

Middle School Montessori Myths: Why stay all the way through?

What the research says:

Students who stay in a k-8 school are more likely to do better socially, emotionally, and academically than those who leave to go to a 6-8 or 6-12 school.

- Researchers of this study published in 2016 looked at 90,000 students in more than 5,000 schools and found:
 - Students in k-8 students experienced less bullying
 - Did better academically
 - Experienced a greater sense of belonging than those in 6-8 or 6-12 schools.

Students in a traditional middle school are the “bottom dog” in 6th grade, while in k-8 schools, those students would be the “top dog” of the school. Obviously, someone must be the bottom grade of the school and the researchers noted that this is better reserved for 9th graders as they are more developmentally ready for that.

- You can read the full article titled “6th Grade is Tough; It Helps to be the Top Dog” on npr.org

Benefits of Montessori Adolescent curriculum

“But, above all it is the education of adolescents that is important, because adolescence is the time when the child enters on the state of manhood and becomes a member of society” Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence.

- The same characteristics of independence, self-discipline, intrinsic motivation, and hard work that begin in early childhood are reinforced so that students leave ready to enter high school.
- Students participate in service learning where they learn the importance of helping the greater community and learn to respectfully interact with adults outside of school.
- Students are academically prepared to enter high school. They learn to take tests, complete long- term projects, and study skills such as taking notes.
- They gain skills in economics through their pizza fundraiser and then use that money for their fall camping trip where they extend their learning, build community, gain leadership skills and overcome personal challenges.
- Students can look at themselves as people who can make a difference in the world. Our students regularly practice reflecting on themselves and their learning, can articulate their strengths and weakness, and learn how they can use their skills to change the world.

Common Myths and Questions:

Myth: My child is ready for a more challenging curriculum.

Answer: Montessori curriculum at every level will challenge students. At MSBG we offer a middle school math curriculum that allows students to take high school algebra as an 8th grader for high school credit if they are ready. In writing, we have even had students write a novella over the course of the year to take their writing to the next level.

Myth: My child needs to go to a larger school to get more socialization.

Answer: At MSBG students have unique leadership opportunities in PEACE Pals. Older students each have a group that they give lessons to on topics of peace education and learn many skills in how to lead others. The middle school also has a personal world lesson once a week where students learn about topics such as managing stress, how to interact with peers and adults, and even about how their brain works. Many students here also participate in extracurricular activities such as 4-H.

Myth: I want to “pop the Montessori bubble” or I want my child to experience the real world.

Answer: A well-known Montessorian once responded to this question by asking, “What kind of world do we want to live in?” She said, “... maybe helping guide children to discover their authentic (essential, true, natural) selves would lead to more people on the planet developing a greater capacity for joy. And maybe more conscious, happy people would set up a more functional, sustainable world” (Marta Donahue, “Where is Everybody?”). In middle school we prepare our students for the real world by teaching them practical life skills such as budgeting, talking on the adults, and how to grow their own food. These skills, in addition to the social skills, help students to become well adjusted adults who can positively contribute to society.



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The Montessori School of Bowling Green is a nurturing community that educates the whole child in a Montessori environment, where children develop mutual respect, personal responsibility, and a passion for learning.