Visual Art Curriculum

The art program at Lexington Montessori School is based on the premise that all children are natural artists and have an artistic voice. By modeling respect for the child and providing developmentally appropriate art activities, we encourage students to experiment with materials, tools, and techniques. Children learn to think creatively, to use their “right brains,” and to take risks with ideas and materials. Mistakes become opportunities to reevaluate artwork and to try a new direction in creating.

We introduce a range of artistic examples from other cultures and times to inspire appreciation of other artists and to help children use critical thinking and observational skills while interacting with works of art.

The art teachers are a resource for the classroom teachers and often help supply materials and techniques for classroom art activities. Exhibiting artwork throughout the school allows us to celebrate each child’s creativity and work.

Toddler Visual Art Curriculum

Toddlers are exposed to a variety of art media, tools, vocabulary, and colors. They are introduced to art materials in an order, from simple to more complex throughout the year. Through the freedom of exploration, the children develop creativity and an appreciation for art.

Learning Objectives and Activity Examples include:

1. Children have the opportunity to experience a variety of art media, such as paper, markers, crayons, paint, watercolors, glue, and scissors.
   
   **Activity example:** A toddler walks to the art shelf and chooses a tray with a watercolor palette. She carries it to the table, gets a piece of paper, and uses the materials to create a painting.

2. Toddlers practice manipulating a paintbrush; holding it, painting with it, and washing it when finished.

   **Activity example:** A toddler works at the easel moving the paintbrush up and down. When he finished, he brings the paintbrush to the sink to wash the paint off.

3. Toddlers experience a variety of colors at the easel, at the beginning of the year with one color at a time and moving towards mixing colors toward the end of the year.

   **Activity example:** A child paints with yellow paint on his paper. He then uses a different paintbrush to add blue paint. He notices that mixing the colors is creating green.
Children’s House Visual Art Curriculum

The art program at Lexington Montessori School is based on the premise that all children are natural artists and have an artistic voice. By modeling respect for the child and providing developmentally appropriate art activities, children in the 3-6 program are encouraged to experiment with materials, tools, and techniques. They transition from the scribble stage of a three-year-old to the symbolic drawing stage of a kindergarten child able to draw recognizable objects. Children learn that they can express their ideas, feel confident in their ability as artists, and begin to develop a visual literacy.

Children in the 3-6 program explore a range of materials and techniques in the art room. A formal lesson is given each week. Children also have time to choose their own work in the art room. They experiment with paint and color mixing, clay, printmaking, and building. The study of form is based on Montessori geometric solids and helps children visualize objects as they articulate two-dimensional ideas into three-dimensional sculpture. Children use clay to construct organic forms such as spheres, ovoids, cones and cylinders; these become animals, sea creatures, people, and other objects. Cardboard construction provides the child with the ability to make cubes, rectangular prisms, and triangular prisms; these then combined become castles or towns.

Art projects may also enhance special areas in the classroom curriculum and are collaboratively planned by both art and classroom teachers. Additionally the art teacher goes into the classroom to demonstrate artwork that is left for children to do during their own time. Children in their classrooms might explore work such as watercolor, skin-color mixing, self-portraits, easel painting, and work with geometric solids in clay and cardboard. All the kindergarten children make a paper mache planet for the end-of-the-year planet play.

We introduce a range of artistic examples from other cultures and times to inspire an appreciation of other artists. When Georgia O’Keeffe was asked “Why paint a flower so big?” she explained, “So that people will be surprised into taking the time to look.” We give the children time to look.

Exhibiting artwork throughout the school allows us to celebrate each child’s creativity and work. The annual LMS Art Show takes place during the month of May and each child in the school is represented. Mural making and other community art projects further enhance our visual arts curricula.

Learning Objectives and Activity Examples include:

1. Children will explore a variety of methods, materials and techniques in both two and three dimensions.

   **Activity Example:** Children learn how to construct basic geometric forms using clay, and then create creatures for a tide pool to complement their classroom study of the ocean.

   **Activity Example:** In our printmaking unit, children draw into Styrofoam, ink the plate using brayers, and then print the images using baren.

2. Children will experiment with elements and principles of design using color, line, texture, shape and form, pattern and symmetry, and space and composition.

