Montessori of Macon’s Mission
“To Educate the Whole Child for a Whole World.”

By the whole child, we mean the social, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of being human. By nurturing the wholeness of our children and fostering respect for each other, nature and community we prepare them for a life of continued joy that will contribute positively to a whole world.

Save the Date!
Session 3 is filled with many fun activities! Mark the following dates on your calendar:
Jan. 6 - First day of Session 3
Jan. 20 - MLK Day - School Closed
Jan. 23 - Tour of Lessons
Jan. 26 - Open House

We hope everyone enjoys the winter break!
We don’t know what we don’t know … until we know it! When I enrolled my two daughters in Montessori of Macon when they were each 2 years old, I thought I was choosing a high quality, loving preschool program for them. And obviously both of those characteristics were important and definitely what I was looking for at the time. As you know, our perspective of parenting is commonly limited to the view of our current stage or experiences. As with most things in life, we can imagine what a new situation or experience will be like, however once we have lived it we actually KNOW what it is like!

Now that my daughters are 16 and 19, and I reflect upon the decision I made long ago to choose Montessori of Macon I now have the perspective to know what I was really choosing was a high quality, loving preschool that would ultimately lead to them both being able to attend the MOM Middle School program. Yes, I know it is hard to imagine if your child is 2, 3, 4 or 5 years old that the decision you made this school year is actually supporting an even larger Middle School decision.

Most of us parents can reflect upon our own middle school experience and remember many of the challenges we faced at that age. To be a middle school age child is hard! As a parent that is surviving raising adolescents, on most days, I think there are two main questions to be mindful of when thinking about your soon to be middle schooler that will live in your house. (And yes, if you are reading this and currently have a toddler student, you will be surprised how soon that same child is in middle school!)

The first question, on the forefront of many parents minds, is “Will my child be academically prepared for high school and for college?” While test scores can never paint the full picture of a student’s accomplishments or success, I do think this is valuable information to assure you your child can live up to their fullest academic potential, while staying at MOM through the 8th grade. Yes, we do many things different in a Montessori school, however the data shows it more than works!

The second question to think about is “What life skills will my child need to learn to be a productive, successful adult?” As a parent of an adolescent, a significant amount of worry is spent on your child’s overall well being, mental health, role within their peer group, judgment/decision making skills and so much more! Yes you want them to be academically prepared but you also want them to survive this tumultuous time in life. Research shows that adolescents benefit tremendously from being in a community of adults they are connected to and that really know them. The MOM middle school is structured with continual opportunities to practice their skills in communication, problem solving, conflict resolution, critical thinking, negotiating, time management, prioritization, etc. It also gives them many opportunities to learn from their decisions, choices and actions. The personal reflection curriculum offers the adolescent student insight into their thoughts, feelings and the importance of self-care and self-reflection. Students are supported and challenged while they find their place in this world and make connections within their community.

I believe it is the combination of these two concepts, being academically prepared and learning necessary life skills, that will allow our children to grow into productive adults in our world. Society places so much pressure on how soon children read, what college they get into, what their SAT scores are, etc. I often wonder how different our world would be if our society spent equal time placing emphasis on what kind of human each child will become. One of the many, beautiful aspects to a Montessori education is you have the ability to offer all of this to your child. Obviously the above test scores provide evidence they will be more than prepared academically, however they will also learn so much more!
A Glimpse at Session 2

Lorelai working with the emotion cards.

Denny playing with a ball.

Adeline practicing the button frame.

LE students playing on the rock.

Thomas dissecting a shark.

Olivia stacking bug blocks.

Sam exploring with the binoculars.

UE students learning about river flow.
This session we embraced a few changes. A few of our older classmates, Campbell, Lorelai, and Chloe, transitioned into primary classrooms. This was a big moment for these students and while we're excited for them, they are surely missed!
We also welcomed two new friends to our classroom, Kayleigh and Sam. Both have already made a huge impact to our classroom community. It's nice to see them adjust and enjoy school so quickly.

