for what she called a “school of experience in the elements of social life,” and she emphasized work that is meaningful, collaborative and adult-like. Her plan for work and study offer adolescents true integration of knowledge and experience as well as opportunities for genuine contribution to their community. The result is intellectual independence, an awareness of human connections and the strengthening of moral character.

To fulfill this mission, The Mountaineer Montessori Middle School will become an extension of our current program and will open in August, 2014 with the charter 7th grade class. We will add 8th grade in August of 2015.

The Mountaineer Montessori Middle School (MMMS) will combine the best of Montessori practices with current research on adolescent development, particularly with regards to the unique intellectual and physical development of children at this stage of life.

Our program will be one of academic rigor with high expectations for each student while also supporting them socially and emotionally. Our middle school faculty will be fully trained Montessori teachers with expertise in adolescent development.

Our program will offer holistic, individualized support to each student so that he or she is able to develop his or her full potential as a future leader and contributing member of society. For more details on the components of the program, please see the Program Overview.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

MMMS will develop an adolescent program that will fully implement the Montessori Erdkinder Model (“Erdkinder is German for “children of the land”). Students participate in agricultural and entrepreneurial activities that develop confidence, responsibility and skills to live independently in the adult world.

Academic projects will be inextricably linked with real, purposeful work, whether it is in the context of their micro-economy work or their occupations. Students will also be meaningfully involved in offering service to the wider community.

Whether the school site is in an urban or a rural location, the students’ involvement in working with the land and with animal husbandry will be a key component of their day. Becoming true stewards of the land, the community and each other is an important goal for each student.
The Mountaineer Montessori Middle School will become a model for other privately or publicly-funded Montessori Middle Schools in West Virginia.

LOCATION

Mountaineer Montessori is currently going through a site search for the new middle school program since there is not enough room in our current location. There are two different types of scenarios: Urban or rural. Both models are being successfully implemented throughout the world.

If we choose an urban setting, the new classroom spaces will be located within walking distance of our current building and we will use an urban/community gardening model for the agrarian part of the curriculum. We will explore the possibilities of partnering with The University of Charleston in order to obtain the ideal site.

If we choose a rural setting, we will secure a farm that is within commuting distance of the school and the students will be transported to the farm on a daily basis.

STAFFING

Our Middle School staffing qualifications will follow the standards that have been set by the world’s leading Montessori accreditation organization, The Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). AMI Adolescent teachers must apply for acceptance into the certification program and are accepted based upon their educational background, experience in working with children, and their demonstrated passion for education. In our first year, we will have one certified adolescent teacher and one college-educated assistant.

In the second year of the program there would be two fully-trained Montessori teachers in addition to the assistant. One would focus more on humanities and the other would focus more on math and science.

In addition to the core teachers, we will have specialists in the areas of music, art, physical education and Spanish who come on a regular basis to give lessons.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The students will be involved in the design of the environment and they will be responsible for its basic daily maintenance. They will share the tasks that are necessary for caring for the prepared environment, both indoors and out.

Students will also participate in preparing a group lunch each day, with the various jobs being rotated on a weekly basis. On occasions where there are overnight activities, they will prepare breakfasts and dinners as well, always under adult supervision.

A critical piece of our program will be our micro-economy, to which all subject areas will be connected. Our students will be responsible for the budget, they will design and make or grow the products, and they will run a variety of mini-businesses that will have a visible presence in the community.
**COMPOSITION OF THE STUDENT GROUP**

For the 2014-2015 school year, we hope to retain the six current sixth-grade students we have, and we will invite students from other schools to apply as well. Those with a Montessori background will be given priority. The total enrollment for the first year will be between six and ten students.

In the 2015-2016 school year, we anticipate a total enrollment of between twelve and 22 students, mostly dependent on how many of our current fifth grade students stay. We will be conducting a survey soon in order to get a more precise number.

In the 2016-2017 school year, our goal will be to have twenty students. The maximum number of students will likely be twenty-five.

