

QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED ABOUT MONTESSORI EDUCATION

Why should I send my child to preschool?

Most educators and psychologists today agree that the single most important period in development of a person's intelligence occurs between birth and age five. When properly nourished and stimulated the child's mind forms patterns for learning that serve him well through out his life. The Montessori system of preschool education has proven to be one of the most effective and fastest growing methods to guide a child through these critical years.

What are the differences among nursery schools, preschools and childcare?

Nursery schools are generally experiences in socialization and play. Preschools are oriented toward educational experiences combined with socialization and play. Childcare is generally for the purpose of caring for children when parents are working or otherwise engaged.

How is Montessori preschool different from other preschools?

In many preschools children are taught educational concepts in a group by a teacher. In a Montessori preschool the children learn concepts spontaneously as they work independently with the many materials in the environment.

Who started the Montessori method?

Dr. Maria Montessori, over 90 years ago, was Italy's first woman medical doctor. Using her scientific background, she began observing children in Rome. Based on her observations she developed unique materials, a child-centered environment, and was one of the first persons to revolutionize educational thought by stressing respect for the child, freedom of expression, self-education, and learning through use of movement and the senses.

What is the Montessori method of education?

The Montessori method of education is basically a unique approach to learning. Rather than "teaching" the child concepts, an environment is designed to stimulate the child's' interest and facilitate her understanding and learning capacities spontaneously with little adult intervention.

What is the purpose of the Montessori method?

The main purpose of the Montessori method is to prepare an environment where the child can unfold spontaneously and manifest the greater person within. According to Maria Montessori, "the child is the father of the man." As the child begins to develop inner self, his love of life and learning expands continuously.

What is in a Montessori classroom?

The Montessori classroom is a child-sized world. Whatever is in the world outside can be incorporated meaningfully into a Montessori classroom. To a child, the world is unmanageable - - it is too big, too complex and too confusing. By careful selection of materials by the Directress, an environment is set up to allow the child to explore life at a level she can understand. The materials or exercises are designed to stimulate independent exploration. This prepared environment entices the child to proceed at her own pace from simple activities to more complex ones. Through this process the child's natural curiosity is satisfied as she begins to experience the joy of discovering the world about her. Materials and curriculum center around practical life, sensorial, language, math, geography, sciences, art, music, drama and dance.

Who is the Montessori method designed for?

The Montessori method is an "approach to learning" and as such has no distinction of class or intelligence. It has been success in all parts of the world and with all kinds of learning styles.

What is the role of the Montessori teacher?

The Montessori teacher is called a directress because she facilitates the classroom activity. She carefully plans the environment in the interests of the children and she helps the children progress from one activity to the next. She is trained to deal with each child individually allowing him to choose from many activities within his range of ability. She stands back while a child is working and allows him the satisfaction of his own discovery.

With all the freedom, isn't there confusion?

The concept of freedom within the classroom is one of freedom within limits. A child is allowed to work freely so long as she does not disturb others. Actually, the children having the freedom to follow their interests are generally happy and busily involved with their work. There seems to be a spirit of respect, love and cooperation among the children that is a joy to behold.

What is the best age to start a child?

Maria Montessori outlined various periods of "sensitivity". During these times, a child is more capable of and interested in learning specific concepts. At age 2.6 to 3.6 a special sense of order, concentration, coordination and independence begin to emerge. This time is ideal to being a child's training in Montessori as he is at the perfect period to build a strong foundation for future learning.

Why is a Montessori experience for five days a week?

The Montessori experience is for five consecutive days in order to allow the spontaneous learning of the child to flow smoothly. A child taken in and out of school does not have the same opportunity to pursue his unfolding interests.

What about socialization and group work?

Socialization is very much a part of the Montessori method. In the classroom you'll notice children interacting continuously, choosing to work on projects together and older children helping younger ones. Each day there is some group activity and play outside.

Does Montessori employ current research and theory in educational methods?

Montessori is not a static or closed system of education. While there are certain materials and methods that have been proven effective during the years, Montessori is as much an attitude about education and children as it is a specific method.

Do you encourage parent involvement in the school?

We encourage parent involvement through conferences, observations, discussions, parent nights, making materials, and volunteering. The staff feels that the more parents can understand the experiences of the child in the classroom, the better able they are to follow through at home. When parents follow through at home, the child benefits even more because he has a consistent environment in which to grow.

Isn't Montessori expensive?

Tuition in Montessori preschools throughout the country is sometimes higher than other preschools because of the expensive materials, encompassing environment, curriculum and trained staff. It is, however, a very reasonable cost in contrast to other activities you would plan for yourself and your child. It becomes a matter of what you value most. To give your child the finest possible experience in his most sensitive years is to give him a strong foundation throughout his life and probably ward off investment later to correct or remedy that, which was missed. The child who enjoys learning and becomes self-directed at the critical preschool age will benefit through all his years of learning. The expense now is a profitable long-term investment.