

MONTESSORI LYCEUM AMSTERDAM

School guide 2010/2011



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Part of the Montessori Scholengemeenschap Amsterdam (MSA)
(Comprehensive School Amsterdam)

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Colophon

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WELCOME TO THE MLA!

The Montessori Lyceum Amsterdam has a tradition of renewal, based on the ideas of Maria Montessori. To us, however, renewal does not mean being swayed by the issues of the day, nor is it a goal in itself. Because innovation means looking critically at the daily practice and trying to improve it.

We do observe children well, aiming at stimulating their development and getting the best out of them. Thus we make high demands. In this way MLA has been presenting itself in the city since 1930.

The MLA is offering *mavo*, *havo* and *vwo/gymnasium*, fit for pupils with as well as without previous montessori schooling. We have some 1,600 students and a staff of approx. 200, and thus are a fairly large school. Every student, however, is working in his own small, independently operating divisional school of 180-230 pupils, in some cases even fewer. In our educational organisation small scale comes first, since we are convinced that safe and familiar surroundings are a condition for proper learning and education. And for the best-possible supervision.

In the following, parents/caretakers/guardians, students and others will find complete organisational information required. Anything you need to know what you and your child(ren) can expect. Useful information for the school year, helpful when selecting a school. (As a matter of fact: where *he*, *him* and *his* is written, also *she* and *her* are meant, and *parents* also means *caretakers* or *guardians*.)

This information can also be found on our website (www.montessorilyceumamsterdam.nl). If required, we will be happy to provide you with more details.

It goes without saying that we also keep parents informed during the school year.

Wiebe Brouwer, Headmaster



THE MLA – 80 years OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

The MLA was founded in 1930, as the first secondary montessori school in the Netherlands. The method of working has inspired many other schools through the years.

It is a comprehensive school, offering three types of secondary-level education: four-years' *mavo* (vocational education – theoretical and mixed course), five-years' *havo* (senior general secondary education), and six-years' *vwo* and *gymnasium* (pre-university education). Since the start the education has been based on Maria Montessori's ideas.

Starting point is *help me to do it myself*. So the students are given room for

- working independently
- bearing responsibility themselves
- within reason, working at their own pace
- planning and dividing tasks and work themselves, and
- learning how to learn.

Our learning targets are *integrity, development, responsibility, wisdom and inspiration*.

Therefore, the MLA offers its students room to develop themselves to become independent and thus able-bodied human beings. Able to take the initiative, creative and with linguistic skills, tolerant and daring to stand up for their opinion. With a sense of standards and feeling responsibility, making choices in freedom and functioning socially. Moreover, apart from knowledge the school also provides them with a sound cultural basis.

Specific system and atmosphere There are *group lessons* for general instruction and explanation. In addition, each student has *werktijd* (working hours) daily, together with students from other (also from higher and lower) classes. During working hours they clearly have their own responsibility, deciding which subject(s) they will work on; teachers work with those students who have chosen their subject.

'Help me to do it myself' involves that parents and coaches must put their trust in the students, in their abilities and need for development, in their ability to make choices and to set their objectives. The MLA stimulates the students in an atmosphere of openness, tolerance and creativity.

Large yet small-scaled Do schools have to be large or small? Our starting point is that learning needs small-scaled and safe surroundings. Therefore, the initial as well as the advanced stage has been divided into small divisional schools, each of them having a specific location in the buildings and its own team of teachers. Within the large school every student follows lessons in his own divisional school, benefiting all advantages involved.

For which students? To succeed at the MLA, the student's background need not necessarily be a montessori primary school. Naturally, for pupils from such a school the MLA is the logical next step. The results of pupils from other primary schools, however, often are as good as theirs. Today these schools also have them work more independently on their own level; the atmosphere and method of working at our school link up very well with that. When entering the MLA, it goes without saying that a child need not be a completely self-reliant student. In our view developing an attitude of independence is a learning process as well, and we work on that consciously.

Montessori Scholengemeenschap Amsterdam (MSA) (Comprehensive School Amsterdam) The MLA is a subsidiary of the MSA, as are:

- Montessori College Oost (MCO, all vmbo courses)
- IVKO school voor Individueel Voortgezet Kunstzinnig Onderwijs (individual secondary artistic education) (vmbo theoretical and mixed course/havo)
- Amstellyceum (mavo, mavo/havo, initial stage of vwo)
- Cosmicus Montessori Lyceum (havo/vwo)

The MSA, offering all levels of secondary education, has some 3,200 students in total and approx.430 staff. Each school is standing by its own identity and its specific atmosphere, but they all carry the same 'brand': montessori.

