

Queen of Angels Montessori Middle School Handbook
School Year 2009-10

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HISTORY AND OVERVIEW, Written 2005

Queen of Angels Montessori School began as the vision of its current principal, Dan Teller. In 1997, while principal at St. Bernadette School, Dan envisioned a program that would integrate Montessori education with Catholic spiritual formation using the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. He used the format of parish-based community meetings to share this vision and generate parent interest and involvement in making this idea a reality.

From the outset, a common theme that surfaced among parents was a desire to select a school that extended through eighth grade. For most parents interested in the concept of a Catholic Montessori program, the alternative choice for schooling would be a traditional K-8 Catholic parish school. The idea of a Montessori program that ended after sixth grade was unappealing to most parents because it would entail moving the child to a new environment for the two years of junior high school, a move that was undesirable due largely to social ramifications for the child at this socially-sensitive time of development. Even though their children were just toddlers or preschoolers at this early planning stage in our school's history, parents clearly indicated that they wanted Catholic education through eighth grade. Therefore, from its genesis, Queen of Angels took on the vision and mission of educating children through eighth grade. The school began in 1998 with one pre-primary environment, 28 students, and a growth plan to expand one grade level per year through eighth grade, keeping pace with its oldest group of students. On the one hand, this ambitious growth plan committed the school to a demanding pace for growth that has provided real challenges. QAMS has not been able to follow the more traditional model of growing a Montessori school by firmly establishing one level before starting the next. Parents have taken an even greater leap of faith than most Montessori parents with a rapidly-growing school that is creating a track record as it matures. Staff difficulties common to any school have had a greater impact on QAMS because of the fragility of its new, rapidly growing program and the anxiety of many parents who have committed their children to uncharted educational waters.

Nevertheless, this rapid growth plan has been a major reason for the school's significant growth in its short history. An important value for most parents in selecting QAMS is the school's clear commitment to developing its program through eighth grade. It has been this unwavering commitment, stated from the outset in the QAMS Mission Statement ("The education of children ages three through fourteen") that has both attracted many parents to the school and helped them make the decision to remain there through their child's elementary years (and hopefully, into the adolescent years as well).

Now, as the school stands on the threshold of implementing a Montessori middle school program, its rapid growth plan again presents a double-edged sword. One edge presents QAMS with the challenge of opening an adolescent program while at the same time solidifying its upper elementary program. The other edge presents the energy, momentum, and exciting potential of fulfilling its original vision and staying true to its mission and commitment to parents of providing "an outstanding education ... from ages three through fourteen."

The first indirect planning for the Middle School program began when Dan Teller attended one week of NAMTA's "Adolescent Retreat" in Painesville, Ohio in the summer of 2000. There, Dan gained important insights as to the great value and potential of Montessori adolescent education. He also had the opportunity to meet and learn from leaders in the movement, including Pat Ludick. This indirect preparation then lay fallow for several years as more immediate demands took precedence in helping the school to develop.

In the fall of 2003, with its oldest group beginning fifth level in the upper elementary program, direct planning for the middle school began. The Board agreed to retain Pat Ludick as a consultant for the project of planning and implementing a middle school program. It empowered Dan to create a Middle School Planning Committee consisting of staff and parents representing a cross-section of the school community. It charged this committee with the task of drafting a blueprint and recommendations for the implementation of the middle school program.

Marta Donohoe, a pioneer in the Montessori middle school movement and the current Program Coordinator at Clark Montessori, "kicked off" the planning process with an evening presentation to all interested parents and, in particular, those invited to serve on the Middle School Planning Committee. Then, the committee began a process of reading, discussion, visits to other programs, and consultation with Pat. Representatives of this group visited Clark Montessori in Cincinnati, traveled to Cleveland for a tour of three diverse middle school programs (Ruffing West, Hershey Farm School, Peaceful Children Montessori), and made a springtime visit to the Montessori Middle School of Kentucky in Lexington.

Pat's two visits to the school through the winter and early spring of 2004 introduced the broader school community to the vision and tenor of the Montessori middle school program. Pat met privately with the Board, observed and met with the staff, gave several parent presentations, spoke with individual parents, and began consultative planning with the MS planning committee. By the end of the 2003-04 school year, the planning committee was well into the process of drafting a blueprint to be presented to the Board by the beginning of the 2004-05 school year. In March of 2004, the planning committee decided to pursue a timetable of opening the program in the fall of 2005. A primary reason for this

decision was a desire to keep the original commitment to parents of the school's oldest students to offer Catholic Montessori education to their children through eighth grade. The committee recommended to the Board the following timetable:

1. Begin the middle school program in 2005-06 with 3-5 students. The adolescents would spend their mornings as part of the upper elementary community, and spend their afternoons with their own teacher and their own prepared environment.
2. In 2006-07, as the next group moves up, the program will have two full-time teachers and its own prepared environment.

In May, 2004, The Board approved the Committee's recommendation to open the Middle School in the fall of 2005.

LEADING VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Queen of Angels Montessori Middle School is founded upon core values and principles that stem from an understanding of the adolescent's tendencies and needs; the great potential of the adolescent as a person becoming an adult; and fundamental principles and ideals of Montessori education and the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.

