



Child Developers Programme
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What is Montessori?

Montessori is an educational philosophy based on the scientific observations of Dr. Maria, an Italian physician.

The method is based on the following premises:

- a) The most crucial years of learning are from birth to six years
- b) Children must be respected as individuals who are different from adults and each other.
- c) The unique mental faculties of children allow them to absorb impression become their intellectual foundation.

How is Montessori Education Unique?

- 1) Montessori is a multi-faceted educational method that encompasses all the development needs of a child intellectual, physical, social and psychological. This broad curriculum emphasizes the joy of learning by allowing children to learn at their own pace and according to their own interest. In this way the Montessori method promotes self-confidence which enables the child to face new challenges fearlessly and without hesitation.
- 2) Observing that “the hands are the means to the intellect”, the Montessori method is fundamentally a sensorial approach to pre-school learning. Dr. Montessori devised a series of developmentally-appropriate materials that attract the child's attention and challenge the mind. They are sequential and self-activities that facilitate skills and concepts of learning.

- 3) Montessori teachers direct children toward purposeful activity by demonstrating materials that are suitable to each child's needs. Once a material has been properly demonstrated by the teacher, the child is free to return to it as his/her interest or curiosity dictates. In this way she serves as a guide or “directress” to young children. Recognizing that learning is an individual process. The Montessori teacher is a keen observer of children and is always ready to provide a new learning opportunity for the ever-curious child. She is also a meticulous care-taker, providing a safe and positive learning environment.
- 4) Dr. Montessori designed a special educational environment. It is called “Children's House”. She theorized that children are most receptive to learning in a home-like atmosphere that welcomes them, stimulates them and provides a sense of security. Children learn to care for their “house” and take pride in its cleanliness and beauty. Children learn to care for their “house” and take pride in its cleanliness and beauty.
- 5) Every Montessori class is composed of children between the ages of 3-6. This three-year age span provides a family-like setting and is a more natural learning environment. Younger children are able to look upon the work of their older peers with curiosity which may provide the impetus for their interest in learning. Older children act as role models and helpers to younger ones.

Moreover, they reinforce their own learning by sharing their experiences with the younger ones. Such interactions between children of different ages encourage conversation thereby enhancing the communication skills of the children.



What happens after Montessori?

Montessori education fosters early decision making skills by allowing children to make choices. Good communication skills are developed by encouraging children to communicate freely with each other. The development of the three skills encourages a child's self confidence, which provides a solid foundation for all subsequent learning. An independent, self confident child is able to make a smooth transition to any other educational setting.

How can a Real Montessori school be identified?

Since Montessori is in public domain, an individual or institution can claim to be a Montessori. Therefore, parents must be alert and check out so-called Montessori schools. Parents who are interested in the Montessori method for their child should visit a school and observe a class in progress.

The following criteria should be based when assessing a Montessori School?

- Are the teachers trained in the Montessori method?
- Where did they train?
- Do the teachers have genuine Montessori certificates?
- Are the children working independently

Montessori schools recognize the unique development of each child. Check to see that the children are working at their own pace and according to their interests and at the same time have a desire to share their experiences with their peers and work together in small groups.

e) Are Montessori materials being used?

A fundamental component of Montessori education is a set of specially-designed materials. These materials should be within easy reach of the children who use them daily. Materials alone, however, do not ensure a successful programme. They must be used under supervision of a Montessori trained teacher.

Information Concerning the Child Developers programme

Montessori teachers are trained in Nairobi at the Child Developers Programme (C.D.P), which is situated within the compound of the Umoja Catholic Church. The course began in 1974 and has trained more than 2,000 child developers (teachers) who are located in nursery schools all over Kenya teaching some 16,000 children.

Students at C.D.P undergo a rigorous two year training in Montessori theory and practice. This includes making most of the materials found in the Montessori method. The first phase is a non-residential and or residential course which starts in the middle of February and ends in the middle of December each year, then June to April. Each student is responsible for living arrangements, fares, pocket money and other incidental expenses.

The second phase of the course consists of one year of practical work in a sponsoring nursery school. During the two years of practical work the student is routinely inspected to assess his/her progress. C.D.P awards a Montessori teaching certificate to each student who successfully completes the full two years of training.



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