Montessori secondary education The montessori secondary schools have their own national organisation, the VMO, cooperating closely on educational innovation, schooling and warranty of quality.



OUR METHOD OF WORKING

Working hours and lessons Our school day is determined by the importance of learning and working independently.

Apart from group lessons the roster also comprises *working hours*. Each day starts and ends with lessons for the class as a whole; working hours, during which students from different school years are working together, are mostly planned in the middle of the day.

During working hours, students select the subjects to work on themselves, and also select the teachers present for supervision according to the daily schedule. Here students work individually or in small groups, check and discuss work done, do tests, are heard, etc. They make appointments with teachers for working hours through a digital *working hours planner*, which this year is compulsory for first-formers and fourth-formers. If they desire so, also other students may use it.

There is also the *divisional school afternoon*, offering additional working time as well as time for attending support lessons, courses and excursions. Since the afternoon is part of the time for education, students are obliged to be present.

Working at one's own pace means that students' progress may vary individually. We make sure, however, that they will not drop behind too far.

The advanced stage offers a greater variety of working forms: group lessons, working individually or in groups and with or without supervision, as well as studying individually at home or at school. They can work and study in the spacious and well-equipped multimedia library, which also has a 'silence room'. Furthermore each divisional school has its own reading room available with computers and Internet facilities. Here students can work and study under supervision.

Planning aids In the initial stage havo/vwo the school year has been divided into 6, in the mavo and in the advanced stage into 4 periods.

To be able to work independently, naturally students must know exactly what to do per period. The programmes provide clear information. The students get various aids for planning. In the initial stage amongst others the *blokboek* (period book), presenting per subject the parts they have to work through, to be ticked off by the teacher after completion.

The blokboek also comprises planners per week and per period, as well as a colour sheet on which the students colour work made. This enables them to see their actual level at a glance. In the advanced stage a *blokkenkaart* (period card) is available. Besides, *werkwijzers* (work indicators) for the subjects in the initial and in the advanced stage show precisely what activities are required from the students.

Learning from mistakes Another montessori starting point is, that one can learn from mistakes made and thus must be enabled to correct them. If the teacher agrees students are allowed, therefore, to check their work using standard solutions and books with solutions. The latter may also be used by those who have reached a deadlock or are uncertain about what they have done. Naturally, there are students copying the work of others. The one who is persevering in doing so will of course fail when being examined. Most students, however, are very well aware that they are responsible for their own learning process.

Testing and resitting After having finished parts of the subject matter the student is tested on his knowledge, mostly individually or in small groups, orally or in writing. In the initial stage to a limited degree class testing occurs, in the third form havo/vwo more often. This prepares the students for the advanced stage where it is done even more frequently, and naturally for the final examination. When testing results are insufficient, in general students are enabled to be re-examined with other tests.

Report At the end of every period the student receives a report. It contains rating symbols instead of marks, specifying attitude, progress, quality of his work, absence, etc. for each subject and presenting a general impression of the performance. This comprehensive picture gives the student a differentiated idea of his development and of the aspects that need more work:

werkhouding (attitude) * How has the student been dealing with his work? In the initial stage the evaluation specifies concentration, pace and organisation, in the advanced stage an overall evaluation is given.

positie (position) The progress in the annual programme is specified in subject matter in lessons and working hours, tests and for a number of subjects in literature or practical. A figure indicates the number of periods which the student has worked through the subject matter.

kwaliteit (quality) * The best possible evaluation of the quality of the work presented, divided over subject matter in lessons and working hours and in tests. The indication is similar to the mark given by other schools.

absentie (absence) On the report in the advanced stage only. Absence during the period, indicated by a fraction (hours absent : hours given).


geheel (aggregate)** Overall evaluation of the progress in the subject.

* *the symbols for attitude and quality*

+++ excellent
++ good
+ sufficient
+/- weak
- insufficient

** *the symbols for 'aggregate'*

 vierkantje (square). Satisfactory progress, no special measures required.

 gevarendriehoek (warning triangle). Stagnation in progress is imminent, requiring *special attention*.

🛑 stopbord (stop sign). Stagnation in progress, requiring *special measures* and appointments between teacher and student. Also used for: has not kept appointments made at a former report, new arrangement, or requires new measures.



SUPERVISION

At the MLA supervising the students is at the forefront, which is only natural in our working method comprising so many individual contacts between pupil and teacher.

