

Montessori Method

The Montessori Materials

The Montessori Primary classroom is full of interesting lessons that call the child to explore and learn. Maria Montessori developed the materials over years and years of observing children, making sure that they touched on the sensitive periods that the young child is travelling through, from 3-6 years old. All of the materials for each area are arranged invitingly on low open shelves, easy for the child to reach and find. The materials are available for the child to choose and work with for as long as the lesson holds his or her interest. When the child is finished with the lesson, it is returned to the shelf from which it came, ready for the next child.

The materials themselves invite activity from the children. The colorful lessons from the geometric solids, golden beads and metal insets, give the child a visual invitation to manipulate the materials. Each activity in the environment isolates one quality. In this way, the concept that the child is to discover is isolated. For example, the material known as the “pink tower “is made up of ten pink cubes of varying sizes. The child constructs a tower with the largest cube on the bottom and the smallest on the top. This material isolates the concept of size. The cubes are all the same color and texture, the only difference is their size. Other materials isolate different concepts including color, form, sound, and so on.

Another important quality of the materials is that they are all self-correcting. When a piece does not fit or is left over, the child can recognize his or her error, therefore eliminating the need for adult correction. This encourages independence, strengthens analytical thinking and allows for satisfaction that comes from true accomplishment.

As the child grows in the environment, the exploration continues. The materials build on themselves and each other. Over the years the same material can be used for various types of lessons, deepening understanding and complexity of the concepts involved. Even later, in the elementary years, new aspects of some of the same materials unfold. The child may return to the pink tower and discover that its cubes progress incrementally from one cubic centimeter to one cubic decimeter.

Ahhhh...the joy of learning, it's a beautiful thing!