

# Maria Montessori

PRESCHOOL & ELEMENTARY

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A Parent's Introduction to Montessori Education

## Maria Montessori School



### The Montessori Philosophy of Education

The Montessori approach to education is grounded in the belief that children have a dynamic inner desire to explore and learn about their environment.

In the words of Maria Montessori:

*"Education is not something which the teacher does,  
but is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being.  
It is not acquired by listening to word, but by virtue of experience  
in which the child acts on his environment . . .*

*We must offer the child the help he needs, and be at his service  
so that he does not have to walk alone."*

The prepared environment is the cornerstone of the Montessori Method. It invites exploration and leads the child naturally from the concrete to the abstract. The classroom director is the link between the child and the environment.

The Montessori motto therefore is,

## **Help me so I can do it myself**

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## Part One: Basic Information for Parents

People have very different impressions of Montessori education.

### What is a typical Montessori School?

The Montessori Foundation and International Montessori Council celebrate diversity. Just as no two children are the same, neither are Montessori school communities.

- There are more than 4000 Montessori schools throughout Canada and the United States, and thousands more around the world.
- Montessori schools are found in church basements, shopping centers, within public schools, and some have their own campuses with hundreds of students.
- Each school represents it's own interpretation of Dr. Montessori's vision.
- Most Montessori schools range from preschool to elementary grades.
- Some schools operate as not-for-profit entities. Due to their charitable status, these schools conduct fundraising to permit as many children as possible, regardless of personal financial status, to take part in their program.

### How are Montessori Schools different?

The key point to remember is that Montessori schools are not completely different from other schools. Over the past century, Dr. Montessori's ideas have had a profound and growing influence on education worldwide. While individual elements of her programs are finding their way into mainstream classrooms, there is a cumulative and distinctly different impact of having a fully integrated Montessori program.

- Montessori schools *begin with a deep respect for children as unique individuals* and work from a deep concern for their social and emotional development.
- Montessori schools are warm and supportive communities of students, teachers and parents. *Children don't get lost in the crowd!*
- Montessori constantly *teaches children to be kind and peaceful.*
- Montessori classrooms are *bright and enticing environments for learning.*
- Classes bring students together in multi-age groups, normally spanning three age levels. *Children stay with their teacher for three years, allowing the teacher to know each student and tailor her teaching style to accommodate individual learning styles.*
- The teachers do not run Montessori classrooms alone. *Students are taught to manage their own community* and develop independence and leadership skills.
- Montessori assumes that children are born intelligent; they simply learn different ways and progress at their own pace. Students are assisted in understanding their own unique learning style and how to study most

- effectively. *Students progress as they master new skills, moving ahead as quickly as they are ready.*
- *Students rarely rely on text and workbooks because many of the skills and concepts that children learn are abstract, and texts simply don't bring them to life.*
  - *Learning is not focused on rote drill and memorization. The goal instead, is to develop minds that fully understand their area of study.*
  - *Students learn through hands on experience, investigation, and research.*
  - *Montessori challenges and sets high standards for all students, not only those considered gifted.*
  - *Students develop self-discipline and an internal sense of purpose and motivation. These values serve them well long after they move on from Montessori.*
  - *Most schools represent a highly diverse student population with a curriculum that demands mutual respect and a global perspective.*
  - *Montessori teachers facilitate learning and coach students.*
  - *Students learn not to be afraid of making mistakes: they come to see them as natural steps in the learning process.*



*"The child should love everything that he learns,  
for his mental and emotional growths are linked.  
Whatever is presented to him must be made beautiful and clear."*

~ Maria Montessori

## Part Two: The Child

### Characteristics of the Young Child

From the pages of Dr. Montessori's research, we learn of "sensitive periods" in a child's development. These can be thought of as blocks of time in a child's life when he is particularly receptive to certain stimuli to the exclusion of others.