Two overarching goals, or "supra-values", can be identified from the writings of Maria Montessori and Sofia Cavalletti: the "Valorization of the personality" and the privilege and responsibility of writing one's "Blank page" in the unfolding story of the Plan of God. The "Valorization of the personality" can be seen as how the adolescent develops his/her self. The "Blank page" can be seen as how the adolescent uses his or her self to contribute to society. All other leading values and guiding principles can be seen as fleshing out and lending support to these two "supra-values."

Valorization of the Personality

Montessori writes of this value:

"[Adolescence] is the time, the 'sensitive period' when there should develop the most noble characteristics that would prepare a man to be social, that is to say, a sense of justice and a sense of personal dignity."¹

"The consciousness of knowing how to make oneself useful, how to help mankind in many ways, fills the soul with noble confidence."²
(bold added)

"Even if a boy were so rich that his economic security seemed above all the vicissitudes of life he would still derive great personal benefit from being initiated in economic independence. For this would result

in a 'valorization' of his personality, in making him feel himself capable of succeeding in life by his own efforts and on his own merits, and at the same time it would put him in direct contact with the supreme reality of social life. We speak therefore of letting him earn money by his own work".³

Montessori also indicates the importance of the social context within which this self-formation takes shape.

"Being active with one's own hands, having a determined practical aim to reach, is what really gives inner discipline. In doing this the realization of one's own value is born in the consciousness. In short, self-valuation and the ability to take part in a social organization form a live force."

The Blank Page

¹ From *Childhood to Adolescence*, by Maria Montessori (London: ABC-Clio, Ltd., 1994), p. 63.

² Ibid., p. 64.

³ Ibid.

Sofia Cavalletti has emphasized the term "the blank page" in the elementary atrium of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. She writes:

"It indicates the period of time between today and the parousia, that page of history which is yet to be written by us, together with God."⁴

A predominant theme in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is that we each have a page to write in the story of the Kingdom of God. Every single person has a unique part in the Plan of God - an empowerment that "what I do really matters." Each person must collaborate with God in working towards the fulfillment of the Kingdom. Montessori approaches this theme when she writes:

"The consciousness of knowing how to make oneself useful, how to help mankind in many ways, fills the soul with noble confidence, with almost religious dignity. (102)*

Leading Values and Guiding Principles

Supporting these two broad goals, the leading values and guiding principles of the Middle School Program should include:

1. Fundamental Montessori principles and ideals continue to apply to education of adolescents, though in a new way that suits the particular developmental needs of this age.
 - a. Experiential education, including practical work.

"If we consider the plan from the point of view of our own method it can be regarded as a development of that principle that has already had such great success in our schools for smaller children ... known as the 'exercises in

practical life.' ...Independence, in the case of the adolescents, has to be acquired on a different plane, for theirs is the economic independence in the field of society. Here, too the principle of 'Help me to do it alone!' ought to be applied.⁵

- b. Cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning.
The Middle School should utilize team teaching that minimizes departmentalization and compartmentalization. A project-based approach to learning supports cross-curricular integration. Furthermore, Montessori emphasized the integration of work on the land with academic studies:
"[W]ork on the land is an introduction both to nature and to civilization and gives a limitless field for scientific and historic studies."⁶

⁴ The Religious Potential of the Child 6 to 12 Years Old, by Sofia Cavalletti (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2002), p. 23.

⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

⁶ Ibid., p. 68.

- c. Mixed-age, cross-grade grouping in a two- or three-year developmental cycle (7th/8th grades or 7th/8th/9th grades).
- d. Youth-centered.
The program design must respond to the young adolescent's social emotional, physical, intellectual, and spiritual needs. A maxim of the program should be to fit the facility and curriculum to the young adolescent, not the young adolescent to the facility and curriculum.
"[R]espect for the children is of the greatest importance and must be observed in practice. The adolescent must never be treated as a child, for that is the stage of life that he has surpassed. It is better to treat an adolescent as if he had greater value than he actually shows than if he had less and let him feel that his merits and self-respect are disregarded."⁷
- e. Freedom within limits.
"Young people must have enough freedom to allow them to act on individual initiative. But in order that individual action should be free and useful at the same time it must be restricted within certain limits and rules that give the necessary guidance. These rules and restrictions must be those of the whole institution. Not forced on separate

individuals as though they had no sense of responsibility and were incapable of conforming of their own free will to necessary regulations.”⁸

2. Rigorous standards set and met in a safe, secure school community that allows young adolescents to test and push themselves (self-discovery through challenge). These standards should encompass:
 - a. Academic challenge, with students taking ownership for their goals and attaining them (self-evaluation).
 - b. Behavioral standards.

“Strict discipline in everything that affects the daily life and the aims of the school must be enforced on the staff attached to the school as well as on the students who will then only learn to adjust themselves to the demands of an ordered environment. This means that the staff must take the responsibility for maintaining order until the order of voluntary self-discipline is established.”⁹
3. Education should include both manual and intellectual work, which “complete each other and are equally essential to a civilized existence.”¹⁰
 - a. Educational syllabus: a rigorous, comprehensive syllabus should include:
 - i. Self-expression (music, language, art).

