Integrated Language Arts

An overview of the three-year cycle as designed for the adolescent aged 12-15 (grades 7-9)

The Montessori School of Winston-Salem—Adolescent Program
Integrated Language Arts Program Description

The Adolescent Program at The Montessori School of Winston-Salem builds upon the previous work of the Lower and Upper Elementary and Children’s House programs in fostering students’ strong development in the language arts: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing. The adolescent is prepared to engage with some of the most significant works of language in human history—from great literature and drama to speeches, poetry, journalism, scientific reports and other expository writings. Adolescents will be encouraged and scaffolded in crafting their own personal responses to and interpretations of these works, and by doing so they will continue to develop their own voices as writers as well as building deep understanding of the power of language to shape the world as well as themselves and their communities. This engagement will foster analytical and critical thinking skills that will be valuable in all areas of life as they approach later adolescence and adulthood.

Maria Montessori viewed language as a vital aspect of “the development of the personality”—an important key to healthy social interactions and responsible citizenship. She observed that “words are a natural means of expressing thoughts and establishing understanding among men”¹. With this observation in mind, the Adolescent Program cultivates language development as both a tool for personal expression as well as an intellectual discipline to be mastered. Language arts work, be it intellectual, creative and/or social, permeates all aspects of the Adolescent Program curriculum and program of study. It is purposefully integrated across disciplines; language arts study includes the development of research skills, formal presentations, reading and writing assignments, journaling, and seminars across disciplines from arts and humanities to science and mathematics.

Literature plays a key role in the Language Arts curriculum. Students are engaged throughout the year in novel studies which reflect thematic elements of the Humanities and Science curricula. Novels are explored through introductory key lessons, comprehension quizzes and checkups, creative responses, character analyses, vocabulary study, thematic essays, and student-led seminar discussions. Through the study of thematically integrated literature, students build a rich understanding of the interconnectedness of literary expression with cultural, scientific, and historical aspects of human society. Literature discussions and seminars are held weekly during Humanities or Language Arts workshop periods. Students will also take trips to public and university libraries to learn how to effectively search for both literary and expository works. Students will also be encouraged and supported in developing a lifelong habit of reading for pleasure as well as for information.

Poetry, with its power to distill and relate both personal and universal experiences through language, makes up another important facet of the Language Arts curriculum. Adolescents are particularly sensitive to reading and writing poetry to help express the increasingly complex social and emotional aspects of their journey toward adulthood. Poetry in a range of styles, themes, and voices will be explored through reading, writing, and sharing aloud.

Drama, much like poetry, is a vivid expression of the human experience. Adolescents will experience reading, writing, viewing and performing dramas as a way of building empathy and understanding by literally and metaphorically putting themselves in someone else’s shoes. Collaboratively writing and performing dramas is a powerful way for emerging adolescents to strengthen their sense of community through teamwork, cooperation, engagement, and participation in working toward a common goal. Students will also connect with local theatrical institutions to observe how drama, opera and other types of performances build a sense of community in the wider world.

Beyond the academic disciplines, adolescents will work toward understanding the differing uses of **voice and personal expression** in academic, casual and professional communications. They will learn the etiquette of communicating appropriately in different settings such as student council; working with suppliers and customers in the microeconomy; going out into the community; addressing peers, guides and administration of TMS via discussion or email; and negotiating or mediating interpersonal differences in the school setting. This will also include thorough and direct instruction on the safe and appropriate use of electronic communications such as email, texting, and social media, as well as the importance of respecting personal, cultural, religious, political and philosophical differences when using language within and beyond the TMS community. The goal of this work is to scaffold the adolescent in developing his or her personal voice to help make positive contributions to and connections within our TMS, local and world communities.

**Writer’s Workshops**

Writing is a complex process that requires support and scaffolding for the developing adolescent. Students will receive concentrated support and guidance from adult guides at least once a week through **Writer’s Workshops**. The workshop format emphasizes with equal importance the phases of the writing process: **Brainstorming, Drafting, Revising, Proofreading, Editing and Publication**. During these workshops, guides will provide group or individualized coaching and lessons related to grammatical conventions, proofreading and editing, vocabulary development, structural and thematic organization, and personal expressiveness. Students will then have ample time to freely explore and practice these skills. As work progresses, students will meet one-on-one with guides for **writing conferences** in which they may ask questions, solve problems, and receive personalized feedback and instruction. Various forms of writing will be explored, including but not limited to: formal essays, news articles, comprehension and thematic essays, creative and autobiographical narratives, poetry, drama, presentations, scientific reports, and other creative and expository forms.
Language Tasks of the Developing Adolescent

