"The first duty of an education is to stir up life, but leave it free to develop." —Dr. Maria Montessori

Upper Elementary Curriculum

- Work and Social
- Cultural
- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Music
- Art
- Physical Education

Work and Social

It is the great work of the Elementary child to develop a strong self-concept and find a place in the community. Therefore, as in the Lower Elementary, the academic and social mission of the Upper Elementary program inspires a dual sense of responsibility in which students learn to take care of their own needs while growing in sensitivity and responsiveness to the greater good. The result is an atmosphere dominated by an expectation of caring for oneself, for each other, and for the communal physical environment. In such an atmosphere of mutual respect the student's own inner clock of development sets the pace and direction of their social and intellectual movement towards independence. Consequently, the boundaries of the Upper Elementary child's environment expand in response to the continuing strides being made toward the ability to reason, both cognitively and morally, as well as the irresistible pull to seek one another's company and form groups of all kinds in search of lasting individual and community-oriented habits of heart, mind, and hands.

Cultural

At the Upper Elementary level the child continues in the development of a cosmic vision of the origin and interdependence of life, of partnership and cooperation, and of each part of creation possessing its unique and critically important task. In short, the Upper Elementary curriculum

extends the exploration of and appreciation for the vast array of human differences -- cultural, geographic, political, and economic. The nine to twelve year old at this new stage of intellectual and social awareness and ability is able to more fully comprehend, and act upon, through study and service, the guiding premise that humanity is rooted in a common set of fundamental needs. The Montessori cultural curriculum, through its integrated historic, scientific, and geographic progression, carries forth the story of life to focus on the coming of humans and the ensuing rise of civilizations. It strives to nurture reverence and instill a lifelong sense of wonder for the grandeur and mystery of life, and, most importantly to assist the child in gaining an appreciation for his or her special role therein.

Language Arts

In the Upper Elementary, language is the holistic thread that binds the Montessori curriculum and ignites the imagination. Throughout the three-year learning cycle, students develop essential skills and strategies common to all proficient communicators. They are guided toward awareness, and ultimately a self-monitoring, of their own thought processes when engaging the spoken or written word as it relates to their own depth of comprehension or that of their very own audience. As these habits of mind take root through introduction to, practice with, and internalization of the rules governing the use of language, the writing process, oral expression, literary analysis and dialogue, and the research process, students begin to experience the active creation and absorption of language as meaningful, sophisticated, and relevant tools for growth.

Mathematics

Mathematics in the Upper Elementary is presented in a scope and sequence prepared to stimulate the constantly developing abilities of the nine to twelve year old. The Upper Elementary student possesses a mind that has the ability to judge, decipher, deduct, and reason: thus, to think abstractly. This is a blossoming critical thinker for whom the journey from the concrete experiences in the Lower Elementary to abstract reasoning and calculation in the Upper Elementary leads to the exploration and grasp of complex mathematical and geometric concepts. Through the manipulation of familiar and more advanced materials, students continue to move at their own pace in a step-by-step progression toward more abstract operations and relationships. It is precisely these gifts of time and materials, along with the practical integration of math into the broader curriculum, that help students better appreciate the language of numbers and their functions while providing a leg up in the climb to abstraction in preparation for the next level of reasoning and calculation contained in the initial studies of Algebra.

Music

In music, the primary areas of focus are singing, dancing and movement, listening, singing and rhythm games, composition and improvisation. The goal is to combine musical skill building with

the elements of spontaneity, improvisation, and creativity. In addition to the general music classes, there are a variety of ensemble groups to choose from, including recorder, percussion, and jazz/pop classes. Here students develop skills in small group musical interaction, improvisation, ensemble playing, and music reading. Musical work in the UE also plays a significant role in the classes annual performance, at all school gatherings, the community dinner, and "sharing" performances for the lower el and primary classes.

Art

The goals of the Upper Elementary Art program are to strengthen visual awareness, aesthetic appreciation, creative expression, and imaginative thinking. Students refine technical skills and make in-depth explorations with elements and principles of visual design. Structured lessons are designed to promote individual initiative and the development of a personal style. Art is also an integral part of the academic program, with projects designed to enhance classroom studies.

The art program also includes the exposure to. and discussion of, reproductions of works of art, and an annual visit to the Brattleboro Museum. These activities help students connect their art making to a wider social and historical context. Finally, the art classes implicitly and explicitly promote awareness of the natural work as a source of imagery and inspiration, establishing a bridge to issues of environmental protection. Outdoor art expeditions to farm, river and orchard reinforce this idea.

Physical Education

The Physical Education program at Hilltop is guided by the seven components of physical fitness: speed, agility, strength, power, endurance, flexibility and coordination. Within the scope of a semester all P.E. activities address one or more of these components. Careful focus on attaining competency in all areas over time will ensure that a student is successful in achieving a healthy fitness level. For as fitness improves so does the level of skill development.

For the 9-12 year olds these skills include Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, track and field, volleyball, tumbling, badminton, pilo polo, dance, circus skills, lacrosse, softball and mile run training.