

Benefits of Montessori

*Some of the many reasons why
Montessori is right for your child.*

EVERYBODY KNOWS that Montessori is a great way to educate children, but not everyone understands the benefits in detail. Here are some of the many reasons why Montessori is right for your child:

Your child learns at his own rate. He is neither held back nor pushed forward according to the learning rates of other students. In a traditional classroom, all the children are learning the same thing and moving through the curriculum at the same rate. We know that each child has different abilities and interests. Some are good at math, while others excel in language and so on. They all have different interests as well. Since children are so different, it is unrealistic to expect that they will learn at the same rate. Because of the repetition that Maria Montessori built into her system, a child is allowed to work on something until she masters it. Since they don't move on to the next skill until they have mastered the present one, there are never any gaps in their education. That means there is never any need for remedial education.

Your child learns how to focus and concentrate. One of Maria Montessori's goals was to teach children how to concentrate. This is one of the foundation skills for learning, and one that is largely ignored in traditional school systems. A Montessori day is structured so that a child's focus is never interrupted by having to move on to the next lesson before finishing the current one.

Montessori accommodates all learning styles. This is important because some children are visual learners, some are auditory learners, some learn through body movement and feeling, and some use a combination of several learning avenues. Montessori teachers are trained to use all the senses; the use of the didactic materials reinforces this.

Your child will master the important life skill of being a self-directed learner. Montessori's aim is to nurture the inner motivation of the child while allowing the opportunity for the fullest possible exploration of his or her interests. This nurture of learning begins as soon as a child enters the scientifically designed classrooms. You will often hear the phrase "prepared environment," because the classrooms are so carefully designed to ensure the child has the freedom to learn. This freedom to explore and choose areas of interest will carry over into a willingness to explore areas that may not otherwise appeal to a child being "force-fed" information in a traditional school setting.

The prepared environment of a Montessori classroom helps children learn to think for themselves at a rate determined by the Director. A young child new to Montessori may be given more direction at first, but as children grow in confidence and experience they are allowed to make more decisions for themselves.

Your child will achieve independence by learning how to take care of herself – her body, her belongings and her environment. Montessori understands that at the heart of

Answers to Some Frequently Asked Questions About Montessori

Is Montessori for every child?

The short answer is yes — there is no child who would not benefit from a Montessori education. First of all, every child wants to learn but each is unique in areas of interest and rate of learning. Montessori addresses this uniqueness because it is an individual program tailored to the strengths and challenges of each student. One child may spend two days learning multiplication while another may require two weeks or even two months. A trained scientist, Maria Montessori spent a lot of time observing exactly how and why children learn. She understood that all children, whether they have strengths or challenges in particular areas of learning, need their own time to master it. They don't need to be constantly worried about being "ahead" or "behind" anyone else. Every Montessori school is the living legacy of this educational breakthrough. Montessori works for every child no matter who they are or where they come from.

Why doesn't Montessori grade students?

Grades (letters or percentages) focus strictly on results and are only a measure of what a student knows at that particular moment in time. Grades become the end itself. What is worse, they can distract the child from the natural enjoyment of learning and developing true enthusiasm for a subject that can last a lifetime, not just until the end of the test. Instead of grades, Montessori



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provides informative and descriptive reports on what your child's focus of interest has been and how he or she is progressing. Montessori children repeat activities or correct mistakes until they gain competency. When students make the transition to other schools that do testing, they usually test well and perform a grade level or two above their peers.

Why does Montessori have mixed-age groups in each class (i.e., three-year age groups: 3-6, 6-9, 9-12, and so on)?

Maria Montessori discovered that putting older and younger children together helps them learn from and teach each other. This is good for the older children because they can be useful and helpful to the younger ones,

which not only reinforces what they have learned but enhances their self-esteem as well. The younger children in turn have role models to follow and are integrated into the classroom by these helpful older children. If you think about it, every normal community has a mixed grouping of ages.

What does polishing a mirror and washing a table have to do with education?

One unique aspect of a Montessori classroom is the Practical Life area. Through repetitive, hands-on and very purposeful activities, the child learns to do things for herself. At the same time, indirect learning beyond polishing a mirror, using tweezers, folding laundry or

A Glossary of Montessori Terms

The Absorbent Mind: This is the way Montessori describes the minds of young children. Their minds are like sponges soaking up information from their environment. Just think about how much a child learns in the early years: how to talk, walk, understand social cues and relationships, objects, laws of nature (like gravity), and even the rudiments of reading. Much of this learning is unconscious because the brains of young children have been hard-wired to absorb information automatically and effortlessly.

Control of Error: Children make mistakes as they learn. Maria Montessori recognized that it was vitally important that children not lose motivation or become discouraged when mistakes occur. So into each didactic material she built in a way for the child to recognize if his work was done correctly or not, along with the ability to make it right – a control of error. As a result, no one criticizes his error or circles his mistakes with a big red pencil for the entire world to see. If a child is putting the lids on bottles and one top does not fit, he knows he's using the wrong sized lid without having to be told.

Cycles of Activity: Allowing a child to become deeply engaged in an activity is crucial for learning. In a Montessori classroom, a child is never interrupted during the work period (the time the child is focused on working with a material). For a normalized child, the cycle of activity is usually about one

and half hours in length or even longer. The basic concept behind the cycle of activity is that it allows the child to become absorbed in and complete the task to satisfaction. Children who complete the cycle of activity emerge feeling happy and refreshed because, as Maria Montessori said: "A child who concentrates is a happy child."

Didactic Materials: Montessori didactic materials are designed to be aesthetically pleasing and to teach through the senses. (For example, The Pink Tower depicted to the right.) The child progresses through the curriculum by repeatedly handling and manipulating these materials. Each one is scientifically designed to teach one concept only. There is also a specific order in which the materials are presented to the child: for instance, in the geography area the sandpaper globe showing the difference between land and water is presented first. The globe of the world showing the continents is shown second. Then a round blue ball of clay is cut in half and pressed flat to explain how we arrive at a map. Finally, these unique didactic materials (you won't find them anywhere except a Montessori classroom) have a control of error built right into them.

Director: The adult who is guiding the children in a Montessori classroom is called a Director, not a teacher. The reason is that a teacher is someone who gives information to someone else. In other words, they "teach." But Montessori believes that

