

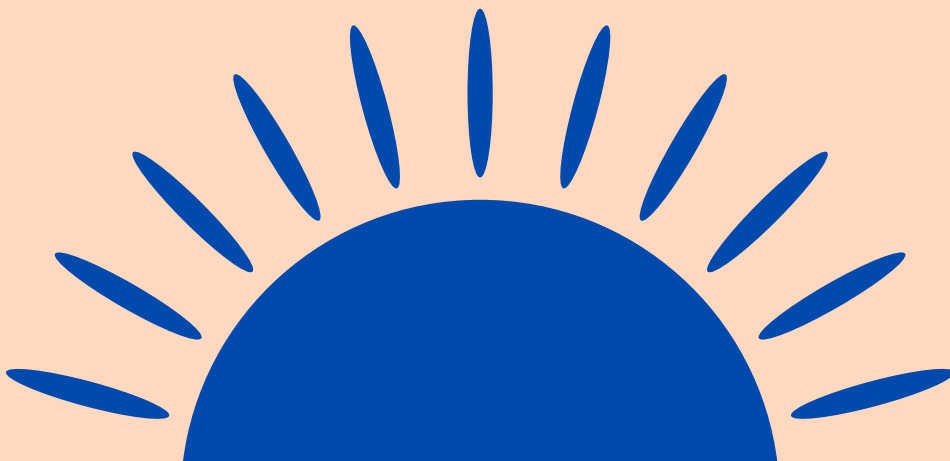


HMS

Monthly News

ARTICLES, TIPS, PHOTOS, & MORE!

June 2021



In Service of the Complete Human Being

When I take a step back and look at the past year/year and a half, it's overwhelmingly clear that these are tumultuous times. I have found comfort in my conversations with other school leaders both locally and nationally, private and public, Montessori and traditional. Regardless of our specific pedagogies, those of us in education value the whole child, social-emotional learning, character development, and empowering 21st century learners. We understand that education is more than reading, writing, and math. Of course, there are many distinctions and differences between religious schools, conventional public schools, Montessori schools, private country day schools, etc. However, there are also many similarities. The desire to help children find their best path to being successful adults is a common thread. A recognition of the important connection between home life and school life is a common thread, as well. Every school I've ever stepped foot in has their own set of values, norms, and expectations for the way students and teachers treat one another. Schools walk the interesting line of being a respite from the outside world while also making sure students are prepared, informed, and connected to that very same world.

In her book, *To Educate the Human Potential*, Maria Montessori said, "Not in the service of any political or social creed should the teacher work, but in the service of the complete human being, able to exercise in freedom a self-disciplined will and judgement, unperverted by prejudice and undistorted by fear." One asks, how, in a time when everything seems to have political implications, we as a school can stand tall in our values and still honor the diversity of thought and beliefs in our school community? What can we do to create a school environment to ensure that students feel their beliefs and identities are welcome? How do we navigate all of this, especially in today's world?

Every decision we make at HMS is made through the lens of our mission, vision, and school values. For us it is imperative that each child feels seen, loved, and understood. It's also important that our students feel they have a voice and can ask questions, share opinions, and express themselves in a variety of ways. Honestly, I think we would be hard-pressed to find any school that can truly claim to be neutral, though how each school prioritizes and expresses its values may be different.

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At HMS, while we try to see all perspectives, we are decidedly not neutral when our neutrality may harm a student. If a student wants to share that their gender identity is different from what we assume, we welcome that sharing and honor their requests. If a student wants to tell us how our lesson about the Big Bang conflicts with their family's belief system we welcome that conversation and encourage them to share their own beliefs.

The world our children live in right now is different from the world we grew up in and what our children carry with them into the classrooms look different, as well. Our goal is not to censor children, but to make sure the topics they bring to the table are handled in a developmentally appropriate dialogue. Our Montessori teachers have a deep understanding of child/adolescent development and are committed to helping students see their place in the world. Rather than saying we don't talk about that here, we try to model listening and asking respectful questions to further our understanding. Students learn a lot in the Montessori classroom about listening, discerning, and forming opinions. These important life skills begin early and continue to develop throughout childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood.

We do not yet know the impact this pandemic will have on our students. Nor do we know how the current events of today will shape this generation. What we do know is that we cannot isolate school from the world nor can we honor the child by only focusing on academics. Our commitment to our students goes far beyond the sandpaper letters and golden beads. Montessori said, "If during this period of social interest and mental acuteness all possibilities of culture are offered to the child, to widen his outlook and ideas of the world, this organization will be formed and will develop; the amount of light a child has acquired in the moral field, and the lofty ideals he has formed, will be used for purposes of social organization at a later stage." While she was specifically speaking of the elementary child, I find her words cross the age levels.

Nurturing the whole child, or serving the whole human being, means helping students create their own paths, ask tough questions, self-reflect, see things from other points of view all while embracing their own identity and values. By allowing children and adolescents to dig into these areas, we allow them to recognize their own potential.