Dr. Montessori called attention to certain characteristics in the two to six year-old child which are of critical importance:

<b>Sensitive Period (Years)</b>	<b>Particular Sensibility</b>
Birth to 1½	Movement
Birth to 3	Absorbent Mind
1½ to 4	Sensory experience – special attraction to small objects and details
1½	Complicated activities and gross motor skills
1½ to 3	Language Development
2 to 4	Gross motor skill refinement, concern with trust and reality
2 to 6	Awareness of order, sequence in time and space, music
2½ to 6	Good manners and sensory refinement
3 to 6	Susceptibility to adult influence
3½ to 4½	Fine motor skill refinement – writing and drawing
4 to 4½	Tactile sense
4½ to 5½	Beginning abstraction, reading with letters and forming sounds to represent spoken words
5 to 6	Foreign language

## The Individual Child



Early childhood educators have come to accept today what Dr. Montessori discovered so long ago:

### **The child under six has a genius capacity for mental absorption.**

The “absorbent mind” will never repeat its miraculous ability to absorb the native tongue, to perfect movement, or to internalize order. Never will these sensitivities be more alive than in the preschool years.

The child entering preschool is gentle and vulnerable with a need for love, protection, friends, and intellectual stimulation. These are serious needs. To serve children directly is *not* what they need; to give help is sometimes an obstruction.

The Montessori *prepared environment* allows children to act freely on their own initiative, meeting needs through individual, spontaneous activity.

The children learn to work quietly and intently on their own tasks. They use the materials with a sense of perfection and order seldom found in adults. They are building *concentration and self-discipline*.

Because the materials are scientifically selected, children are able to learn skills that were previously reserved for development at a later age.

Reading and writing are treated as an extension of spoken language.

Young children have a singular mathematical interest, and therefore, with the use of concrete materials, they can be exposed to all four mathematical functions with large numbers before they are six years of age.

Because these children are characterized by “absorbent minds”, the work seems untiring and effortless. The children test their skills in an environment that is patient, respectful, and free from distraction.

When children work on skill mastery by manipulation of environment and repetition they will work with joy and mastery of the skill will come naturally.

## The Child Forms A Community

The Montessori classroom is not merely a place for individual learning.

There is a mix of ages – a three-year-old may be washing clothes while a four-year-old is working with alphabet cut-outs nearby, and the five-year-old down the way is performing the operation of division using a special set of beads.

Some children may be talking and working with friends, and a few may be watching.

The children work freely when they choose to complete their task, and they return the material to its proper place.

The Montessori preschool is a community of workers building of heritage of mutual enrichment. The older five-year-old learns through teaching younger children. The younger child is inspired to do more advanced work by having older children working in the same environment.

Children at this age enjoy and need social courtesies. They are interested in knowing how to greet, to shake hands, and to excuse themselves. Classrooms have low mirrors and special aids for self-care. In this free environment, children learn to express the best of themselves by improving their social skills as they acquire manners and consideration for others.



Although most of the class-time is spent in individual or small group format, during some part of each day the entire community of children might engage in whole class activities such as storytelling, singing, movement activities, or large muscle activities.

The unique needs of the individual child merge as part of the vibrant community whole, usually at the end of the day.

## Part Three: The Adults

### The Montessori Parents As Primary Educators

No matter how you regard the school, you must realize as parents that, you have the greatest influence on your child's life because of your unique love. No one knows and cares for your child as well as you do.

Educate means "to lead". As parents, you have the special opportunity to lead the child into activities which are your hobbies, your chores, your spiritual and intellectual life, and your appreciation for the environment. What you share with your own, they remember with a special relish. You desire what is best for your child even though this involves sacrifice and renunciation. You want to give, but not indulge, to serve but not to overserve, to allow freedom but not license.

The school will be a natural extension of your home and will help in establishing a balance.

The directress will work directly with the child uniquely in the prepared environment and in the context of other children, but your relationship is still key.

