

How to make your child successful in the Montessori Classroom

The Role of the Adult

Adults play a very critical role in the life of a Montessori child. It is important that adults understand the very purpose, reasoning & philosophy that most Montessori school advocates for.

PURPOSE

- Develop the fullest potential of the child – capitalizing on “Absorbent Mind”, Planes of Development, & Sensitive Period
- Love for Learning- nurturing curiosity, creativity, and imagination
- Awaken their social being – they are part of a bigger society; they have both an individual and social role to play

PHILOSOPHY Translated in the classroom

Here are some Specific Details of the Montessori Method *The Michael Olaf Montessori, www.michaelolaf.net*

The schedule - The three-hour work period

Under the age of six, there are one or two 3-hour, uninterrupted, work periods each day, not broken up by required group lessons. Older children schedule meetings or study groups with each other the teacher when 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.

Multi-age grouping

Children are grouped in mixed ages and abilities in three to six year spans: 0-3, 3-6, 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. The Montessori middle and high school teacher ideally has taken all three training courses plus graduate work in an academic area or areas.

Work Areas /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.

Teaching Ratio - 1:1 and 1:30+

Except for infant/toddler groups (Ratio dictated by local social service regulations), the teaching ratio is one trained Montessori teacher and one non-teaching aide to 30+ children. Rather than lecturing to large or small groups of children, the teacher is trained to teach one child at a time, and to oversee thirty or more children working on a broad array of tasks. She is facile in the basic lessons of math, language, the arts and sciences, and in guiding a child's research and exploration, capitalizing on his interest in and excitement about a subject. The teacher does not make assignments or dictate what to study or read, nor does she set a limit as to how far a child follows an interest.

Basic lessons

The Montessori teacher spends a lot of time during teacher training practicing the many lessons with materials in all areas. She must pass a written and oral exam on these lessons in order to be certified. She is trained to recognize a child's readiness according to age, ability, and interest in a specific lesson, and is prepared to guide individual progress.

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.

Class size

Except for infant/toddler groups, the most successful classes are of 30-35 children to one teacher (who is very well trained for the level she is teaching), with one non-teaching assistant. This is possible because the children stay in the same group for three to six years and much of the teaching comes from the children and the environment.

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 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. The work of the 6+ class includes subjects usually not introduced until high school or college.

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.

A Great Montessori Day

When Does it Start?

Starting of the day of your child starts with the preparation the night before you send off your child to school. It is critical that you set the initial tone for the day as this will be carried through the rest of the day

Night Before

- meet the P.E.M.S. (Physical, Emotional, Mental, & Socio-spiritual)
- involve your child in the preparation of all the things they need for the next day
- encourage to have a plan & set that expectation that "we look forward for tomorrows work"

On the Day of

- early preparation – give ample time for the children to do things on their own; avoid rushing the children
- breakfast?
"Research has shown that children who regularly ate breakfast had better standardized test scores, better behavior, and were less hyperactive than children who skipped breakfast. When comparing low glycemic index (GI) breakfasts to high GI breakfasts eaten by 9- to 12-year-old children, research also shows that children who eat high GI breakfasts (sugary breakfasts) tend to eat more at lunch.

Try to avoid giving your child sugary breakfast cereals, white-flour pancakes and syrup -- all of which will leave your child hungry and tired half way through the morning. If your child tends to get hungry in the middle of the morning no matter what, send an apple, whole grain crackers, nuts and cheese snacks rather than sugary cookies or white-flour crackers.

- ask your child "I wonder what work you will do today?"; "Share with me later whom you ate snack with"; "Are you going to use the 100 board today?"
- Set the expectation at drop-off -- "one kiss and a hug"

Arrival at school

- Advocate for independence -- confident that your child can do it
- Show an emotion of trust -- children feed off from our emotion
- Leave with passing on the message that "you will be back"

Dismissal at school

- Come in with excitement
- Advocate for responsibility & accountability
- Focus on your child

Volunteering at school

- Make sure to set the volunteer orientation with your child's teacher
- Prepare your child of your coming in -- set the expectations
- Come prepared -- complete materials, confident with the process, etc.
- Be ready to engage and interact with the children

Pre-school Handbook

How to help your child build self-esteem at Montessori school

When children come to a Montessori school, the first lessons they learn are care of self and care of environment. Care of self includes, washing hands, using the bathroom, dressing and undressing by themselves. Care of the environment includes, washing, sweeping, and keeping the classroom beautiful. The children water plants and care for animals.

