



Q & A

Elementary Education – Montessori Style

What structure is used to ensure my child is getting a well-rounded and challenging elementary education?

Elementary education, for the Montessori child, revolves around the five major stories called "The Great Lessons." These stories provide the framework and jumping-off point for all the learning that will take place during the elementary years. These lessons provide the basic structure for learning and the "Big Picture." The challenge comes from the child himself or herself. Maria Montessori found that for the elementary child "the power of imagination is what educates." The stories are designed to present the entire universe as a framework for all the child's later knowledge. Each succeeding story presents more and more detail, arousing the child's curiosity and interest along the way. While exploring the universe in this way, the Montessori child receives a thorough and well-rounded education, with an added bonus; he/she understands the parts in the context of the whole, and this knowledge truly prepares the child to become a "citizen of the world."

How does the Montessori method validate mastery of a concept (i.e. multiplication, sentence structure)?

In the Montessori method, concepts are introduced initially through a material or through a presentation. The teacher will make a note of when each concept is introduced to a child and will then note when the child completes the follow-up work for that material or presentation. It is through the follow-up work that learning occurs, so completion of this work indicates that mastery is achieved. It may take months, or even years, to complete the follow-up work and achieve mastery. For example, the child comes to the elementary classroom with a solid basis for understanding the decimal system and the hierarchy of numbers. He/she has a strong foundation in the four mathematical operations. At this point, the elementary child still needs to memorize facts and tables. This may occur through materials (e.g. Flat Bead Frame) or through procedures such as the Geometric Form of Multiplication. Children also complete worksheets to reinforce their skills. Through a variety of methods and materials, the elementary child eventually achieves mastery of a concept. This will be validated as they successfully progress to increasingly complex work!

How does the school ensure that the children are being exposed to everything they would receive in the public school system?

Society has expectations about what the elementary child needs to be exposed to at each grade level. Therefore, the Montessori teacher keeps track of each child's progress as it relates to the public school curriculum. In addition, our elementary children are tested on a yearly basis through standardized testing. On the whole, the Montessori child tests much higher than the child at a comparable level in public schools. This is not the case because only the intellectually elite are admitted to a Montessori school. In fact, there are no entrance requirements or testing when a child begins his/her Montessori education. The Montessori materials and method not only adequately cover the public school curriculum, but go much further. The aim of the Montessori method is to present the child with the "whole universe." With that as a goal, the Montessori child cannot help but achieve.