Warmly,

-Aimee



Aimee Allen
Head of School

My Day as Head of School

Hi! I am Manasa and I got to be the Head of School on today. Today I started my day with Starbucks, then Mrs. Allen, Quinci, and I went over our day's agenda. I got to take people's temperature in the morning. Then we visited the infant classroom, and had sushi for lunch. I still got to have recess with my class. And then we had a few meetings. I got to help make this page for the newsletter, and helped Mrs. Allen work on a lesson. I learned that being a head of the school can be hard, but fun too. Everything that I did was fun!



Manasa Werner
Head of School for the Day,
5/26/21



ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE IN ADOLESCENCE

by Ann-Marie Leichsenring and Grace Hampton, Cedar Room Teachers

"The essential reform is this: to put the adolescent on the road to achieving economic independence. ...

For this would result in a 'valorization' of [their] personality, in making [them] feel [themselves] capable of succeeding in life by [their] own efforts and on [their] own merits, and at the same time it would put [them] in direct contact with the supreme reality of social life.

We speak therefore of letting [them] earn money by [their] own work."

(From Childhood to Adolescence, 64)

Whole Picture

The Montessori philosophy values nurturing the whole person. At the adolescent level, this means preparing our students for life as adults in society. This is supported in many ways, one of which is supporting their economic independence. Through various experiences, students learn about finances, practice managing their classroom funds, and strengthen their communication skills regarding their economic endeavors.

"But, above all it is the education of adolescents that is important, because adolescence is the time when the child enters the state of [adulthood] and becomes a member of society. If puberty is on the physical side a transition from an infantile to an adult state, there is also, on the psychological side, a transition from the child who has to live in a family, to the [adult] who has to live in society." (From Childhood to Adolescence, 60)

Lessons and Assignments

Lessons and assignments are important for introducing key financial concepts that are essential for beginning the journey of becoming economically independent. Lessons are presented through developmentally appropriate and engaging activities, which include exploring financial goals, career paths, savings options, the tax system, as well as strategies for smart shopping.

Career path exploration is one that the students greatly enjoy, as they are able to begin seeing themselves in the bigger picture. Through this exploration, students begin mapping out the details that are necessary for setting short- and long-term goals for education, jobs, internships, and volunteering opportunities.

Another big topic includes the exploration of financial goals, through the process of identifying financial values. By creating financial goals and developing processes to achieve them, the students discover possible barriers to their goals, which in turn provides the opportunity to practice a life-long lesson on resilience, as life does not always go according to plan.

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In addition to goal setting and career exploration, financial literacy includes an understanding of taxes and money management options, as the students are given the opportunity to apply mathematical skills and concepts to tax brackets and personal income. This piece of the curriculum includes lessons on different types of tax collection, revenue, and spending. The time we spend studying taxes gives the students a chance to describe and evaluate the importance of the current federal income tax system and the effect it has on our entire society.

Economic Experiences

Various economic experiences are incorporated into our middle school program each year. Students choose these experiences, so the types of opportunities differ from year to year. Our main economic experiences are: businesses (repeating events), fundraisers (one-time events), and managing their class trips (day trips and overnights).

Student businesses have taken many forms over the years. Some years students have hosted a morning cafe, where they served coffee and tea. Other years, they had a baking business. For a few years, the students had a market, where they made and sold goods. Typically, there are students who volunteer to take on more of a leadership role in the business, and support their peers throughout the year.

Our fundraisers have varied from student-created fundraisers (such as the waffle breakfasts) to collaborations with external organizations (such as the Equal Exchange fundraisers). These experiences give students an opportunity to work more closely with outside organizations, communicate with adults outside the HMS community, and learn about the benefits and disadvantages to some fundraisers. Some are so successful that they turn into a repeated event, such as the waffle breakfasts, which was one of the student businesses last year, but a fundraiser in past years.

The class trips provide students with the opportunity to budget, plan, research, communicate, and make mistakes. Planning a trip for a whole classroom can be challenging as well as an immense time of personal growth. Aspects such as entrance fees, transportation costs, lodging expenses, food budgets, and more are all part of this experience. Students must manage all of this, with the close support of teachers.

Through doing this work, students practice receiving, exchanging, and counting money; managing financial spreadsheets; correcting financial mistakes; and making financial decisions. With all of these economic experiences, students gain a better understanding of how to manage finances, events that might impact their financial gains, how to communicate with their peers and adults within and outside the HMS community, and their financial capabilities.

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Student Quotes

"I like knowing where my s also really helpful to remember that everytime I receive a paycheck when I'm older, taxes will be taken out of it, and it was nice to have that reality check..."

"I feel like it was really beneficial to start thinking about what I want to do with my life and what I would need to do to prepare for that, in both high school and college."

