



Southern  
Montessori  
School

Brave Hearts | Curious Minds

Guide to the Adolescent Program



Teachers must have the greatest respect for the young personality, realising that in the soul of the adolescent great values are hidden, and that in the mind of the adolescent there lies all our hope of future progress and the judgement of ourselves and our time.

Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*





# Welcome

We warmly welcome you to Southern Montessori Middle School. This document complements the Parent Handbook and will assist you to navigate our Adolescent Program.

## Empowering Students to Flourish in Learning and in Life

Our Adolescent Program is carefully designed to aid our students' natural development and support the beginning of their transition into adulthood within a secure, supportive community.

We provide an innovative educational program in which adolescents can excel academically, engage in meaningful work, develop leadership skills, and learn to care for themselves, the environment, and their community.

Building on our students' learning in the primary years, we provide them with the skills, knowledge and experiences that will ensure they are successful in school and beyond, both in their personal and their professional lives.

# Meeting the Unique Developmental Needs of Adolescents

Adolescence is a time of rapid growth and development during which young people shape their identity. Adolescents have a tendency to demonstrate:

- an internal drive to gain independence from their family in order to find their place in the world;
- difficulties concentrating on structured learning;
- the incredibly powerful influence of the peer group;
- mental fragility as they become very critical of themselves and others around them;
- fluctuations between periods of high energy and enthusiasm contrasted with unexplained lethargy;
- an inclination to make connections with the wider community and understand the workings of society and the world.

Our Adolescent Program has been designed with the adolescent at the centre. Understanding these characteristics allows teachers to provide rich, developmentally appropriate learning experiences for our students.

## Positive Wellbeing

Adolescence is a vulnerable formative period of human development where many physical, social and emotional changes are occurring. It is during this time that adolescents are at risk of mental health issues. Middle School teachers strive to create a culture of positive psychological wellbeing where students feel safe, valued and are given the support needed to emerge from this challenging period and thrive.

The Middle School environment nurtures appropriate emotional and social interactions between students. Time is taken to better educate adolescents about healthy sleep patterns, regular exercise and how to manage emotions. Close relationships are formed with families to best support all students.

Further to the Health and Personal Development Curriculum, Southern Montessori Middle School engages local organisations, such as Headspace to run programs to better educate students and their families on how to cope with the everyday stresses of life and manage their mental wellbeing. Our student counsellor is available, one day a week, providing both one to one and group sessions with our students.

Ensuring our students are happy and holistically well is critically important as it provides the best foundation to continue their journey to realising their own potential.

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# A Holistic Focus on Every Student Every Day

Keeping the developmental characteristics of adolescents in mind, our program aims to:

- value each student as an individual;
- nurture each student's sense of belonging in a safe and respectful community of learners;
- provide students with rigorous, purposeful and challenging work that is relevant to the world we live in and extends beyond the classroom;
- nurture a lifelong love of learning, supporting the development of intrinsic motivation and self-direction;
- develop curiosity and critical thinking;
- provide opportunities for creative expression and for physical activity;
- offer choice where possible dependent on a student's ability to self-regulate;
- nurture the social and economic independence of students, building their confidence and ability to lead productive and fulfilling lives as adults;
- assist students to construct their identity through experience in a variety of different roles;
- connect students with the community in which they live, providing opportunities to further citizenship and democratic problem-solving;
- deepen students' understanding of the world around them and of themselves as human beings, enabling students to develop a global conscience, test ideas around social justice, and empower action towards peace and sustainability;
- offer students time to reflect, withdraw and just be.

## A Caring Community

Our Middle School operates as a group of caring people actively working together to support each other's personal development.

Our community is a place for discussion and problem solving. A space for adolescents to critically think, question each other, disagree, resolve conflict and understand different perspectives.

The wellbeing of students is the foundation of our community. Teachers work closely with adolescents to ensure they feel psychologically safe and valued. Our program incorporates helping students learn to navigate the complexities of social relationships, and how to actively contribute to decision making.