   **Activity Example:** Children use tempera paint to experiment with color, texture, and line. The paintings are then bound together to make Painting Experiment Books.
Activity Example: Children create giant flowers using straw-blowing for the roots, brush painting for the stem and leaves, and printmaking with shaped sponges and other tools for the flower and its parts.

3. Children will create art from direct observation.
   
   Activity Example: Children learn how to draw a self-portrait using basic shapes and then add a background that expresses their interests.
   
   Activity Example: Kindergarten children make a planet of paper mache and use it in their classroom planet play at the end of the year.

4. Children will brainstorm and create works from their memory and imagination.
   
   Activity Example: Children brainstorm the use of recyclable materials and then construct their own creations at the 3D table.
   
   Activity Example: Children paint a composition of people having fun.

5. Children will express ideas, emotions, and beliefs through their art.
   
   Activity Example: Children use different media to make a picture, and then title their work with words to name their ideas, emotions, etc.

6. Children will apply essential skills and vocabulary unique to each art form.
   
   Activity Example: Children learn to make pinch pots, add clay pieces by scratching and slipping, and then make creature pots with legs, heads, feet, etc.
   
   Activity Example: Children practice mixing primary colors, white and black to match their own skin tones to paint their face or make a handprint.

7. Children will investigate the cultural and historical contexts of the arts.
   
   Activity Example: After a lesson on Asian brush painting, children make a painting using a bamboo brush and rice paper.
   
   Activity Example: Children learn about Aboriginal or Native American symbols and they create a painting telling a story using the symbols.

8. Children will connect the arts with other classroom curricula.
   
   Activity Example: Children construct a castle using cardboard geometric forms to complement the study of Germany in their classroom.
   
   Activity Example: Children cut paper tiles to create a Middle Eastern mosaic.
   
   Activity Example: While studying Pacific Northwest Native American culture, children create a totem pole with personal animal symbols.
Lower Elementary Visual Art Curriculum

The art program at Lexington Montessori School is based on the premise that all children are natural artists and have an artistic voice. By modeling respect for the child and providing developmentally appropriate art activities, children in the 6-9 program are encouraged to experiment with self-expression and to explore new materials, tools and techniques. Children learn to think creatively, to use their “right brains,” and to take risks with ideas and materials. Mistakes become opportunities to try something different. Children actively engage in Visual Thinking Strategies to expand their visual literacy.

During their years in Lower Elementary, children make the transition from symbolic drawing to observational drawing. To help with this transition, from drawing what is in their imagination or memory to recording what they actually see, all children in Lower Elementary make and keep a Silent Drawing Notebook. Students silently study, draw, and develop their observational skills. These Silent Drawing Notebooks are then used both as a record of their emerging observational skills and a personal resource for future work.

Children come to the art room for an hour each week and participate in art class. We offer a broad spectrum of two- and three-dimensional projects: color mixing and painting, printmaking, ceramics, sculpture, self-portraiture, collage and mixed media, and more.

In addition to work in the art room, children create art in their classrooms. Students illustrate their writing, make models for the study of earth science, design scenery and props for plays, and other activities related to classroom curricula. In addition, the art teacher and classroom teachers collaborate on special projects. Each year, the 6-9 classrooms study an ancient culture and the children work on projects in the art room to enhance this learning. The art teacher is a resource for the classroom teachers and often helps supply materials and techniques for classroom art activities.

Children learn about art and artists through participating in the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum presented by the art teacher throughout the year. This art appreciation curriculum helps children use their critical thinking and observational skills while interacting with works of art.

Exhibiting artwork throughout the school allows us to celebrate each child’s creativity and work. The annual LMS Art Show takes place during the month of May and each child in the school is represented. We create artwork for various school productions and assemblies, including the Harvestfest and residencies. Mural making and other community art projects further enhance our visual arts curricula.

Learning Objectives and Activity Examples include:

1. Students will explore a variety of methods, materials and techniques in both two and three dimensions.
   - **Activity Example:** Children learn to make coil pots, to produce variations on the coiling technique, to add clay pieces by scratching and slipping, and to experiment with potters’ tools.
   - **Activity Example:** Children learn about the color wheel, practice mixing colors, and experiment with a variety of painting tools.
2. Students will experiment with elements and principles of design using color, line, texture, shape and form, pattern and symmetry, and space and composition.