- To develop their own unique voice through writing as a form of creative personal expression
- To develop their own unique voice through writing for intellectual understanding and development
- To understand the importance of audience in writing and adapt accordingly
- To understand and practice key conventions of grammar in both speaking and writing
- To develop a clear, confident, poised and articulate form of verbal expression for formal, informal, and creative presentations
- To develop and use elevated vocabulary in a variety of written and verbal settings
- To recognize and appreciate the diverse cultural and historical uses of language in literature, poetry and drama
- To develop the habits of a critical mind (observing, thinking, feeling, responding, questioning, debating, evaluating, etc.)
- To interpret and analyze a wide variety of texts (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, scientific, primary and secondary sources)
- To be exposed to and to experience the practices of writing in a diverse variety of styles and for a wide range of audiences and purposes
- To grow a love of reading for personal and intellectual purposes
- To understand writing as a process, and gain confidence and proficiency in each phase of the process
- To organize an array of information from various sources on one topic, and cite sources accordingly

Ways that Language Tasks Are Achieved

- Frequent key lessons delivered by adult guides
- Frequent opportunities to write in a variety of styles for a variety of audiences
- Frequent opportunities to share work with peers and others through oral presentation, performance, or written publication
- Writing workshops including instruction in grammatical conventions, style, mechanics and vocabulary
- Formal and informal group discussions about reading and writing materials
- Formal seminars/Socratic discussions on literature and other written materials
- Peer editing, conferencing and coaching
- Support, practice, and remediation on spelling if needed
- Celebration of the written and spoken word through dramatic presentations, poetry slams, attendance at local productions, author visits, book clubs, outings, etc.
Forms of Evaluation and Assessment

As is consistent with the Montessorian approach in the Upper and Lower Elementary programs at TMS, students actively participate in their own assessment and evaluation. Frequent self-evaluations and peer and guide coaching sessions keep the adolescent apprised of his or her own progress in both efforts and achievements. Guides will also provide feedback and constructive criticism based on rubrics and other holistic forms of assessment to provide an adult perspective and foster the adolescent’s confidence in engaging in constructive dialogue about strengths and challenges in his or her work. There is a continued de-emphasis on letter grades; however, the students do receive feedback in the form of percentages. In the Ninth Year, end of course letter grades will be awarded to record progress for students’ high-school transcripts.

- Self-evaluations, including the use of rubrics and guiding questions
- Guide evaluations, using rubrics with specific standards
- Peer editing and conferencing
- Ongoing coaching, discussion and feedback throughout the stages of the writing process
- Comprehension and vocabulary quizzes
- Assigned questions and reflections

- Formal and informal reading responses
- Demonstration of mastery over subject matter as expressed through a variety of written and oral presentations, artistic expressions, or other culminating projects
- Portfolio development
- Publication of polished work
Writing Topic and Format Overview

*Students are always writing throughout the year, in all subject areas. Over the three-year cycle in the Adolescent Program, the following forms of writing will be explored. Some forms will be required, and some may be voluntarily explored through free-choice writing projects. Students will keep a Writing Portfolio of drafts in progress as well as finished pieces as a valuable resource for self-evaluation and marking of progress over time.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Writing</th>
<th>Persuasive Writing</th>
<th>Creative Writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Journaling</td>
<td>• Persuasive essays</td>
<td>• Poetry (various styles)</td>
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<td>• Self and peer evaluation</td>
<td>• Speechwriting</td>
<td>• Short stories &amp; novellas</td>
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<td>• Personal emails</td>
<td>• Debate prologues</td>
<td>• Plays</td>
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<td>• Personal Letters</td>
<td>• Position papers</td>
<td>• Screenplays</td>
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<td>• Thank-you notes</td>
<td>• Letters to the editor</td>
<td>• Folktales (myths, legends, fables, etc.)</td>
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<td>• Blog posts</td>
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<td>• Songs</td>
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<td>• Freewriting</td>
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<td>• Raps</td>
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<td>• Travelogue</td>
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<td>• Poetry Slams/Spoken Words</td>
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<th>Narrative Writing</th>
<th>Business Writing</th>
<th>Expository Writing</th>
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<td>• Personal essays</td>
<td>• Business letters and emails</td>
<td>• Expository essays</td>
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<td>• Biographies</td>
<td>• Thank you letters to businesses</td>
<td>• How-To essays</td>
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<td>• Autobiographies</td>
<td>• Advertisements</td>
<td>• Comparison-Contrast essays</td>
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<td>• Descriptive essays</td>
<td>• Marketing brochures</td>
<td>• Cause and Effect essays</td>
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<td>• Graduation speeches</td>
<td>• Business/product proposals</td>
<td>• Classification essays</td>
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<td>• Fundraising materials</td>
<td>• Math tables</td>
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<td>• Writing for social media</td>
<td>• Statistical report/analysis</td>
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<td>• Science Lab report</td>
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<td>• Response to prompt</td>
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<th>Journalistic Writing</th>
<th>Writing About Literature</th>
<th>General Writing Forms and Conventions</th>
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<tr>
<td>• News reports</td>
<td>• Thematic Essay</td>
<td>• Paragraph Structure (topic, body,</td>
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<td>• Feature articles</td>
<td>• Literary Analysis</td>
<td>closing sentences, transitions)</td>
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<td>• Editorials</td>
<td>• Literary Criticism</td>
<td>• Essay Structure (introduction and</td>
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<td>• Music, film, theatre, art, or food criticism</td>
<td>• Chapter Summary</td>
<td>conclusion, thesis statements, five-</td>
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<td>• Interviews</td>
<td>• Character analysis</td>
<td>paragraph format, unity and</td>
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<td>• Oral Histories</td>
<td>• Personal response</td>
<td>coherence, strong transitions)</td>
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<td>• Ethnographies</td>
<td>• Artistic response</td>
<td>• Strong use of facts and supporting</td>
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<td>statements</td>
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<td>• Presentation notes</td>
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<td>• Note-taking in lessons and</td>
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<td>presentations</td>
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<td>• Paraphrasing sources</td>
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<td>• Citations and Bibliographies</td>
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<td>• Avoiding plagiarism</td>
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Reading Overview

