

# **Montessori of the Village**

## **Preschool Curriculum**

### **Montessori Education**

Montessori is a scientific method of education, a philosophy of child development, and an approach to children that helps them maximize their potential. Doctor Maria Montessori, who lived from 1870 to 1952 was a brilliant and original educator. Her most important discovery was that children learn in a fundamentally different way than adults. A child, for example, learns her native tongue by hearing and imitating. Anyone who has learned a second language as an adult can appreciate what an enormously complex task it is. The young child, however, has an innate capacity to "absorb" language as well as other types of knowledge spontaneously.

When Montessori studied children's innate capacity to absorb knowledge, she discovered that they learned best when they were free to work and play in a carefully prepared, nurturing environment. In time Montessori went on to create schools where teachers and parents worked together to create prepared environments where children worked with specially designed learning materials that optimized their potential. Today, authentic Montessori schools are recognized throughout the world for their superior and innovative approach to education.

### **Curriculum Overview**

At Montessori of the Village, our philosophy is to foster independence, love of learning, and a positive sense of self in a prepared environment. Through working with the Montessori materials in a mixed-age community, children's fine and gross motor skills, care for the school environment, care of themselves, academic skills, as well as grace and courtesy skills are developed.

Uniquely, activities are created to attract the child. Even the academics exercises are chosen by the child who is engaged and intrigued. While our guides create an individual lesson plan for each child and guide children to work in each area of the classroom, this is done by the child's attraction to the activity.

A Montessori classroom is a specially prepared learning environment designed to meet the developmental needs of young children and to appeal to their diverse learning styles. The Montessori environment is also prepared to foster independence, grace and courtesy and a sense of personal responsibility. Montessori developed all of her materials to initially isolate a concept or new skill before combining more complex skills and processes.

The multi-faceted materials are organized in the following areas: practical life, sensorial, language, mathematics, science, geography, music, and art.

### **Practical Life**

Our Practical Life area connect school with the kind of activities the children may see at home and are especially designed to help develop fine and gross motor skills, pre-writing and pre-reading skills, sequencing and memorization of steps, and satisfy the developmental needs of the children.

Even though the children consider this play, the activities are reality, not fantasy, based. It helps them feel capable, an important and contributing part of our society. In the area of daily living

children learn to care for themselves and take responsibility for the care of the classroom environment. Activities such as preparing a snack, learning how to button and tie their shoes, sweeping and cleaning up, foster confidence, independence and responsibility.

Frequently, children go straight for this area when they have been away from school and also children choose these activities after an academic challenge.

The Practical Life area concentrates on developing a foundation for learning in all of the other areas in the classroom. The four basic skills that are focused on are: order, coordination, concentration, and independence.

Dr. Montessori was aware of the strong connection between a child's movements and their developing mind. Therefore, she designed a whole area of her curriculum to refine exacting movements and sequential work patterns to encourage a child's internal sense of order. These activities also help children become more coordinated in their movements. Examples of these activities include spooning, folding, setting the table, using a screwdriver, or washing a table.

The exercises of Practical Life are also designed to encourage the child to develop independence, sense of responsibility. While everyday tasks such as getting dressed can be practiced at home, there is usually a need to keep to a schedule that does not allow children the time needed to focus and master these skills. Montessori classrooms are equipped with materials to isolate these skills (buttoning, for example) and provide enough time for children to repeat many times.

Children who feel inspired, fulfilled and independent grow to love the learning process. All of the activities in Practical Life are designed to appeal to the youngest children, especially, in order to give them the foundation they need to succeed in the years to come in the Montessori environment.

## **Sensorial**

The Sensorial area features a wealth of materials and sensory experiences to stimulate and develop the sensorimotor skills so important to academic success. Each Sensorial material is designed to focus on a single sensory skill to encourage concentration. The Sensorial materials also incorporate a "control of error" which helps children identify and correct their errors, an invaluable skill for success in school.

A child's senses are more acute between the ages of two and five and the sensorial area is the focal point for the development of the whole child. Dr. Montessori designed all the Sensorial materials carefully and scientifically to help a child to develop his intelligence through training and refining all his senses.

The sensory areas are: dimension, tactile, chromatic, auditory, thermic, gustatory, olfactory, stereognostic (combines tactile, baric, thermic), and visual and tactile senses combined. The sensorial materials are designed to give children a system by which they can discover similarities and differences. Examples of this work include grading sandpaper tablets of various grits, matching objects of similar weights and experimenting with blocks whose dimensions vary by a centimeter in one aspect.

## **Language**

In the Language Area, children are exposed to oral language with the spoken word, stories, and songs, reading stories aloud and language cards. Cards are used for vocabulary development and are used in a variety of ways such as matching and sequences.

In a Montessori class, writing is introduced first. This requires that we focus on the sounds letters make, not the names of the letters. We have a variety of Movable Alphabets available. Handwriting is also part of the language area.

When the children can read back the words they have written with the Movable Alphabet, they have told us that they are ready to read! We introduce them to a variety of reading exercises, starting with simple words and building to sentences and paragraphs.

While language is an integral part of each area the children study, the Montessori environment is constantly interwoven with language and communication. Language is not solely designed to teach a child to read and write, but it is also to help him to develop effective skills of communication and verbal expression.

Parts of the Montessori language curriculum include the development of a child's imagination, independent thought, interaction with others, and verbal problem solving. The language materials begin with simple exposure to vocabulary and progress to exploration of grammar and total reading experiences.

Dr. Montessori developed many exercises in the classroom to strengthen the hand and fingers before encouraging the child to write. As previously mentioned, movement is key to learning, and children spend time forming letters in sand and on chalkboards before attempting to write on paper. These exercises give the child practice and the confidence to succeed in writing. Reading and writing are taught simultaneously and strengthen the other as the child progresses.

### **Mathematics**

In Mathematics, we focus on learning the names of the numerals using sandpaper numbers, counting and sequences using a variety of 1-10 activities, before introducing teen numbers and the names of tens.

Children do counting chains from 1 through 10 cubed, where they label the links in a skip-counting fashion and use the bank game to perform operations using materials that represent 4-digit numbers.

From this point there are a number of materials that introduce math fact memorization and paper calculations. Math and Language come together with word problems.

### **Peace Education - Geography, Science, Cultures, and Languages**

The cultural subjects encourage a child's ability to concentrate and to enjoy learning about the greater world outside the classroom. The Cultural Subjects area provides structured activities in the basics of geography, history, botany and scientific method, as well as the arts. The children are encouraged to ask questions about the world and to research and document the answers.

As an important component of Montessori peace education, we study the world as world citizens. As the different continents are introduced to the children, we look at pictures of children and families all over the world doing the very same things that they like to do; playing, eating, going to school, and cuddling with their parents! We admire the differences and celebrate the things we have in common. The older children learn the names of the continents and their countries and are often moved to create beautiful maps. We also have Chinese lessons by Mrs. Kwok as part of their curriculum on Friday mornings.