⁷ Ibid., pp. 72-72.

⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

⁹ Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 65.

- ii. Foundation for character (moral education, mathematics, and language, including study of a foreign language)
 - iii. General education (geology, geography, biology, botany, zoology, physiology, astronomy, anatomy, physics, chemistry, engineering, etc.) done in connection with history (study of human progress).
 - b. Meaningful physical activity allows adolescents to know the nobility of work with their hands.
 - c. Purposeful work gives adolescents an opportunity to contribute in a meaningful way to their own community, to the adult community, and to society.
 4. Land/Nature Component

The connection of the adolescent with the land is of great importance, for it is in this connection that lessons of interdependence, stewardship, and humility are absorbed, as well as our link with history.

“Life in the open air, in the sunshine, and a diet high in nutritional content coming from the produce of neighboring fields improve the physical health, while the calm surroundings, the silence, the wonders of nature satisfy the need of the adolescent mind for reflection and meditation...[I]t is not the country itself that is so valuable, but work in the country, and work generally, with its wide social connotations of productiveness and earning power. The observation of nature has not only a side that is philosophical and scientific, it has also a side of social experience that leads on to the observations of civilization and the life of men.”¹¹

5. Self-expression. The program must provide activities that allow adolescents to express themselves in adult-like ways in the context of mature, adult-like roles (drama, intramural and /or interscholastic sports, debate, senate, etc.).
6. Building school community in a way that obliges young adolescents to consider and confront how they relate to one another and to adults. Real work and experiential learning within the school community create the genuine creation of distinct roles for the students and the need to take responsibility for the life and welfare of the community.
7. Service and community beyond school: building direct academic and experiential links with the outside community. The service and community component provides an important element of reality to the adolescents’ study and work. It also prompts young adolescents to look beyond themselves and, in so doing, to diminish self-centeredness.

Cosmic Education: Fostering a Sense of Interdependence and Gratitude. The middle school curriculum and experience should help the young adolescent understand and genuinely appreciate the web of relationships and interdependence that humans share with each other, with past and present societies, and with the natural world. In addition,

¹¹ Ibid., p. 68.

the program should help the adolescent see his individual place within this web of relationships, to appreciate the legacy of human achievements that he enjoys, and to deeply consider how he will contribute to the continued progress of civilization.

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Structure

1. Seventh and eighth grade students work together in science and social studies in a rotating two-year curriculum. Math and Language are taught in two groups at grade level.
2. In addition to the main subject areas, other classes include: Spanish, Art and Self Expression, Religion
3. The day is organized so that students have opportunities for: Individual work, group work, daily assignments, long-term assignments, peer teaching, planning time, time to review individual progress, a variety of means for demonstrating mastery: tests, projects, and presentations.

* See *Daily Schedule* in classroom for a more detailed explanation of the schedule.

Curriculum

Unifying Theme: The Study of Humanity

The rich and rigorous middle school educational syllabus weaves all of the important elements together into an integrated, continuous two-year curriculum. The study of the History of Humanity combines the humanities, mathematics, and science in a historical unifying theme. This interdisciplinary approach includes writing, literature, social studies, current events, geography, and the arts. As a Catholic school, we recognize that history receives its meaning from the fact of the Incarnation. All historians have a perspective, and the perspective of this school is shaped by divine revelation.

Over the two-year cycle, students investigate the broad tapestry of human achievement with specific study on scientific discoveries, geographic explorations, relations of humans to the environment, contact between different peoples, war, religion, and patriotism.

The middle school's curricular foundation connects to the Montessori elementary program. During the elementary years, study focused on ecology-based themes, including the emergence of human civilization. This provides the preparation for the middle school's focus on the transformation of human society.

Cycle One: Development of Civilization, World History

Cycle One focuses on the cultural development of mankind, beginning with the nature of human beings as created by God and their fundamental needs, both physical and spiritual. Special attention is given to the study of early societies in the Eastern Hemisphere (hunter-gathers,

pastoralists, cultivators, and city dwellers). Human achievements in technology, math, and science illustrate the role of the individual person in the story of western civilization, which is traced from its foundation in Greece and Rome to its flowering in the Renaissance.

Students examine societies similar and dissimilar to their own, with emphasis upon the static and dynamic components present throughout the process of cultural evolution. The areas of government, social structure, law and order, spirituality, economics, and education are integrated into this study, as are political and geographical factors. Important to this study is connecting the past with the present.

Students engage in independent or collaborative study from the classical age through medieval times, and throughout the Renaissance period. Leading questions suggest a study of each time period with an emphasis upon the social, material, and spiritual needs of people, the role of law and government, the education component, the inventions and discoveries of that time, and the roles and responsibilities of citizenship.

Students deepen their understanding of the history of humanity by engaging in a many-faceted Peace Study. Their investigation covers the evolution of weapons and rules of war from hunter-gatherers through modern times. The investigation ends with a study of the wars in which America has been involved, including the war against terrorism across the globe. This component includes a four-day key experience in the Washington, D.C. area (battlefields, monuments, museums, interviews).

