

Welcome to Montessori Lower Elementary at The Bramble Nature Campus!

We are so delighted to welcome you to our communities for the 2026/2027 school year!

If your child's teacher is Andrea, they are in the **Willow Community**

If your child's teacher is Aubrey, they are in the **Ginkgo Community**.

Important Dates:

Supplies Drop off: Tuesday, August 18 **list is attached

First Day of School: Wednesday, August 19 @ 8:00am - 2:30pm

Items to Bring on the First Day:

1. Labeled water bottle
 2. Extra labeled clothes to keep in backpack
 3. Lunchbox (if packing) **hot lunch is available for every student
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Montessori Pedagogy

The Cosmic Curriculum:

The child at 6-9 years of age is immersed in what Dr. Montessori called the Cosmic Curriculum. In Montessori classrooms, we believe children at this age are ready to understand their place in the universe and the unique role they are here to fill during their lifetime. This is known as the child's Cosmic Task. Everything in our curriculum flows from this sense of wonder for discovering our place in the universe. We begin the year with the Five Great Lessons, which are designed to give the children an impression of how the universe was formed, how life came to earth, as well as the infinitesimal amount of time humans have been on earth. These lessons end with the story of language and math, giving the children context for why these two fields of study are so important to humanity.

We begin the year this way intentionally to give children a big-picture sense of why every area of study we include in the classroom is important for our cosmic task. Once the grand impression is set, then we begin to fill in the details over the course of the three years the child is in our community.

Work Cycle:

From the moment your child arrives each morning, they begin an uninterrupted 3-hour period of work time. During this morning work cycle, there is a strong routine in place to help them remember what they are meant to do. This routine promotes their independence, which is a cornerstone of Montessori education. We want children to feel trusted to do what they are supposed to do, so we set up routines and prepare the classroom environment for them to be able to do those things without adult assistance. Work cycle is the time when children receive lessons from the two adults in their community. A work plan is utilized to help children with time management and prioritization. They choose when they will do the work on their work plan, and the adults provide added support for those children who are still developing this skill.

There are two adults by design: typically one, but ideally both, are trained Montessori guides. The nature of a multi-aged classroom requires small group instruction. These small groups allow us to naturally differentiate our instruction for each child, rather than moving children along at a predetermined pace for their age band. While children are in lessons, the other children are working independently. While one adult is in a lesson, the other adult is assisting with independent work. Lesson presentations are the child's opportunity to hear information and show what they know about the topic at hand. After the lesson, the child is given a "follow-up" activity to complete independently. This follow-up activity is crucial for their learning, as this is their opportunity to apply what they heard in the lesson. It is a form of assessment for the teachers to see how well they understood the material and whether they need further support. The teachers observe the children closely and use their reflections on their observations to inform their next steps with each individual child.

A classroom intentionally designed this way relies heavily on children internalizing the routines and procedures in their community. They are expected to protect the concentration of their classmates just as much as they are expected to stay focused on the work they need to do. Montessori believed in children's natural drive to engage in meaningful work in their environment, that their hands reaching out to use what is placed within their reach creates pathways in their brain. What they choose to do determines all the things they choose not to do, which is how the child practices self-discipline. We expect them to make choices that enhance their own learning and the learning of everyone in their community.

Perhaps you have a collection of cardboard box creations in your home that your child deems too important to get rid of? This is the way of the 6-9 child. In 6-9, children are naturally industrious. They want to make things constantly out of anything lying around. Our curriculum allows creativity to flourish as they come up with unique ways to demonstrate their understanding of lesson information. For example, children might create a diorama to show what they learned about a mammal from Oceania, or a fortune teller to show the parts of a polygon. Teachers set parameters and expectations,

then the children are free to be creative when they do the work their lessons inspire them to do. Montessori curriculum utilizes concrete materials to inform the child's brain with experience in the natural, physical world, which is a highly replicable research-based practice for children this age. We prioritize, above all else, real experience with and interaction between the hand and the brain.

Community:

Montessori classrooms are true communities. We are a group of people who care about one another and share a common goal. This truth dictates how we structure our time as well as the conversations we have together. At the beginning of the year, we spend a lot of time in circle establishing our community. We get to know one another and form our community agreements. These agreements are the anchor of all our expectations for work and behavior. We create these agreements together so everyone feels ownership and accountability for their choices.

