



ARBORLAND MONTESSORI INFANT - 8TH GRADE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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"The chief symptom of adolescence is a state of expectation, a tendency towards creative work and a need for the strengthening of self-confidence."

Maria Montessori (From *Childhood to Adolescence*, p. 63)

Hello Junior High Families!

We hope you are as excited as we are to start a new school year! As we look forward to our new academic year, we want to take a moment to express our gratitude for your choosing to continue your academic journey here at Arborland. Adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and transformation, both physically and emotionally. It is a time for our students to discover their voices, shape their identities, and explore the world around them with the eyes of emerging adulthood. Our role as educators and guides is to support our students and families during this process and provide an environment that fosters curiosity, creativity, independence, and self-discovery. Throughout the year, our students will engage in various activities, group projects, specifically tailored electives, and collaborative learning experiences in the academic classroom and our community. This program is designed not only to deepen students' understanding of different subjects, but to strengthen critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. To that end, we will outline our daily schedule, a few of our program parts, communication, and our conference format. The information in this welcome letter contains broad strokes because many of the details of our program are shaped by the adolescents who comprise our program. Here is the core of our program:

Daily Schedule

We will have seven periods throughout the day, and our school day will run 8:00 AM - 3:45 PM. The subjects will be Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Science, PE, Foreign Language, and Elective. There will be a scheduled time for a morning nutrition break and a 30-minute lunch break. Our school day will also have dedicated time to focus on class planning for our events. We are hoping to dedicate our Friday afternoons each week to be used for our Service Learning curriculum, but time will be announced as our weekly and daily schedule is more firmly in place.

7th-grade Service Learning

We are so excited to work with our incoming students on opportunities to give back to their community in a meaningful way. Every week our students will have one afternoon to focus on the community and making a difference. The service locations and experiences will vary throughout the year and will be guided by the teachers, but planned and executed by the students. Part of the learning process is to figure out the details of the logistics including setting learning goals, planning, making contact, scheduling, acquiring transportation, and if there is any cost

involved. Some of the ideas we have had for service learning include working closely with our school community to provide recycling services that benefit our planet and our class economy, food banks (sorting and stocking donations, pantries, and food boxes), local nature preserves (trail maintenance or cleaning), and so many more! We highly encourage the students to come prepared with ideas for how we can help our community at Arborland and in the city. If you have a service learning idea for our students, please share it with your child to share with us.

8th-grade Service Learning and Internships

To acclimate our incoming students to the service learning program as well as give our 8th-grade students leadership opportunities, we will have group service learning for the Fall semester. Both groups of students will work together to plan and carry out meaningful service projects during this time. We will also use this time to begin narrowing down ideas for the internships for the students that will take place in the Spring semester. Details of the internship program will be discussed in more detail during our Orientation week.

Grading

In junior high, students will receive a letter grade per period on their school transcripts. Grading rubrics will be determined by the subject teacher and introduced during the first week of school. Students will be an active part of grade keeping during the school year. Students and parents will have access to our grade-keeping software, Jupiter (<https://jupitered.com/>), throughout the semester. Students will have a fresh grading start each quarter and a formal attendance and citizenship grade report will be generated on their transcripts as well. We encourage our students to take responsibility for their grades and to be in open communication with instructors and their families about their grades.

Communication

All students need to have a Gmail account and will be expected to take responsibility for checking and responding to emails. For students who do not have a Gmail account, we highly suggest a professional format “firstname.lastname@gmail.com” style email address. This will become more important as students move through our program and we learned that it is easier to start using a professional email address earlier, rather than last minute. Emails are encouraged as the easiest way to get in touch with the teacher of each subject matter. Student phones will not be permitted during school hours and must be kept turned off and put away during class times unless students are off-campus.

Regular, open communication between teachers, parents, and students is imperative to a quality education. Please do not hesitate to contact the teaching staff at any time with questions, concerns, or suggestions regarding your child’s education. I would encourage you to present your questions to us by email (mssimms@arborland.com or mrsmith@arborland.com) for the quickest response. If it is an urgent matter, please contact the office and they will get a message to us quickly.

Appropriate Use of Technology

At the start of each year, our students create and sign both a Class Constitution and a Technology User Agreement. We will use our Orientation week to have in-depth discussions of appropriate technology usage as well as the importance of good digital citizenship. The internet is a powerful tool that can enhance our learning experience, but it is important to use it responsibly and effectively. It is crucial to remember that our time in class is dedicated to learning and engaging with the subject matter at hand. While the internet can provide us with a wealth of information and resources, it can also be a source of distraction if not used mindfully. We will focus on using the internet as a resource for doing research, creating projects, and accessing relevant educational materials. We will also be continuing our digital citizenship lessons and will come up with a supportive and inclusive digital environment where everyone feels safe and respected. We will focus on training to be aware of online privacy, protecting personal information, and respecting intellectual property rights. In this day and age, it is critical that we continue to learn how to give credit to the original creators when using digital content in our projects or assignments, and avoid plagiarism at all costs.

Academic Conferences

Students will need to attend traditional Parent/Teacher conferences with parents and will play an active role in managing their education. Please choose a time when the adults and students can attend the conference together when the time comes to sign-up.

