

What Is That Tall Tower Used For?

Adolescents are natural explorers, driven by curiosity and a desire to make sense of the world around them. When education is rooted in place, learning becomes tangible, meaningful, and deeply relevant to real life.

In our Montessori Adolescent Program, learning is grounded in real work, real experiences, and real connections, helping students develop both a sense of place and a sense of self.

After several weeks of science, geography, and history lessons, students were invited to take their learning further by selecting an aspect of the farm to investigate. Each student or group identified a question that sparked their curiosity, choosing a topic and creating a BIG QUESTION that reflected their personal interests and a desire to better understand their environment.

Rather than simply receiving answers, students will engage in experiential inquiry, where they observe, research, hypothesize, and test their ideas using real evidence and hands-on applications. This process allows them to construct knowledge through direct experience, reinforcing the way learning occurs in the real world.

Place-Based and Interdisciplinary Learning

These inquiries exemplify place-based learning, a cornerstone of Montessori adolescent education. By using the land and community as an extension of the classroom, students make meaningful connections between disciplines while actively shaping their own learning.

Students take ownership of their investigations, working independently or collaboratively to explore their chosen topics. This fosters motivation, deepens understanding, and cultivates a sense of responsibility toward their environment. Projects are diverse, reflecting a broad range of student interests. Some will examine weather patterns and their impact on the farm, while others will explore the land's history and human influence over time. Ecology-focused students will investigate local bird species, while others will analyse soil composition or study the role of the farm's water catchment system.

Each project integrates multiple academic disciplines, mirroring real-world problem-solving. Students apply mathematics to measure and analyse data, use scientific methods to conduct experiments,



explore historical records to understand land use, and develop literacy skills through research, writing, and presentations. Hands-on projects allow them to apply their learning in practical, meaningful ways.

Education Rooted in Place and Purpose

Place-based learning is essential for adolescents, as it aligns with their developmental need to engage in meaningful, real-world work. By directly interacting with their environment, students develop a deeper awareness of their surroundings and their role within them. This inquiry-driven approach builds critical thinking, collaboration, and executive functioning skills as students plan, conduct, and present their research.

At the end of the research period, students will share their findings in what we call **Work and Study**, a practice based on the **Pedagogy of Place**. Through this process, they contribute to a collective understanding of our **Centre of Work and Study** (the farm), reinforcing the value of shared knowledge and community learning.

Through this inquiry-based approach, they are not just learning about their world. They are learning how to explore, interpret, and shape it for themselves. Place-based learning enables them to see the world not as a series of disconnected subjects but as a living, evolving system in which they play an essential role. By developing this awareness, students learn to engage thoughtfully and responsibly with their surroundings, preparing them to become the problem solvers and changemakers of the future.

Join us for a guided tour of the farm and experience our learning environment in action. To book your spot, contact reception—we'd love to show you around!

AP Staff

Terminology Corner:

Work and Study integrates practical work with academic learning, supporting adolescents in meaningful, real-world engagement while fostering intellectual growth through research and reflection.

Pedagogy of Place grounds learning in the local environment, culture, and community, using experiential, interdisciplinary study to connect students to their surroundings and deepen their sense of self.

The **Centre of Work and Study** combines hands-on work with academic inquiry in a self-sustaining environment, giving adolescents real responsibilities that build independence, problem-solving skills, and a sense of contribution.