Cycle Two: Emergence of Modern Society, US History

Cycle Two of the humanities course focuses primarily on the transformation of Western Civilization into modern nations, particularly the rise of the United States of America. Beginning with the period of exploration in the 15th century, European civilization underwent drastic changes as it encountered the civilizations of the Far East and the Americas, experienced dominance during colonialism, and was divided by the Protestant reformation and the revolutions of the 18th century.

Tremendous progress in technology and science characterizes the development of the modern age. The path of this development is illustrated by previously inconceivable comforts as well as unprecedented human suffering. The decline of morality in modern society gives rise to many questions on the responsibility of the individual and the nation to protect basic human rights and to promote justice and compassion in the world.

Students deepen their understanding of intolerance—religious, racial, ethnic groups, and so on. This cycle ends with a five-day key experience

in the Alabama & Georgia areas as with follow the path of the Civil Rights Movement.

Moral Development

Moral formation is a slow, progressive process which is related to general growth patterns. It is deeply connected to the joy that one is loved and is capable of loving others. The major influence in a child's moral formation is the value structure lived in the home. In the area of sexual morality, the parents have guided their child's growth in understanding during the elementary years. The middle school will build on that foundation through chastity education which builds upon the dignity of the human person as made in the image and likeness of God.

The middle school program connects all the elements of the curriculum through history, which is made by individual people acting in their particular time and place. As the adolescent searches for his place in society and purpose in life, he encounters people in each age who have impacted society by their actions, both for good and for ill. Highlighting the virtues or vices which affected these decisions gives the students many examples of personal freedom and the responsibility which accompanies that freedom.

The adolescent encounters a time of emotional and physical upheaval. In their search for truth, adolescents frequently challenge their family's values, beliefs, and morals. It is a time to examine the reasons for their faith, rather than continuing to accept it on the authority of their parents. The middle school program will introduce the students to vibrant faith-filled and knowledgeable people as witnesses and resources to help the students "Be ready to give the reasons for the joy that is in you."

Adolescents are capable of great zeal and desire to see faith being lived out in love, not just talked about. In addition to their own service projects in the school community, they can benefit from participating in service work with adults in the larger community, such as soup kitchens, Habitat for Humanity, or mission work.

Mathematics

The mathematics experience of early adolescence provides both depth of study and breadth of exposure. Basic number concepts, arithmetic operations, and geometric ideas studied in earlier years are consolidated and applied in early adolescence through the students' studies of topics in probability, basic statistics, applied geometry, and other areas. The students' small business enterprise, meal preparation work, and work on

the land provide a wealth of opportunities for the students to apply their math in real-world applications.

Early adolescents have distinct developmental characteristics that are addressed in the mathematics program. First, their social needs dictate that they have the opportunity to work in a variety of group sizes and settings: individual, self-paced tutorials, small group collaborative projects, and whole-group symposia and lessons.

Secondly, the adolescent needs to do meaningful work of strong personal relevance. This is accomplished with arithmetic, geometry, statistics, and algebra applied in situations of interest to the early adolescent: computing tips and budgets, surveys of peers, design and layout of building projects, etc.

Finally, the early adolescent needs to know that he or she is informed of and is meeting the basic norms of society. Hence, the early adolescent needs regular and systematic study, typically guided by a textbook, and training in test-taking and study skills.

The mathematics curriculum is closely aligned with that advocated by the American Association of the Advancement of Science and the National Council of teachers of Mathematics. It is a logical continuation of the student's work and studies in the Montessori elementary program.

Science

Middle school science makes a direct relationship between science education and daily life. Investigations are designed to help students learn about themselves and their world. Designing technological solutions and pondering benefits and risks underlies the middle school science experience. As students take initiative to learn science, they learn more about themselves, their community, and possible careers. The confidence to pursue such personal goals can be instilled through successful science experience.

The science curriculum stresses a hands-on approach to an understanding of the interdependence of the natural world and human life through interdisciplinary study of ecology, geology, botany, zoology, physics, chemistry, and comparative anatomy. The land provides a natural laboratory for this study.

The implementation of science in the middle school follows the Benchmarks for Science Literacy developed by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. This is a basic thematic approach which

blends well with the integrated studies method employed in the Montessori curriculum. The Ohio frameworks are also interwoven throughout the students' two-year experience at Queen of Angels Montessori Middle School.

Language Arts

Readings and Seminar

Students develop their comprehension skills through directed readings in both literature and non-fictional works. These assigned readings extend beyond the classroom and form a part of the work students do at home. Assignments specific to seminar discussions grow out of these readings and cover a wide scope of genres as well as interpretative comprehension of plot, characters, and settings. The seminars are based on directed readings from literature that engages both the intellect and the imagination.