Have your child wear clothes they can dress and undress themselves in with no assistance. Examples: elastic waist pants, pull over shirts, velcro or slip on shoes. This will help build their self-esteem and help them to be independent and capable at school.

Our classroom has many materials for your child to practice dressing and undressing with buttons, zippers, bows, lacing, etc. In an unrushed, when they want to environment instead of an "I better hurry, I have to use the bathroom situation". We want your child to have a positive experience and set them up for success. If they cannot take their clothes off, this will make them feel dependent and incapable, not allowing them to build their self esteem and feel important. They may have an accident because we have not set them up to succeed.

Children should bring healthy, low salt, low sugar snacks, please no cookies, cakes, or chips (to promote a healthy environment) in containers they can open and eat easily with little mess. Part of our curriculum is care of the environment, once again, we want to set your child up for success by giving them snacks they can easily clean up after themselves. Children learn to sweep crumbs and sponge tables after eating. If you give them something very messy it will be frustrating for them to clean it up independently. Sure the teachers can do it for them, but then we are not teaching or helping your children learn to "do" things for themselves. Suggestions are crackers, sliced fruit, vegetable sticks, and sandwiches.

Arrival and departure can be made easy by talking to your child about school and what to expect. How fun it is or how much you like the teachers. What a wonderful school and how lucky they are to come to such a great school. Your positive comments will help your child want to come to school. If you apologize or make negative remarks or threats it is going to be a difficult transition. We discourage bribery, as it will escalate, until everyday; you have to promise a new treat after-school. Help your child want to come to school for the joy of coming to school. Talk with your child about your expectations of their behavior. How we arrive at school." We are going to quietly walk you into your classroom and I am going to let you put your things in your cubby, then I will give you a kiss and a hug and say goodbye, I will be back at 11:45 right before lunch."

You can talk to them about the structure of the day prior to arrival." Your teacher will be there to greet you and help you start your day." Once your child has entered the classroom, please let them enter independently, once you start to leave, please do not re-enter, even if you hear your child becoming upset. We need you to show your trust in us, so your child will also trust us. Help make school a positive experience for your child. Consistency and follow through are equally as important. Implement Montessori philosophy into your home by letting your child help with daily routines. If this practice is not already established, each day take a new step towards letting your child do things independently with less and less direction and

guidance until they can master the skill all by themselves. I will give you a kiss and a hug and say goodbye, I will be back at 11:45 right before lunch." You can talk to them about the structure of the day prior to arrival." Your teacher will be there to greet you and help you start your day." Once your child has entered the classroom, please let them enter independently, once you start to leave, please do not re-enter, even if you hear your child becoming upset. We need you to show your trust in us, so your child will also trust us. Help make school a positive experience for your child. Consistency and follow through are equally as important.

Implement Montessori philosophy into your home by letting your child help with daily routines. If this practice is not already established, each day take a new step towards letting your child do things independently with less and less direction and guidance until they can master the skill all by themselves.

Teach your child respect and responsibility at home. Using toys and materials appropriately and gently, putting things back the way they found them.

Take a step back and observe your child doing something positive. The more you notice the positive, the less redirection will be necessary. Instead of telling them what not to do, show them how you do it, or ask them what they think. Help them look answers to questions up in books to teach them to be resourceful and capable.

Please do not bring toys from home, they are distracting and create conflict in our environment.

Parent Volunteers

There are many ways for parents to be involved in our community. Please let us know how you would like to share your special talent with our community so we can set a time aside for this wonderful event.

Thank you for your support, we are looking forward to working together with you to help your child build self-esteem, and practice grace and courtesy as well as kindness for others.