

Montessori Education

Maria Montessori embarked on an educational journey which has made worldwide impact since its beginnings in the early 1900's. Based on the scientific understanding of the emerging brain development of a child, and the incredible ability to receive information via the senses, Montessori schools throughout the world are filled with concrete learning materials to expand the child's understanding of the world around him.

The idea that children are sponges, explodes in Montessori classrooms, as children experience living education in the areas of mathematics, sensorial development, practical living skills, language arts and cultural subjects. Concrete, self-correcting learning materials allow the child to discover, explore and integrate complex information into simple and understandable concepts.

Underneath the academia, lies the heart of Montessori education - the cultivation of the inner qualities that make for peaceful existence within the classroom and outside community. Children learn lessons of grace and courtesy and study peoples of the world, in an effort to find their contribution to others, and to practice understanding and tolerance.

“Help me do it by myself!” While Dr. Montessori's pioneering work with children's education began at the beginning of the twentieth century, one hundred years later her philosophy and approach remains remarkably fresh and in tune with modern minds. In particular it resonates with parents who seek to stimulate their children through creative activity and exploration in all its forms. Children educated in the Montessori manner know who they are as people. They are confident, at ease with themselves, and interact on a high social plane with their peers and adults. Montessori students are naturally curious about their surroundings and are eager to explore their whole world. They enter early adulthood ready to make a contribution to society.

A Spiritual Connection to the World from Within

Montessori believed that as important as physical development is to life and the body, psychic development is to the mind and spirit of a child. Some define spirituality as ‘the peace one feels with oneself and the outside world.’

Separate from one's possible religious connection, the spirituality of a child involves his or her heart and inner spirit. Appreciation for living things and understanding one's feelings and those of others, are concepts that can only be experienced through emotional nourishment, patience and unconditional love.

How Might this Spiritual Emphasis Manifest Itself in the Classroom?

- **Tone of the environment**
The atmosphere of a Montessori classroom, while obviously busy, is also generally calm and orderly.
- **Slowing down of classroom life**
Classroom life slows as the children take the time to watch chicks being born, to watch the journey of an ant, to hear the differing sounds of tiny bells, or to enjoy the repetition of a pouring exercise; meditative thoughts about those we love; carrying things one at a time; quiet exercises; gardening; working on a rug.
- **Development of care for living and non-living things**
The children can often be found cleaning the leaves of plants; mending a torn book; stopping to take notice when someone is hurt and offering assistance; returning materials and furniture as one found them; observing the beauty in the environment.
- **Gentleness of the teacher**
Teachers take great care to achieve eye contact when giving a lesson and speak from the child's level whenever possible; they exude patience; they may also play quiet music during class time.

Elements of Montessori Education:

Montessori education is a philosophy of human development, and a fundamental basis for directing such development. The elements of Montessori education include:

A prepared environment, where:

- a student can develop abilities and strengthen areas of challenge
- giftedness is matched via the curriculum and community opportunities
- challenged areas are identified and given individual focus
- individual success is promoted
- materials designed for individual lessons
- an individualized curriculum meets students in their academic 'place'
- self-correcting, ungraded materials and assignments are used
- continual refinement of skills, through repetition and gradual intensity
- older students share presentations or read to younger ones
- younger students may share their discoveries with older students



The Rods

Self-development of the child

- peer instruction to challenge and develop leadership skills
- academic success teams form during the year for special projects
- practical life education prepares students for life, from pouring exercises, to repair, laundry and practical skills
- an individual education and development plan is created for each student

Concrete educational materials

- non-frustrating, self-correcting living educational materials are a trademark of a Montessori environment
- such concrete learning is not replaced by massive textbooks and dittoes
- materials are multi-leveled, to allow for repetition and challenge
- concrete education also includes community involvement and assistance



The Pink Tower

The Montessori teacher

- the 'teacher' is a facilitator, who directs the child toward self-learning
- the teacher is the link between the student and the learning environment
- the teacher directs the activity and the motivation of the student toward the accomplishment of his or her goals
- the teacher seeks, not to make every child a genius, but to enable every student to develop their own capabilities to their fullest potential