



GATEWAY

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Lifetime Of Creative Learning

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE MONTESSORI CONCEPT OF EDUCATION





Dr. Montessori's scientific observation of the natural stages of development through which all children pass led to her discovery of universal principles of childhood education and to the devising of pedagogical strategies that can be applied successfully to all age groups. Montessori classrooms offer children a holistic curriculum incorporating physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development which responds to the natural differences in children's learning styles. When children learn in accordance with their developmental nature, they reveal capabilities for achievement that are seldom seen or even imagined in other settings.





Dr. Montessori discovered that children's learning characteristics occur in developmental cycles of three years. For this reason, Montessori classrooms typically encompass a three year age span. In this learning environment, younger children benefit from the mentoring of older children, and the older children enhance their learning opportunities by serving as peer tutors and role models for their younger peers.

The classroom houses an integrated curriculum which spans each developmental cycle and fosters individualized instruction and pacing. During the three year period, the teacher and children form more meaningful relationships and congruent, continued, parent involvement is encouraged. Success for each child is one important result of this lasting parent-teacher relationship.



A Montessori education encompasses the whole child. The Montessori program for each succeeding cycle involves a dual curriculum. While children gain academic skill in the traditional areas of study such as reading, writing, mathematics, the sciences and social sciences as well as physical education and the arts, they also gain skill in the affective area of growth and development and thus develop their emotional intelligence as well as their cognitive intelligence.

Because teachers learn to observe and understand each student's learning style, this dual curriculum design provides teachers with powerful, daily, criterionreference and student-performance-based, assessment opportunities. This also makes it possible for teachers to adjust their instructional strategies and presentation practices for each child, on the basis of the results from these daily assessment procedures, which are based upon their careful observation of each student. The curriculum at all levels is multisensorial, multi-cultural and integrated.





The Montessori system of education is based upon Dr. Montessori's original observations validated by current research that children are naturally motivated to learn and that learning involves curiosity, interest, inquiry, investigation, construction, spontaneous repetition, the emergence and development of concentration, and collaboration.





During each cycle of development, a child is sensitive to certain aspects of the environment and is predisposed to seek out experiences that exercise the developmental capabilities of that cycle. Each cycle is qualitatively different. The teacher's strategies of instruction and the development and design of the classroom environment reflect and provide for both these periods of specific sensibility and for children's differing learning styles.



Current research has validated many of the insights and observation made by Dr. Montessori over a century ago. Scientific research confirms that Montessori children have an advantage not only academically, but also in social and emotional development.

An article published in The Guardian reported a recent study which established that Psychologists in the US found that across a range of abilities, children at Montessori schools out-performed those given a traditional education. Children were tested for mental performance, academic abilities, and social and behavioral skills.

Angeline Lillard, from the University of Virginia, who coled the study, said: "We found significant advantages for the Montessori students in these tests for both age groups.

"Particularly remarkable are the positive social effects of Montessori education. Typically the home environment overwhelms all other influences in that area."



Studies found that Five-year-old Montessori pupils were better prepared for reading and math, and 12-year-olds wrote "significantly more creative" essays using more sophisticated sentence structures. However, some of the biggest differences were seen in social skills and behavior.

Montessori children displayed a greater sense of "justice and fairness", interacted in an "emotionally positive" way, and were less likely to engage in "rough play" during break times. Older Montessori pupils were more likely to choose "positive assertive responses" when dealing with unpleasant social situations according to researchers. They also displayed a "greater sense of community" at school.

Not only were five-year-old primary school children better prepared for the "three Rs" at primary level, they also had higher scores in tests of "executive function". This is the ability to adapt to changing and complex problems, and is seen as an indicator of future school and life success.



Although the Montessori children were not regularly tested or graded, they did just as well in spelling, punctuation and grammar exams as those given conventional lessons. The scientists concluded: "Montessori education fosters social and academic skills that are equal or superior to those fostered by a pool of other types of schools."



Because Montessori students have learned how to learn rather than just what to learn, they tend to be more adaptable and quite successful when making the transition to a more traditional school environment. Montessori students are generally well equipped not only academically, often far surpassing their more traditionally educated peers, but they are also socially and emotionally advanced. Competence, confidence, and compassion are hallmarks of the Montessori student and those traits are life skills transferable to any setting. Parents, of course need to be the advocates for their children as they determine the next best setting and help them prepare for a new set of expectations and requirements.





