

Drachman Montessori Middle School Program Description

Last year, we began integrating the AMS (American Montessori Society) model for Montessori middle schools under the guidance of Wendy Weeks, our magnet coordinator. She is AMS trained and taught the curriculum for nine years at another Montessori school before joining Drachman Montessori. Our Montessori lead teacher, Dara Carlson, works closely with Wendy. She also taught the curriculum for three years at another school before joining Drachman Montessori to help us offer the most authentic Montessori experience possible.

We have integrated mixed-grade classes, much like our elementary classrooms, to allow for mentorship between our old and young students. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students learn the same ELA, social studies, and science content side-by-side, but the expectations of their follow-up assignments differ depending on their grade level. For example, responding to the same assignment, work turned in by an 8th grade student is required to be more extensive, answer questions with more depth, and display a higher level of vocabulary and grammar than that done by a 6th grade student. Younger students benefit from hearing these higher-level responses during class discussions, which helps them mature their own critical thinking skills.

Math is the only subject taught by grade level.

Another important element of the AMS model is the use of thematic units. This means that each cycle (quarter), there is an overarching theme that ties together the content between Language (ELA), Social World (social studies), and Natural World (science). This wholistic approach helps students make connections across content areas and allows for richer, more organic learning. Our Language units stretch across the whole cycle, but Social World and Natural World are each focused on for half of the cycle. This means your student will complete all their work for their social studies grade by about half-way through the quarter but will not yet have a grade for science. Once the Social World unit is complete, we will begin the Natural World unit, and you will notice assignments being input for their science grade in the second half of the quarter.

At the beginning of each cycle, students receive a Study Guide that outlines all the assignments that they will have to complete. This is one way that the program prepares students to manage their time and allows them to self-direct their learning. We also teach them how to use a planner to determine when they will get work done and what they still need to accomplish. If your child is behind and is unable to communicate what assignments they have or how to do them, a way that parents can help is to start with "Let's take a look at your study guides." Assignments that have the teacher's initials next to them are complete; anything else is yet to be done.

Students should have minimal homework. Almost all their work can be completed during the school day. If a student does not finish their work by Friday, they may still take it home over the weekend and turn it in on Monday for credit. If you are interested in your student experiencing more homework than what our teachers assigned, we will provide additional homework ideas for you and your student.

For more information about the Middle School program, please contact Wendy Weeks, Magnet Coordinator, or Dara Carlson, Middle School Montessori Lead Teacher.