

The Aquinas Montessori School

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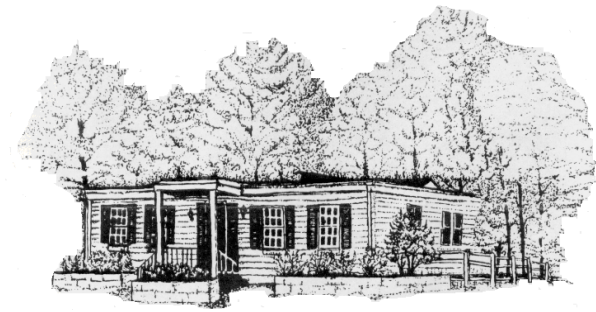
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Montessori Education

Questions and Answers

Why should I send my child to Preschool? Most educators and psychologists today agree that the single most important period in the development of a person's intelligence occurs between birth and age five. A child's mind is extremely absorbent and his curiosity is at a peak during these early years. When properly nourished and stimulated, the child's mind forms patterns for learning that serve him well throughout 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 is the difference between Day Care, Nursery Schools, and Preschools? Day Care Centers are generally for the purpose of caring for children on an all day basis. Nursery Schools are generally experiences in socialization and play. Preschools are oriented toward educational experiences combined with socialization and play.

How is the Montessori preschool different from other preschools? In most preschools, the children are taught educational concepts in a group by a teacher. In a Montessori Preschool, the children receive individual presentations by the teacher and learn concepts spontaneously as they work independently with the many materials in the environment.

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 his understanding and learning capacities spontaneously, with many manipulative, self-correcting materials.

What is the purpose of the Montessori Method? Dr. Montessori thought of this system of learning as an ideal preparation for life. The main purpose of the Montessori Method is to develop 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 this inner self, his love of life and learning expands continuously.

Who started the Montessori Method? Dr. Maria Montessori was Italy's first woman medical doctor. Using her scientific background, she began observing children in the children's houses of Rome. Based on her unbiased observation, 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 training through use of movement and the senses.

What is in the Montessori classroom? The Montessori classroom is a child-sized world. Whatever is in the world outside can be incorporated meaningfully in the Montessori classroom. To a child, the world is unmanageable. It is too big, too complex, and too confusing. Careful selection of materials by the Directress creates an environment that allows the child a place to explore life on a level he can understand. The materials or exercises are designed to stimulate independent exploration. This prepared environment entices the child to proceed at his own pace from simple activities to more complex ones. Through this process, the child's natural curiosity is satisfied and he begins to experience the joy of discovering the world about him. Materials and curriculum center around Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, Geography, History, Science, Art, Music, Drama, and Dance.

How do children interact in the environment? As the children develop their sense of pride in their "work", a feeling of confidence, well-being and joy begins to manifest itself in the child. A "new child" is born. A classroom of Montessori children is a joy to watch. There seems to be a spirit of respect, love and cooperation among the children that is not found too often.

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.

With all the freedom, isn't there confusion? The concept of freedom in the classroom is a freedom within limits. A child is allowed to work freely so long as he does not disturb others. Actually, the children having the freedom to follow their interests are generally happy and busily involved in their work.

What is the best age to start a child? Dr. 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 ½ - 3 ½ a special sense of order, concentration, coordination, and independence begin to emerge. This time is ideal to begin a child's training in Montessori, as he is at the perfect period to build a strong foundation for future learning.

How do Montessori children adjust to public schools? Children who have been in a Montessori environment are generally very flexible and adjust quite easily to the public school situation. They are generally better students and spend their time in more productive ways because of their self direction and positive attitude toward learning.

What about Homework for the Elementary years? Children are free to pursue special interested and are expected to read for at least an hour each day choosing from a wide variety of historical fiction, classics and biographies. They also read selections for the

Great Books Discussion program conducted at the school. Their daily work is checked immediately in the classroom; therefore, does not need additional practice at home. They then have time to engage with their family and other activities.

Why is a Montessori experience for five days? The Montessori classroom 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 every other day 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.

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 used successfully in all parts of the world and in all types of programs, i.e. Headstart, gifted children, mentally retarded, average children, etc.

Isn't Montessori Expensive? Tuition in Montessori preschools throughout the country is sometimes higher than other preschools because of the extensive materials, encompassing environment, curriculum and trained staff. It is, however, a very reasonable cost in contrast to other activities you would plan for yourself or 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. Many educators believe that it is wiser to invest in a child's preschool education than his college education. 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! Every effort is made to keep tuition costs affordable for Montessori elementary classes. They are usually less expensive than area private schools.

How long is the school year? The regular program begins in early September and continues through early June. *However, because of the transient nature of many government and military jobs in this area, The Aquinas Montessori School uses a rolling admission process that allows students to be accepted as spaces become available throughout the year.*

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 through 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 information evenings, assisting in the classroom, making materials, etc. 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.