As your child starts out on this great adventure called Montessori, remember that you are the most important adult, and for your effort there is no substitute.

*"The love we find in infancy shows what kind of love should reign ideally in the grown-up world, a love able of its own nature to inspire sacrifice, the dedication of one ego to another, of one's self to the service of others."*

*~ Maria Montessori*

### The Montessori Teacher as A Guide

The Montessori teacher is a child advocate in the deepest sense, and has cultivated respect for the child's total being.

As both the psychological and educational director of the classroom, the Montessori teacher responds to the essential needs of the children through careful observation first. The child may repeat a certain activity, reinforcing knowledge of a material.

The teacher knows when to intervene so that concentration and involvement which is second-nature to the child's work is encouraged and not interrupted.

The emphasis is on the "work-cycle" and the child is his own timekeeper.

The trained teacher allows for a natural pace which facilitates *unconscious* absorption and better retention.

Support is given during low productive phases of work which then builds to peak involvements as the day progresses.

Teacher-scheduled time is minimized so that the child's creative choice is given first priority.

### **Collaboration: Parents and Teachers**

Parents and teachers need to work together to support and follow the whole Montessori process.



The school is not a drop-off place; effective use of the school comes best through communication. Children often confide in their parents, and it is important for the teacher to know how the child perceives the day. And of course, the teacher sees the child in a "scientific environment" and has a unique facility for serving children in the context of other children and materials.

The parent and teacher each hold jigsaw pieces which come together to generate a complete picture.

The Montessori program also offers parents creative principles for redesigning aspects of their home, for approaching the child with new kinds of tasks and challenges, for discipline, and general understanding.

Parent education gives parents another way of seeing which may enhance decisions related to child development. Thinking and talking about children along with other concerned adults offers heightened awareness and a better response to your child's needs.

## Part Four: The Montessori Classroom

At the Casa (Primary) level, children are typically 2 years 8 months to five years of age. Each classroom is staffed by one Montessori trained director, and in many cases an assistant is also available. The teacher and assistant work together as a team.

Normally, children come to school five days a week. Montessori schools do not offer two or three-day programs like most other preschools because young children thrive on consistency and order.

### Basic Structure of the Curriculum

Dr. Maria Montessori's research led her to conclude that when children grow up in an environment that is intellectually and artistically alive, warm and encouraging, they spontaneously ask questions, investigate, create, and explore new ideas.

*Learning can, and should be, a relaxed, comfortable, natural process.* The secret is to pay attention to the hidden nature of the child at a given stage of development, and to design an environment at home and at school where they will begin to fulfill their innate human potential.

The Montessori Approach is not designed simply to teach children basic skills and information. In addition to becoming literate, *children need to learn to trust their own ability to think and solve problems independently.*

Montessori encourages students to do their own research, analyze what they have found, and come to their own conclusions. *The goal is to lead students to think for themselves and to become actively engaged in the learning process.*

Rather than giving students the right answer, Montessori teachers tend to ask the right questions and lead students to discover the answers for themselves. Learning becomes its own reward, and each success fuels a desire to discover even more.

Montessori found that *at every age level, students learn in different ways and at different rates.* Many learn much more effectively through hands on experience than from studying a textbook or listening to a teacher's explanation. But all students respond to careful coaching, with plenty of time to practice and apply new skills and knowledge. Like the rest of us, children learn through trial, error, and discovery.

Montessori students *learn not to be afraid of making mistakes.* They quickly find that few things in life come easily and they can try again without fear of embarrassment or reprisal. And perhaps as importantly, since they are learning independently, no one will ask them to move on until they truly "get it".

## The Prepared Environment: A Montessori Concept

The Montessori classroom is a “living room” for children. Extending out from all directions are open shelves with bright arrays of solid geometric solids, knobbed puzzle maps, colored beads, metal templates and various specialized blocks and rods. In another corner are a small child's sink, a cutting board, a dish pan and real china dishes. Nearby stand an ironing board, a clothes rack and a wash basin with a scrubbing board. The room invites activity. Independence is shaped by the clear availability and self correction aspects of the materials.