First of all the teachers are responsible for the supervision in their special field. Students make appointments with them in case of stagnation in their progress.

Class tutor Each form has its own *class tutor*, coordinating the supervision of the students and staying with them when they move up. This guarantees continuity. He also is the one who primarily keeps in touch with students and parents about how the pupils are working at school, results, problems, etc. If this is worrying you, please contact him immediately. Class tutor and students meet during the class tutor hours, two per week in the initial stage and one in the advanced stage. Here the class tutor addresses much more than work and results only. A few examples: furthering a safe and open atmosphere in the class, informing the students about internal and external matters and conducting discussions in these areas, trying to solve problems, and helping students when they have to select their subjects and continuation course. In this way, over the years often strong ties are developing between him and the students.

Personal tutor A *personal tutor* is a teacher supervising a student individually in a period when the latter needs additional support. The student has to find such a teacher himself, on his own initiative or advised by the teachers in the reports' meeting.

This kind of tutorship aims at putting him back on the right track and is, therefore, meant for a limited period only. The tutor may coach students who need control or want to go through the points once again, as well those who require help involving confidentiality. In some cases, additional attention is already enough in itself for students to work in a better way.

Student counsellors The *student counsellors* especially help students preparing choices to be made. Thus not so much that they are concerned with their performance, but with their plans for the future and their capabilities.

For the choices to be made at school the counsellors closely cooperate with the class tutors. Students in 3 havo/vwo must select a direction (havo or vwo) and a profile, students in 3 mavo a sector. In both profiles and sectors certain combinations of subjects do apply, which in turn give entry to various directions in continuation courses after the lyceum.

In the advanced stage, the counsellors' programme is especially targeted on the continuation courses after the MLA. In this stage they are less bound by the programme within the class tutor hours. Naturally, obligatory supervision of groups is never a perfect match with the students' individual wishes and capabilities. Therefore, the counsellors hold 'open' office hours to answer their questions, during which also parents may phone them.

There are, indeed, some obligatory activities, for introduction to continuation courses (e.g. one day of trial lessons at a university) and for information about options for selection in general. We also introduce them to the world of student grants and enrolment (on the 'counsellors' afternoon' during the year of examination).

Remedial teaching We have two *remedial teachers*. They provide additional support to students with language and/or learning problems and advise teachers in this area. These problems may be caused by e.g. multilingualism or dyslexia. There is only a limited number of hours for remedial teaching available, which are used in the first and second forms. In September, all first-formers participate in a *signaleringsonderzoek* (inquiry), aimed at detecting possible learning problems. If necessary, they will be referred to a remedial teacher for additional tests. First of all, the possibility of additional supervision will always be talked over with the parents.

Blokken na de bel ('Cramming after the school bell') If required, initial-stage students can continue work at school after the lessons - on two afternoons per week, under supervision. *Blokken na de bel* starts after the autumn holidays and can host 25 participants per afternoon at a maximum. Students enrol for one or two periods at a small fee.

Further help

- The *care coordinator* coordinates the care students require in and outside school and contacts the divisional schools' care tutors regularly.
- The *care tutor* maps the students who need care. He keeps in touch with the care coordinator, those involved in his divisional school and the parents, if required.
- The *internal care committee*, working under the responsibility of the education deputy headmaster and consisting of the care coordinator and the care tutors, seeks solutions for students who are doing badly. The committee tries to prevent them from dropping out by spotting cases and developing proper measures.
- The *external care committee* consists of internal care committee members, the school doctor, the school attendance officer, the educational prevention worker and the school psychologist. This committee deals with, amongst others, cases presented by the internal care committee.
- An *educational prevention worker* from Bureau Jeugdzorg AJAA (Office for Youth Welfare Work) advises in case of problems and can refer to this office.
- The *school psychologist* can help when problems of social psychological nature need to be solved.
- The school has two *confidants*.
- The *school doctor* and the *school nurse*, both from the Jeugdgezondheidszorg department of GGD Amsterdam (Youth Health Care Department of the local Health Authority) provide medical care at our school. Both parents and students may apply to them as well. The department's offer in Amsterdam-South also includes a medical test of all second-formers, about which the parents will be informed. The MLA also participates in this department's project of supervising students showing a sickness rate exceeding the average and thus a high absence rate. They and their parents are invited by the school doctor to talk it over.
- The *Switch* project, providing additional supervision of students who have come from another school or have moved to another divisional school. The supervision, individually or in small groups, aims at facilitating the change and is carried out in school hours by an external supervisor.



