

The Montessori Method is a child-centered educational approach that recognizes children as naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared environment with sequential, hands-on materials.

Montessori education began in 1907, when Dr. Maria Montessori—one of Italy's first female physicians—opened a child-care center in Rome. Drawing from her scientific observations of young children and her medical background, she designed a unique learning environment and materials that nurtured children's natural curiosity. The results exceeded all expectations, and her groundbreaking approach continues to thrive today.

The principles that guided Maria Montessori's work over a century ago remain foundational to Montessori education and are consistently supported by contemporary research:

- Children are to be respected as unique individuals, developing at their own pace and through distinct developmental stages.
- Critical life skills—such as language development—are primarily formed from birth to age 6 and refined throughout the Elementary and Secondary years.
- Children learn best through purposeful, self-directed activity.
- They possess an extraordinary sensitivity and ability to absorb knowledge from the people and environment around them.

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Montessori
Innovative, Bold,
Empowering, Essential



What makes Montessori education unique?

The Whole Child Approach

A primary goal of Montessori education is to help each child reach their full potential in all areas of life. The child's emotional, social, spiritual, physical, and cognitive needs and interests are inseparable and of equal importance. The child is seen as naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment, with the guidance of a Montessori credentialed teacher.

The Prepared Environment

For self-directed and joyful learning to take place, the entire classroom setting is thoughtfully prepared by the teacher to encourage exploration, independence, freedom within limits, beauty, trust, and a sense of order. Through individual choice, the child engages with the materials in the classroom to support their own development, seeking guidance from the teacher when needed.

The Montessori Materials

Students in Montessori classrooms work with specially designed learning materials, manipulating and investigating them to master the lessons they embody. Each material teaches one skill or concept at a time. Built-in “control of error” allows the child to determine if they have done the exercise correctly. Materials offer multiple levels of challenge and can be used repeatedly at different developmental levels. Students use real objects and actions to translate abstract ideas into concrete form.

The Montessori Guide

The Montessori teacher, often referred to as a guide, functions as a role model, demonstrator, and meticulous observer of each student's behavior and growth. In preparing the classroom, they make sure it meets each student's unique interests, academic levels, and developmental needs.

How does Montessori education work?

Every Montessori classroom operates on the principle of freedom within limits. Ground rules appropriate to the age level are based on core Montessori beliefs: respect for self, for others, and for the environment.

Teachers present individual and small-group lessons on the various materials in the environment. Students are then free to work at their own pace with materials they have chosen, either alone or with others. The teacher relies on their observations of the children to determine which new activities and materials to introduce. The aim is to encourage active, self-directed learning and to strike a balance between individual mastery and small-group collaboration.

The multi-year span in each class provides a family-like setting, where learning can take place naturally. More experienced children share what they have learned, while reinforcing their own learning. Younger students look up to their older peers and get a preview of the work to come. Ideally, students stay with the class for the entire cycle, forging a stable community and meaningful bonds.

How is creativity encouraged?

Emphasizing curiosity and nurturing confident, active problem-solvers who find joy in self-expression, the Montessori classroom is rooted in the essential role of creativity across all areas of learning—not only in the arts, such as music, drama, and visual design, but also within academic subjects. Carefully designed materials that spark interest and invite experimentation; uninterrupted time for exploration and discovery; a multisensory approach that honors each child's unique learning style; and an atmosphere of freedom, acceptance, and trust all come together to create a dynamic environment where curiosity thrives.

How can a “real” Montessori classroom be identified?

Since “Montessori” is a word in the public domain, it is possible for any individual or institution to claim to be Montessori. But an authentic Montessori classroom must have these basic characteristics at all age levels:

- Teachers, credentialed in the Montessori philosophy and methodology for the age level they are teaching.
- A multi-aged classroom of students.
- A diverse set of Montessori materials, activities, and experiences that are designed to foster physical, intellectual, creative, and social independence.
- Child-directed work where students are given agency to self-select their work.
- A schedule that allows large blocks of uninterrupted time for problem solving, seeing connections in knowledge, and creating new ideas.

How does Montessori education prepare a student for the future?

Montessori children are unusually adaptable. Since they have been encouraged to make decisions from an early age, these children are problem-solvers who can make choices and manage their time well. They have also been encouraged to exchange ideas and discuss their work freely with others.

Good communication skills ease the way in new settings. Montessori programs, based on self-directed, noncompetitive activities, help children develop a positive self-image and the ability to face challenges and change with skill, confidence, and creativity.