Several things stand out as being different from the typical classroom of young children. The classroom is spacious, cleverly designed and furnished to appeal to the needs and interests of young children. You will see few posters of cartoon-like animals, and no collection of dozens of identical arts and crafts projects – done primarily by adults, with children taking credit for the “creativity”.



The classroom is divided into several areas by low, open shelves which display an array of learning activities.

There is order in this room. It is divided into several different areas for practical life exercises, sensorial, language, math, art, geography, and science.

The exercises on the shelves are arranged in a logical order, and placed around the room according to their category and sub-grouping. Items are arranged on the shelves from the most difficult to the most complex, and from the most concrete to the most abstract.

Each object isolates one concept or skill, and is so beautifully designed that children want to work with it with little or no encouragement from an adult. Each manipulative is also designed so that children can normally check their own work, referred to as a built-in “control of error”.

These materials are used as tools to help children work and learn at their own pace, to see abstract ideas in a very concrete, three-dimensional way, and to help them grasp and truly understand what they are working on.

*“The objects surrounding the child should look solid and attractive to him, and the ‘house of the child’ should be lovely and pleasant in all its particulars. It is almost possible to say that there is a mathematical relationship between the beauty of his surrounding and the activity of the child. He will make discoveries rather more voluntarily in a gracious setting than in an ugly one.”*

~ Maria Montessori

## Practical Life: A House for Children

When a child enters the Casa at 2 years 8 months to three years of age, the area and aspect of the Montessori classroom called Practical Life may be considered the link to the child's home environment, and thus an extension of the child's developmental process.

Academic success is directly linked to the degree to which children feel they are capable and independent human beings.



Even if they cannot yet verbalize it, children are asking: "Help me learn to do it myself".

As we allow children to develop a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline, we also set a pattern for a lifetime of good work habits and a sense of responsibility. Students are taught to take pride in their accomplishments.

The child spontaneously and naturally seeks order in independence through movement and purposeful activity. The Practical Life materials involve children in precise movements, allowing them to concentrate, to work at their own pace uninterrupted, to complete their work, and to gain internal satisfaction. At three years of age, children are more interested in the scrubbing motion of washing a table than they are in getting the table clean.

The Practical Life materials also fulfill specific purposes in the real world for children: they learn to button their shirts, tie their shoes, and wash their hands free from adult help. The child also cares for the beauty of the environment, by polishing wood, by scrubbing the floor, and by dusting the shelves. The child-sized materials beckon to the child, allowing him to grow more and more independent. He chooses work as his needs unfold.

In addition, Practical Life centres the child in a social atmosphere where "please" and "thank you" and a polite offer of "Do you need help with your work?" are the mainstays of conversation. A child is treated with respect and is therefore respectful.

Independence does not come automatically as we grow older; it must be learned. In Montessori, even very small children can learn how to dress and pour water. The water will likely be all over the floor at first, but with practice, skills are mastered, and the young child beams with pride.

To experience this success at such a young age builds one's self image as a successful person, and leads the child to approach the next task with confidence.

## Sensorial: Building Imagination with the Real



A child interacts with the physical world through her senses. From birth, she will look, listen, touch, taste, pick up, manipulate, and smell almost anything.

At first, everything goes into the mouth, but gradually the child begins to explore each object's weight, texture, and temperature.

The sensorial curriculum is designed to help the child focus her attention more carefully on the physical world, exploring with each of her senses the subtle variations in the properties of objects.

Through sight, touch, sound, taste, and smell, the sensorial materials “throw a spotlight” on reality.

For example, the concepts of length and shortness are derived from the red rods of varying lengths. Language is clarified and vocabulary is sharpened. Because these rods are rendered in unit lengths from one to ten, they also provide a basis for mathematical gradation.

