

Montessori 101

Principle 4: A well prepared environment is a critical component of Montessori Pedagogy.

Dear Parents,

This newsletter will focus on the fourth of six principles that all SAMA member schools are required to follow, which is: a prepared environment is a critical component of Montessori Pedagogy.



When one enters a well-run Montessori school, there is an overwhelming feeling of calm and beauty. The Montessori environment feels less like a classroom and more like a home. The environment is filled with specifically crafted materials to be used by the children to support their development. These materials are clean and only complete sets (for example: 10 cubes in a pink tower) are offered to the children. While the equipment is used often, materials that are in need of repair or refurbishment are not visible. Further analysis of the space reveals thoughtful arrangements of furniture and décor items which have been specifically chosen to attract the child.

The first aim of the prepared environment is to help the growing child become **independent** of the adult, as far as possible. The child gains experience and therefore is more able to direct his/her own life; and in doing so, becomes conscious of his/her own abilities. "...through the environment we aim to assist the child to reach perfection *through his own efforts*" (Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work by E.M Standing).



The Montessori environment, when well equipped, will contain the developmentally appropriate mental stimulation necessary for the development of the child. Look around the environment and see what you are drawn to. Think about what would interest your child. Appreciate how everything is the perfect size for your child to use and how everything

your child might need is easily within reach so they can follow their innate desire to explore and learn.

“It must be proportionate to the child but I do not mean that it need all be of the same shape. There is no reason why furniture should be exactly alike. Why should all the tables be square, or rectangular, or round? There is no reason at all why they should all be the same shape. They can be of all different shapes and sizes so long as they are proportionate to the child’s strength. The same applies to the chairs, they need not be all be the same ugly shape, one could have pretty little arm chairs, little stools, little benches, and chairs of various shapes.”

Maria Montessori

Children will get dirty at school. Most Montessori schools will advise you to send your child to school in clothes that you don't mind getting a few stains on.



Nature forms an integral part of the Montessori curriculum and don't be surprised if your child spends a large part of their morning digging for worms, gardening, or feeding the birds. These real-life experiences help the child clearly understand the interconnectedness of all living creatures and their important and unique role in our world. Creative and academic tasks form part of our daily living in a Montessori class.



Montessori Guides spend many hours searching second hand stores to find beautiful little trinkets for the children to polish or sort. Nothing should be in the environment if it does not have a clear purpose. Sometimes that purpose is simply to be pretty.

A calm, ordered environment filled with activities that provide the right mental nourishment offer the child the protection that they need to develop properly. Parents should ensure that the environment they choose for their child is safe and secure with opportunities for the child to safely explore the world around them.



Children are not limited by a preset curriculum, rather, the Guides will present individual or small group lessons to satisfy the child's thirst for knowledge.

It is imperative to note that the adults working with the children should all be trained in Montessori pedagogy and display respect and kindness towards each child.

Although Montessori regarded 40 preschool aged children as the largest number of children who could live and work happily together in a group under the supervision of one experienced Guide, the International Montessori council recommends the following guidelines:

6 – 12 years: 36 children = 1 x Montessori Guide and 1 x Non-Presenting¹ Guide

3 – 6 years: 30 children = 1 x Montessori Guide and 1 x Non-Presenting Guide

18 – 30 months: 2 children = 1 x Montessori Guide and 1 x Non-Presenting Guide



Parents are often concerned with class size. Montessori classrooms tend to have bigger classrooms with larger numbers of children, because the Guide is not the only source of support for the young child. An older child who has learnt to

read a piece of music - and play it - is often the best teacher for a child who is starting the journey of reading music.

I love everything about Montessori environments!

¹ A person who has completed Montessori training (in some form) and acts as an assistant to the Guide.

I love the feeling of peace that permeates the atmosphere. I love seeing the individual flair every Guide shows in how they lovingly prepare their spaces to meet each child's need regardless of where they are on the learning continuum.



Most of all, I love that you have chosen a Montessori environment for your child. I appreciate that you think of your child as more than another cog in the system.

Thank you for choosing a SAMA Montessori school for your child to attend that offers:

- An environment that is specifically structured to meet their developmental needs.
- An environment that is focused on your child and not a predetermined state curriculum.
- An environment that fosters peace and tolerance.
- An environment where children learn through active engagement rather than being seen as empty vessels waiting to be filled.
- A place where each child can be truly independent, and a valuable, contributing member of their little community - regardless of their age.

Warm regards,

Kym

I look forward to your feedback, comments and questions.

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