   **Activity Example:** Children draw a still life made from sports equipment that range in colors to include all primary and secondary colors. We practice cross-hatching, texturing and other visual methods to describe value.

   **Activity Example:** In our printmaking unit, children draw into Styrofoam, ink the plate, and then print the images. We touch upon the elements and principles of design especially color, line, texture, form, and composition in this unit.

3. Students will create art from direct observation.

   **Activity Example:** Children study examples from our life-like (but not life-sized) animal collection and then draw from careful observation in their Silent Drawing Notebooks.

   **Activity Example:** Children study the artwork of Georgia O’Keeffe and then paint a close-up of flowers in tempera from direct observation.

4. Students will brainstorm and use imaginative thinking throughout the artistic process.

   **Activity Example:** Children use recyclable materials to construct their own creations for an “Invention Convention”

   **Activity Example:** Children learn how to draw a self-portrait using basic shapes, and decide what background to put in to their drawing that represents something about themselves.

5. Students will express ideas, emotions, and beliefs through their art.

   **Activity Example:** Children use paint, collage, or other media to make pictures that tell stories to illustrate such themes as “My Worst Nightmare” and “What People Do Together.”

6. Students will apply analytical and critical thinking to respond to works of art.

   **Activity Example:** Children look at works of art presented before a lesson and respond to questions from the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum: “What’s going on in this picture?” “What do you see that makes you say that?” and “What more can you find?”

7. Students will investigate the cultural and historical contexts of the arts.

   **Activity Example:** After a lesson on sculpting clay by a subtractive or “taking away” technique, children make their own figure inspired by Chinese Quin dynasty statues.

   **Activity Example:** Children learn about Ancient Egypt, and create a sarcophagus with mummy inspired by their study of Egyptian art.

   **Activity Example:** Children study the form of animal, create it in clay, and then, after the bisque firing, paint it with acrylic paints in the tradition of Oaxacan woodcarvings.

8. Students will connect the arts with other classroom curricula.

   **Activity Example:** Children use watercolor and collage in their classrooms to illustrate their writing work.

   **Activity Example:** Children use clay to construct land and water forms, volcanoes, and dioramas to illustrate various classroom lessons on earth science or cultures.

   **Activity Example:** Children create giant pendulum paintings, or accordion fold painted books to illustrate the Montessori creation story.
9. Students will participate in the community’s cultural and artistic life.

Activity Example: Children use art during the annual Residency program to produce scenery and props for the production.

Activity Example: All elementary children make a large paper quilt to celebrate Black History Month, or to participate in a worldwide art exchange – The Global Art Project.
Upper Elementary Visual Art Curriculum

The art program at Lexington Montessori School is based on the premise that all children are natural artists and have an artistic voice. By modeling respect for the child and providing developmentally appropriate art activities, children in the 9-12 program are encouraged to experiment with self-expression, to explore new materials, tools and techniques and to build upon previously developed skills. Children learn to think creatively, to use their “right brains,” and to take risks with ideas and materials. Mistakes become opportunities to try something different.

In the Upper Elementary level, students come to art for one hour per week and learn more advanced elements of drawing (e.g. perspective, value, and composition), painting, and form (making three-dimensional structures, clay people, sculpture). Increasingly, each student’s individual voice emerges and students reflect on their own progress through writing self-assessments. We have discussions in art class that involve critical thinking skills about their own and other artists’ work.

In Upper Elementary Art, students build on specific skills begun in the Lower Elementary program. Silent Drawing Notebooks continue to be an important part of our curriculum as students develop and refine observational and fine-motor skills. We continue to offer a broad spectrum of projects, both two- and three-dimensional: color mixing and painting, printmaking, ceramics, sculpture made from recyclable materials, self-portraiture, collage and mixed media, and more. Students are introduced to the slab roller for handbuilding ceramics, a printing press for printmaking, and a range of tools and techniques to enhance their artistic experiences.

In addition to work in the art room, children create art in their classrooms. Students illustrate their writing, make models for the study of earth science, design scenery and props for plays, and other activities related to classroom curricula. The art teacher and classroom teachers often collaborate on special projects. The art teacher is a resource for the classroom teachers and often helps supply materials and techniques for classroom art activities.