Roughness and smoothness are experienced by touching rough sandpaper and smooth polished wood. Later, these lessons are repeated with the sandpaper globe, helping the child to distinguish between land (sandpaper) and water (smoothness).

Sensorial materials are used for clarification of large, small, heavy, thick, thin, loud, soft, high, low, hot, cold, colors, tastes, smells, and for plane and solid geometric forms.

Typical sensorial materials include: the pink tower, the broad stair, the red rods, the knobbed cylinders, the knobless cylinders, the Baric tablets, the smelling bottles, the geometry cabinet, the geometric solids, and binomial and trinomial cubes.

The sensorial material is really a key to the world and is the basis for abstraction.

*“Imagination can have only a sensorial basis.*

*The sensory education which prepares for accurate perception of all different details in the quality of things is the foundation of all observation.*

*This helps us to collect from the external world the material world for the imagination.”*

*~ Maria Montessori*

## Mathematics: Materializing the Abstract

The Montessori approach to math is special for many reasons.

All operations emerge from the concrete manipulation of “materialized abstractions” such as rods, beads, spindles, cubes, cards, counters, etc. The children do not merely learn to count, they are also able to visualize the whole structure of our numeration system and to perform the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with an overview in mind.



Children are also presented with the possibilities of fact memorization at a young age where combinations like  $3 + 2 =$  offer a real fascination, at age four. If this sensitive period is missed, rote drill will be necessary later on.

Materials are sequenced so that conditions for mathematical discovery will always occur.

Problem solving and formulae once contributed by the teacher's directive are materialized in groups of objects which lead to independent learning.

Children retain better, any information that they “figure out” on their own.

Montessori math is based on the European tradition of “unified Math”, which has only recently been recognized by North American educators. The fundamentals of algebra, geometry, logic and statistics, along with the principles of arithmetic are introduced very early.

This study continues over the years, becoming increasingly complex and abstract. The calculations of area and volume, for example, involve algebra, geometry and arithmetic. Since these areas have never been arbitrarily separated, children are better able to analytically understand the process involved.

Elementary Montessori students are continuously given the opportunity to apply mathematical concepts in various projects and activities.

Early math activities involve use of the following materials: red and blue rods, spindle boxes, number cards and counters, and golden beads.

## Reading and Writing: Pathways to Culture

Reading and writing are the keys which can uncover, conserve, and synthesize knowledge.

The preschool children are immersed in the dynamics of their own language development.

Using simple alphabet cut-outs and sandpaper letters, young children are able to effortlessly link sounds, symbols, their shapes, and their written formation.

As the children improve their reading of words, they want to know more names of things. The classroom is filled with pictures, labels, puzzles bearing the names of animals, plants, geometric figures, countries, and land forms for example.



From the very beginning, reading and writing are tied to culture. The mastery of skills is propelled by interest and love of the environment.

By placing young children in classes where older students are already reading, there is a natural lure to “do what the big kids are doing”.

Children learn by touching and manipulating sandpaper letters, by using a movable alphabet to reinforce phonetic sounds with graphic symbols, and by combining letters to form words with metal inserts.

Children are first taught the functions of grammar and sentence structure as young as five or six years, just as they are first learning to put words together to express themselves. Doing so this early develops an innate ability for the child to express himself well and correctly in written form.

Montessori created a set of symbols to represent each part of speech. These symbols enable children to label sentences easily and at an age where it is fun, rather than a chore to do so.

*The teacher's task is no small or easy one!  
He has to prepare a huge amount of knowledge to satisfy the child's mental hunger,  
and he is not, like the ordinary teacher, limited by a syllabus.*

*~ Maria Montessori*

## History, Geography, and Culture

Without a strong sense of history, we cannot begin to understand who we are today. As early as the age of three years, children are introduced to the world around them in terms of history and world culture. Timelines, from the most simple to the most complex, are developed at every level.

