"The Middle School experience is about growing in independence and self-reliance. Everything children do here helps them reach that goal—from taking the lead in a parent-teacher conference to taking the field on an interscholastic team." Dr. Randy Kleinman, Middle School Head of Campus

OUR DISTINCTIVE STRENGTHS

MKA’S MIDDLE SCHOOL PROVIDES A SAFE AND STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT UNIQUELY SUITED TO THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS GROWING FROM CHILDHOOD INTO EARLY ADOLESCENCE. AS THEY BUILD A SENSE OF INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY AND PURPOSE, THE SCHOOL PRESENTS THEM WITH A PANOPLY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPLORATION, THROUGH THE ARTS, ATHLETICS, AND EXTRACURRICULAR CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE
At every level and in every subject, our curriculum challenges students fully. Learning in small, interactive classes, they advance from concrete reasoning to the conceptual and abstract, taking on independent research projects, algebra and geometry, and reading and writing assignments of real sophistication.

CHARACTER AND SERVICE
A focus on ethical behavior and high standards of character pervades the Middle School experience, with the Honor Code at its core. As they develop the qualities of good citizens, children put their ideals into action through a thriving program of community service.

WARMTH AND SUPPORT
Students consistently describe their teachers and advisors as caring, kind and accessible. Younger students turn to older ones for help. Laughter punctuates class discussions—all signs of an environment in which children feel at ease and at home, ready to take the risks required to learn and grow.
ENGAGING THE INTELLECT

MKA MIDDLE SCHOOLERS MASTER CHALLENGING CONTENT AND TAKE ON FASCINATING PROJECTS. THEY MOVE BEYOND REVIEWING FACTS TO EXPLORE CONCEPTS, MAKE CONNECTIONS, AND THINK INDEPENDENTLY.

EXPERIENCING SCIENCE
From their first days in the lab as fourth graders doing soil and hydrology experiments, middle schoolers learn to think and work as scientists. By eighth grade, they are completing extensive Science Research Projects, framing original questions, conducting experiments, and presenting their findings to an assembly of teachers and classmates.

IMMERSING IN HISTORY
In social studies, students move beyond textbooks and into real discovery. Fourth graders learn about the immigrant experience by adopting the role of men and women who came to America through Ellis Island and Angel Island. By eighth grade, students are visiting Williamsburg for four days of on-site research into Colonial life in preparation for writing major papers.

FOCUSBING ON WRITING
Excellence in writing stands out as a hallmark of the MKA experience at every grade level. Through a rigorous workshop approach, students immerse themselves in diverse genres, benefit from ample practice and feedback, and learn the skills of prewriting, drafting, and revision key to becoming a strong writer.

HARNESING TECHNOLOGY
For middle schoolers, technology is a major part of life; at MKA it is also a key tool for learning, applied in innumerable ways. These range from data collection and analysis in science, to the creation of digital stories with iMovie in English, to developing podcasts of French or Spanish radio ads and practicing pronunciation with MuVos, tiny digital recorders.

MEETING ADVANCED CHALLENGES
MKA eighth graders move on to high school as accomplished scholars. Many have taken a year of geometry and all have completed algebra. Most are ready to enter the third year of high school foreign language, with oral comprehension skills superior to most students at that level. All have grown comfortable encountering cultural works of real sophistication, including our Core Works. These masterpieces, studied by every MKA student, range from To Kill a Mockingbird to Hammurabi’s Code, from the “Principles” of Pythagoras to the choreography of Alvin Ailey.
“She’s a fantastic teacher, able to create enthusiasm in the classroom and deeply concerned about the children in her care. She was my son’s advisor the year we first moved here from England and she started the Cricket Club to help him adjust. She made such a difference.” Luce Battsek, MKA parent, describing Nancy Pi-Sunyer, science teacher

“The thing that’s great about Mr. Shade is that he is so nice and supportive. Last year was my first year at MKA, and he did a great job helping me settle in and get used to being at a new school.” Michaela McInerney, 7th grade student, describing Leon Shade, her 6th grade gym teacher and advisor

