

Minden Montessori School

The Montessori Classroom

On The Power Of The Child

“The child is endowed with unknown powers, which can guide us to a radiant future... The child’s true constructive energy, a dynamic power, has remained unnoticed for thousands of years.”

Maria Montessori

There are five major work areas in a Montessori classroom. The following is a brief description of what children gain through each of the major work areas...

1. **Practical Life:** This is the area by which children learn inner control and mastery of movement. "Inner control" refers to a mental order, which develops into concentration and self-discipline. "Mastery of movement" refers to acquisition of coordination. So, through this area of work a child learns to adapt himself to the environment and grow in independence. The child is also able to care for himself and his environment and establish himself in society through courteous relations with others. This area answers the child's plea of: "Help me help myself."
2. **Sensorial:** The activities in this area are needed for the development of the sense of perception, and are a means of acquiring classified, detailed and accurate knowledge of things in the child's daily environment. It gives them a keener sense of taste, smell, vision, sound and touch. By cultivating these things we can train the children toward a discrimination of contrasts and identities and minute graduation of differences. These are the basis for the unfolding of the child's intelligence.

At home too, the child has many opportunities to develop his senses and learn the names of shapes, dimensions and colors that surround him as well as the differentiation of tastes and smells.

3. **Math:** In this area, children learn quantity value and symbol representation. Again, we use the concrete first (quantity), and then the abstract (symbol). This area covers a great range from the Red and Blue Rods, which teach quantity, to the Golden Bead

Decimal System, which goes into static and dynamic addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Children also learn the squares and cubes of numbers through beads and numerals. Soon, children gradually make the transition from concrete use of materials to the abstract.

Again, the home environment provides the children with a wealth of opportunities to count and recite numerals. They can count their fingers, toes, the dishes on the table, the chairs, etc..

4. Language: There are three components in this area; speaking, reading and writing (in that order of difficulty). Before your child came to school he was mastering the hardest of all three: speaking. So Language, as a subject, begins in the Montessori classroom the day he enters. Reading begins with conversation. The structure and grammar of his native language will mature during these young years. Reading comes effortlessly after the child has had many varied experiences in working with materials which have prepared his eyes and hands for reading and writing.

It is very important to use accurate language when naming objects, places, actions, etc.. The child between the ages of 3 and 4 is passing through an acutely sensitive period of language. It is very important to use correct language during this stage of learning.

Reading and writing are further developed through the use of the Sandpaper Letters and the Moveable Alphabet, these skills are expanded through reading, grammar and manuscript & cursive writing.

At home, reading to your child, conversing with him, playing sound games, memory games and word games will further prepare him in this area.

5. Science, Geography, History: It is through language that geography, history, science, art, music and biology are exposed to the child.

Throughout time man has lived in geographical situations. Geography, therefore, in its totality is not to be studied unrelated to the life of man. Nor is history a study of names and dates that should be memorized. History and Geography are:

A) The story of man as he has lived all over the Earth, throughout all times.

B) The particular ways in which man has lived his life.

The Study of Man encompasses the study of history, not divorced from the study of geography.

Expressions of man include art forms: graphic arts, music, inventions, discoveries, etc.. Science, then, is part of the study of the story of man.

All of this study forms part of the language work we do with children. Some is done in spoken language, and as the children become able to read and write, it is extended and the children themselves explore.

Dr. Montessori called this aspect of work with children in class "Cosmic Education."

The Many Elements of the Montessori Method

1. The method is based on years of patient observation of child nature.
2. The method has proved itself of universal application. Within a single generation, it has been tried with complete success with

children of almost every nation. Race, color, climate, nationality, social rank, type of civilization—all these make no difference in a successful application.

3. The method has revealed the child as a lover of work, intellectual work, spontaneously chosen and carried out with profound joy.
4. The method is based on the child's imperious need to learn by doing. At each stage in the child's mental growth, corresponding occupations are provided, by means of which he develops his facilities.
5. While it offers the child a maximum of spontaneity, it nevertheless enables him to reach the same or even higher level of scholastic attainment as under the old system.
6. Though it does away with the necessity of coercion by means of rewards or punishments, it achieves an active discipline which originated within the child and it is not imposed from without.
7. The method is based on a profound respect for the child's personality and removes from him the preponderating influence of the adult, leaving him room to grow in biological independence. The child is allowed a large measure of liberty (not license) which forms the basis of real discipline.
8. The method enables the teacher to deal with each child individually in each subject, and thus guide him according to his individual requirements.
9. Each child works at his own pace. Hence, the quick child is not held back by the slow, nor is the latter in trying to keep up with the former, obligated to flounder along hopelessly out of his depth. Each stone in the mental edifice is "well and truly laid" before the next is added.

10. The method does away with the competitive spirit and its train of baneful results. More than this, at every turn it presents endless opportunities among the children for mutual help—which is joyfully given and gratefully received.
11. Since the child works from his own free choice, without competition and coercion, he is freed from danger of overstrain, feelings of inferiority and other experiences which are apt to be the unconscious cause of profound mental disturbances in later life.
12. Finally, the Montessori Method develops the whole personality of the child, not merely his intellectual faculties but also his powers of deliberation, initiative and independent choice with his emotional compliments. By living as a free member of a real social community, the child is trained in those fundamental social qualities which form the basis for good citizenship.

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