Children learn about art and artists through participating in the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum presented by the art teacher throughout the year. This art appreciation curriculum helps children use critical thinking and observational skills while interacting with works of art to deepen their visual literacy.

Exhibiting artwork throughout the school allows us to celebrate each child’s creativity and work. The annual LMS Art Show takes place during the month of May and each child in the school is represented. Mural making and other community art projects further enhance our visual arts curricula.

Learning Objectives and Activity Examples include:

1. Students will explore a variety of methods, materials, and techniques in both two- and three-dimensions.

   **Activity Example:** Drawing - Students explore a range of drawing tools, practice one and two-point perspective drawings, and create form through crosshatching and use of value (shading).

   **Activity Example:** Painting - Students create a color wheel and experiment with advanced color mixing, gray scales, complementary colors, and different paints.
Activity Example: Clay - Students learn more advanced techniques for hand-building with clay, including use of the slab roller. Slabs may be used to build mirrors, boxes, shoes, birdhouses, etc.

2. Students will experiment with elements and principles of design using color, line, texture, shape and form, pattern and symmetry, and space and composition.

   Activity Example: Students study both one- and two-point perspective based on techniques developed by the Renaissance artists and then create a fantasy drawing.

   Activity Example: Students tear paste papers to collage a self-portrait and then, using permanent marker, draw a line composition on top of the papers.

3. Students will create art from direct observation.

   Activity Example: Students examine items on the Silent Drawing Tray (which changes monthly) and draw directly from observation in their Silent Drawing Notebooks. Examples of monthly themes include plastic and real food, art room tools and materials, household utensils, superheroes and dolls, natural and found materials.

   Activity Example: Using mirrors, students examine their faces and draw pastel self-portraits annually.

   Activity Example: Students select a piece of popcorn from a tray, make a detailed drawing, and then return their popcorn to the tray to find their piece among the hundred on the tray.

   Activity Example: Students take turns modeling, or use figurines to observe positions of the body. They then create a montage of figures in different positions using different drawing materials.

4. Students will brainstorm and use imaginative thinking throughout the artistic process.

   Activity Example: Students make self-portrait shoes and “If I were a bird” birdhouses out of clay.

   Activity Example: Students collaborately create PEACE PLANETS to celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday.

   Activity Example: After viewing special boxes from Africa (ornate coffins from Ghana), students brainstorm ideas for their own special box to represent “themselves”, and build their box using different clay techniques.

5. Students will express ideas, emotions, and beliefs through their art.

   Activity Example: Using clay and mixed media, students make individualized place settings (in the spirit of Judy Chicago), including thematic cutlery and tableware.

   Activity Example: Students create self-portraits on big paper using different materials (tempera paints, collage, mixed media).

   Activity Example: After learning principles of composition, students illustrate words, ideas, and emotions using cut paper.

6. Students will apply analytical and critical thinking to respond to works of art.

   Activity Example: Students engage in Visual Thinking Strategies and respond to works of art. “What do you notice?” “What makes you say that?” and “What more do you see?”

   Activity Example: Students analyze images of ancient India and then design motifs illustrating aspects of daily life. They carve these motifs into erasers and stamp the borders of their accordion-fold books.
7. Students will investigate the cultural and historical contexts of the arts.
   Activity Example: While learning about color theory, students look at how artists use their ideas of color to develop the Pointillist and Impressionist styles. Then students incorporate these ideas in their paintings.

8. Students will connect the arts with other classroom curricula.
   Activity Example: Students study form based on the Montessori geometric solids (ovoid, cylinder, sphere, and cone), and use their observations in their 3D work.
   Activity Example: After students are given lessons in the art room on watercolor, printmaking (stamp making), and metal embossing, they incorporate these techniques to make an accordion fold book in which to present their history work.
   Activity Example: In conjunction with math lessons in the classroom, students may create artwork incorporating “Patterns in Nature” or “Tessellations”.