Throughout the session, the children have been busy exploring the many works on the shelves. As I reflect, I must say all the food preparation works were definitely their favorites. These are the works the students enjoyed repeating again and again. The students enjoyed orange peeling, cheese slicing, apple slicing, inviting a friend to have a picnic, setting the table, peeling and slicing a banana, and spreading strawberry cream cheese onto graham crackers. Toddler students felt a great sense of pride and accomplishment to be able to prepare something they were about to eat. A lot of them tried things they wouldn't normally eat, just because they were doing the slicing or spreading themselves. We all know toddlers can be very picky eaters and sometimes it takes introducing new foods several times before they actually like it. Getting children involved in the kitchen at a young age is a great way to introduce new foods and create a foundation for healthy eating habits. Working together in the kitchen also invites conversations, which builds language, introduces early math concepts and serves as quality bonding time. I challenge you, the next time you're preparing a meal to ask your child to help with the process. You'll be glad you did!

Overall we had a great 2nd session and I'm looking forward to 3rd session! Happy Holidays!
This session we welcomed fall with open arms. We’ve observed the changes in the trees and are taking note of the changes in the weather. The children have been learning to put on their own coat, which always fills them with confidence. Toddlers crave independence and our classrooms are designed to allow them to explore their environment, almost without assistance of any kind. Even though we have recently welcomed some new students to the classroom, all the children have become familiar with our routines. Watching them navigate the classroom independently, choosing work that speaks to them, moving with such confidence and happiness, illustrates the effectiveness of promoting their independence.

Fall is the perfect time for exploring farms and farm animals. The children have enjoyed playing with the farmer puppet, filling barns with animals and singing “Old McDonald.” The children love singing songs during our group time, as well as reading books, doing yoga, dancing and playing instruments. They also love observing and listening to each other. Friendships are forming, picnics are being shared and food prep has become an integral work in our classroom.

Toddlers love to eat constantly throughout the day. This session we have been exploring many food works such as cheese slicing, strawberry slicing, apple slicing and orange juicing. Though these works are delicious, they all strengthen the children's fine motor skills as well. All that effort they put forth builds up their hand and arm muscles and offers a tasty treat.

One of the children’s favorite works is our sensory table. It is filled with black beans and corn and loaded with trucks of all kinds, animals, and a farmhouse. These hands on experiences, we provide our students, are carefully chosen to nurture their development on every level and, most importantly, they are so much fun!
Our second session has been full of unforgettable experiences; the children returned from their fall break to a familiar and consistent routine. They were excited to see their friends and to get back to the classroom. As the session began, we discussed the changes that come with autumn; the leaves changing colors, the days being shorter, and the weather getting cooler. As part of our annual traditions, we hosted a Fall Festival and a Thanksgiving feast.

During this session we have been busy with lessons on South America, Pablo Picasso, different kinds of families, and a student favorite, Fire Safety . . . stop, drop and roll!

The students have been working in the garden weekly. They enjoy spending time outside watering, planting, weeding, and harvesting. This session we harvested green and red peppers as well as squashes. We valued our gardening and outside time as fundamental parts of our day; as Maria Montessori said, “The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the earth.”

We are thrilled to see the children work, independently and with self-motivation, on their individual lessons in an environment where they have the opportunity to learn at their own pace, enjoy outside time, and build well-balanced relationships with their peers.

During the month of December, we have been looking at what different Festival of Lights look like around the world. Children have been learning about holidays that are celebrated this time of the year and how each one has a different symbol of light.
As we wrap up the second session of the school year I am feeling grateful. As mid-year conferences were underway and I was able to meet with so many of my families I am left feeling lucky for the community of families I get to connect with on a daily basis. This session, our classroom community grew as we welcomed new students who moved up from Toddler as well as those who were new to Montessori of Macon. It was beautiful to watch how the children took the new students under their wing and there was very little Ms. Emily and I had to do since the kids were welcoming and helpful in every way.

This session, as attention spans were expanding and vocabulary was increasing, our class discussions at group time have been the highlight of my day. We learned about family diversity and how each family is unique. We discussed gratitude and stated what we were grateful for individually. We discussed fall and gathered together to have a very successful and fun Fall Festival with games and crafts. We combined both Primary classrooms for a delicious Thanksgiving Feast that wouldn't have been successful without all of the parental support. We studied South America, insects, and the Rainforest. We carved a pumpkin, tasted a variety of different apples, and prepared our own applesauce. We practiced our song for the recent Winter Performance and learned how to overcome feeling shy while practicing singing in front of others.

