

The Montessori Philosophy

There are several elements that define the Montessori method. Many of these have been accepted and adapted for use in mainstream preschools, and others are unique to Montessori programs.

The **Absorbent Mind** is an unconscious, creative and non-selective process by which the brain takes in everything from the environment. This allows the child to literally, and effortlessly, absorb information from his surroundings. Although many early childhood educators now accept the principle of the absorbent mind, it is uniquely nurtured in a Montessori classroom. The classroom is very rich and varied, giving the child many opportunities for both conscious and unconscious learning.

The **whole child approach** is one of the primary goals of a Montessori program, that is, to help each child reach their full potential in “all” areas of life. Children are encouraged to grow socially, physically, cognitively, intellectually, and emotionally. This integrated approach leads to increased confidence and independence, as well as creating an environment in which learning is interesting and fun, as opposed to competitive.

Freedom within limits is based on having the Montessori classroom carefully prepared by the directress with everything meant to be used by the children. Only developmentally appropriate, child-friendly materials are available, creating an environment that is truly made for children. Thus, children in a Montessori classroom enjoy tremendous freedom of choice and exploration.

Learning as “work” is a concept that allows ample time for free play activities, both indoors and outdoors, and time for serious activity. You will observe children in a Montessori setting “working”. Calling the child’s learning “work” lends seriousness to the activity, as it is, in fact, the job of the child to learn, and more clearly defines their rights and responsibilities regarding their learning. It also helps the child to understand that what he or she is doing is important and valuable, just like the work parents do, which helps create confidence and build self-esteem.

Multi-age setting is one of the major differences between a Montessori environment and a traditional classroom in that Montessori children learn in a multi-aged setting. Multi-aged preschool environments offer opportunities for children ages 0-3 and 3- 6 to grow and learn over an extended period of time and to develop naturally at their own pace. The multi-aged setting naturally supports constant interaction, problem solving, child-to-child modeling, and socialization.