A seminar discussion is a group process that allows the participants to think for themselves and learn from each other. It is a distinctive method of learning in which participants search for answers to fundamental questions raised by the text. It relies on an active process in which the reader searches the text to interpret the author's meaning. It relates the students' understanding to their own experience and sensible reasoning. Questions are posed and the entire group is engaged in a guided discussion. Each young person is expected to make a contribution and relate his or her ideas to the questions in the seminar. Answers are supported, tested, or expanded on by others in the group. Essentially, the discussion becomes a thoughtful debate where the ideas of others are considered, and the group works together to form a common understanding.

Writing

Students are asked to gather information from primary and secondary sources and write reports using this research. Through these assignments they develop skills in a variety of written forms, including reports, essays, letters, and note-taking. Specific lessons are given in sentence structure, syntax, spelling, and punctuation. Students develop skills in all areas of standard English and writing mechanics.

Students are taught methods for the writing process so that they may skillfully move from prewriting to final drafts. These written works form an important component in oral and multi-media presentations. Throughout this integrated approach, advanced grammar, composition, and the history of language are woven into all the studies done by the young people.

Creative Writing

Adolescence is an important time for the development of creative writing. Students do a great deal of journaling and incorporate their creative writing in the performing arts. These are integral parts of the humanities study, including debate, elocution, poetry, and dramatic presentations.

Second Language

The main goal of language studies today is communication, both in oral and written form. Language study is a window on the customs, culture, and way of life of other societies both historically and today. Through such studies, students also better understand their own language and their place in the world.

In the final year of the Montessori program, students will study Spanish in depth with more of a focus on grammar, including morphology and syntax, with the goal to prepare students to enter high school at the second level or beyond. Emphasis in the modern languages is on developing communicative competence. Beginning Spanish at the Pre-K level would allow the opportunity for some students to reach the intermediate level of proficiency according to the ACTFL proficiency guidelines (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages).

Second Language Components

Intermediate proficiency in a foreign language includes some knowledge of socio-linguistics, that is the culture, history, and life patterns of the society or societies in which the language is spoken. According to the guidelines of The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, intermediate proficiency in a second language is characterized by the following skills:

- The ability to ask and answer questions and maintain a simple conversation in areas of immediate need and on very familiar topics.
- The ability to pronounce the language well enough to be intelligible to native speakers.
- The ability to understand, with some repetition, simple questions and statements.
- The ability to read and understand the information presented in a simple paragraph, as well as some information written for the native speaker.
- The ability to write a paragraph on a familiar topic.
- The ability to deal with some everyday situations in the culture such as greetings, leave-takings, buying food, and asking directions.

Students who expect to follow an advanced program of study in another language or in other subjects requiring language skills will need a greater proficiency that provides the following skills:

- The ability to engage in conversation about such subjects as school activities, personal interests, and auto-biographical information.
- The ability to understand the essential points of a lecture, narrative, or explanation delivered at moderate speed.
- The ability to read and comprehend some literature and most factual information in non-technical prose such as newspaper articles addressed to the native speaker.
- The ability to write several paragraphs of reasonably coherent and correct prose to produce summaries, descriptions of events, or social correspondence.
- The ability to handle routine social situations in a culturally correct manner showing understanding of common rules of how individuals behave toward one another.

Creative Arts, Performing Arts, and Music Study

The program seeks to provide opportunities with career artists to acquire skills in drawing, sculpting, painting, woodworking, and photography. Students continue their study of music through study of the lives of composers and the periods in which they lived, instruments in solo and orchestral performance, and choral work.

Health and Wellness

The Middle School approach to sport, health, and wellness is fully integrated into both the academic and practical life components of the curriculum. It includes rigorous and varied physical activity which emphasizes skills in various individual carry-over sports such as hiking, biking, running, and swimming. It is combined with the hard work of the land such as trailblazing and gardening.

Over the two-year cycle the curriculum develops skills and concepts in the areas of physical, emotional, and social growth and development. These lessons are presented within the broader scope of human development, and become a primary tool for understanding. Connections are drawn through science and humanities foci in the curriculum.

Specialists are contracted to lend expertise regarding modern social issues, health issues, and wellness strategies.

Key Experiences for the Adolescent

Working

- Physical labor, integration of manual labor and academic work,
- Immersion experiences on the land

Expressing Oneself

- Art and music, creative arts, crafts, drama, plays, public performance
- Writing and speaking for self-expression, communication skills, speaking to a group

Relating to Adults

- Maintaining and developing positive and respectful relationships with adults
- Engaging in a mentor/counseling relationship with a guide, adults who are fascinated with life
- Interviewing people, and entering long-term projects with peers and adults

Building Community and Relating to Peers

- Assuming a participatory and responsible role within the community, council meetings
- Group problem solving, cooperative activities, trust activities
- Conflict with peers, social problem solving, solving personal and group issues, teamwork
- Extended social interchanges, leadership training within the peer group
- Dance and social interaction organized and directed toward a purposeful end

Developing Personal Identity

- Developing a positive and separate identity, developing the potential human personality
- Blocks of time away from parents and urban areas, time to reflect, writing a journal
- Clarification of values and beliefs, exploring possibilities, discovering one's place in community
- Finding success in learning and physical challenges, winning and losing, self-evaluation, goal setting