Each year, each session, and even each month as each child’s development increases and as personalities expand I am able to witness a sense of calm in the classroom that takes place around this time of the school year that is impressive. Maria Montessori once wrote, “The greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as if I did not exist.'” It truly leads me to believe in and fall in love with the Montessori method all over again. Some days it looks as if the classroom is being completely self-directed by the children. I feel like a fly on the wall in the classroom as I am able to take more of a role as an observer and watch all that the students can do independently.
Each day the transition between morning work time and group time is filled with handwork. The students enjoy keeping their hands busy and focusing on steady, repetitive, creative work. This is a good way to relax after a morning spent engaging with challenging work and lessons.

Earlier this year, students sewed “Jacques Cousteau” caps from red fleece to wear during their presentation to parents after the MOM Annual General Meeting. Currently we are enjoying using a variety of knitting looms to create headbands, hats, washcloths, scarves, blankets, and fingerless gloves. Ms. Katherine and Ms. Jenny are our mentors in this work. Both of them serve as wonderful inspiration to us because they always have a beautiful project going themselves.

Handwork connects us to nature. We talk about the fibers that we use in our work. We examine cotton bolls still attached to the plant and a sheep’s fleece that has yet to be washed and processed.

Besides the practical nature of learning to create something useful, our handwork helps to broaden our appreciation of where our clothing comes from and how it is made. It ties in beautifully with our study of the fundamental needs of humans. We talk about the processes required to prepare these fibers for our use. In past years, and hopefully again soon, we will have a spinning demonstration. (One of our students spins and dyes yarn with her mother!) These lessons help us to appreciate the work that goes into making our clothing and other textiles and connects us to makers all around the globe, both now and in times gone by.

Handwork has other benefits as well. Research has demonstrated a connection between the activity of the hand and brain development. (This is a major reason for our use of cursive handwriting in Primary and Lower Elementary.) Playing an instrument strengthens this connection as well. Maria Montessori knew this from her observation of the children in her school. She called human hands the “instruments of man's intelligence” and said the child builds this intelligence through the use of the hands “by experience, first in play and then through work.”

In the past, Lower Elementary students have explored other types of handwork, including cross-stitch embroidery and quilting. Our most recent class auction project was a quilt featuring a square from each child. We look forward to exploring many other textiles and techniques.
Many shelves in the toddler and primary classrooms are dedicated to Practical Life works, such as learning to tie laces, slice bananas, or use tongs to pick up things. But what happens to this area once the children progress to Elementary? The practical life skills are still taught, just differently. In Upper Elementary, we have many opportunities, both teacher and student planned, for learning new life skills.

Earlier this session I found myself driving to a history field trip that I did not plan. How could this be? Well, the children planned it. The 6th years, in their study of United States history, began learning about slavery. After a short introduction, they all set off in different directions, with different topics to research. One began researching the life of slaves on a Southern plantation. This led to the question “Weren’t there plantations in Georgia?” and an internet search for a place to visit!

The student’s interest in plantations led to many lessons on how to plan a trip that I did not plan. How could this be? Well, the children planned it. The 6th years, in their study of United States history, began learning about slavery. After a short introduction, they all set off in different directions, with different topics to research. One began researching the life of slaves on a Southern plantation. This led to the question “Weren’t there plantations in Georgia?” and an internet search for a place to visit!

The student’s interest in plantations led to many lessons on how to plan a trip. Once they found the location (Smith Plantation in Roswell), they had details to find out. How much did it cost? How long would it take to go there? What was the best day to travel? Through research online, using tools such as Google maps and navigating the location’s website, they found many of their answers.

However, they could not find some answers. This led to another new skill: how to call a business and ask questions. We discussed their questions, how to politely address the person, and how to work an automated answering service. Over 20 minutes and 3 phone calls, they had their answers! What ownership! What pride! What engagement!

The quarterly Kids’ Café is another example of practical life in Upper Elementary. Each session a group collaborates to plan, shop, and cook a meal for the rest of the class. First there is the discussion of what to cook. As they all must agree, this leads to detailed debates about prices and processes for certain dishes.