There are many well-known and highly regarded Montessori alumni who have consistently demonstrated the success of a Montessori education by their academic and social achievements. They are truly examples of the “self-actualized” person. Some of the best known Montessori students include Larry Page and Sergey Brin, founders of Google.com who credit their Montessori education for much of their success; Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com; Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nobel Prize winner for Literature; T. Berry Brazelton, noted pediatrician and author, Julia Childs, famous chef, star of many cooking shows and author of numerous cookbooks; YoYo Ma, world renowned cellist; and Prince William and Prince Harry, English royal family. Montessori alumni have been successful in every field of endeavor and a wide range of academic institutions often becoming the leaders and innovators in whatever avenue they may pursue.





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KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF A MONTESSORI CLASSROOM





The classroom is organized around the child as learner. Children develop independence, self-discipline, and concentration. Instructional materials are self-correcting and foster children's discoveries. There is much child-initiated learning activity. The teacher observes the child in order to understand and facilitate the learning process. The Montessori Teacher is not autocratic, they are facilitative guides.





Because children develop and mature at various rates, each Montessori classroom has children whose ages generally span at least 3 years. The materials of instruction are available for the entire 3 year age span allowing for individual rates of progression.



Individualized instruction, small and some large group, cooperative, and peer learning activities occur regularly. Critical thinking encouraged through inquiry is a part of every lesson. The teacher is accountable for adopting strategies of instruction to fit the learner's needs.





Each child works at his or her own rate in accordance with his or her own developmental process and needs. Children engage actively in their own development and in the acquisition of knowledge and mastery of the motor, sensorial, language, math, science, cultural, music and arts skills that make them successful both in life and in school.





Montessori is one of the first learning programs that combine challenging content across subject areas that builds upon individual student interest and is suitable for mixed-age classrooms. The instructional materials are fully integrated, ecological in outlook, and represents multi cultural perspectives. The children study freely the accumulated knowledge of mankind, with increasing ability to make judgments in response to genuine inquiry.





The sequences of instructional materials are related. Each lesson orients children towards an understanding of the whole topic or theme. Children see how knowledge relates across various disciplines, learn to solve problems, and engage in inquiry as part of a creative process. All materials start teaching the concrete concepts that children can quickly experience a direct physical/tangible (feel, taste, touch, hear, smell) result from, and gradually move to the abstract where outcomes are a result of using the mind and understanding concepts.





The materials of instruction themselves provide daily diagnostic information to the teacher. The teacher observes the student's performance and assesses it based upon performance criteria associated with that particular material, skill, activity, or experience.





The Montessori Learning Environment is inviting, aesthetically appealing and generously equipped with scientifically designed, hands on, self-correcting, multi-sensorial learning materials and manipulatives designed to engage children in the exploration and discovery of concepts and skills. This environment is initially prepared and consistently renewed for the children by the teacher. Soon, however, the children come to understand that the environment belongs to them; consequently it is the children who accept important responsibilities for keeping the environment clean and in order throughout the year.





The children in a Montessori classroom are encouraged to respect and support one another by working together rather than competing. By having children do the same things at different times and different things at the same time comparisons between children are avoided. Within the context of the classroom community children work cooperatively and collaboratively to support each other's learning and discovery. Each child becomes an important part and contributor to the life of the group. Older children act as mentors and become the natural leaders while the younger children benefit from having role models and peer tutors.



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Because children remain in the classroom for a three year cycle, a deeper long term relationship develops between the teacher and child that is not possible in traditional classrooms where children have a different teacher every year. Essential to that relationship is a deep respect for each other. Montessori teachers really know their children through acute observation and long term interactions. They are able to facilitate and witness a child's learning and growth over time.





The Montessori teacher is guide and facilitator as the “Dynamic Link” between the prepared environment and the child. Anyone wishing to become a Montessori teacher must be transformed into the kind of person that can be successful in working with children of the age range s/he wishes to serve. That is why the preparation of Montessori Teachers is such an essential element in the establishment of any Montessori educational system. In order to be successful, the Montessori teacher must achieve a significant change in his or her point of view regarding how children learn and the role of the adult in the learning environment. Montessori teacher education is a transforming experience because the teacher learns to design and implement curricula that are specific to a child’s developmental capabilities and styles of learning, not one curriculum that has been designed by adults, without reference to children’s individual differences, and universally imposed upon all children of one age, no matter which developmental stage they are passing through at the time.





A Montessori education introduces children to the joys of learning and provides a framework in which the intellectual and social disciplines go hand and hand. The Montessori approach is designed to help the child build within himself the foundation and desire for a lifetime of creative learning and critical thinking.





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A Love for Learning

A love of learning and confidence in one's self as an independent learner are pre-requisites for success in a world in which the only constant is change. Educators are interested in the Montessori approach to education because it promises and delivers an effective way of developing competence, confidence and initiative in every student.





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Thank You