Developing the Intellect

- Academic challenge, opportunity to pursue learning, polishing academics.
- Exploration of skills learned in elementary, intellectual problem solving
- Acquiring and valuing intellectual skills and knowledge, development of thinking tools.
- Reading excellent literature, seminars, philosophy discussions, shared inquiry

- Writing and publishing, computing, computer literacy, foreign language
- Science experiments and projects, applied mathematics, research and discovery

Developing Business Skills

- Real work in the business community, work experience
- Running a land-based business, entrepreneurial activities
- Practical operation of the school, balancing a checkbook, accounting
- Fund-raising, dealing with the public

Participating in the Adult World

- Exploring the natural and man-made environment, camping, land activities, gardening
- Odyssey trips (challenge, adventure, and work), internships, linkage to adult world or work
- Real world field experiences, visiting cultural centers, using community resources

Assuming Responsibility

- Creating and maintaining the environment, student planning of activities
- Decision making, taking responsibility for learning

Serving Others

- Caring and sharing with older people, giving service to others in the community
- Helping and being helped, working with younger children

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

Student Responsibility

Our Middle School Program is committed to providing a framework that supports educational opportunities that are engaging for all levels, establishes an appropriate environment for study and learning, and encourages higher level thinking. We take these commitments seriously. The final responsibility for a student's education, however, rests with him or herself.

We expect the student to:

- Do the work assigned to the best of his or her ability
- Work respectfully with other students
- Schedule and complete work in a timely fashion and make arrangements to finish work when necessary.
- Commit up to 2 hours per night to spend on homework
- Work efficiently during the school day and not interfere with the work of others
- Communicate difficulties to his or her teachers so that they might better facilitate each student's success.

Organization

Academic Planner

We require students to use an academic planner. These planners have been purchased for the middle school. The planner will be our connection between school and home. It will be a place for students to record assignments and projects, record school events, behavioral or health concerns, and notes to and from home.

- Students must have planners every day. They will be expected to bring them to every community meeting.
- Parents should check the planner daily.
Check for notes. Also, let the teacher know necessary information for that particular day. (Ex. Picking up early, 2:15 for doctor's appt.)
- Parents should help their child use their planner efficiently.
Middle school is a new experience. At the beginning of the year, please go over planners with your child every night, go over assignments that are due, and help them note completed and not completed works. After the first month of school, a daily check is not needed. Please check with them weekly to go over list above. If you have any questions about assignments or homework please note in your child's planner and the Google calendar.

In class, students are expected to record assignments in their planners daily. We will begin and end every day with updates for our planners.

Every day will note the homework assignment given that day or will say, "NO HOMEWORK".

Instruction, Assessment, and Evaluation

Grading: A rubric grading system is being adopted for the 2006-07 school year. Students will receive a 4,3,2,1, or O on their work, projects and trimester progress reports.

4= Meets all requirements and goes a step beyond	(90-100%)
3= Meets all requirements	(89-80%)
2= Meets some requirements but needs work	(79-70%)
1= Demonstrates little understanding of tasks/materials	(69-60%)
0= No evidence of understanding	(59-0%)

- See the school calendar for dates when progress reports are sent home.

Assessment: Assessment refers to a collection of information about a student's learning and progress. As in the elementary classrooms we use a variety of assessment tools. These tools include checklists of skills or behaviors, anecdotal records of observations of student's interactions and interviews, portfolios, notebooks/journals, student self-assessment and self-evaluation reports, and charts of completed work. Students will receive a rubric for each project. The rubric will spell out the requirements for receiving a "4", and so on.

Evaluation: Evaluation refers to the collection of information about a student's learning. Teachers consider a variety of assessments before making an evaluation of student performance and progress. Students who have an IEP will be evaluated according to its goals and objectives.

Homework

Homework is an integral part of the academic program in Middle School. Not only does it reinforce information covered during the day, but it helps students expand their understanding of a topic through more analytic exercises. Questions regarding homework assignments should follow the progression listed below:

1. Students should check their planners for information regarding the subject in question.
2. Students should also check their notebooks for possible notes regarding the assignment.
3. If students have no luck on their own, they should call a classmate for help.
4. Check the Google calendar.
5. If students still have questions, they should call their teacher.

Grading and Late Work Policy

- All work is due on the due date.
- All submitted work must have the proper heading to get credit. Without the heading the work will be returned with no grade. To get a grade the heading must be on the paper and the work must be checked with the control. If there is no heading and it has been returned the work will earn a maximum of 60%.
- Nightly homework assignments can be turned in late for 60% credit. To get credit students must check their own assignments using the control or answer sheet. The only grade assigned for late is 60%. A grade zero will be assigned until work is submitted.
- Projects are due on the due date. Students can get 70% credit the day after and 60% after two days.
- All signatures are due on the due date. Students can get 70% credit the day after and 60% after two days.
- Shelf work is due on the due date. Any shelf work that is turned in late for that week can get 60% credit.
- Shelf work must be checked with the control in order to get credit. Show me shelf work **before** you get the control to check it.
- When biweeklies have mistakes students must take the biweekly home ***with the mistake***, find the work that corresponds with the mistake and bring it the next day to get the grade changed. If the work was not turned in on the original due date, the above policy applies.
- All controls will be kept in file folder when not in use. Return the sheet after you have completed checking in the work. Any work needing to be checked by the teacher, put in the Check-In basket.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Since the Montessori curriculum for the adolescent requires that your young student spends quality time in a variety of learning environments outside the confines of the classroom, we will inform you and update you on a 6 week basis when and where our outdoor extensions will take place. Until we gather the students as a learning community and get a sense of

their readiness and interest levels, we cannot publish the specifics of these destinations.

