



Frequently Asked Questions

What is Montessori?

This system of education promotes both a philosophy for children's growth and a rationale for guiding such growth. It is based on fostering the child's developmental needs for freedom within limits. Carefully prepared environments guarantee exposure to materials and experiences that develop intelligence as well as physical and psychological abilities. It is designed to take full advantage of self-motivation and the unique abilities of young children to develop their own capabilities. Children need adults to reflect with them on the possibilities of their lives, but children themselves must direct their responses to those possibilities.

Is the child free to do what he or she chooses in the classroom?

The child is free to move about the classroom at will, to talk to other children, to work with any of the equipment he or she understands, or to ask the teacher to introduce new materials to him or her. The child is not free to disturb other children at their work or to abuse the materials. The older children are accountable for the choices they make and how they use their time.

What does the teacher do?

The teacher works with individual children introducing materials and giving guidance where needed. Her primary task is to observe children very carefully in order to determine their individual needs and to gain the knowledge needed in preparing the environment to aid each child's growth. The method of teaching is indirect in that it neither imposes upon the child as in direct teaching, nor abandons the child as in a non-directive permissive approach. Rather, the teacher is constantly alert to the direction in which a child has indicated he or she wishes to go, and actively works to help the child achieve his or her goals.. There is also considerable time given to students who need individual attention.

What does Montessori do for the child?

Observers of children in Montessori schools have described them as having developed self-discipline, independence, self-knowledge, academic skills, enthusiasm for learning, and an organized approach to solving problems.

What happens when children go from a Montessori class to a traditional class?

Montessori children usually adjust readily to new classroom situations. This is because they have developed a high degree of self-discipline and independence in their Montessori environments. Also, children have a high degree of adaptability and can assimilate into and accommodate different situations.

Why do Montessori classrooms have mixed age groups in one class?

Children learn from one another. This can be seen in family and play situations where children are free to observe and interact in a variety of activities. Young children learn higher-level cognitive and social skills not only through mental development, but also by observing others as models. Multi-age grouping helps children develop a sense of community and supports social development. Older children act as role models and (sometimes) teachers of younger children. This aids in the development of personality, collaboration, and cooperation. Montessori classrooms have used mixed age groupings for over 100 years.