## Connecting Students to their Place

Designing learning experiences that connect students to their place in the world is vitally important to a successful Montessori program. Understanding the history of their place and taking a lead in the future planning and development, instills a sense of belonging.

Frequent, student planned, excursions allow students to better understand their world. Students are encouraged to plan excursions, determining routes and using public transport.

## Meaningful Work

Work for our students is appropriately challenging, follows student interests where possible and is aligned to their individual academic readiness and ability. Work includes the exploration of real-world problems to ensure students understand why they need to learn the content, promoting an authentic connection to learning and providing deeper understanding.

Adolescents seek valorisation from the learning. This is a term Maria Montessori used to describe the sense of contribution and worth someone has made to their community. Therefore, work in the Middle School is not solely driven by the staff but is designed in conjunction with students to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their learning.

Adolescents also need to experience work that involves the complementary use of hand and mind. We offer learning opportunities where students meet the theoretical component of learning through practical application.





# A Day in the Life of a Middle School Student

A typical day in our Adolescent Program begins with a community meeting to share the plans for the day as well as upcoming events for the week. It is also during this time that students plan and prioritise what they need to achieve.

Following this meeting, students break into groups to work with teachers. The timetable is designed with the student at the centre and is flexible and responsive to student interest. Rather than switching quickly between subjects, long work cycles allow students ample time for deep thinking and complex work. Students also have blocks of Independent Work Time (IWT), in which they can immerse themselves in their learning. During this time, students may work independently, or participate in one-to-one coaching or small group conferencing with a teacher.

The morning work cycle is generally dedicated to academic learning including english, mathematics, science and humanities. Students engage in presentations, seminars, small group work and individualized instruction.

After lunch the day becomes more hands on and practical. This is when students work through electives in the curriculum areas of Creative Expression, Physical Education and Occupations.

# A Rigorous Curriculum

Our Adolescent Program covers the Australian Curriculum through the Montessori pedagogy. All curriculum areas are extensively and thoroughly presented to the students by our teaching team. It is important to acknowledge that our learning plan for our adolescents is mapped out over the three-year cycle. Therefore, student learning goals are based on each student being in the program for all three years. Unlike traditional educational approaches, our students experience learning that transcends subject specific silos, building important connections between disciplines.

**English**

Our language studies are rigorous and challenging allowing students to become fluent communicators.

Our program incorporates lessons on oral language, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, reading, and writing, providing students with the confidence needed to interrogate and critically evaluate information they see, hear and read.

Students explore genres such as narratives, persuasive, procedural and poetry, with multiple opportunities for creative expression. Book groups allow students to engage deeply in the study of a shared novel, play or film, reading or viewing independently or as a group before coming together to discuss text features. Students have many opportunities to present their work and opinions through engaging in debates, public speaking, oral presentations and seminars.





## Mathematics

Mathematics is presented to students in small groups. Students work at their ability level, enabling them to be appropriately challenged and supported. Areas of study are: Number and Algebra; Measurement and Geometry; Statistics and Probability.

Following explicit lessons, students have time to practice, explore and reflect on concepts covered. Connections are made with real-life problems in order for students to understand the importance and relevance of what they are learning. There are many opportunities for students to strengthen their understanding of concepts covered in Mathematics lessons through the Science and Occupations programs where problem solving is prevalent.

## Science

In Montessori education we tackle contemporary topics such as climate change from a strong foundation in, and understanding of, the 'traditional sciences': biology, physics, chemistry, earth science and astronomy.

Content in Science is a balance of knowledge, inquiry, questioning, investigation, practical experiments and research skills. These experiences emphasise working scientifically which assists students to think critically about issues impacting the world around them. Science laboratory facilities enable our students to refine their investigative skills.

## Humanities

Humanities covers History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship, and Business and Economics. Lessons aim to connect students to their world and assist them to understand the social structures and cultures within society. This includes sharing the moments from history that have shaped the world we live in.

The rich experiences in this work build on knowledge from the previous Cycles. We strive to equip our students with the foundation to develop ethical, political, cultural and environmental consciousness. We enable our students to be aware of, and understand the wider world and their place in it. We encourage them to take an active role in promoting peace and sustainability and aim to imbue them with a strong sense of social justice.