It is likely that those outings will include: day trips to Cincinnati and nearby cities, mentorships in science and business, hikes, service ventures, museums, land-based activities in the area, and adventure opportunities. The school assumes the primary expenses for these academic based outings per the fee requirement as stated in your tuition billing. **Students will be expected to provide their own food money and spending money as needed.**

GOAL-SETTING FAMILY CONFERENCES : AUGUST 20-21 2008	
❖ Morning and Afternoon appointments	
❖ Allow 20 minutes	
Hico, WV: Adventure and Community Building	September 14-17, 2009
Spring trip	May 3-6, 2010

There will basically be two trips that will include travel beyond the state of Ohio. These will be the Hico, West Virginia community building experience in September and the class trip in the spring.

- ❖ The **Hico adventure** is an outing that many schools provide for their young teenagers. It sets the tone for the year in terms of cohesion and spirit in the critical areas of social development. We project this to be a four day experience which will include cabin lodging, a ropes course, collaborative problem solving, campfire fun, rafting and hikes.
- ❖ The **May Class Trip**, Peace Trip. The trip will be planned by the students.
- ❖ Class Trip fees are included in the tuition this year. All money made on fundraisers will benefit the group as a whole.

Middle school students need to be responsible for raising ½ of the trip fee money. Here are examples to get you started on ways to raise money: Katie Farfing- raised \$600 dog sitting during the summer and on weekends during school.

Andrew Fuller- raised over \$200 making and selling tie-dye t-shirts.

Group of Clark students- raised \$300 after school one day washing cars

Trip Fees

Trip fees are included in the tuition. Any money earned by the students can be applied to their tuition. Mrs. Stephenson in the office will be responsible for keeping track of school fundraisers and money per pupil to be deducted from tuition. Students and their families are responsible for keeping track of money earned outside of school. Mrs. Stephenson will be in contact with you at the end of the school year to settle your final tuition bill. If you have any questions about money raised and deductions from tuition please contact Mrs. Stephenson at (513) 271-4171.

Phone Policy on School Trips

Cell phones are not permitted on school trips. It is a time of learning and intellectual experience in keeping with our study of the 20th century. Unlike an excursion or family outing, the students will need to treat our travels and visitations to historic sites as their extended classroom. On our academic trip, when entering the various public buildings and institutions, we undergo security scanning and certainly wish to keep our entry and exits as simple as possible. Except for the limited use of electronics [music] on the long bus/car ride, we will be busy connecting with studies and enjoying each other's company.

In terms of safety, the ratio of adults to students is approximately 1 to 7. Each adult will have a cell phone in case of an emergency. We are ever so responsible about caring for the well-being of each and every student. That is a privilege and something we take very seriously.

Any phone calls home are at the teachers' discretion. We will be open and sensitive but calls will be based on what we know to be the right choice, in the moment, for the group and the individual.

Developmental Rationale: This is a time for growth and maturity. It is time to exercise the ability to disconnect from family, overcome any uncomfortable feelings that may arise, perhaps having *other* people meet your emotional needs...this is what we want for our children as they grow into adults. The process of letting go doesn't start at age 18. It begins at birth...one layer at a time. The truth is that this is such an important time of establishing self-confidence and independence that students rarely ask to call home. They journal and save their stories for their return home.

Please remember that we call Mrs. Toon each morning and report the happenings, the weather, and our whereabouts. Each family has the student driven daily schedule as well.

Thank for respecting our rules for the road. If you have any questions or serious reason for an exception to this policy, please discuss the issue with your homeroom teacher.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Students at QAMS will participate in community service, both individually and as a group during the school year. Students are expected to fulfill 30 hours of community service during each school year, or 10 hours per trimester, and to submit written documentation attesting to this service.

60 hours total are required by graduation from QAMS in 8th grade. Service hours are to be completed in a variety of settings, serving the family, the school, or the broader community. Students should expect to receive no financial compensation; service is to be completed for the benefit of others rather than of self.

Community service hours are to be reported to your community teacher. Each trimester, students are given 5 hours of service to their families, their community, and their school.

Community service performed during the summer months will be credited to this requirement. Service must be written and turned into your community teacher.

Written documentation/Community Service Logs must have verification signatures from a community/agency member, and detailed information- date, time, description of service.

Some ideas for community service:

Read to preschool students at QAMS

Work at Tender Mercies one Sunday a month with Mrs. Farfsing

Volunteer to help out at the zoo (they are always looking for volunteers)

Landscaping at QAMS

COMMUNICATION

Teacher, Student, Parent discussions (TSP):

At the middle school level, we encourage the student to be involved in all appropriate communication. If there is a question or concern about grading, the process, conflict with friends or situations, and so on, then the teacher, student, and parent will sit down for a discussion.