PARENTS AND SCHOOL

Parents are involved in various ways. In our opinion this is important, because we aim at a good relationship not only with the student but also with his parents.

First of all there are the contacts with them about individual students, periodically as well as between times. As indicated earlier, parents are urgently requested to contact the class tutor if they feel that their child does not function well at school. A signal like that is highly important for the supervision. Conversely, the class tutor will take a similar step.

Apart from that, parents are represented by contacts per class in the Parents' Network. The network confers on school matters, puts (critical) questions and advises the school's management, with which is also discusses how to spend the parents' contribution. It also organises thematic meetings for all parents. Furthermore, the Parents' Network is the rank and file of the parents' section in the Representative Advisory Council.

ADMISSION OF STUDENTS

Admission to the first form The primary schools provide us with information on newly presented first-formers. Traditionally, if possible we pay them a visit at their primary school to get to know them, to look at their work and to contact their teachers.

In Amsterdam, the advice about admission and the admission itself have been regulated in the so-called Kernprocedure (core procedure). This stipulates that they all have to participate in the so-called CITO check at the primary school, what the score is belonging to each type of advice, and that one is allowed to enrol at one school only. The decision whether a child can be admitted or not is based on the CITO results, and on the advice and further information from his school. We also investigate his suitability for montessori education. If necessary, we discuss the candidate with the primary school or for additional investigation.

We talk elaborately with parents and other supervisors about admitting students with 'rugzakfinanciering' (financing of special care or handicapped students). In this way we try to find whether now as well as later on the school will be able to supervise them in a proper way. This is a condition for admittance, just like the right level and suitability for our type of education.

If we decide to admit a student requiring special care, we record in writing that the supervision and the care required will be evaluated regularly. Each school year it is considered whether the school is able to continue to guarantee the supervision and care required. This depends on the abilities and the capacity of the teams of teachers in the divisional schools, as well as on the number of students they are responsible for.

In this framework we consider the initial and the advanced stage as two separate phases. In some cases, a student having finished the initial stage will not automatically be admitted to the advanced stage.

Some of our buildings are only partly accessible for students with certain physical handicaps. In building E (mavo) an escalator is not available, nor can it be installed, so here we cannot admit handicapped students requiring an escalator. For these students a solution may be found in another MSA school.

Students are allowed to give up to three names of students with whom they want to share the form. The request will be considered but we cannot guarantee that we can cope with it.



(Over)enrolment first forms In case of overenrolment lots will be drawn by a notary. There is a deviating arrangement for children from a montessori primary school, for those with a brother or sister already attending the MLA and for children of MSA staff. They have priority, if they are permissible according to the Kernperiode's criteria and have been registered *in time*. If registered later, in case of overenrolment also for them will be drawn lots. This arrangement has been agreed upon with Amsterdam's Dienst Maatschappelijke Ontwikkeling (Social Development Office), which determines the Kernprocedure's rules. If

the mere number of enrolled 'priority' children already exceeds the school's capacity, to them drawing lots also applies.

Admission to higher initial stage forms We will hold an admittance conversation with new students enrolling for a higher initial stage form. If after consultation with their previous school it turns out that they are permissible, placement (initially for one year) is possible if room is available.

Interim intake in the advanced stage If a student from another school would like to switch to our advanced stage during the school year, he reports to the student counsellors' office for an appointment. Then he and his parents have an exploratory conversation with a divisional school manager and the student counsellor of the profile required. Placement (initially for one year) follows after his previous school has been consulted and if room is available.

THE INITIAL STAGE

The initial stage comprises the first three forms, and in the four-years' mavo also the final examination form. During the initial stage the students basically stay together as a standing form's group, with the same class tutor and as much as possible the same teachers, because we feel strongly about continuity in supervision.

Divisional schools Four of our five divisional schools have 160-180 students each: in havo/vwo the AB, EF, DS and ML (building A). Basically, these small units comprise 6 forms: 2 first, 2 second and 2 third forms. The mavo (building E) is an exception, comprising not only the forms 1, 2 and 3 but also the final examination forms and some 260 students. The highly autonomously operating divisional schools are in fact small schools within the school. Each has its own team of teachers, its own manager and its own location in the building. Thus they are marked by small-scale and a personal, secure atmosphere. In the divisional school you know each other and you can be who you are.

Progress in the initial stage A typical feature of montessori education is that within certain limits students work at their own pace and develop themselves continuously. Although in some cases inevitable, we basically want to prevent them from staying down a class. Repeating a school year is undesirable, especially since it is essential for children in this phase of their development that their group or class stays together. In the mavo, progress is even more compelling, because here the law forbids studying more than five years.