“We have very nurturing faculty and staff who love middle school students. To be a good middle school teacher, you need to love this age—the seriousness, the silliness, the energy, the unpredictability.” Boni Luna, Assistant Head of Middle School

“Tom brings remarkable life experiences to the classroom—years of setting and meeting the highest goals as a world-class runner. He’s always encouraging, open and flexible, but always focused on the objective. He has a wonderful spirit about him. He really likes the kids and they know it.” Patty Strain, MKA parent, describing Tom Fleming, fourth grade teacher
**SHARED TRADITIONS**

**FACULTY-STUDENT BASKETBALL**
Fun and fund-raising come together in the annual faculty-student basketball game, which benefits a charity of the students' choice. The Middle School’s boys’ and girls’ teams take on men’s and women’s teacher teams in an event that fills the stands. The match-ups are close, and no one even thinks about letting anyone else win.

**CAMPING AND BONDING**
Each grade in the Middle School takes a trip together each year, whether it’s camping out on the MKA playing fields, as our younger students do, traveling to Fairview Lake environmental center, or visiting Colonial Williamsburg for four days in eighth grade. These trips give students a taste of independence and also draw them closer in friendship. With each new destination come new skits and games, new roles and responsibilities.

**SERVING AND LEARNING**
Growing in a sense of self also means growing in service to others. As part of the Middle School’s highly active community service program, students in fourth and seventh grades read and play with preschoolers in a nearby Head Start program. Fifth graders visit with older friends at a Montclair retirement home. Sixth graders run the recycling program for the entire middle school building, and eighth graders work in many capacities at Goodwill.

**STAGING SHAKESPEARE**
The Middle School’s most distinctive theatrical tradition is the seventh-grade Shakespeare production. The Elizabethan world is woven into the English and social studies curriculum and the entire grade is transformed into a theater troupe, with all the faculty pitching in and every child taking a role, either on stage or behind the scenes.

Whether the selection is *Romeo and Juliet* or *Macbeth*, the cast and crew dedicate weeks of effort and hold themselves to an exceptional standard of quality. Students grow in both independence and teamwork and gain a rare understanding of the play they’ve brought to life.

**CLUBS AND ACTIVITIES**
All middle schoolers gather once a week during school hours for meetings with fellow members of clubs of their choice. Options range from the Floor Hockey and Knitting clubs to Hip-Hop Dance and Harry Potter. In seasons when they are not engaged in a sport, students may also join an after-school activity such as Stagecraft, Science Olympiad, Mock Trial, Dance Club, or Digital Photography. Whatever their focus, clubs offer a great chance to try new interests and meet new friends.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL BUDDIES**
For students in fourth and fifth grade, having a friend who is older and wiser can be an inspiring experience, and for students in seventh and eighth grade, guiding a younger child can be an introduction to leadership and a lot of fun. This insight is at the heart of the Middle School buddy program, which pairs older and younger students. Older buddies are helpful mentors in the first days of school and trusted guides when it’s time for the challenges of overnight trips.
As a teacher, it is amazing to follow a student from fourth through eighth grade and see their transformation. They grow in confidence and ability. They begin to take responsibility for themselves in adult ways. "Jason Ruff, art teacher

I always enjoyed Mrs. Miller’s class. We had great discussions of the books we read, and when we hit rough spots with grammar or vocabulary, she would turn it into a game to keep everyone interested. She’s a very caring, very good teacher." Chris Pepe, 9th grade student, describing Ruth Miller, his 8th grade English teacher

MKA is a great place to grow as a middle school student. It offers a very personal setting, a strong network of support, and an amazing advisory program. Your child is going to build those solid social connections and sense of self-confidence, both of which are so important." Toni Arena, MKA parent

"Every year your teachers give you a little more freedom and trust. You have more free time and more choices about the things you want to do. When I look back, I see how much more mature I have become." Tess Meyer, eighth grade student
THE ARTS