Seminars and discussion based learning form a significant part of the Humanities program, building confidence within our students to share their ideas and understand other perspectives.

## Italian

The Italian program continues for students in the Middle School. Students study language and conventions as well as developing an understanding and appreciation of the Italian culture and its impact on Australian life. Experiences are rich and immersive.

## Creative Expression

Creative Expression involves the Arts and more. It encompasses visual art, design, drama, dance, music, and provides opportunities for students to be self-expressive. Adolescents strive for experiences that allow them to show their community who they are in a safe space.

Choice is a key element of this program. Teachers plan collaboratively with students to provide them with creative experiences including painting, drawing, drama, dance, music, sculpting, model making, photography, movie-making, stop-motion animation and podcasting. The possibilities are truly dependent on student interest.

External professionals from the community, such as musicians, local artists, engineers and landscapers, are regularly engaged to strengthen students' experiences.

## Technologies

All students are supplied with their own laptop to support inquiry and enhance classroom learning. We integrate rich digital technology experiences with a focus on content creation. To prepare students for their future, we incorporate emerging technology including virtual reality, artificial intelligence and coding.

The key elements of Design Technology include designing, making and appraising. Our Occupations program provides many opportunities for students to engage with this curriculum area. Students also create models to deepen understanding of Science and Humanities concepts.

## Physical Education

The Physical Education program is wide ranging and varied. It is less about competitive sport, and more about getting involved whilst being active. Teachers aim to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to continue to be physically active once they leave school. Showing students that fitness is fun is one key to developing positive lifelong habits!

Students participate in individual pursuits, fitness games including modified team sports, and outdoor education experiences such as our Year 9 bike riding program. The Middle School utilizes local parks and sports facilities to provide students with daily fitness activities as well as structured sports experiences for example, basketball and table tennis. Yoga is a popular annual elective.

Students also participate in an annual camp which sees students build resilience through physical challenges such as kayaking and hiking.





# Our Signature Program - Occupations Connecting Learning to Life

Occupations is a project based learning experience unique to Montessori Adolescent Programs. Occupations provides experiences for students that are multidisciplinary, relevant and purposeful. An Occupation comes from a genuine need within the community and is completely driven by the students. It is a time where academic knowledge is applied practically to a meaningful project.

Providing students with the opportunity to serve their community while earning money is a fundamental aspect of the Occupations program. Our adolescents learn the value of money through raising it themselves, tracking profit and loss, and determining how profits should be reinvested into the program. This is an important part of the adolescent's journey to becoming a functional member of society.

One of the many benefits of an Occupation is the social structure that forms organically within the student groups. Students experience a variety of roles and take on leadership responsibilities. They learn to collaborate and communicate to solve complex issues. These are all skills that will better support them to be successful in family life, and later in the workforce.

Students select from a number of Occupations each term. During the three-year cycle, it is an expectation that students will undertake an Occupation from each of the learning areas.

## Food Technology/Health

Students will further develop their ability to cook and create meals for small and large groups. This program extends from food education and nutrition, to planning and creating recipes. Kitchen safety and knife skills are essential components of this learning. During Term 1 of each year the Year 7 students learn cooking skills as they prepare lunch once a week for their community. Students then have the opportunity to elect to cater for school functions.

**Examples:** Feeding the Community, Restaurants of the World .

## Humanities

Serving people and place: students learn the skills of how to serve and/or provide a service. This includes hygiene, safe food practices, and undertaking Onkaparinga Council's Safe Food Handling course. Numerous opportunities are provided for students to engage with the local and wider community. In this Occupation, students will test ideas around sustainability, livability, and city and town functionality.

**Examples:** café, catering events such as picnic nights, fetes, Sports Day etc.

## Design and Technology

Students use a range of technologies, materials, tools and systems to engineer, manufacture and create through a variety of experiences. They test and develop their understanding of design principles: creating, testing and reviewing their constructions. Students will further develop their computational thinking, create digital solutions and consider human interaction with network systems.

