

Montessori Method

The Practical Life Area

A Montessori classroom looks orderly and inviting to a child. What is not readily apparent when viewing the classroom is that Maria Montessori actually designed the environment so that each physical area of the classroom addresses a different goal. The five areas of the classroom are the practical life area, sensorial area, mathematical area, language area and the cultural area. The practical life area is a busy and popular area in the classroom. All ages love to frequent the shelves that call them to strengthen their ability to do everyday tasks in the comfort of their classroom. Maria Montessori structured the exercises for the classroom to help the child satisfy his need for meaningful activity. For these exercises, she used familiar objects such as buttons, dishes, pitchers, water and many other things which the child recognizes from his home experience. For a young child there is something special about tasks which an adult considers ordinary- washing dishes, paring vegetables, and pouring water. The child loves doing these things because they allow her to imitate the adult's actions.

The practical life area in the classroom is dedicated to strengthening the child's coordination, independence and concentration. The materials gradually increase in steps giving the child the opportunity to learn about sequencing, attention to detail and developing a positive working habit. Many of the materials also gradually decrease in size to strengthen fine motor skills and prepare the hand for writing.

Although the practical life exercises may seem simple and commonplace, they are actually a very important part of the Montessori program. Each of the tasks helps the child to perfect his coordination so that he will be able to work later with the more intricate academic materials and build independence toward learning. No true learning can take place without concentration and attention. These materials build the foundation for the experience that the child has throughout his three-year cycle in the environment. So if your child wants to wash dishes at home, pour water and set a table, remember that these are some of the wonderful lessons in the classroom that help your child be a successful and independent individual!!