Choices in the initial stage The practice is not always cooperative. An insufficient working pace and/or motivation as well as other causes may lead to arrears. In that case students need more time for the initial stage. Therefore in *havo/vwo* we determine already at the end of the second form how they can proceed:

- . students who must preferably continue at havo level *move up to the third form along with their class and will work there at that level*. For the advanced stage they choose a profile only, since after having finished the third form successfully they basically will move up to 4 havo automatically;
- . those who are able to take the vwo level, *continue on that level*. They choose a profile and after having finished the third form successfully they will move up to 4 vwo or 4 gymnasium.
- . students unable to cope with the level in a havo/vwo divisional school *may move to 3 mavo*. The few whom the MLA does not offer an appropriate possibility for continuation will have to find another school after the second form.



In the *mavo*, during the first two periods all first-formers who are able to take up the havo level are enabled to work on that level. If this leads to sufficient results, the report meeting decides whether they can move up to the 3 havo level in a havo/vwo divisional school. Moreover, after having acquired a mavo diploma it is still possible to switch to 4 havo.

In the third form mavo students choose a *sector* (similar to choosing a profile for the advanced stage's havo and vwo). Then they also start building up an *examination file* and get the *Wegwijzer voor de mavo* (mavo guide). The guide describes the rules and regulations for the exams as well as each subject's tests and the practical assignments presented in the examination file. The results from the latter yield a school examination mark per subject. This and the final written examination mark produce a final mark.

Depending on their level, students who after 2 mavo cannot be moved up to 3 mavo can repeat 2 mavo. They might also be advised to continue on the vmbo-k level, offered by MSA sister school MCO.

Nota bene: MLA students basically have been registered at the MSA. A student who has to leave the MLA may be offered a place in one of the other MSA schools, on condition that it has an appropriate care system. Parents who do not accept this offer must find another school themselves.

The teachers discuss their students' progress in report meetings. The last report always includes a letter from the class tutor, looking back on the past school year, mentioning decisions and agreements with the student and, if applicable, that the student has to switch to another school. We request parents in this case to deregister their child from our school. The care coordinator and students' counsellors can assist in finding a new school.

Linking up initial and advanced stage We continuously work on the third form's programme and on linking it up with the advanced stage's profiles. The school aims at guaranteeing students an ongoing learning path as well as preparing them optimally for the demands in the advanced stage. Moreover, we want to cope with individual differences as much as possible.

Events and projects in the initial stage There are a number of regular events during the school year. Parties, naturally, and sports days, of which especially the one for the first and second forms in June is special. For artistic events and projects see page 5, 'Art and culture'. Every year the second-formers have their *project week* in September. Walking, cycling, rowing, touring in a canoe. Most important commitments: taking care of oneself properly with a fixed amount for food, and being responsible for the atmosphere in the group. There is a project week for the third mavo form as well, and the third-formers in havo/vwo finish off the school year with a one-day school trip. Most of the costs of both project weeks and trip are on the account of the parents' contribution.

All the initial stage havo/vwo students participate in the so-called *mega project* of one week without lessons and comprising different projects. One of these is *Mens en werk* (Man and Work) for the third-formers of havo/vwo. From almost the beginning of the school year they are looking around for the choices of study and profession to be made later on. In the project they select a profession they are interested in, interview professionals in that area outside school and make a report on it. Finally an exhibition of the results is organised in school. During the third period the third-formers of the mavo carry out a 'work experience project', getting acquainted with professions by working in a company for some days. Also in this case the results are presented through an exhibition in school.



THE ADVANCED STAGE

For the fourth form of havo and vwo students choose one out of four profiles:

- Cultuur en Maatschappij, C&M (Culture and Society)
- Economie en Maatschappij, E&M (Economics and Society)
- Natuur en Gezondheid, N&G (Nature and Health)
- Natuur en Techniek, N&T (Nature and Technique).

Organisation Like the initial stage, the advanced stage has been set up as a small-scale organisation. Here there are three divisional schools. Two divisional schools (X and Y) offer C&M and E&M. One divisional school (Z) offers N&G/N&T. Each divisional school comprising havo as well as vwo. Every divisional school is located separately in the buildings and has its own reading room – X and Y in building D, Z in building B – and a permanent team of teachers. The divisional school manager has the final responsibility.

In practice All students follow a standard number of subjects in the so-called general section, choosing a cluster of related subjects, the profile. Furthermore they have to choose at least one examination subject.