**Examples:** Furniture restoration, screen printing, chicken coop construction, set designs, website construction.

## Business and Economics/Micro-Economy

Students develop, advertise and maintain their own business. They create items to sell and accept genuine feedback from paying customers. Students develop understanding of financial management, investigating margins with profit and loss, as well as income and expense.

**Examples:** café, market day, ASX Sharemarket Game.

## Science and Mathematics

Students have opportunities to work scientifically, testing their inquiry skills and investigating science as a human endeavour. Students will make predications and propose explanations, drawing on evidence to support their views while considering

other points of view. Life cycles / reproductive cycles of plants, classification, science behind composting life cycle, and the structure and function of plants are important learning areas in the Occupations program.

**Examples:** vegetable gardens, vertical gardens.

## General Capabilities/English/Arts

Students create a wide variety of imaginative, informative and persuasive text types. This includes narratives, performances, script writing, reports, discussions and analysis that contribute to greater projects.

**Examples:** letters to council, scripts for podcasts, plays and films, production of podcasts, plays and short films, resumes to apply for positions within the school.

## STEAM (Architecture)

Students use the design process and design and digital technologies to design and build a model residential home. Students research sustainable building (low impact) techniques and materials, and council building regulations.

**Example:** students construct a 3D balsa wood model home that adheres to a list of sustainable building requirements.





# Intergenerational Learning

Our Middle School site is co-located with Kalyra Communities Woodcroft. Intergenerational learning consists of the experiences students have with residents and staff from Kalyra. Sharing lunches, gardening, basic construction, biography and life writing, are examples of intergenerational learning.

Students are able to use the facilities at Kalyra as well as engage with professionals who work there. For instance, our students can refine the barista skills they acquired as part of the Occupations program, by working in the Kalyra café. They have access to the gym, working with the physiotherapist, or the chefs in the commercial kitchen, producing meals for residents.

Once again, choice is a big component of this program; students can select the parts that are of interest to them. Providing a unique opportunity for the adolescents, Intergenerational learning also adds further rigor to our program.

# Assessment for Learning

The Montessori program utilises a unique approach to education which differs from state curriculum frameworks. The organisation of the Montessori curriculum is based on three year developmental cycles and as such grades and number scores on report cards are not readily compatible with Montessori philosophy. Whilst complying with government regulations, we endeavour to use a variety of assessment practices and reporting methods which assist the teaching and learning process and provide meaningful information about student progress to parents.

In the Middle School, teachers will:

- share learning goals with students;
- use a variety of assessment strategies including observation, conferencing, validated assessment tasks and dated work samples;
- provide explicit and effective feedback to students which leads them to recognise their next steps and understand how to improve;
- actively involve students in their own learning including self-assessment.

# Reporting to Parents

Parents are able to initiate conversations about student progress at any mutually convenient time.

At the start of each term, parents will be provided with information about the summative assessment task and due date for each subject taught that term. Following assessment, parents will also be provided with a copy of the assessment rubric and the teacher’s feedback.

Student led Learning Conversations are scheduled at the end of Term 1 (for students new to the Cycle and for students requiring extra support), and at the end of Term 3, for all students.

Formal reports are emailed to parents at the end of Term 2 and the end of Term 4.

# Where to next?

We assist our Year 9 students as they transition to the senior school they and their families have selected. During Years 7 and 8 staff have preliminary discussions with parents regarding where they wish to send their children for their senior studies. These conversations are revisited during Term 1 of Year 9 and during Term 2, staff assist students with the application process for their new school through the Occupations program.

Due to similarities of teaching styles and connections made throughout the time spent in Cycle 4, most of our graduates have successfully applied to complete their senior years at the Australian Science and Mathematics School (ASMS); it is a natural fit for most of our students. However, this may not be the right choice for your child. We encourage all parents to liaise appropriately with staff and research thoroughly when considering senior school options and we are here to assist them through that process.

With their high levels of independence, strong academic knowledge and applicable practical life skills, our graduates are ready to embark on the next stage of their journey towards adulthood.



## Contact details

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School Hours:  
Monday – Friday  
8:30am – 3:05pm



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