Classroom Hours

The classroom will have a dedicated teacher in it from 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM, but the room will remain open to students until 6:00 PM, with an office staff person in the lobby to assist with emergencies. Students are encouraged to stay at school to finish any work or projects they need and may use the room responsibly with their peers if necessary. Please note that it is a privilege and a training opportunity in responsibility to use the classroom during after-school hours without teacher supervision. The privilege can be taken away if the student cannot prove himself/herself to be a responsible citizen.

Teacher Introductions

Ms. Ashley Simms

Hello, my name is Ashley Simms and I have been a teacher at Arborland Montessori for 19 years. I started in the Upper Elementary program, and my passion for upper elementary and adolescent programming has only grown and deepened. I am honored to have been part of the start of our junior high program and am so proud of what we have achieved and excited about the continued opportunities our program offers our students. I grew up in Orange County and graduated from Esperanza High School. From there I went to Baylor University in Texas where I graduated with a bachelor's degree in Social Work. When I returned home from college I worked for several years doing sports and aquatic programming for the YMCA of Orange County and found my passion for teaching. To pursue my teaching goals, I enrolled in the University of Phoenix Master of Education and Teaching Credential program and graduated with my MA.E.D.

in Secondary Education. After my first year at Arborland, I was thrilled to also take the Montessori Upper Elementary training course and receive my certification. Since then, I have also had the opportunity to take the Montessori Adolescent Orientation training and am looking forward to continuing my Montessori education.

I have always had a deep passion for math and science due to the logic and curiosity these subjects inspire. Although my academic background is strong across all academic subject areas, when taking the CSET (single-subject teacher accreditation testing for middle and high school) we had to choose a subject and I chose to go with the English accreditation. I am genuinely enthusiastic about helping your children grow in math and science and am dedicated to fostering their academic success. At Arborland, we are fortunate to have a team of educators with diverse expertise. Our principal, Ms. Chen, was a math teacher for high school students and we have several other colleagues who majored in math and they help to provide a robust support system. I am not shy in asking for help when needed. My job is not to know everything, but to ensure our students receive the best possible education.

I love to cook, read, and travel and I love finding ways to incorporate all of these into educational experiences for our students. I can't wait to work with our students this year and embark on a wonderful educational journey with all of them!

Mr. Ryan Smith

Hello all, I'm Ryan Smith and this will be my third school year teaching at Arborland Montessori School. I started at Arborland in January 2023 after moving to the United States and becoming a resident. I believe that Junior High school is one of the most important moments in one's educational journey. It is a transitory period where students are discovering who they are, and what their relationship with education will be. I am thrilled to be a part of a program that fosters all forms of learning and helps students grow both academically and personally. I grew up in the United Kingdom and despite a rocky start in my own education, I eventually excelled and finished high school strong. Upon leaving school, I began working toward a GNVQ in Children's Care, Learning, and Development which required both academic study and in setting training. I worked at the very same primary school that I had attended and began working in classrooms at the age of 17. After finishing my qualification, I completed a bachelor's degree in English Literature remotely with the Open University, which allowed me to continue to work with students full-time. Then in 2018, after finishing my degree and working in my local school for 8 years, I moved to Japan where I taught English at public Junior High schools. After living out there for 4 years and meeting my now wife, I moved to Orange County. I write stories in my spare time and lead Dungeons and Dragons games. I play both board games and video games and thus I make sure to use games in my teaching. This year marks my thirteenth year as a teacher and I am excited to continue working with students to help them learn and grow into their best selves.

Supply List

- Student Planner (for Homework Log) - 5.5"x8.5" or 8.5"x11" (no smaller, please)
- Personal Technology Device
- Accordion folder (with at least 5 sections)
- 1 - 8.5"x11", 5 Subject notebook (college-ruled)
- Math
 - 2 in or 2 ½ in, 3-ring binder
 - Supply of graph paper (two to four packages to start, this will be used for class work and will need to be refilled and supplied by the students)
 - Inch/centimeter ruler
 - Protractor
 - Safety Compass (optional, no pointed compasses allowed)
 - Scientific Calculator
- Language Arts
 - Curriculum novels will need to be purchased throughout the year
- Elective
 - 1 - 8.5"x11" spiral notebook (college-ruled)
 - May need additional supplies
- Spanish
 - 1 - 8.5"x11" spiral notebook (college-ruled)
 - Index cards
- Two packages of lined paper (college-ruled)
- A packet of 3M Post It Index Flat Tabs 51/38mm
- Flag tabs (multiple packages)
- Pencils (regular or mechanical are fine) – please provide the lead for mechanical pencils
- Pens (colored, not neon or metallic for classwork and corrections)
- Erasers
- Highlighters
- Scissors (not child-size scissors)
- Colored pencils
- Markers (no crayons necessary)
- Sharpies – Black thin and Black regular (may bring metallic Sharpies)
- Glue sticks (multiple)
- Milk crate for storage

We are thrilled to embark on a new school year filled with exciting possibilities. Our program is designed to adapt and evolve, allowing students to play an active role in shaping their learning experiences, both individually and as part of a group. We are excited to witness the growth and development of each student, both academically and personally. Our dedicated team of educators is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where students feel valued, respected, and supported. We will celebrate their achievements, nurture their strengths, and provide guidance during times of difficulty. Here's to a year of discovery, growth, and meaningful connections!

Sincerely,

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