The broad range of subjects in the advanced stage is rounded off with an examination. For various subjects this is a school examination only, to be held in 4 havo, 4 vwo or 5 vwo. Some subjects have been concentrated in a half-year's period.



Guide At the beginning of the school year students get the *Wegwijzer voor het Profieexamen* (guide for the profile examination) of their year. It comprises the rules and regulations for exams, the school's rules of play when exams are being held, and a description of each subject's tests and the practical assignments presented in the

examination file. The latter comprises all parts of the school examination; for each subject the final mark is the average of the marks of both the school's and the final written examination. If the latter is not required for a subject, the school examination mark is the final mark. Going in for the final written examination is not allowed if the examination file has not been rounded off completely.

Progress in the advanced stage The teachers discuss and check the students' progress at the first, third and fourth report. At the latter, the decisions about moving up are taken. Right from the start of the fourth form students and teachers keep an *examination file* up to date, including all school examination tests and practical work counting for the examination. In the divisional school one of the team members is in charge of coaching students who need supervision, at the beginning of the school year in particular the ones repeating a class or having come from another school. In consultation with them this team member develops a programme per period, whether or not adapted. He coaches the students whose first report shows considerable arrears and a rather high absence rate.

Divisional school afternoon and profile week On the weekly *divisional school afternoon* the advanced stage's students are educated by means of various activities – sometimes a 'lecture' for all students of the profile involved, sometimes an excursion or a practical assignment that has to be done.

Between two periods a week with an adapted schedule is always inserted, the *profielweek* (profile week). Then students can 'repair' work from the past period. The week can also be used for e.g. one-day excursions, rounding off a profile paper and making up missed tests centrally.

Projects in the advanced stage Naturally, also the advanced stage has its parties and various excursions. For artistic events and projects see 'Art and culture'. In May the fourth-formers of havo/vwo pass the border for a project week, organised by a number of staff. Each week is of a different nature – dedicated to sports or creative activities, and as regards content they may be linked to the participating students' profiles. Apart from that, there are also profile-exceeding project weeks. Firth-form gymnasium students visit Rome.

The costs are on the account of the parents' contribution. For certain project weeks, however, a supplementary contribution from the parents is asked.

GENERAL RULES FOR STUDENTS

The key rule is: at school, anyone must be able to work in a pleasant atmosphere. Thus:

- Treat others in the way you would like to be treated yourself.
- Do not disturb others at their work.
- Respect your environment.
- Come to the lessons and in the working hours on time.

Other rules applying:

- Students must report absence, owing to e.g. illness.
- They have to dismount before the gate, putting their bicycle or moped in one of the places intended for that purpose.
- Students have to go to their class room at the first school bell, five minutes before the start of the lessons.
- It is not allowed to leave the class room before the school bell.
- During working hours students are not allowed to stay on the inner court.
- Students must always have their ID card on them. It is needed for use in the multimedia centre, for printing and copying. If a student is late he has to have the card scanned; if not available he must go and fetch it.
- The MLA is a big school in a densely populated quarter, so students must prevent inconvenience for the neighbours. Staying in their doorways is not allowed, the police may fine them for that.
- Taking drinks and food in the class rooms is prohibited.
- During lessons and working hours, using mobile telephones in the buildings is not allowed.
- In and around the buildings taking alcohol and drugs is not permitted.
- This also applies to smoking. It is, however, tolerated on the court.
- Plastering the school with graffiti is prohibited. The offender will be charged for the cost of cleaning.
- Students must follow any directions by staff members.
- Garments covering the face are hindering contacts and thus are not allowed. The same applies to wearing headscarves during gymnastics, for reasons of security. If desired, one may wear a bandana covering the hair.

- Vandalism, (sexual) intimidation, discrimination, threatening, violence and criminal behaviour are prohibited, as is the possession of arms, knives and spray cans. It can be a reason for being suspended or expelled.
- The school reserves the right to check the contents of safes and satchels, in cooperation with the police, if required.
- We will always call in the police if suspecting that someone is endangering the security in and around the school, and in case of a punishable act.

DEVELOPMENTS

Education At the MLA, renewal is a permanent item on the agenda. We combine renewal of the basic curriculum (school year 1 and 2) with adaptation of the advanced stage's profiles, and consider the renewal of both the initial and the advanced stage as a whole. It aims at creating modern, challenging and strong education for and with the students. We consider knowledge as a value, inextricably bound up with skills.

