

What is Montessori

In a Montessori classroom you will see happy and busy children working purposefully, in a learning environment that will reinforce the child's independence and natural urge toward self-development. This is achieved in three ways: beauty, order and accessibility.

The materials are displayed on low open shelves. Each piece of material has a specific purpose and is presented to the children in a manner that will enable them to direct their own learning.



The Montessori materials are tools to stimulate the child into logical thought and discovery. They are provocative, enticing and simple. Each piece of material presents one concept or idea at a time and has what is known as a "control of error". If the child has done something incorrectly it will be self-evident. The geometric shape, for example, won't fit the hole; the water will spill on the table or the last label will not match the last picture. Being able to see his or her own mistake allows the child to work independently.

The Montessori classroom is not merely a place for individual learning. It is a vibrant community of children, where the child learns to interact socially in a variety of ways. Children teach the younger and learn so much themselves from the experience while the younger children are inspired to more advanced work through observing the older ones. With such a variety of levels in the classroom, each child can work at his or her own pace, unhindered by competition and encouraged by co-operation.

You will also see small children who are often perceived as only being aware of their own needs helping each other and who, without being asked to, will put things away and perform acts of kindness purely to benefit the group as a whole. So how does this all come about? What exactly is Montessori?

Montessori Learning is:

- Based on helping the natural development of the human being
- Children learn at their own pace and follow their own individual interest
- Children teach themselves using materials specially prepared for the purpose
- Child is an active participant in learning

- Understanding comes through the child's own experiences via the materials and the promotion of children's ability to find things out for themselves
- Learning is based on the fact that physical exploration and cognition are linked
- Child can work where he/she is comfortable, move around and talk at will while not disturbing others
- The teacher works in collaboration with the children
- The child's individual development brings its own reward and therefore motivation
- Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline
- Child works as long as he/she wishes on chosen project
- Uninterrupted work cycles
- Mixed age groups
- Working and learning matched to the social development of the child
- Shared emphasis on intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development
- Shared focus on the acquisition of academic, social, practical and life skills

Dr. Montessori described the child's mind between the time of birth and six years of age as the "absorbent mind". It is during this stage that a child has a tremendous ability to learn and assimilate from the world around him/her, without conscious effort.

