



AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY®

education that transforms lives

Member School

In the first Casa dei Bambini (Children's House) founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1907, teachers worked with children ages 2½ through 6. Dr. Montessori noted the benefits of children of different ages working and learning together in the same community. Much as in a family, she noted, older students helped younger students within the environment, and both older and younger students benefited. The multi-age classroom became an important tenet of the Montessori Method.

The Montessori Method is also known for its 3-year cycle of learning. Children stay together, often with the same teacher, for that extended period, getting to know one another and themselves as they grow. Older children become mentors and leaders; younger children look up to and learn from older classmates as well as their teachers. As each cycle is completed, children have the opportunity to rise up to the next level.

If your young child begins his or her schooling in a Montessori environment—whether it is a program for infants and toddlers or Early Childhood (preschool and Kindergarten)—you may be curious about the advantages of committing to Montessori beyond those very early years. You may also wonder about the move from a Montessori Elementary program into Montessori Secondary school.

Do you hope to ignite your young child's love of learning and lay the foundation for a fulfilling future? The Montessori approach to early childhood education will begin that process in a joyful, secure, and loving environment in which your young child will thrive.

The Early Childhood level, for children ages 2 ½ – 6, encourages preschoolers to explore and discover, to collaborate with classmates, and to take ownership of their education. The Montessori Method encourages self-directed learning that promotes self-confidence, independent thought and action, and critical thinking, while fostering social-emotional and intellectual growth.

Education for peace is a foundational component of Montessori education at all levels. At the Early Childhood level, the teaching of peace, social justice, and global citizenship is based on fostering respect for all people and living things, and helping children learn the tools for peaceful conflict resolution.

Early Childhood, Including Kindergarten

Working with younger children heightens older children's leadership skills. In the third year of Early Childhood education, the Kindergarten year, a child is engaged as a leader in his or her classroom community—a foundational experience that develops lifelong leadership skills. In the Kindergarten year, a child's learning from the previous 2 years in the Early Childhood classroom is fully exhibited and exercised.

During the Kindergarten year, curriculum continues to be developmentally attuned to your child's ability level. Kindergarteners are introduced to advanced academic concepts that prepare them for their Elementary years. At the conclusion of Kindergarten, they are fully ready to rise up to Elementary.

On to Elementary

Making the decision to continue in Montessori through the Elementary years offers your child many of the same benefits of the Early-Childhood years, but they are exhibited in a different way. This is the time that children are exposed to “big ideas” and Elementary children are naturally drawn to the topics. Exploration of these topics is often dictated by the child's own interests, which in turn provides deeper engagement. Along the way, their peers become interested, and the child will naturally share what they have learned. Often children are encouraged to give formal presentations of their project providing opportunities for children to speak in front of a friendly group early on.

Elementary Montessori teachers take advantage of the older child's preference to work in small groups. Often the lessons are designed so that children have multiple opportunities to hear other people's ideas, perspectives, and thought processes. This provides children with the concept that there are multiple ways to think through an idea, and encourages creative thinking and problem solving.

Students in Elementary are still working at their own pace and may make work choices in conjunction with their peers. Collaboration and cooperation are encouraged and expected in the Elementary environment. Being exposed to multiple ways to complete a project allows children to develop social-emotional skills in tandem with learning the content. Children work on mastery of a skill and are encouraged to continue learning without the competitive structure of grades.

The ability to continue to learn at one's own pace, to explore one's unique interests, and the emphasis on whole-child development (academic, physical, social, and emotional) characterizes the joyful Elementary years in Montessori.

The Early Childhood Environment

In a Montessori Early Childhood classroom, highly trained teachers create a customized environment crafted to her unique abilities, interests, and learning style.

This approach to learning is “hands-on.” Dr. Maria Montessori believed (and modern science has affirmed) that moving and learning are inseparable. In the prepared classroom, children work with specially designed manipulative materials that invite exploration and engage the senses in the process of learning.

All learning activities support children in choosing meaningful and challenging work at their own interest and ability level. This child-directed engagement strengthens motivation, supports attention, and encourages responsibility.

Uninterrupted blocks of work time (typically 2+ hours in length) allow children to work at their own pace and fully immerse themselves in an activity without interruption. Your child’s work cycle involves selecting an activity, performing it for as long it remains interesting, cleaning up the activity and retuning it to the shelf, and making another work choice. This cycle respects individual variations in the learning process, facilitates the development of coordination, concentration, independence, and a sense of order, while facilitating your child’s assimilation of information.

A Welcoming Space

A Montessori Early Childhood classroom feels more like a home than a school. You won’t see desks, nor will a teacher stand at the front of the room delivering a lesson to the whole class. Instead, you’ll see children happily working individually or in small groups, at tables or on the floor near small mats that delineate their own space.

Specially designed learning materials are displayed on open shelves, easily accessible to the children. Classrooms also include low sinks accessible to the children, child-sized furniture, cozy spaces for quiet reading, reachable shelves with work available for free choice, and child-sized kitchen utensils so the students can eat, prepare, and clean up their snack on their own. Teachers gently guide students to help maintain the organization and cleanliness of this environment to keep it orderly and attractive, and to help your child understand how to care for materials and clean up after themselves—skills you will be happy to observe carrying over in your home.

