

The Montessori Approach to Reading and Language Arts

*Do you remember how you learned to read as a child? What are some of your earliest reading memories?

There are two basic reading approaches. Which one do you identify with yourself? What about for your child or children? The Montessori language curriculum incorporates both:

- **Phonetic** - focuses on the rules of reading; phonics
- **Whole Language** - emphasizes reading for meaning

Montessori classrooms are print-rich environments that offer an abundance of interesting reading material (labels, booklets, books, nomenclature cards, charts, etc.) in addition to leveled reading books (SRA, reading series, decodable books, etc.) Students learn *how to read* (letter sounds and reading strategies) and are also encouraged to read more *challenging* reading material.

The Montessori Language Curriculum

- “Behind the Scenes” preparation for reading
 - Practical Life: children practice eye-hand coordination and concentration
 - Sensorial: children compare and classify materials
 - Language Development: children communicate while working
 - Motor Development: materials are presented left to right
- Children are introduced to writing *before* reading through (writing is one’s own creation while reading requires the reader to interpret another person’s thoughts; reading is more complex)
 - Sandpaper Letters: identify sounds with letter forms (*children learn letter sounds *before* letter names)
 - Moveable Alphabet: compose words with letters
 - Metal Insets: trace frames for precision

- Children learn phonics through the Pink, Blue, and Green work
- Children are exposed to an in-depth study of language thorough
 - Word Study Cards (compound words, roots, prefixes, suffixes)
 - Grammar Symbols and Grammar Boxes (parts of speech)
 - Sentence Analysis (sentence diagramming)
 - Research
 - Cultural Aspects of Writing (history and importance)
- Montessori Classrooms also incorporate the following into the Work Cycle
 - Read Aloud (adults read picture and chapter books to the class)
 - Silent Reading (SSR/DEAR)
 - Guided Reading (students read out loud to teacher)
 - Decodable Books/Leveled Books
 - Sight Words
 - Journal Writing
 - Creative Writing
 - The Writing Process

What Can I Do At Home?

1. Read, Read, Read! (Make reading a daily routine)
 - Read aloud to your child (choose a challenging book)
 - Ask your child to read to you (books should be on his/her level)
 - Model reading in front of your child
 - Schedule Family Reading Time (Silent Reading for older children)
2. Go to the library weekly. Make a day of the week Library Day!
3. Read recipes and cook with your child.
4. Ask your child questions before and while reading a book to help them think about reading. ("What do you think this story is about? What's happening in this picture? What do you think will happen next?")
5. Be patient while your child reads to you and keep reading fun! (encourage them to read as much as they can and set up a system if they are stuck on a word like "tapping").
6. Use a larger vocabulary when speaking to your child.
7. Practice sight words and handwriting at home.
8. Play Books on Tape/CD in the car.
9. Put on the captions if and when your child watches TV and movies (this improves reading fluency).