



The
Montessori School
of Northampton

Children's House Curriculum Statement

Your child's sensory experience of the immediate environment is the way s/he has learned since birth. At The Montessori School of Northampton, this natural way of knowing and becoming continues. By experiencing materials of many kinds and complexities in carefully designed classrooms, children have the opportunity to develop their mental abilities fully, to satisfy their natural inquisitiveness, and to set the stage for a life of learning. Trained and experienced teachers help guide this development, respecting each individual's learning style and creativity.

Respect for children in all their dimensions, not only the cognitive, is a fundamental part of our Montessori philosophy. Therefore, the curriculum has been developed to include many kinds of materials and activities. The following is a summary of the various curriculum areas and a few examples of the many materials that are available to children during the work period each day.

Practical Life The practical life materials or exercises of daily living are designed to help children perfect their body movements, increase their ability to concentrate, develop coordination and learn about care of the self and the environment. The Practical Life curriculum includes activities such as pouring water, buttoning a coat, scrubbing tables, and making applesauce.

Sensorial The sensorial work helps children bring order and meaning to the multitude of sensory impressions that they are constantly receiving. Children need to be able to identify, compare, and classify the information that comes to them through vision, touch, hearing, smell, and taste. Working with materials that isolate these senses such as color tablets, sound boxes, and the tower of cubes gives young learners opportunities to construct an accurate understanding of the real world around them and to verbalize this understanding appropriately.

Language The language curriculum is a mixture of whole language and phonics; that is, a mixture of strategies related to language's meaning in context and to language's separate parts. An essential component of whole language instruction is reading and discussing books with children so that they will want to learn to read. This motivation is supported by phonics work using sound, symbol and visual cues. The counterpart to the reading program is writing. Children's drawings are seen as the first stage in the process of learning to write. Words, phrases, and sentences eventually accompany the pictures and elaborate the ideas and feelings that the children want to express. Materials include big books that allow group reading, sandpaper letters, wooden alphabet letters, and a fanciful collection of small objects for sound games.

Mathematics The Montessori math materials offer children a variety of ways to learn the correspondence between numeral and quantity for the numbers 1 - 9,999. Progressive use of the materials teaches fundamental mathematical concepts: counting, one-to-one correspondence, grouping, and classification. Such use lays the groundwork for future abstraction. Materials include the golden beads that provide a sensory impression of the decimal system and the numeral cards that accompany them.

Art Art activities provide the children with opportunities to express emotions and ideas and to explore their developing motor skills in many different ways. Using a variety of formats and sizes, children find avenues for creativity and experimentation with symbol making through drawing, painting, collage work, printing, paper construction, and sculpture.

Music Singing, movement games, and work with instruments expose the children to the elements of music, help them refine physical awareness and coordination, and build a sense of community. Performances for celebrations held throughout the school year encourage self-discipline, cooperation, and the joy of sharing talents.

Science The science curriculum engages children in the exploration of physical science (the properties of water for example) and biological sciences (both plants and animals). Our study of human beings covers the physical characteristics as well as the social and emotional aspects of people.

History and Geography The history curriculum focuses on activities that help children develop a sense of time and its passage, especially their own histories which are celebrated concretely on birthdays. Geography study starts with an introduction to various aspects of the planet earth, its representation by a globe, and its division into continents. Puzzle maps help the children learn more about particular continents and countries, and lead the discussion about the unique qualities of each with an emphasis on the unity of the fundamental needs of human beings and respect for the richness of cultural diversity.

Grace and Courtesy An important goal we share is to assist children in the internalization of the social graces that allow a group to work together in a kind and productive way. Montessori referred to this group of lessons as “grace and courtesy,” an expression that captures the essence of social caring. “Use your words” is a reminder as the students learn to cope with problems peacefully. A specific procedure for confronting and mediating difficulties -- peer problem solving -- becomes part of every child’s experience, and the result is feelings of social competency that last throughout the child’s life. Social skills are further enhanced through watching and discussing role-plays that the teachers present on such topics as how to ask a friend for help when you need it or what to do if you feel left out. Another important goal is helping children understand the privileges and responsibilities of community life through various kinds of group participation, such as caring for the plants and animals and physical environment together.

Imaginary Play and Physical Activity What an adult considers to be work is judged by a young child to be play. Often the children in our school ask one another, “Which work would you like to play?” The play/work choices at MSN include enjoying a play loft where rotating activities encourage flights of imagination and experimentation. Imaginary play continues on the playground along with running, climbing, swinging, and devising ball games that add full-scale action to play possibilities. We celebrate the joys of both guided and free movement and the attainment of specific skills.

Peace Education Dr. Maria Montessori said, “All politics can do is help us out of war; establishing lasting peace is the work of education.” At our school the teachers and children explore the meaning and experience of peace in the hope that we can create a peaceful future and a reverence for all living things. We strive to maintain a classroom atmosphere that supports peaceful conflict resolution and positive self-esteem. The children learn to respect individual and group differences and celebrate the lives of important peacemakers. This work spotlights the importance of equal rights, the strength of the human spirit and the power of community.