Naturally, not all wheels need to be re-invented. Existing developments have been analysed and, whether or not amended, adopted in the framework of our renewal plan. In school year 2007/2008 the revised initial and advanced stage were introduced simultaneously in the first and fourth forms. From 2007 to 2011 the educational system will be similarly renewed during the succeeding school years.

During the renewal special attention is paid to the supervision of students, improvement of the link between the initial and the advanced stage, the coherence of didactics and the curriculum within the subjects, and the coherence between the subjects. The school develops three distinct learning lines directed towards culture, society and nature and running on in the four advanced stage's profiles.

The total renewal plan has been laid down in the school plan 2007/2011.

Besides, there are several other educational developments and changes to be reported on:

Art and culture The school's art coordinator is in charge of a continuing and coherent art programme for both the initial and the advanced stage. We aim at two clear lines: graphic art and performing arts.

All students in both the initial and the advanced stage follow a number of creative arts subjects. They are also introduced to works of art, often in small projects combining lessons at school and attending performances, events and exhibitions.

The MLA has a long and rich tradition of producing theatrical performances, often including a choir and/or a school orchestra. Recent examples are *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Magic Flute*, *Oliver*, an adaptation of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, the *West Side Story* and *Hair*. Coached by professionals, every year students also participate in a youngsters' version of a well-known play in the Stadsschouwburg (Municipal Theatre), Toneelgroep Amsterdam (Theatrical Company Amsterdam) playing the original version at the same time.

At the annual *Open Podium* students can show their dancing, musical and theatrical talents. *Montipop* is a music festival for and by our students during the school's closing festivities in the Melkweg theatre. In the initial stage, they can participate in a great number of *courses* in the spring, and for the advanced stage the *Cultureel Café* (Cultural Café) is organised periodically. Our website reports on all these events regularly.

Finally, at the MLA students may take their finals in drawing (mavo, havo, vwo) or drama (havo, vwo).

Extracurricular school In the first place, the connection between the extracurricular school and the 'normal' school can be found in Studieweb, our virtual school (see also below, 'MLA and ICT'). Studieweb contains almost all the teaching material and all study guides and means for planning. It gives a new dimension to self-reliant learning, which also can be done independent of the location: in our study rooms and subject rooms, and as easily outside the school. Including checking an exercise themselves and mailing the score to the subject teacher.

The extracurricular school, however, also actively offers education outside the school. Learning is moved from the school building to the society itself through projects, work placements and exchanges between schools. Examples are the third-form projects directed towards work and future, the project weeks for the second form, for the third form of the mavo and for the advanced stages' fourth forms of havo/vwo, as well as the programmes for exchange with schools in Germany and France.

International operations After their MLA career students will often carry on with their studies and/or work abroad, for which we want to prepare them well. At the MLA they will get aware that they are a European citizen. They learn how the European Union is functioning and develop the skills required to communicate well with citizens of other countries.

For the education in modern foreign languages, every year we try to call in foreign students on work placement and language assistants, bringing the students in touch with their language and culture regularly. Intensified education in French, leading to an internationally approved diploma (DELFL, Diplôme d'Études de la Langue Française) is also possible.

In the third form havo/vwo there is an exchange with a German school in Oldenburg. Moreover, at the end of the initial stage all havo/vwo students pay a one day's visit to a city in a neighbouring country. For students in 4 mavo an excursion to another country is organised, improving their speaking skills in French or German and their knowledge of its culture.

In the advanced stage, the students are enabled to participate in several extracurricular projects, e.g. an exchange with a French school. In 5 vwo the Spanish and Italian modules basically are rounded off with an educational week in Spain and Italy respectively. In the framework of the new approach of the advanced stage's project weeks also various existing and new international projects will be offered, such as the project week in Berlin.

Training school and academic training school The deficiency in teachers in this country will increase in the forthcoming years, and the quality of their training is often under discussion. Therefore, the MSA has also developed itself as a training school for teachers. This project, carried out at the MLA too, comprises a coherent curriculum for future teachers. In this way the MLA can also improve the quality of its own teachers, by schooling them in schooling. Moreover, scientific research of didactics within the school has come within reach. The academic training school is a new element of the training school. The MLA is one of the few schools having qualified for this project. In order to be able to probe our educational practice and effectiveness ourselves, we cooperate with EHvA (Educatieve Hogeschool van Amsterdam – Educational College of Amsterdam) and ILO (Instituut voor de Lerarenopleiding van de UvA – the University of Amsterdam's Teachers Training Institute). This enables the MLA to found the renewal process internally by means of scientific educational research.

