

Sun and Stars Montessori School

Suns Class - Preschool and Kindergarten 3-6 year old program

"If we would only respect the natural impulse of the child to explore his surroundings and to organize his experience, he could be led into a mastery of his culture." - Maria Montessori

In the Montessori preschool classroom, children choose their work from among self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves and organized into specific work areas. The carefully prepared environment and systematic approach to the materials enable students to work independently and with a sense of order.

Our learning environment is multi-aged, with children learning from their teachers, their peers, and through their own self discovery. The multi-aged preschool/kindergarten environment permits children to work according to their own ability, and not to that of the whole.

In the Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten class, five distinct areas constitute the prepared environment:

Practical life enhances the development of task organization and cognitive order through care of self, care of the environment, exercises of grace and courtesy, and coordination of physical movement.

Mathematics makes use of manipulative materials to enable the child to internalize concepts of number, symbol, sequence, operations, and memorization of basic facts.

The **Sensorial** area enables the child to order, classify, and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, color, pitch, etc.

Language arts includes oral language development, written expression, reading, and the study of grammar, creative dramatics, and children's literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters, alphabet cut-outs, and various presentations allowing children to link sounds and letter symbols effortlessly and to express their thoughts through writing.

Cultural activities expose the child to basics in geography, history, and life sciences. Music, art, and movement education are part of the integrated cultural curriculum.

The preschool environment unifies the psycho-social, physical, and academic functioning of the child. Its important task is to provide students with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security and a sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. This foundation will enable them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career.

Why Choose Montessori for the Kindergarten Year?

Parents are often in a quandary over the appropriate Kindergarten placement for their child. Montessori education is quite an appropriate choice for Kindergarten for the children whose parents truly wish an educational beginning that prepares their child beyond the Kindergarten years.

The concept of 'learning to learn' has been widely discussed and the lack of this ability has been acknowledged as the key reason why many students do not achieve the ultimate in academic success. Research about how children learn shows that most American students, in the best schools from kindergarten to college age, do not "understand what they've studied, in the most basic sense of the term. They lack the capacity to take knowledge learned in one setting and apply it appropriately in a different setting. Study after study has found that, by and large, even the best students in the best schools can't do that." (On Teaching For Understanding: A Conversation with Howard Gardner, by Ron Brandt, Educational Leadership Magazine, ASCD, 1994.)

In contrast, Montessori preschoolers learn the beginning of the academic areas within the Montessori environment, mastering the fundamental concepts in language and mathematics, being challenged to enhance their sensory reception for intake of information and learning independence, interdependence, initiative and self-ability in exercises for practical living.

At the Kindergarten level, depth of understanding and application ensues. It is not a matter of simple rote memorization, textbook copying, ditto sheet study and common graded study material. The Montessori Kindergartener becomes adept at

the scientific feat of ‘learning’ – questioning, hypothesizing, repeating and finding real life application for the information studied.

Students study grammar concretely, for example, giving reason to an abstract, often misunderstood concept. They use shapes to form different sentence structures, make patterns, analyze and compare grammatical patterns. In mathematics, they learn living examples of mathematical applications, as they measure and find the area of materials in their classroom.

In its best sense, The Sun and Stars Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten program prepares the child to learn *well* as the foundation for higher level understanding.