In order to achieve these numbers, we will accept applications from other Montessori and traditional schools. We will institute an application process that relies heavily on past teacher recommendations and family interviews.

To accommodate students with learning challenges, we will supply a reading specialist (Jennifer Carriger, if possible) and a math tutor if necessary.

**FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS**

Parent involvement is critical to the success of the MMMS program. Every school year will begin with a parent/teacher/student conference at which goals will be set in academic, social and organizational development. Parents will be included in the conversation to ensure that the entire family is on the same page about the student’s goals and so that the parent and the advisor can develop a working relationship.

Parents will also be encouraged to become involved in all aspects of the micro-economy and will be invited to share their areas of expertise with the students. Additionally, we will seek other community members who will share their expertise to share with us.

Throughout the year, there will be a variety of community events and meetings to promote the development of a strong sense of community and parents will be expected to participate in these activities.

In order to further involve the parents, we will hold regular parent education events where the students get to share their work with their parents and teachers have an opportunity to help parents learn more about the Montessori adolescent pedagogy.
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Multi-Disciplinary Projects

The hallmark of Montessori Adolescent Program is its fully integrated project approach to studying science, history, and cultures. Students participate in multidisciplinary projects, often related to their own community and their own geographic location, in which students apply what they are learning to direct problem-solving or hands-on experiences in the community and on the land.

Occupation Projects

• Incorporate science-based problem-solving or task-oriented studies
• Include formal presentation, independent work time, committee work time, research, lab activities, practical task work on the land or in the community
• Include a variety of readings: textbooks, newspaper and magazine articles, essays, chapters from non-fiction books and manuals
• Frequently include math applications and seminars on literary or historical connections
• Include a variety of writing opportunities: research papers, response papers, journals, newspaper articles, position papers, proposals to the community
• Culminate in group or individual presentations of what the group learned and accomplished for the community

Humanities Projects

• Incorporate multi-disciplinary studies of cultures from different geographic locations and time periods
• Cycle through the story of human history every year—from early farming through modern times
• Include literature, geography, philosophy, art, music, and drama
• Focus on role-playing: What was it like to BE someone from this culture and time period?
• Include a variety of primary sources and secondary sources as readings
• Include multi-media experiences and visits off campus to cultural and historic sites
• Include a variety of writing opportunities: research papers, response papers, analysis papers, fiction writing, script-writing, monologues
• Include dramatic presentations by the group for the whole community as the culmination of the project
• Include seminar discussions of primary sources, philosophical topics, and related current issues
Mathematics

The study of mathematics takes a lab approach. Groups meet for extended sessions that include warm-up mental exercises, small group project work, formal lessons, and independent follow-up work, and math seminars. A lab approach allows students to work on concept material in a variety of modes and at their own pace. Students are able to advance based on their own learning trajectory.

Concepts traditionally studied in Pre-Algebra and Algebra I are combined for a one-year or two-year approach. Advanced students are able to study Geometry and occasionally Algebra II.

Foreign Language

Mountaineer Montessori Middle School will offer formal lessons in Spanish emphasizing fluency in conversation and language acquisition related to community life.

Lessons are followed up with written exercises and media-assisted computer learning through Rosetta Stone.

Workshops

Workshops provide an opportunity for teachers to custom design a series of lessons for a group of students based on their individual interest or need. Workshops may be elective or teacher recommended.

Topics may include:
- Math Review
- Grammar Review
- Sentence Writing
- Paragraph Writing
- Creative Writing
- Research Skills
- Vocabulary Study
- Keyboarding
- Debate
- Current Events
- Election Study
- Health and Lifestyle Issues
- Test Preparation
- Individual Culture Studies
- Outdoor Work
- Exercise
Book Groups and Seminars

We learn to appreciate and analyze good literature by reading novels, short stories, and poetry and by sharing responses and ideas in small discussion groups every Wednesday.