MLA and ICT Information and communication technology is an important aid in the educational learning process. All divisional schools have at least one study room available with at least 15 computers and a beamer set-up, and apart from that at least one room with a beamer. For the staff, work stations with a computer are available in both the team rooms and the common teachers' workrooms.

ICT is offered integrated in the subjects; teachers are increasingly applying digital instruction. Often applets and animations provide a better insight into the subject matter.

Through ICT the MLA stimulates learning independently of the teacher, the location and the moment. For this purpose we had the *Studiweb* digital learning environment developed, which can be seen as a school on the Internet. On Studiweb each student has his own digital 'room'; teachers provide them in this virtual school with working guides, commitments,

diagnostic tests and information. The system also comprises an e-mail facility, through which teachers and class tutors can easily reach students and vice versa.

Additionally, here the student also has the latest schedules and general information available. Via Magister he reaches the digital *working hours planner*, to be used for reserving a place in the working hours and making appointments with teachers to recite a lesson or a book there.

A special mavo programme is *Toekomst voor Talent* (Future for Talent). Here students work thematically on skills required by ICT and profession, to be gained in commitments from 'real' parties from outside the school.

Our *website* is an important instrument in the internal and external communication.

The students' reports have been digitized completely. Absence and late arrivals are being kept up digitally.

The students get a *student's ID card* with a bar code and one euro in credit, paid from the parents' contribution, for borrowing books, printing and copying. The card is also used for identification, e.g. at school parties. Upgrading is possible against payment.

All students have their own *folder* on the students' network, enabling them to file their work digitally.

Security One of our top priorities is a safe environment for our students and staff. First of all this is a matter of supervision, and the result of a proper and vital pedagogic climate.

The buildings cope with the latest security requirements. We have developed a cohesive and professional policy by combining security with labour condition matters and the activities of the internal relief group. The latter has been trained how to act in case of accidents and calamities; we train partial evacuation of our population and make security rounds regularly. A special school security system is in operation, as well as a system for recording and analysing incidents. There is a security coordinator available, and a number of janitors have been trained as 'pedagogical janitors'.

The school participates in the city of Amsterdam's VIOS project (Veilig In en Om School – Safe In and Around School). In this connection we and a great number of other schools have signed a covenant, together with the city quarters of Oud-Zuid and ZuiderAmstel, the regional police organisation and the Prosecution Council. The covenant, which is available for perusal at our administrative department, contains agreements about security in and around the school. Furthermore, the MLA carries out partial VIOS projects, like lessons about how to deal with each other and about ragging and badgering.

Students' council Students have renewed the set-up of the existing students' council themselves, in order to improve its status in the school. Every divisional school will have its sub council, made up of representatives from each form. The sub councils' chairmen will form the Central Students' Council. In this way more students will be involved in the council.

MEASURING QUALITY: SENSE AND NONSENSE

The School Inspection authority publishes so-called quality cards, presenting the schools' performances. This is based on the idea that parents ought to know the characteristics of schools before selection. The cards show that the MLA has been performing well in the preceding years. This is just normal: a school ought to provide its students with the room and the means to prepare themselves optimally for the examination. And so we do.

Emphasizing examination results and performance measurement, however, has negative aspects too, since quality comprises a lot more than that, as we all know. Personal growth and social development cannot be measured immediately. It is the montessori school that aims at having the children develop qualities in many areas, enabling them to maintain themselves in society in a better way and secure a position there. We are working on that consciously.

We also work on keeping up the quality of our education. Personnel management aims at increasing our teachers' professional level and maintaining the education's montessori standard through coaching and schooling. We have the Nederlandse Montessori Vereniging (Dutch Montessori Association) judge our quality regularly. Recently a similar check of the mavo divisional school has yielded good results.

COMPLAINTS

Within the MSA general rules for complaints are applied, and students' rights and duties have been laid down in a special statute. Both also apply to the MLA; they are available for perusal at the school's secretariat.

Normally, students or their parents discuss a complaint with the class tutor first. If no solution is achieved, one may turn to the divisional school manager and finally to the school's management. Anyhow, we trust that everybody feels free to come to the school and talk about the problems, in order to work on solutions jointly. If no satisfactory result is achieved, the highest authority to bring forward complaints or objections is MSA's general management.

Furthermore, there are two internal confidants to present issues and discuss them confidentially. They also advise about calling in the external confidant for our school, if necessary, and about bringing forward a complaint to him or to the grievance committee.