The study of geography also begins very early. The youngest students begin working with specially designed maps and learn to recognize and name the continents and countries. Physical geography begins in the First Grade with the study of the Earth's formation, the emergence of oceans and atmosphere, and the evolution of life.

Once introduced at the preschool level using the major geographical areas, children in the lower elementary grades begin to study world cultures in greater depth: customs, dress, diet, languages, government, industry, arts, and history. Doing so helps them better understand and appreciate cultural similarities and differences and the rationale behind these contrasts. Lower elementary children also study the emergence of human beings, the development of the first civilizations and the universal needs common to humanity. For upper elementary children, the focus is on early man, ancient civilizations, and early North American history.

Montessori tries to present a "living" history at every level through direct hands-on experience. Children recreate an array of historical instruments, artifacts, and events. Children are therefore much better able to visualize and synthesize what it is they may be reading in textbooks.

Economics is another important element in the Montessori curriculum. Young children learn the value of each monetary unit, how to count it, and how to make change. Given how interwoven the Montessori curriculum is, imagine how effective the golden beads are as learning tools!

Older students compute the cost of everyday items, prepare and run sales to earn money for their class, and organize and carry out purchases. Students thereby learn to recognize the value of a dollar: how long it takes to earn, and what it can buy.

While the Montessori school is community in and of itself, students are also connected to the surrounding local, provincial, and national communities. The goal is for each student to recognize his or her place in these interrelated communities both today and in the future. Montessori children are often taking part in field trips, meeting with community individuals and groups, touring facilities, and even volunteering.

Foreign Languages, particularly a second language, are often introduced very early in Montessori schools. The primary goal is to develop conversational skills as well as a deeper appreciation of the culture of the second language.

## Hands-On Science

Science is an integrated part of the Montessori curriculum. It represents a clear approach to gathering information and problem solving. The scope of the Montessori science curriculum includes botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, geology, and astronomy.

Students study the formation of the universe, development of our planet, the relationships between living things and their physical environment, and the balance within. These lessons integrate astronomy, earth sciences, and biology with history and geography.

The Montessori approach creates a lifelong interest in observing nature by tapping into children's early fascination with all that is around them.

Children are encouraged to observe, analyze, classify, experiment, and predict and test their outcomes without fear of "getting it wrong".

## Art and Music Integrated Into the Day

For the most part, Arts cannot be compartmentalized into a particular subject area. Instead, it is interwoven throughout all areas of study given its relationship to culture, history, literature, and even math.

Various media are available, such as clay, crayons, oil pastels, colored chalk, paste, collage materials, paints, etc.

The more experiences the child is given in art, the more he is able to express himself.

Music is the same, and the primary class offers widened avenues for musical exploration. Music is experienced as sameness and differences, as physical rhythm and body awareness, and as a cultural medium related to history and geography.

The Arts give the children another dimension of the curriculum and of themselves.



## Part Five: Choosing A Montessori Education

### Montessori or Public Kindergarten

When making the difficult decision of where to enroll your child in Kindergarten, observe both programs carefully and try to evaluate the influence each might have on your child. Do not hesitate to observe in both. The exercise of this legitimate right of parents is the only way that you can get the first-hand information necessary to make a wise decision.

Begin by observing your four-year-old child in the Montessori classroom during the spring months. Is he comfortable and happy? How does he interact with the other children? How long can he concentrate? Which math operations is he able to perform? What reading or language activities has he begun?

Next, visit the public Kindergarten your child could attend. What are their goals and expected outcomes? Are all children generally engaged and enjoying what they are doing? What are they learning? How are new concepts introduced? What math or reading exercises are available as the next step to what your child is doing right now? Are there opportunities for independent work, creativity and leadership? Assess the environment. Could your child thrive there?

The next step in this sequence is to re-visit the Montessori school. This time, rather than watching your own child, look at the classroom as a whole. What are the five-year-old children doing? How do they compare with the children in the public school? What are they doing in Math and Reading? Are they leaders? Are they self-confident? Is the classroom a happy place, conducive to learning?

