

Frequently Asked Questions About Montessori

Can I do Montessori at home with my child?

Only a trained Montessori teacher can properly implement Montessori education, using the specialized learning equipment of the Montessori prepared environment. Moreover, the social development that comes from being in an environment with other children is an integral part of Montessori education.

However, all parents can use Montessori principles of child development at home, complementing your child's experiences in a Montessori school. Look at your home through your child's eyes. Children need a sense of belonging, and they get it by participating fully in the routines of everyday life. "Help me do it by myself" is the life theme of the preschooler. Providing opportunities for independence is the surest way to build your child's self-esteem.

What ages does Montessori serve?

There are more Montessori programs for ages 3-6 than for any other age group, but Montessori is not limited to early childhood. Many elementary (ages 6-9 and 9-12) and adolescent (ages 12-15) exist, as well as a few Montessori high schools.

Is Montessori good for gifted children? What about children with learning disabilities?

Montessori is designed to help all children reach their fullest potential at their unique pace. A classroom whose children have varying abilities is a community in which everyone learns from one another and everyone contributes. Moreover, multi-age grouping allows each child to find his or her own pace without feeling "ahead" or "behind" in relation to peers.

Are Montessori children successful later in life?

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, asking provocative questions, showing enthusiasm for learning and adapting to new situations.

Common Misconceptions

Children in Montessori classrooms are relatively unsupervised and can "do whatever they want." Montessori is based on the principle of free choice of purposeful activity. If the child is being destructive or is using materials in an aimless way, the teacher will intervene and gently re-direct the child either to more appropriate materials or to a more appropriate use of the material.

Montessori classrooms are too structured. Although the teacher is careful to make clear the specific purpose of each material and to present activities in a clear, step-by-step order, the child is free to choose from a vast array of activities and to discover new possibilities

Montessori classrooms push children too far too fast. Central to the Montessori philosophy is the idea of allowing each child to develop at his or her own, individual pace. The "miracle" stories of Montessori children far ahead of traditional expectations for their age level reflect not artificial acceleration but the possibilities open when children are allowed to learn at their own pace in a scientifically prepared environment.