

Montessori Schools - Some Elements of Montessori Practice

Multi-aged Grouping, based on Periods of Development: Children are grouped in three or six-year spans and have the same teacher all of the years.

The 3-Hour Work Period: At every age, a minimum of one 3-hour work period per day, uninterrupted by required attendance at ANY group activities of is necessary when using the Montessori method of education to produce the results for which the method is famous.

When the children had completed an absorbing bit of work, they appeared rested and deeply pleased. It almost seemed as if a road had opened up within their souls that led to all their latent powers, revealing the better part of themselves. They exhibited a great affability to everyone, put themselves out to help others and seemed full of good will.

The Prepared Environment: The environment is logically arranged according to subject area. There are no text books, but instead approved didactic materials and a selection of culturally rich books and activities. Since the child learns to glean information from many sources, instead of being handed it by the teacher, it is the role of the teacher to prepare and continue to adapt the environment, to link the child to it through well-thought-out lessons, facilitating the child's exploration and creativity.

Teaching Method: children are always free to move around the room, and to continue to work on a piece of material with no time limit. Seldom will two or more children be studying the same thing at the same time.

Children learn directly from the environment, and from other children—and from clear presentations of individual activities by the teacher.

The child is scientifically observed, observations recorded and then studied by the teacher. The teacher is adept at

teaching one child at a time, with occasional small groups and almost no lessons given to the whole class. 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 a child's interests of the moment and excitement about a subject.

Large groups occur only when starting a new class, or in the beginning of the school year, and are phased out as the children gain independence. Children learn from what they are studying individually, from group projects that they initiate, and from the amazing variety of work that is going on around them during the day.

Class size: The most successful 3-6 or 6-12 classes—IF the teacher is fully trained in the method—are of 30-35 children to one teacher, with one nonteaching assistant, this number reached gradually over time. This provides the most variety of personalities, learning styles, and work being done at one time. This class size is possible because the children learn from each other and stay with the same teacher for three to six years. Although laws sometimes prohibit this ratio laws have been changed in a few states to allow it.

Areas of Study Linked: All subjects are interwoven; history, art, music, math, astronomy, biology, geology, physics, and chemistry are not isolated from each other and a child studies them in any order he chooses, moving through all in a unique way for each child. At any one time in a day all subjects—math, language, science, history, geography, art, music, etc.—are being studied, at all levels.

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 real 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, concentration, and work.

Requirements for age 3-6: 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 thought usual for a child of this age.

Requirements for ages 6-18: There are no curriculum requirements except those set by the state, or college entrance requirements, for specific grades and these take a minimum amount of time. Students of K-12+ age design 1-2 week contracts with the teacher to balance their work, and learn time management skills. The work of the 6-12 class includes subjects usually not introduced until high school.

Learning styles: All intelligences and styles of learning—musical, bodilykinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, intuitive, natural, and the traditional linguistic and logicalmathematical—are nurtured and respected.

Social/Character education: Opportunities for the *valorization of the personality* is considered at least as important as academic education. Children are given the opportunity to take care of themselves, each other, and the environment—gardening, cooking, building, moving gracefully, speaking politely, doing social work in the community, etc.

The results: In looking at the results one must be sure they are judging a class run by a fully trained teacher. Using *Montessori* without this training will not have the same results. When the environment meets all of the needs of children they become, without any manipulation by the adult, physically healthy, mentally and psychologically fulfilled, extremely well-educated, and brimming over with joy and kindness toward each other.