



ARBORLAND MONTESSORI INFANT - 8TH GRADE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

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"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*, p. 60)

Hello Junior High Families!

We hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits! Adolescence is a time of tremendous growth and transformation, both physically and emotionally. It is a time for our students to discover their own 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, independence, and self-discovery. Throughout the year, our students will engage in a variety of activities, group projects, specifically tailored electives, and collaborative learning experiences in the academic classroom and in 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.

Our Staff

Hello, my name is Ashley Simms and I have been a teacher at Arborland Montessori for 18 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 with my California teaching credential for English. 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 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!

Hello, my name is Farnaz Amirchoopani and they call me Ms. A at school. I am originally from Iran and moved to the United States 15 years ago to pursue my dream of becoming a math teacher. I speak Farsi and LOVE to cook Persian food! I have a master's degree in Applied Mathematics from CSUF. Teaching math is a passion of mine and seeing my students enjoy learning is the greatest joy! This is my third year at Arborland and I'm looking forward to working with our wonderful students. I have a 4.5 year old son named Aven, who also attends Arborland and is loving it! During my spare time, I usually go to the gym or run on the boardwalk since I live close to the beach. I used to run half marathons and won a few medals when I lived in Los Angeles and I'm working on getting back on that path soon again.

Below, 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 be having 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 for 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 during the first week of school.

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 make 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 the Muckenthaler Center (landscaping, grounds cultivation, program assistance for seniors and youth), 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

In order to acclimate our incoming students to the service learning program as well as give our 8th-grade students leadership opportunities, we will be having group service learning for the Fall semester. 7th & 8th graders 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 8th grade 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

Students will be an active part of grade keeping during the school year. They will have access to their grade trackers 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 msamirchoopani@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 research, 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 also focus on

training to be aware of online privacy, protecting personal information, and respecting intellectual property rights. We will focus on always giving 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 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. Students must check out with either the teacher or office staff before leaving campus.

Supply List

- Student Planner (for Homework Log) - 5.5"x8.5" or 8.5"x11" (no smaller, please)
- Personal Technology Device
- Math
 - 1 - 8.5"x11", **graph paper** spiral notebook
 - Inch/centimeter ruler
 - Protractor
 - Safety Compass (optional, no pointed compasses allowed)
 - Scientific Calculator
- Language Arts:
 - 1 - 8.5"x11", 5 Subject notebook (college-ruled)
- Science
 - 1 - 8.5"x11" spiral notebook (college-ruled)
- Social Science
 - 1 - 8.5"x11" spiral notebook (college-ruled)
- Elective
 - 1 - 8.5"x11" spiral notebook (college-ruled)
 - May need additional supplies
- Two packages of lined paper (college-ruled)
- One package of construction paper (mixed colors, 9"x12")
- 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
- Scissors (not child-size scissors)
- Colored pencils
- Markers (no crayons necessary)
- Sharpies – Black thin and Black regular (may bring metallic Sharpies)
- Glue sticks (multiple)
- Personal seating device
 - The school will provide the standard student chair, if your student would like to bring an alternative chair (ex – office chair, balance ball chair) or cushions for their chair they are welcome
- Technology cover/carry device
- 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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