

Montessori

Questions and Answers

How is Montessori different from other preschools?

In many preschools, the emphasis is on play and any educational concepts that the children learn are taught in a group by a teacher. In a Montessori classroom, the children learn at their own, individual pace and according to their own choice of activities, with the teacher acting as a guide to the environment.

With all this freedom, isn't their confusion?

The concept of freedom in the classroom is a *freedom within limits*. A child is allowed to work freely as long as he does not disturb others. Children having freedom to follow their interests are generally happy and busily involved in their work. Also the child “chooses” activities within a range of activities suited to his stage of development under the guidance of the teacher, so here again there is freedom but within limits.

Would Montessori give my child the structure that I think he needs?

Teachers are constantly aware of your child's stage of development and gently encourage them towards particular areas by demonstrating suitable activities to them. The “structure” therefore exists, but in a subtle way. Also in the course of the day there are specific times set aside for circle time, outside play and group activities such as reading, music, singing, etc. There is therefore structure to the day's events but also considerable autonomy for the child to choose his activities. This all helps to develop the child's self-esteem, initiative and love of learning.

What about socialization and group work?

Socialization is very much a part of the Montessori method. In the classroom, children interact continuously choosing to work on projects together, older children helping younger ones. Every day there is some group activity and play outside as a group. Children learn to work in a small community of friends. Social graces, manners and interpersonal relationships are developed through group activities as well as individual pursuits. They become a family—learning to share, to care for themselves, each other and their world.

Can Montessori cope with children with differing learning abilities?

One of the real strengths of Montessori is that it allows the child to set their own pace. Children of differing abilities can therefore happily co-exist within the one classroom and each can benefit from learning when they are ready to learn.

How do Montessori children adjust to mainstream education?

Montessori education teaches a child to be flexible and respectful. Because they learned self-direction and a positive attitude toward learning, children typically adjust very well to other classroom settings. Research studies show that Montessori children are well prepared for later life academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition to scoring well on standardized tests, Montessori children are ranked above average on such criteria as following directions, turning in work on time, listening attentively, using basic skills, showing responsibility, showing enthusiasm for learning and adjusting to new situations.

Is there too much focus on academics in a Montessori classroom?

Montessori provides a variety of activities that satisfy the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of the children. The materials are available so that each child can reach his full potential—whatever that potential might be. Children who are exposed to more, learn more. Quite often they are ahead of peers in other programs. The children learn to solve problems for themselves. The goal is that they will be able to adjust to any situation and make the best of it. There are different rules and guidelines in any social situation and adaptation is a skill that must be developed.

What role does the teacher play in a Montessori classroom?

The teacher acts as a facilitator of learning and models appropriate, respectful behavior and positive conflict resolution. Teachers observe the children carefully to determine skill levels and readiness and offer appropriate activities. The teacher is trained to teach one child at a time or often interacts with small groups. It is the role of the teacher to prepare and continue to adapt the environment, to link the child to it through well thought out lessons, and to facilitate the child's exploration and creativity.



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