After this series of observations, give careful consideration to the long-range as well as to the immediate advantages of one program over another. The "right now" benefits of choosing a public school program, such as the relief from tuition and transportation responsibilities are often very obvious to parents. The long-range benefits of another year of Montessori are sometimes more subtle and difficult to recognize. Unwittingly, some parents give up substantial long-term benefits for motives that are not always educationally sound.

The Montessori curriculum is based on a three-year cycle. Each year builds upon the last one, giving the children a solid foundation. The third and final year is a culmination and integration of all that the children have learned in the prepared Montessori environment.

It is during this third year that the child becomes a "leader" in the classroom. The third year allows the child to develop those leadership skills that will last a lifetime.

Five-year-olds in the Montessori classroom often help the younger children by modeling appropriate behavior, and by tutoring and giving lessons.

Current research suggests that peer teaching is a very powerful way to encourage subject mastery. One must truly understand a subject before it can be taught to another.

The Montessori classroom is a rich environment that has been specifically designed to prepare the young child to “learn how to learn”. It is developmentally appropriate and is in direct concert with what is being learned.

According to current research, hands-on experiential learning is the most effective means of helping children not just memorize, but truly understand.

The concrete experiences and opportunities for exploration that the children receive in their first two years prepare them for the abstract academic concepts that they learn in the third year. Montessori is not based on superficial information – it involves a real understanding of the processes in which the child is working.

Five-year-old Montessori children are normally autonomous, enthusiastic, and engaged learners. They are excited about school and the learning process. Montessori children who move on to other Grade One programs are commonly described as eager learners. This is largely a result of the way children in a Montessori classroom are treated – with honesty and respect – they are allowed to ask questions and to be active participants in their learning. These are children who are becoming independent learners.



## Looking Ahead To Montessori Elementary

For the already accelerated preschool child, the Montessori elementary provides a smooth transition with an overlap of some material in the first year.

However, the elementary objectives are different from the preschool. The child is directed towards abstraction, away from the pedagogical materials.

The mature imagination of the six-year-old child embraces larger ideas which go beyond the immediate environment. The curriculum is interdisciplinary where concepts of biology, geology and history converge on the study of life's evolution from the origin of the universe to the emergence of man and civilization.

The child's studies stem from spontaneous humanistic questions which Montessori thought were universal to all children.

Who am I?

Where do I come from?

What is human about humans?

What are universal human needs?

How do I cooperate with the world?

Emphasis is not placed on mere presentation of detail, but rather on the association between different areas of study. The natural sciences lead to the social and physical sciences. Math and geometry concepts flow from basic number operations, moving through Euclidian geometry to solid geometry, always on a fully integrated basis.

Language becomes the final synthesis of all experiences with creative writing and grammar analysis built on the cultural content of the curriculum.

*Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.*

*Education should no longer be mostly imparting of knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentialities.*

*~ Maria Montessori*

## Part Six: Maria Montessori: The Woman, The Educator

Maria Montessori, born in 1870, was the first woman granted a medical degree by an Italian university.

At the age of 28, she was engaged as a medical professional to assess the physical needs of “defective children”. Influenced by the work of Seguin and Itard in France, Montessori designed materials and techniques which allowed the children to work in areas previously thought to be beyond their capacity.



Montessori's great triumph came when these children took State examinations along with “normal” children. Her “defectives” passed the exams. Montessori concluded that if retarded children could be brought to the same academic level as normal children, something must be drastically wrong with the education of normal children.

Montessori's life work began with a group of slum children in 1907, when she opened her famous Casa Dei Bambini.

Through her observations of, and work with the children, she discovered their remarkable, almost effortless, ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings.

Children can teach themselves!

This simple and profound truth inspired Montessori's lifelong pursuit of educational reform, curriculum development, methodology, psychology, teaching, and teacher training – all based on her dedication to further the self-creating process of the child.