Kindergarten: The Leadership Year

During the first 2 years in an Early Childhood classroom, Montessori students look forward to their turn to be a leader. In their third year—often known as Kindergarten—children get their turn and take pride in being the oldest. They serve as role models for younger students; they demonstrate leadership and citizenship skills. They reinforce and consolidate their own learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered to their peers. In their Kindergarten year, they express confidence, develop self-esteem and self-sufficiency, and show responsibility.

Kindergarteners are introduced to progressively more advanced Montessori materials and sophisticated, fascinating lessons. And they experience an important period in which their previous learning from working with concrete Montessori materials begins to become permanent knowledge. A Montessori Kindergarten student sees and feels their personal growth as they watch others learn information they have mastered themselves.

Kindergarten is the culmination of the Early Childhood program. Children exhibit the independence, critical thinking, collaboration, and leadership that they have been practicing during their previous years in the Early Childhood classroom, exercising them independently as they prepare to transition into an Elementary program.

Montessori Kindergarten: Essential & Empowering What Your Child Will Learn

Rigorously trained teachers carefully observe their children in the Early Childhood environment, identifying their interests and abilities and developing personalized learning plans tailored to each child's needs. They guide the learning, introducing new lessons and levels of difficulty as appropriate. The teacher offers the encouragement, time, and tools needed to allow children's natural curiosities to drive learning, and provides choices that help them learn, grow, and succeed.

After participating in a demonstration of a material from a teacher, your child is free to choose activities and to work on her own or with a partner for as long as she wishes. Since there is usually only one of each material, your child will develop patience and self-control as she waits for a material to become available.

The Montessori Early Childhood curriculum follows a 3-year sequence. Because the teacher guides your child through learning at her own pace, her individualized learning plan may exceed the concepts she would be taught in a classroom environment in which all children learn the same concept at the same time.

As children move forward, they develop the ability to concentrate and make decisions, along with developing self-control, courtesy, and a sense of community responsibility.

In Montessori schools, academic growth is seen as just one part of children's healthy development. The method nurtures their social, emotional, and physical growth, ensuring that they are, as Dr. Maria Montessori put it, *"treading always in the paths of joy and love."*

The Curriculum

The Early Childhood classroom offers your child 5 areas of study: Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, and Cultural Studies. What are the lessons in these areas?

Practical Life

Children learn daily-life skills, such as how to get dressed, prepare snacks, set the table, and care for plants and animals. They also learn appropriate social interactions, such as saying please and thank-you, being kind and helpful, listening without interrupting, and resolving conflicts peacefully. In addition to teaching specific skills, Practical Life activities promote independence, and fine- and gross-motor coordination.

Sensorial

Children refine skills in perceiving the world through their different senses, and learn how to describe and name their experiences—for example, rough and smooth, perceived through touch. Sensorial learning helps children classify their surroundings and create order. It lays the foundation for learning by developing the ability to classify, sort, and discriminate—skills necessary in math, geometry, and language.

Math

Through hands-on activities, children learn to identify numerals and match them to their quantity, understand place-value and the base-10 system, and practice addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. They also explore patterns in the numbering system. With an exploratory approach, children do more than just memorize math facts; they gain a firm understanding of the meaning behind them.

Language

Activities throughout the Early Childhood classroom teach language, help children acquire vocabulary, and develop skills needed for writing and reading. The ability to write, a precursor to reading, is taught first. Using hands-on materials, children learn letter sounds, how to combine sounds to make words, how to build sentences, and how to use a pencil. Once these skills are acquired, children spontaneously learn to read.

Cultural Studies

A wide range of subjects, including history, geography, science, art, and music, are integrated in lessons in the cultural area of the curriculum. Children learn about their own community and the world around them. Discovering similarities and differences among people and places helps them develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of our world, and a respect for all living things.

Montessori Learning Materials

Montessori materials are not only beautiful and inviting, but ingenious. They teach only 1 skill at a time to allow the child to work independently and master the intended concept. The materials are also “self-correcting.” This means the child is able to identify if they have done an activity accurately and try again without intervention from a teacher. For example, if a large block is stacked atop a tower of shorter blocks, the tower will fall down. Working with self-correcting materials helps children develop confidence and self-sufficiency and promotes critical thinking. In a sense, they become their own teachers—a skill that will last for life.

The Elementary Years

What sets Montessori apart in the Elementary years—ages 6 – 12—is the individually paced curriculum that challenges children academically and safeguards their well-being and sense of self. Engaging as contributing members of a respectful community, they learn to question, think critically, and take responsibility for their own learning—skills that will support them in later education and in life.

As at all Montessori levels, the Elementary program is based on the belief that children learn best through movement and work with their hands, and provides cognitive, social, and emotional support to help them reach their full potential.

