

Montessori Method

Sensorial Area in the Primary Classroom

A Montessori Primary classroom is divided into five different areas, sensorial, language, math, cultural and practical life. The sensorial area focuses on the child's senses. Maria Montessori believed that nothing comes into the mind except through the senses. The purpose of the sensorial materials is to help the child sort out impressions he is given by his senses so that he can provide order and categorize these impressions. The materials help the child become aware of details by offering him, at first, strongly contrasted sensations such as color and size differences. Each of the materials has two purposes. The first purpose is to isolate the sense, such as visual, auditory, tactile, etc. The other is to isolate one defining quality of the materials such as color, weight, shape, texture, size, sound, or smell, and require the child to master the grading, matching and distinction of that characteristic. For example, in visual sense exercises, the child through the sense of sight learns how to visually discriminate differences between similar objects and differing objects. We see this with the pink tower, brown stair and color tablets.

As with all Montessori materials, the key to involving the child is to provide precisely the right level of challenge for the child's level of development. With the sensorial materials, this challenge must be both physical and mental, since sense perception depends both on upon a person's physical as well as mental faculties. The progression of the sensorial materials follows a logical chain of building complexity designed to aid the child in developing a series of sense perceptions. To meet this challenge, and refine his senses, the child is drawn to repeat a sensorial activity many times over. This familiarity with the materials helps the child move from concrete realizations based on his interactions with the materials to more abstract realizations. As Dr. Montessori wisely advised, "First the education of the senses, then the education of the Intellect."

The Sensorial Area is Designed to Help the Child:

- Develop sense perception
- Categorize, sort and classify
- Prepare for geometry
- Introduce base 10
- Encourage muscular development and pre-writing skills
- Strengthen logical thinking