Dr. Montessori died in 1952.

Today, after almost 75 years of international application, the Montessori method thrives in Canada and the United States, with more than 4000 schools established since 1957.

Montessori schools are not only found in the private sector, but also are increasingly implemented within public school systems and Federal daycare programs.

Montessori's focus on the individual child, the peaceful unfolding of self, and the prepared classroom environment, offer opportunity for renewal in the appreciation of family life.

## **Part Seven: Maria Montessori School**

### **Mission Statement**

To offer all children a respectful and stimulating Montessori learning environment that allows them to realize their unique, individual potential and prepares them for lifelong learning.

### **The Montessori Philosophy**

The Montessori approach to education is grounded in the belief that children have a dynamic inner desire to explore and learn about their environment.

All children carry within themselves the person they will become.

Developing the physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest requires freedom – freedom achieved through order and self-discipline.

A prepared and stimulating classroom environment allows children to learn at their own speed, according to their own capabilities, in a non-competitive atmosphere.

### **People**

Maria Montessori School offers an excellent educational team with expertise in Montessori education methods, and who are skilled at collaborating with families to meet each child's individual needs.

Our highly trained staff have individual specialties in French, Spanish, Music, the Arts, psychology, early childhood education, mediation, and special education.

We have a very involved and enthusiastic school community.

And of course, the children are avid learners and natural supporters of the Montessori Method.

### **Quality Education**

The combination of the Montessori Method and the Maria Montessori School's own approach to working collaboratively and effectively with families ensures your child's education at MMS will be a full and rewarding experience.

## Maria Montessori School Programs

### Casa

Early Childhood Program for children 2 years 8 months to five years of age.

In the specially prepared classroom there are four main areas of study: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language and Mathematics. We offer the Cultural Subjects of Art, Science Geography, Biology, Music, Physical Education, and Grace and Courtesy.

This stimulating and carefully planned environment ensures that each child's needs are fully met.

#### Half-day Program

- For children 2 years 8 months to four years old
- AM (9:00–1:30 a.m.) or PM (1:00 – 3:30 p.m.) every day

#### Double Session

- For children 2 years 8 months to four years old
- 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. every day

#### Full Day Program

- For children who are five years old by January 31 (Kindergarten age)
- 9:00 – 3:30 p.m. every day
- We offer an enriched program that includes French and some Spanish instruction, additional academics, and in-depth cultural learning.

### Elementary

This program is for children in two age groups

- Lower Elementary – ages six to nine years
- Upper Elementary – ages nine to 13 years

Lessons follow the Albanesi Curriculum for Montessori Schools, while considering the SaskEd Curriculum.

Studies include Geography, History, Botany, Zoology, Mathematics, Geometry, Language, Grammar, Reading, and Writing. We also offer twice weekly lessons in Music, Gym, Art, and French.

We organize many field trips and community-based activities to enhance the children's learning and to provide them with valuable leadership skills along with a social context for their studies.

## **At Maria Montessori School your child will benefit from:**

- A child-centered learning environment. Your child explores and learns naturally, spontaneously, with guidance to become a successful and joyful learner.
- Education programs for children aged 2 years 8 months to 13 years. All elementary education is in accordance with Montessori and Saskatchewan Education curriculums.
- A highly-trained education team. Our directors collaborate with families to meet your child's individual needs.
- A beautiful facility. We offer large, bright classrooms, a full-sized gym, and indoor courtyard complete with children's play structure.
- Easy access. You can find us at the corner of Circle Drive South and Preston Avenue.
- An extended day. Before care, lunch, and after care programs extend the day from 7:45 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- An affordable, educational daycare option. Preschool fees are tax deductible for working parents. Your Maria Montessori education costs less than \$5.00 per hour per child (based on 2003-2004 tuition fees).
- Ongoing registration. Your child can enter our program at any time, based on your child's readiness.