Discussion times will be after school at 3:05 p.m.

Teacher Contact:

You may contact us at school, 271-4171, between the hours of 7:45 and 3:30 daily. After 3:30, you can email us or put a note in our mailboxes at school. We will respond to your question or concern within 24 hours or the next school day. TSP discussions will be set up as necessary.

We ask as a courtesy to the children and the teachers that you please do not enter the classroom during the school hours unless you have a scheduled appointment with the teacher or the office. Having adults coming in and out of the classroom during the students work day disrupts their work cycle. Therefore, we are not available for conversation or conferences during school hours. See above how to make teacher contact. We appreciate your cooperation.

Student Led Parent Conferences

QAMS students present their work to their parents during a Student-Led Parent conference. Students and their parents discuss the student's work during the trimester with teachers available to clarify and assist when needed.

In addition, students, parents, or teachers may ask for a conference at any time during the year.

Snack

Healthy eating is an important consideration for early adolescents. Students are allowed to bring a nutritious snack and water bottle each day. They may eat and drink as needed. Suggestions include: veggies and dip, fruit, nuts, yogurt, muffins or bagels, cheese and crackers, etc. Also, students need to bring a water bottle every day.

THE STUDENT AGREEMENT

Queen of Angels Middle School is a community which believes respect and responsibility are essential to an environment conducive for learning and growth. Parents, teachers and students are part of this community where recognition of the individual, acceptance of differences, and compassion for others are the basis of all relationships.

The teachers' goals are to generate an interest in learning, provide necessary information and skills, and encourage creativity. Students are expected to learn to manage and schedule their time and assignments and to practice good work habits. Student participation in establishing goals and recording progress is an important part of the curriculum.

STUDENT AGREEMENT

I would like to be a member of the QAMS Middle School Program.

As a middle school student, I agree:

1. To build and maintain a spirit of community by:
 - cooperating with and respecting other students and adults through actions and words
 - respecting each individual's unique qualities
 - participating constructively in all middle school activities
 - welcoming new families and visitors to QAMS

2. To assume responsibility for my personal academic growth by:
 - establishing goals
 - managing my time well
 - using my planner
 - taking care of my belongings
 - working to the best of my ability
 - agreeing to stay in at recess to finish my work if necessary

3. To make a commitment to academic excellence by:
 - completing my work on time
 - being thorough and neat
 - working independently on individual assignments and tests
 - seeking help when necessary
 - working cooperatively on group assignments
 - coming prepared to class
 - setting aside an average of 2 hours per night for school work

4. To take responsibility for the middle school environment by:
 - maintaining good care of all materials, books, furniture, and equipment
 - participating in daily upkeep of the classrooms and outside space

**Agreement inspired by Washington Montessori Middle School, 05-06*

THE PARENT AGREEMENT

Queen of Angels Middle School is a community which believes respect and responsibility are essential to an environment conducive for learning and growth. Parents, teachers and students are part of this community where recognition of the individual, acceptance of differences, and compassion for others are the basis of all relationships.

The teachers' goals are to generate an interest in learning, provide necessary information and skills, and encourage creativity. Students are expected to learn to manage and schedule their time and assignments and to practice good work habits. Student participation in establishing goals and recording progress is an important part of the curriculum. Parents work collaboratively to foster development of the child.

PARENT AGREEMENT

I would like to be a member of the QAMS Middle School Program.

As a middle school parent, I agree:

1. **To respect the Montessori professionals by:**
 - Seeking to understand how things are done in a Montessori classroom.
 - Acting in a way that reinforces the Montessori approach and support the fundamental Montessori tenet of the teacher's authority in the classroom.
2. **To be a collaborative problem solver by:**
 - Working with the teacher in problem solving to improve the educational experience for the student.
3. **To become an instructional supporter by:**
 - Reading Montessori Life magazine, newsletter articles, attending conferences and seminars.
 - Ask the classroom teachers, "What can I do to support my child?". Follow through on agreed upon steps.
4. **To facilitate problem solving by:**
 - Promote development of adolescent's problem solving skills.
 - Ask questions to help the adolescent solve his/her problems rather than solving problems for him/her.
 - Allow adolescent to experience consequences for his/her actions.
5. **To volunteer by:**
 - Giving time, energy, and resources to identified school/classroom needs.
 - Check volunteer opportunities from parent orientation or ask staff about available opportunities.
 - Ask teachers, "How can I help?"
 - Follow the lead of the classroom teachers in working with the classroom and respect his/her classroom guidelines and procedures.

STUDENT

I have read the Student Handbook and Student Agreement. I understand that I will be held to the standards of the handbook and the agreement.

Student Signature_____

Date ____/____/____

PARENT

I have read the Student Handbook, Student Agreement, and Parent Contract. I understand that I will be held to the standards of the handbook and the agreements.

Parent Signature_____

Date ____/____/____