- MKA offers an exceptional breadth of arts opportunities. In grades four through seven, all students take art, music, dance, and drama each year.
- In eighth grade, students choose electives such as Studio Art, Graphic Design, Media Literacy, and Actors Studio.
- In addition to concepts of perspective, composition, and color, art classes explore medieval architecture, the mobiles of Alexander Calder, and iMovie stop-motion animation.
- Field trips have ranged from the Montclair Art Museum to Storm King sculpture garden, while visitors to campus have included members of the New Jersey Ballet and other dance ensembles.
- Student instrumental and vocal groups include several choruses, the Girls’ Choir, Concert Band, and Strings Program, as well as the selective Jazz Band and Chamber Singers.
- Performances include concerts, assemblies, the sixth grade musical, the seventh grade Shakespeare play, and the eighth grade Performance Festival, often featuring student-written works. Student musicians and dramatists take to the stage in the Middle School’s 500-seat auditorium.
- The MKA Strings Program, open to students on all three MKA campuses, performs a concert at Carnegie Hall each spring.
- The bands and choral groups end each year with the national Music in the Parks competition, where they have received awards of excellence in every category.
- The Drama Club, Drawing Club, and Dance Club and others offer further chances to pursue individual interests.

ATHLETICS

- With interscholastic sports beginning in sixth grade, MKA offers an exceptional range of athletic opportunities for middle schoolers.
- A no-cut policy and supportive attitude encourage participation, and reduce barriers to trying new sports. Over 50% of students play at least one sport each year and many play several.
- MKA’s focus on character development inspires ongoing lessons in sportsmanship and teamwork.
- Athletes have access to three gyms, playing fields, and tennis courts at the Middle School campus, plus the swimming pool at MKA’s Upper School, an outdoor track, and use of an ice rink. Football, soccer and lacrosse players compete on the Upper School’s Van Brunt Field, a superb synthetic turf venue.
- Excellent coaching and an emphasis on skill-building provide a foundation for success in highly competitive Upper School sports.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SPORTS

Fall
- Football
- Field Hockey
- Cross Country
- Soccer
- Tennis (girls)
- Volleyball (girls)

Winter
- Basketball
- Ice Hockey
- Swimming
- Wrestling

Spring
- Baseball
- Lacrosse
- Tennis (boys)
- Softball
- Track and Field
AGE-APPROPRIATE ADVANTAGES

IN THE CLASSROOM AND BEYOND, MKA OFFERS AN EXPERIENCE DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY TO MEET THE DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILDREN.

BUILDING STUDY SKILLS
In preparation for the challenges of Upper School, it is critical for middle schoolers to grow as independent learners. In each area of study, teachers target development of effective learning strategies, including taking notes, setting and meeting goals, managing time, and assessing one’s progress and seeking help when needed.

PRACTICING POSITIVE CHOICES
Each fall parents join students for a day of professionally-led workshops focusing on topics of special interest at the onset of the adolescent years, from changing interpersonal relationships to safety in the risks raised by new technologies. The popular “Positive Choices” event fuels ongoing follow-up discussion in advising sessions spanning the course of the year.

LEADING PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES
Starting in sixth grade, middle school students take the responsibility of leading the discussions in parent-teacher conference sessions, reviewing their progress, sharing their work, and updating their goals for progress. Of course, adults take part too, but the message is clear: It is students who are in charge of their own success.

BECOMING MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY LITERATE
In media literacy classes and special training sessions, middle schoolers learn skills critical to life in the wireless age—from internet safety to care in evaluating sources of information.

MAKING TIME FOR RECREATION
Educational research has shown that unstructured play and social opportunities are vital to the health and growth of middle school children, and at MKA we agree. Each morning includes a recess period, and students are also free for half of their lunch period to play outside (or during bad weather in the gym).

BELONGING TO A HOUSE
The Middle School serves the needs of students spanning a broad age range—from nine to fourteen. The lower house, comprising grades four and five, provides structure and support for younger learners, who change classes as a group. The upper house, for grades six through eight, offers increasing freedom, building toward a smooth transition to Upper School.
ADMISSIONS OFFICE

201 Valley Road
Montclair, New Jersey 07042
(973) 509 7930 PHONE
(973) 509 4526 FAX
admissions@mka.org EMAIL
www.mka.org WEB

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Kimberley Campus (Grades 4-8)
201 Valley Road
Montclair, New Jersey 07042