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Montessori Principles

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was the first woman physician in Italy. Her work led her to closely observe the behavior of children. The principles that follow are based on Maria Montessori's writings and observations and have been adopted by the American Montessori Society (AMS) as key concepts in preparing children for life in the 21st century.

- 1) The aim of Montessori education is to foster autonomy and competence and to develop responsible, adaptive citizens who are life-long learners, problem identifiers, and problem solvers.
- 2) Montessori classrooms are environments where learning occurs in an inquisitive, cooperative, nurturing atmosphere. Students increase their own knowledge through a combination of self-correcting work and teacher initiated experiences. A Montessori classroom is less teacher centric than a traditional classroom.
- 3) Montessori environments enable learning to take place through the senses. Students learn through manipulating materials and interacting with others. These meaningful experiences are precursors to the abstract understanding of ideas. Hands-on materials in a classroom are designed to attract the child, stimulate academic exploration, and develop critical thinking.
- 4) Classrooms are multi-age by design. Self-initiative, collaboration, and problem-solving skills are practiced in a safe, supportive and healthy atmosphere with mixed age children of varying levels of skills and experience, to help support learning without judgement and an acceptance of diversity and learning styles.
- 5) The individual is considered as a whole. The physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, and cognitive needs are all considered essential to the developing human.
- 6) The child learns the respect of self, others, the environment, and life, all as a necessary expression of developing a caring attitude toward all people and the planet.

You can see the differences in the Montessori approach to the whole child in the classrooms, on the playground, during meals, and even at home, as children care for the themselves, for each other, and for the world around them. Developing the qualities of self-discipline and independence are essential aspects of Montessori education. We hope you will see the value in having your children practice these skills at home. We ask parents to encourage children to take responsibility at home: choosing their own clothes, setting the table, helping with laundry, unloading the car, working in the garden, watering plants, feeding pets, etc., thus participating and supporting their life at home as active contributors from a very young age.

The Montessori Difference

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that children need positive role models from whom they could learn respectful behavior. The role of the teacher is to help the child make the best choices about his/her own behavior. Thus, the children have “freedom within limits.” Children will respect each other, take care of their work and classroom materials, and behave responsibly when their ideas and contributions are accepted and respected, when they are allowed to make choices, and when they can participate in the daily functioning of the classroom. This allows the students to have the freedom to direct their learning, to develop concentration, and to excel in their work.

A Montessori classroom is unique because it offers personalized learning programs focused on a child’s development. The children choose their work from a carefully prepared classroom that challenges them to explore, solve problems together, and trust in their own abilities. Montessori puts children in a multi-age classroom, where children at various levels can excel, recognizing that children have different learning styles and develop at different rates.

Our primary task is to help the children in our care construct themselves to flourish in an increasingly challenging world. The two most important assets we believe our philosophy offers them that help sustain them throughout their lifetime are: a love of learning and the ability to adapt.

It has been suggested that most people will change careers at least two or three times during their lifetime. Introductions of new forms of technology will continue to alter the pace of life. How can we best prepare our children for the changes facing our society when we can’t even anticipate what those future demands will be? We believe we can prepare them by offering a curriculum that develops and supports their abilities to think logically, cope with change, cooperate with others, identify problems, solve problems in new ways, articulate their own thoughts, values, ideas and to be respectful of the rights and concerns of others.

Maria Montessori believed, “Education is a natural process carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment.”