Once the meal is planned, the students go with a teacher to the grocery store. While this seems like a dreary task, the children are eager for the trip! Each student has a job to do. One must keep track of how much we are spending, usually doing mental math to calculate multiples rapidly as children add things to the cart. Another child keeps the grocery list, and leads us through the store to the different sections. The students tasked with choosing items must discuss the best brand or type of ingredients. This leads to discussions of price per ounce, fat content in meat, the difference between organic and free-range, pure maple syrup or “fake”, etc. Finally, a child helps to check us out, by scanning and bagging our items. Beyond the practical skills, we also learn grace and courtesy. Where do we stand in the aisles? How do we ask for help? How do we talk and move from one section to another? And all this happens

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The wind is blowing across the ocean and onto my face. My feet are compacting hundreds of thousands of grains of sand with each step. Middle schoolers are creating a model of the beach ecosystem in the sand using the beach itself. A brief bus ride to Tybee Beach brings to life the concepts we learned only minutes ago, as we sat on logs in the middle of the Burton 4-H Center Campus listening to our instructor, Corncob, explain the berm, the wrack line, the dunes, and their meadows.

The Montessori of Macon Middle School had the opportunity to visit the Burton 4-H Center this session and take part in the wonderful variety of environmental learning experiences the center offers. We received lessons about marshes, maritime forests, and beach ecology before visiting real-life examples of each and we held the reptiles and invertebrates that inhabit the island and learned the ins-and-outs of shark adaptations while holding their oily livers and during our nightwalk, discovered why pirates wear an eye patch (ask a middle schooler).

In addition to learning about the life and the land of Tybee island, the students had the opportunity to bond with their peers from Montessori of Macon and beyond. Breaks between classes allowed us time to play games together as a class and with other schools. 8th grader Thomas and 7th grader Xavier went 2 v 2 against some new friends in an exciting game of half court basketball. Our middle schoolers enjoyed sharing a cozy evening around a campfire with other students. We enjoyed a nice ice breaker game before taking part in a competitive relay race during which students had to gallop like a horse and crab walk to the finish line. It was quite entertaining.

When asked about his favorite experience at Tybee, 7th grader William brought up the Marsh ecology class and the Nightwalk. “I got to put marsh mud on my face and I learned that it clears your pores!” “The nightwalk was really meaningful to me because I got to reflect on my day at Tybee. I really want to go more often.” 7th grader Madeline had this to say about her experience at Tybee: “I think the classes we had were all different and interesting. All of the classes were fun to me because there were so many different types of information that we learned. I really enjoyed the trip to Tybee and hope to go again next year.”

Maria Montessori once criticized education by saying “the world of education is like an island where people cut off from the world are prepared for life by their exclusion from it.” Such is not the case at the Burton 4-H Center on Tybee Island. Here the amazing educators and staff have created an experience that connects people to the rich variety of life and ecosystems on the island through hands-on learning experiences, in a social setting that allows us to connect with other learners from around the country. This has been another amazing year at Tybee and I look forward to the next!
before we even begin the actual cooking!!!

I recently shocked the children with the knowledge that during my (traditional) education, I never did chores at school. That's quite different from our classroom, which is more like a small house than my childhood classrooms ever were. Thus, each day our students complete a chore. Rotating each week, students take turns dusting the shelves, organizing the books, doing the dishes, taking out the trash, and even setting out snacks.

Besides learning to take care of their own future homes, the children gain many more skills. The snack person has a lot on their plate. Each day they look at a menu, planned by the last snack person, decide on the portion sizes, and set it out nicely for their peers. This may be trickier than it sounds. What if they let each person have 2 full cups of goldfish crackers? Soon a cry of “we can’t already be out?!?” can be heard from the kitchen. They soon learn to think ahead about how much they have and if it will be enough for everyone. At the end of each week, the snack person looks to see what we have and makes a plan for the next week. They then type up an email, complete with a polite greeting and sign off, that explains what they need the snack parent to bring the next week.

Thus Upper Elementary continues the younger children’s work of practical life in oh so many ways!