The balanced, multi-age classroom is crucial for this community to thrive. We need older children to help guide and model the expectations for the younger children, and the younger children learn through observation and imitation of their older peers. The three years the children spend in this community together allow them to form significant bonds with one another and experience the shifts that come with each year as they move up to a new status in the community. The third-year students take on leadership roles that they are proud of and are truly meaningful to the group. The younger children eagerly await their turn to become the leaders of the classroom. Everyone in the community also performs a job that helps us maintain the function, beauty, and order of our environment. Ongoing community meetings are opportunities for the children to bring up important issues that affect the entire group, and together they come up with solutions to those problems. Everyone's voice is heard and (with the teachers' support) decisions are made together.

Important Community Routines

Snack

We love to share delicious, nutritious food as a community each week to support our holistic Montessori Curriculum. Each community will set up a Signup Genius for families to volunteer to bring itemized choices for the children to enjoy as food preparation in the classroom. One child will have the community job of doing the food prep for the community each day, even if they are not the person who brought the snack that week. Children love to have the opportunity to contribute to their community in a meaningful way and we love providing many options for them to do so. On Fridays, the snack list will be shared with the family who has volunteered to bring snack the following week.

Keep an eye out for a sign up coming soon! This is completely optional and intended to enrich the curriculum and support the cohesiveness of our community - we do not want families to feel burdened or obligated.

To be respectful to all our children's and staff's needs, we will only permit select whole foods and pre-determined nut, gluten, and dairy-free packaged foods. These will be clearly listed on the snack list. **Please note when specific brands are listed as they are tried and true options we rely on.

Occasionally we will include items in the snack list that the class needs to replenish, such as baking ingredients, hand sanitizer, Band-Aids, and laundry detergent. Specific directions will be included in the snack letter if you volunteer to bring snack. We are so grateful for your support in this effort to keep the classroom supplies stocked!

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays in our communities are an especially joyful part of our Cosmic Curriculum, which forms the foundation of Lower Elementary Montessori classrooms. For each child's birthday we invite families and siblings from other classrooms to join a 20-minute "walk around the sun" celebration. During this celebration, your child shares their personal timeline that they have created, highlighting each year of their life. We provide each child with their timeline as their birthday approaches. This timeline is a special opportunity for your family to select a photo from each year and write a brief highlight of what happened in that year of life. Your child may create their timeline at home or at school. We will coordinate the day and time of the celebration when your child's birthday is near.

Please note that **we do not allow treats, party favors, or any type of birthday giveaways**. The celebration focuses on sharing your child's personal timeline and honoring their journey around the sun.

Communication

Each community will communicate pertinent information on a regular basis. You will receive classroom information, reminders for upcoming events, permission slips for field trips, and volunteer opportunities via email or Class Dojo **If your child's teacher uses Class Dojo, you will receive an invitation to join their classroom. Room parents also communicate information via email and are a valuable resource for all parents.

We use a Home Folder as another crucial form of communication. Students will bring home any physical papers in this folder, such as permission slips, CPS forms, or other important documents. **It is very important that this folder travels back and forth between home and school every day. We prefer to use this system so papers are less likely to be misplaced. 1st-year children

bring home an early reader book in their folder each night, along with a book list to sign. They will read this book once at school, bring it home to read to you, and then bring it back to school. Repeated daily reading is the best way to build fluency in early readers, so we appreciate your assistance in keeping this routine a priority in your family rhythm.

Classroom Plants

We invite each member of our community to bring a small plant for our classroom. Indoor plants not only enhance the appearance of our space, but research shows they can boost mood, increase creativity, reduce stress, and improve air quality, creating a healthier, happier environment. Plants will also provide a wonderful opportunity for students to develop a sense of responsibility by caring for living things in their environment. Participation is completely optional.

Family/School Connection

We treasure each one of you so much and would love to learn as much as we can about your culture and home life. Expanding the children's lenses while also ensuring that they see themselves within our curriculum is an intentional part of the Montessori methodology. We aim to highlight the diversity that exists within our community and constantly strive to do better to learn more about people with whom we are not familiar. We would love to welcome you into our classrooms to share traditions, recipes, celebrations, music, attire, holidays and any other special rituals that you might be willing to bring into our spaces. We can all learn from each other and continue to broaden our worldviews with the hope of instilling a lasting sense of empathy, awareness, and, ultimately, belonging.

Thank You!

Thank you for trusting us with your children. We cannot wait to see them make these environments come to life. As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns.

With gratitude,

The Lower Elementary Team

Aubrey, Andrea, Angela (ON-jeh-lah), and Jess