

## Montessori Classrooms and Standardized Testing

How young is too young to prepare students for testing? Did you know that the Montessori curriculum and teaching method indirectly prepare students for testing as young as 3 years old through Practical Life and Sensorial materials? Elementary students continue working independently with concrete materials in order to create a solid understanding before they ever take a standardized test.

Research shows that Montessori students generally test well, especially if they have completed a full 3 year Montessori cycle (PreK 3-Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>). Students understand the content on the tests, but need practice using the testing format and different vocabulary that may be used in the tests.

### Practical Life Skills and Objectives

- *Order* (problem solving; deciding what comes first, next...)
- *Coordination* (hand-eye coordination and precision)
- *Concentration* (attention span and focus)
- *Independence* (successfully completing work by oneself)
- Key lessons and materials include Sorting, Pouring (dry-rice, pebbles and wet-water), Scooping, Grasping (using tongs), Transferring liquids (using eye-droppers), Food Preparation (slicing/peeling fruits and vegetables), Dressing Frames, as well as more "masculine" work (tools, inflating balls).

### Sensorial Skills and Objectives

- Children thoroughly explore materials to develop a deeper understanding of concepts and relationships between objects.
- Key lessons and materials include the Knobbed Cylinders, Knobless Cylinders, Pink Tower, Broad (Brown) Stairs, Red Rods, Geometric Solids, Tasting Bottles, and Sound Cylinders.

### What Teachers and Assistants are Doing at School to Prepare Our Students

- Encouraging your child to work independently.
- Introducing the testing format (Reading and Math SRA, computer programs, \*tray testing\*) in the classroom.
- Discussing test-taking and problem solving strategies.
- Using iLEAP/LEAP practice and workbooks (3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade).
- Providing free iLEAP(3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>) tutoring on Saturdays and LEAP(4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>) tutoring after school Tues, Wed, and Thurs..

*"Help me to do it myself."*

Maria Montessori

## What You Can Do At Home

1. Encourage your child to work independently (chores, homework, crafts, etc.). Help only when needed and *after* your child has attempted to do a task himself/herself.
2. Discuss problem solving strategies together when you do help. "Sometimes when I read word problems I circle key words or numbers" or "this looks like a big spill...should we use a sponge or a towel?"
3. Give your child space to work. Try not to hover or read over your child's shoulders. Ask them to bring his or her work to you when they have finished or have done as much as they can.
4. Give your child time to work. Try not to squeeze in difficult work in a short amount of time; we want children to feel successful.
5. For iLEAP and LEAP practice and work at home please remember to:
  - Simulate the testing environment as much as possible
    - Sit in chair at a clear table
    - Use pencils
    - Quiet environment (no TV, radio, distractions; situate noisy family members elsewhere (this may include you!!))
    - Remind your child that this is their work and they need to do it themselves "do as much as you can and then bring your work to me afterward and we'll talk about it."
  - Discuss test taking strategies:
    - \*Reread the question to make sure that you understand it.
    - \*Circle key words and numbers.
    - \*If you get stuck, go on to another problem/question, (you can come back to it later).
    - \*Show your work! (The tests have areas for children to work out math problems and brainstorm for writing prompts. Encourage them to put what they're thinking in their heads down on paper. They may get more points than for their answer alone on some parts of the test).
  - Visit the website for the Louisiana Department of Education ([www.doe.state.la.us](http://www.doe.state.la.us)) for more information and test-taking tips.