This includes addressing their needs as they enter a new period of development characterized by:

- A transition from concrete to abstract thinking
- Growing interest in socialization
- Thinking and memory that is enhanced by creativity and imagination
- An interest in fairness, social justice, and compassion

The Elementary Classroom

In a Montessori Elementary classroom, students work individually or in small groups, at tables or on mats on the floor.

Natural lighting, soft colors, and uncluttered spaces set the stage for activity that is focused and calm. Learning materials are arranged on accessible shelves according to curricular area, fostering independence as students go about their work. Everything is where it is supposed to be, conveying a sense of harmony and order that both comforts and inspires.

Children who are new to Montessori quickly feel at home with the inspired teaching that appeals to their deepest interests, and with the distinctive, hands-on learning materials that teachers introduce sequentially according to the students’ developmental needs. For students who have completed Montessori Early Childhood programs, the environment offers continuity

with familiar routines and learning materials that offer new lessons and opportunities for more complex exploration and discovery.

The classroom is a happy community. Students are focused. They take joy in their work. They invent, explore, experiment, confer, create, prepare snacks, and curl up with books; sometimes they might even reflect in a peaceful, meditative corner. Meanwhile, teachers circulate throughout the room, observing the students and making notes about their progress, ever ready to offer support or introduce new material, as appropriate.

Expectations are both exquisitely clear and engagingly open-ended.

Multi-Age Learning

Multi-age groupings of children ages 6 – 9 and 9 –12 (or 6 –12) provide a heterogeneous mix in which children can collaborate and socialize. These inter-age relationships strengthen the entire community.

Older children are seen as role models within the community. They support the growth and development of younger children through socialization, assisting with new work, or teaching skills they have mastered themselves. They can also work with younger students in areas of the curriculum in which they themselves may need more practice, without stigma.

Younger children follow the example set by the older students, and have peers to work with in areas of the curriculum in which they may be more advanced. This multi-age community provides opportunities for all individuals to learn from each other, at times leading, sharing, or serving as role models. It also develops an appreciation of differences.

Within this supportive, inclusive community, children work through the curriculum at their own pace, accelerating during some tasks or taking additional time with other.

What Your Child Will Learn

For returning Montessori students, the Montessori Elementary program expands upon the learning fostered in an Early Childhood program. For students new to Montessori, it orients them to the joys of responsible participation.

Teachers guide children through a rigorous curriculum individually tailored to their own interests, needs, and abilities. Teachers monitor progress against established benchmarks and expectations for student learning, including: academic preparedness, independence, confidence, autonomy, intrinsic motivation, social responsibility, and global citizenship.

Curricular Areas

The Montessori Elementary curriculum contains the following areas of learning:

Practical Life

Within the Elementary program, the Practical Life curriculum expands from the foundation laid in Early Childhood. Practical Life at the Elementary level shifts from a focus on self-care and fine motor skills, to skills that help children connect with their interests in the outside world, organize their time, and take part in their community.

While self-care and appropriate social interactions continue to be supported, lessons that teach responsibility are the focus. Use of tools, such as work plans, to support organization and time management skills, are incorporated into the daily routine.

Teachers and students often work together to post reminders about assignments, projects, and ideas. Using these, children make independent work choices, prioritize activities, and meet deadlines.

Math

The ideas of number concepts, place value, numerals, and related quantities are reinforced and expanded upon within the Elementary program. Newfound purposes for familiar math materials provide children with the means to consider number concepts, mathematical operations, and more complex functions, helping to expand advanced mathematical knowledge and understanding.

Language

Reading and writing are integral to all subjects in Montessori Elementary, as children express their interests and satisfy their curiosity. Students master conventions with thorough studies of grammar, spelling, and mechanics. They produce final copies with careful penmanship and keyboarding. They read, analyze, think critically, and compare and contrast literature to support personal opinion and perspective. Using these reading and writing skills, they present ideas through formal and informal presentations.

Cultural studies

Cultural studies are interdisciplinary and integrate zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, physical and life sciences, and anthropology. Through these lessons, children explore the interconnectedness of all living things. Additionally, in-depth studies of history, physical and political world geography, civics, economics, peace and justice, the arts, world language, and physical education are introduced.

Science and Social Studies

Interdisciplinary and integrated studies of geology, geography, physical and life sciences, anthropology, and history are built around “Great Lessons,” a series of dramatic stories that explore the origins of the universe, our planet, and the continuous development of human advancement. The laws of physics and chemistry reveal the interdependency of all living

things. Beginning with a study of civilization, students explore the contributions of history and what it means to be a responsible citizen and to seek ways to make the world a better, more peaceful place.

Montessori Learning Materials

Montessori students don't just memorize facts and figures. They also learn the "hows," "whens," and "whys," ensuring that learning takes place on a deep and fundamental level. Specially designed learning materials that use real objects and actions to translate abstract ideas into concrete form support them in this learning.

Teachers introduce materials to students according to their level of development and readiness. Students then work with the materials to make exciting discoveries—such as why, when dividing fractions, we invert and multiply. Inherent in the use of Montessori materials is the understanding of the power of discovering answers on one's own.