"I felt invested in this work because I realized that I could be more original with my career path choices and seeing other people's decisions can be helpful. You can learn from other people's decisions and build off of their ideas. "

At-Home Recommendations

Economic independence during adolescence can be supported at home, as well. Below are some ideas for how to support your adolescent(s) during this journey.

Ages 12-15

- Plan, research, and budget for a family outing
- Plan, research, and budget to cook 1-2 family meals each week
- Have discussions about how to save money and why it is important
- Provide a specific budget for personal items, if your family typically provides those; for example, "You have \$____ for personal expenses, such as toiletries, clothing, games, and so on. If you would like to spend more than that, you can either use your own money for that, or propose a different amount and a reason for the variation."
- Ask each other financial questions on a regular basis
- Open a savings account, and create specific goals
- Manage the family budget for pets (food, medical care, accessories)

Ages 15-18

- Anything from the 12-15 suggestions
- Plan, research, and budget for a multi-day family trip
- Plan, research, and budget to cook 4-6 family meals each week
- Open a checking account tied to their savings account, and create specific goals
- Earn money outside the home, when possible; have family discussions about their goals for that money
- If vehicles are in the picture, be open and transparent about all of the finances, and expect your adolescent to help contribute to those costs; maybe decide on a percentage together (for example, contributing 25%, 50%, 75%, or 100% of the vehicle costs)
- Have discussions about student loans, if applicable - plan, research, and make the financial impact clear
- Ask each other financial questions on a regular basis
- In preparation for leaving the family home, adolescents can be made aware of and practice some of the family budgeting: utility costs, transportation, household necessities (laundry soap, toilet paper, etc.), and more

Parent Grove Presents

Summer Fun Ideas!

By Megan Prunte and Kara Rush, Juniper Room Parents

It's hard to believe the school year is ending and summer is here. Both of my little ones have been confused by it being light out for so long already and my toddler, on more than one occasion, has told us, "it's not bedtime yet, sun still up." It is going to be a long summer if he keeps up that argument.

My family is looking forward to exploring more of our beautiful community this summer. We still have so much to see having only lived here for three years. Since we have been doing lots of research about summer activities, we wanted to share some of our favorites. Hope these ideas help keep you busy this summer:

1. **The Beach:** we love exploring Bella Bella, Titlow, Narrows Bridge beaches are our favorites so far. We run into HMS friends at these beaches often and it is always so fun to see familiar faces. Hope to see you there this summer!
2. **Parks:** Sehmel, Kopachuck and Point Defiance are some of our favorites. We also love Skansie Brothers Park and Netshed, Splash Pad and Park, Jefferson Park, and Titlow Park when the splash pads are running on a hot summer day. Hopefully it will be safe this summer for the splash pads to be on!
3. **Restaurants:** The Hub Gig Harbor has been on our list to visit since shortly before the pandemic and we hope to bring our plane loving toddler there soon. Patrons can watch planes take off and land while dining in because the restaurant is near the tarmac of the Gig Harbor Airport. We also love The Harbor General Store and the Harbor Cakes stand (cakes and cupcakes are so yummy), Suzanne's Bakery, and Table47/Ocean5. So many good restaurants in the Harbor!
4. **Activities:** We also love kayaking in the Harbor, Duffy Boat rentals, picnics at local parks, hiking, the summer concert series on the waterfront (hopefully we will be able to gather at the park this summer), camping at local campgrounds, and the zoo & aquarium.

We are looking forward to making up for lost time and hope to be able to see more of our friends this summer. Cannot wait to see you around town. Having an amazing summer!



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Board Corner

I cannot believe this school year is already coming to an end! At times, this school year felt like it was never-ending, and also that it flew by. As I reflect on this past year, I think about where we were a year ago. We were all wondering what school would look like in the fall, whether there would be a vaccine anytime soon and all the unknowns were quite unnerving. What we anticipated fall to look like turned out much better in retrospect. We didn't have to close down the school and we had ZERO Covid outbreaks at the school (knock on wood, I know there's a few more days left). I have to give tremendous credit to Aimee and all of the staff and teachers for all of the extra protocols in making sure the school could feel as "normal" as possible for all of the kids.

If I could sum up the school year in one word, it would be *generosity*. Aimee shared in our annual Board meeting in May that the school raised over \$98,000 this school year. That number is beyond anything I would've imagined going into the school year. Because of the generosity of our entire community, the diligence and extra effort from Nikki and Quinci to secure extra grants this year, and Lisa, Jennifer and Adena who helped us secure the PPP funds, our school is in a great financial position, which is not something all nonprofit schools and businesses can say after these tumultuous past 15+ months. I am forever grateful for every single one of you and proud to have this year behind us and look ahead to what's next. This summer, we begin planning for our next cycle of the school's strategic plan, which will include input from families and teachers. If you're interested in being part of this strategic planning process, please don't hesitate to reach out to me (boardchair@harbormontessori.org). Cheers to all of you on a fantastic school year and thank you again for your generosity and support this year.

Thank you,
Julie Thorn
Board Chair