9. Students will participate in the community’s cultural and artistic life.
   Activity Example: Students use art during the annual Residency program to produce scenery and props for the production, create a group sculpture or mural, or explore individual artwork tied to the Residency theme.
   Activity Example: All students participate in the annual LMS Art Show. Students also make individual block prints and add them to the publicity posters.
Middle School Visual Art Curriculum

The art program at Lexington Montessori School is based on the premise that all children are natural artists and have an artistic voice. By modeling respect for the individual and providing a more in-depth approach to artistic exploration, students in the Middle School program are encouraged to experiment with self-expression and to explore the artistic process. Students are encouraged to think creatively, to use their “right brains,” and to take risks with ideas and materials. Mistakes become opportunities to reevaluate artwork and to try a new direction in creating. Students actively engage in *Visual Thinking Strategies* to expand their visual literacy.

On the Middle School level, students take a more in-depth approach to learning about advanced elements of drawing and painting, printmaking, form and sculpture. The Middle School students develop art skills through deeper explorations of work, often over an extended period/semester on one theme. They reflect on their progress through group critiques and continual self-assessments. Students keep a sketchbook and have regular drawing practice for homework. A subscription to *Scholastic Art Magazine* provides opportunities for discussions in art class, and helps students foster visual literacy and critical thinking skills.

The Art Show is a celebration of the wonderful artwork done by each child in the LMS community and takes place during May and the first week in June. The Middle School students help to plan the reception and presentation of their community art project for the art show.

*Learning Objectives and Activity Examples include:*

1. Students will explore a variety of methods, materials, and techniques in both two- and three-dimensions.

   *Activity Example:* Drawing - Students explore a range of drawing tools, practice drawing each week for homework, and create form and volume though further experiments with crosshatching and use of value (shading).

   *Activity Example:* Painting - Students use acrylic paint to show volume in a piece of fruit.

   *Activity Example:* Clay - Students learn more advanced techniques for hand building with clay, including use of the slab roller.

2. Students will experiment with elements and principles of design using color, line, texture, shape and form, pattern and symmetry, and space and composition.

   *Activity Example:* Using art elements and a square format, students create a design for a cell and make an abstract painting.

   *Activity Example:* Students create a plaster mask as a self-portrait, and use art elements to express the inside and outside of themselves.

3. Students will create art from direct observation.

   *Activity Example:* Students practice drawing by observing items assigned or chosen in their art sketchbooks as homework.
**Activity Example:** Students create a still life, and after doing a careful value study, they paint a section of the still life in acrylics.

**Activity Example:** Students choose one peanut from a tray, and draw their peanut carefully that they can find it again from the tray full of 100 peanuts.

4. **Students will brainstorm and use imaginative thinking throughout the artistic process.**

**Activity Example:** After collecting ideas and brainstorms from the whole school community, students refine the ideas, create and paint a community mural for the school.

**Activity Example:** Using personal photographs, students use Photoshop to combine two or more of their photos to create a self-portrait.

5. **Students will express ideas, emotions, and beliefs through their art.**

**Activity Example:** Students choose materials and build a doll or puppet as a self-portrait to express their ideas of themselves.

6. **Students will apply analytical and critical thinking to respond to works of art.**

**Activity Example:** Students interact with works of art and discuss their ideas using the Visual Thinking Strategies curriculum.

**Activity Example:** Using Scholastic Art Magazine, students discuss artists and their work in class.

**Activity Example:** Students regularly critique their own and others drawings in class.

7. **Students will investigate the cultural and historical contexts of the arts.**

**Activity Example:** Students look at photographers such as Steiglitz, Adams, Arbus, and Leibowitz from different periods to inspire their photographs.

**Activity Example:** Students review muralists from both local and historical perspectives when planning their mural. We study the Philadelphia Mural Project and invite local muralist Josh Winer to talk about his work and to advise us. We discuss Shepherd Fairey and issues of graffiti art, public art, and the law.

8. **Students will connect the arts with other classroom curricula.**

**Activity Example:** Students use information from the study of cell structures in Science to create an abstract design for a painting.

**Activity Example:** In conjunction with creating a personal value list in the classroom, students create and glaze a clay frame to mount their work.

9. **Students will participate in the community’s cultural and artistic life.**

**Activity Example:** Students participate in and display their work in the annual LMS Art Show at the end of the year.

**Activity Example:** After collecting ideas from the whole school community, students plan, and paint a mural for the campus.

**Activity Example:** Students help plan the Art Show Reception and the “unveiling” of their mural.