During the first semester we focus on learning the most effective questions to ask. During the second semester we learn to write responses to literature.

On Fridays, we meet in groups to have a seminar discussion on a short reading or on a topic of cultural or community interest. Occasionally they are “open seminars” for which students choose the topic of discussion. When these seminars are about philosophical ideas, we call them “Socratic Seminars.”

Typical Book Group Selections:

Watership Down, Richard Adams
Plain and Simple, Sue Bender
Dandelion Wine, Ray Bradbury
Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury
House on Mango Street, Sandra Cisneros
The Great Gatsby, F. Scott Fitzgerald
Seedfolks, Paul Fleischman
Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl, Anne Frank
Lord of the Flies, William Golding
The Old Man and the Sea, Ernest Hemingway
Siddhartha, Hermann Hesse
The Outsiders, S.E. Hinton
The Odyssey, Homer
Across Five Aprils, Irene Hunt
Inherit the Wind, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee
To Kill a Mockingbird, Harper Lee
Call of the Wild, Jack London
Animal Farm, George Orwell
The Chosen, Chaim Potok
Ishmael, Daniel Quinn
All Quiet on the Western Front, E.M. Remarque
“Romeo and Juliet,” “A Mid-Summer Night’s Dream,” “Twelfth Night,”
“Macbeth,” William Shakespeare
Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck
The Hobbit, J.R.R. Tolkien
Make Lemonade, Virginia Euwer Wolf
Creative Expression and Physical Expression
(Music, Art, Drama, Dance, Sports, Outdoor Physical Activities)

The goal of our Creative Expression and Physical Expression projects is to introduce students to art activities and physical exercise as a means of self-expression and with the possibility of developing lifelong interests or passions. Artists and instructors from the broader community join our staff in sharing artistic and athletic pursuits and teaching technique and form.

Art
Calligraphy
Watercolor
Drawing
Earth Art
Flower Arranging
Drama
Improvisation
Drama Production
Stage Tech and Set Design
Crafts
Woodworking
Basket Making
Pottery
Paper Craft
Wool Working: Spinning/Knitting/Weaving
Jewelry Making
Music
Guitar: acoustic, rock, and steel
Choir/Voice
Songwriting
Music Appreciation
Movement/Dance
Contra Dance
Yoga/Pilates
Modern Dance
Other Arts
Gourmet Cooking
Novel Writing
Group Sports
Soccer
Basketball
Softball
Volleyball
Various Gym Activities
Ultimate Frisbee
Outdoor Activities
Running
Hiking
Biking
Outdoor Skills
Archery

Experiences of Social Responsibility and Practical Life

The fundamental need of adolescents is to belong to a genuine community that requires meaningful work. Every student in the program contributes to the care of the school’s land, gardens, natural resources, and buildings. Students create and operate a number of businesses; every student cooks and serves meals; every student supports the maintenance of the buildings and the grounds. As a result, every student feels he/she belongs and is an important contributing member of our little “society.”

Looking Ahead: Ninth Grade—The Culminating Experience

In Montessori, the third year of a cycle is a culminating year. The child becomes the leader, the teacher, the organizer, the example. All of the development that has been blossoming and growing emerges as a sense of confidence and competence. The ninth-year student joins the adult community as an “elder” who knows how to handle and solve problems, how to operate the farm and businesses, and how to reconcile differences in perspective. They reach a level of understanding and appreciation that often surprises people outside the community. They are articulate ambassadors.

There is nothing more fundamental to an adolescent’s sense of identity than reaching this goal of community recognition. It sets the standard for everything to come.

Ninth-Year Students have the following unique experiences:

• High school Biology studying the biodiversity and human impact on our land
• The hosting of a regional colloquium on human impact issues
• High school level analysis work in literature and history
• Opportunities for advanced high school mathematics—Geometry and Algebra II
• High school credit classes in foreign language and health
• Managers’ positions in running the farm and community operations
• A culminating study of Peace and Education with a final off-campus retreat