



Montessori School of Celebration

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Frequently Asked Questions About Montessori Education

Where did Montessori come from?

Montessori education was founded in 1907 by Dr. Maria Montessori, the first woman in Italy to become a physician. She based her educational methods on scientific observation of children's learning processes. Guided by her discovery that children teach themselves, Dr. Montessori designed a "prepared environment" in which children could freely choose from a number of developmentally appropriate activities. Now, nearly a century after Maria Montessori's first casa dei bambini ("children's house") in Rome, Montessori education is found all over the world, spanning ages from birth to adolescence.

Multiage grouping

Children are grouped in mixed ages and abilities in three to six year spans: 0-2.5, 2.5-6, 6-12 (sometimes temporarily 6-9 and 9-12), 12-15, 15-18. There is constant interaction, problem solving, child to child teaching, and socialization. Children are challenged according to their ability and never bored.

What is the difference between Montessori and traditional education?

At the under age six level, Montessori emphasizes learning through all five senses, not just through listening, watching, or reading. Children in Montessori classes learn at their own, individual pace and according to their own choice of activities from hundreds of possibilities. They are not required to sit and listen to a teacher talk to them as a group, but are engaged in individual or group activities of their own, with materials that have been introduced to them by the teacher who knows what each child is ready to do. Learning is an exciting process of discovery, leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning.

Above age 6 children learn to do independent research, arrange field trips to gather information, interview specialists, create group presentation, dramas, art exhibits, musical productions, science projects, and so forth. There is no limit to what they created in this kind of intelligently guided freedom. There no text books or adult-directed group lessons and daily schedule. There is great respect for the choices of the children, but they easily keep up with or surpass what they would be doing in a more traditional setting. There is no wasted time and children enjoy their work and study. The children ask each other for lessons and much of the learning comes from sharing and inspiring each other instead of competing with each other.

Montessori classes place children in three-year-or-more age groups (2.5-6, 6-12, and so on), forming communities in which the older children spontaneously share their knowledge with the younger ones. Montessori represents an entirely different approach to education.



Who accredits or oversees Montessori schools?

Unfortunately no one body can accredit the Montessori element of schools. There are several Montessori organizations to which schools can belong. The two major ones operating in the United States are the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). Our school is affiliated with the American Montessori Society, the largest of the two organizations in the United States. For more information on AMS you can visit their website at amshq.org.

Protection of the "best" in each child through respect of choice and concentration

The most important discovery that Dr. Montessori has contributed to the field of child development and education is the fostering of the best in each child. She discovered that in an environment where children are allowed to choose their work and to concentrate for as long as needed on that task, that they come out of this period of concentration refreshed and full of good will toward others. The teacher must know how to offer work, to link the child to the environment who is the real teacher, and to protect this process. We know now that this natural goodness and compassion are inborn, and do not need to be taught, but to be protected.

The schedule - The three-hour work period

Under the age of six, there are one or two 2 to 3-hour, uninterrupted, work periods each day, not broken up by required group lessons. Older children schedule meetings or study groups with each other and/or the teacher as necessary. Adults and children respect concentration and do not interrupt someone who is busy at a task. Groups form spontaneously or are arranged ahead by special appointment. They almost never take precedence over self-selected work.

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Work centers

The environment is arranged according to subject area, and children are always free to move around the room instead of staying at desks. There is no limit to how long a child can work with a piece of material. At any one time in a day all subjects -- math, language, science, history, geography, art, music, etc., will be being studied, at all levels.

Teaching method - "Teach by teaching, not by correcting"

There are no papers turned back with red marks and corrections. Instead the child's effort and work is respected as it is. The teacher, through extensive observation and record-keeping, plans individual projects to enable each child to learn what he needs in order to improve.

Areas of study

All subjects are interwoven, not taught in isolation, the teacher modeling a "Renaissance" person of broad interests for the children. A child can work on any material he understands at any time.

Learning styles

All kinds of intelligences and styles of learning are nurtured: musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, intuitive, and the traditional linguistic and logical-mathematical (reading, writing, and math). This particular model of multiple intelligences is backed up by Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences.

Assessment

There are no grades, or other forms of reward or punishment, subtle or overt. Assessment is by portfolio and the teacher's observation and record keeping. The test of whether or not the system is working lies in the accomplishment and behavior of the children, their happiness, maturity, kindness, and love of learning and level of work.

Requirements for age 0-6

There are no academic requirements for this age, but children are exposed to amazing amounts of knowledge and often learn to read, write and calculate beyond what is usually thought interesting to a child of this age.

Requirements for ages 6-18

The teacher remains alert to the interests of each child and facilitates individual research in following interests. There are no curriculum requirements except those set by the state, or college entrance requirements, for specific grade levels. These take a minimum amount of time. From age six on, students design contracts with the teacher to guide their required work, to balance their general work, and to teach them to become responsible for their own time management and education.

Character education

Education of character is considered equally with academic education, children learning to take care of themselves, their environment, each other - cooking, cleaning, building, gardening, moving gracefully, speaking politely, being considerate and helpful, doing social work in the community, etc.

Is Montessori good for children with learning disabilities? What about gifted children?

Montessori is designed to help all children reach their fullest potential at their own unique pace. A classroom whose children have varying abilities is a community in which everyone learns from one another and everyone contributes. Moreover, multiage grouping allows each child to find his or her own pace without feeling "ahead" or "behind" in relation to peers.

What ages does Montessori serve?

There are more Montessori programs for ages 2.5-6 than for any other age group, but Montessori is not limited to early childhood. Many infant/toddler programs (ages 2 months to 2.5 years) exist, as well as elementary (ages 6-12), adolescent (ages 12-15) and even a few Montessori high schools.

Are Montessori children successful later in life?

Research studies show that Montessori children are well prepared for later life academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition to scoring well on standardized tests, Montessori children are ranked above average on such criteria as following directions, turning in work on time, listening at-

tentively, using basic skills, showing responsibility, asking provocative questions, showing enthusiasm for learning, and adapting to new situations.

Does a Montessori preschool classroom allow for pretend play?

When Dr. Montessori opened the first Children's House it was full of pretend play things. The children never played with them as long as they were allowed to do real things - i.e. cooking instead of pretending to cook. It is still true.

Does Montessori allow for creativity?

The materials teach specific things and then the creativity is incredible. Like learning how to handle a good violin and then playing music. It is not considered "creative" to use a violin as a hammer, or a bridge while playing with blocks. We consider it "creative" to learn how to use the violin properly and then create music. The same goes for the materials in a Montessori classroom.

With the emphasis on individual work, are the children allowed to interact enough with each other?

There is as much interaction as the children desire, but the tasks are so satisfying that, for these few hours a day, children want to master the challenges offered by them. Then they become happier and kinder—true socialization. Also, since concentration is protected above all, as all "work" is respected, children learn early on not to interrupt someone who is concentrating.

Source: <http://www.michaelolaf.net/FAQMontessori.html> / Edited by MSC, January 2010