The following forms of reading are explored and practiced throughout the three-year cycle of the Adolescent Program. Students will read classic and contemporary works of literature (novels, poetry, plays) which are thematically linked to their studies in the Humanities and Science. Other short-form texts will be read throughout the curricular frameworks of their studies in Mathematics, Humanities, Science, Microeconomy, Advisory, and Current Events. Students will always be encouraged to read books and other texts on their own for pleasure with the goal of developing enthusiastic lifelong readers. Emphasis is placed on students’ comprehension, personal responses, and critical analysis of all readings. Media Literacy is also emphasized throughout the three-year cycle, as students are guided into habits of critically questioning, validating, and identifying bias in online sources and other media.

Literature and Creative Readings/Viewings

- Novels
- Novellas
- Short Stories
- Memoirs
- Poetry
- Plays
- Films
- Screenplays

Research-Based and Informative Readings

- Primary Sources (Examples: Declaration of Independence, Plato’s Republic, letters, historic speeches, transcripts, archives, etc.)
- Secondary Sources (Examples: textbooks, journal articles, magazine and internet sources)
- Journalistic Writings and News Articles
- Biographies and Autobiographies
- Editorials
- Essays
- Speeches
- Instructional Manuals
- Maps and Guidebooks
- Web-based readings

Literature Seminar Readings

The following are examples of the types of classic and contemporary literary works which will be explored throughout the three-year cycle. Guides will select literature based upon thematic elements of the Humanities curriculum, current events, or an individual class’s areas of interest.

- A Separate Peace
- Our Town
- October Sky
- A Tree Grows in Brooklyn
- Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
- The Little Prince
- 1984
- Tuck Everlasting
- Hamlet
- Bud, Not Buddy
- Ruby Holler
- Little Women
- The Diary of Anne Frank
- Lord of the Flies
- Romeo and Juliet
- To Kill a Mockingbird
- Inherit the Wind
- Of Mice and Men
- Across Five Aprils
- Night
- The Giver
- Out of My Mind
- Hoot
- A Midsummer Night’s Dream
- The Outsiders
- Girl with a Pearl Earring
- All Quiet on the Western Front
- Oliver Twist
- Canterbury Tales
- Animal Farm
- Catcher in the Rye
- The Once and Future King
- Stargirl
- Walk Two Moons
- A Tale of Two Cities
- Jane Eyre
Grammar Conventions Overview

The following grammar conventions are among those reviewed and practiced throughout the three-year cycle. Lessons will be given to groups and individuals, with follow-up assignments for practice. Students will also practice revising, proofreading and editing their own work in the context of Writer’s Workshop.

- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Spelling
- Simple, compound, and complex sentence structure
- Parts of a sentence
- Phrases and Clauses
- Active and Passive Voice
- Subject-verb agreement
- Types of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs
- Verbs (indicative, imperative, conditional, subjunctive)
- Verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives)
- Modifiers
- Conjunctions
- Interjections
- Prepositional phrases
- Literary devices (metaphor, simile, analogy, alliteration, foreshadowing, hyperbole, allegory, etc.)