

Outcomes of a Montessori Education

In a Montessori classroom, children operate within a balanced structure of freedoms and responsibilities, free to follow their inspirations with work that stimulates and satisfies their inner motivations, while remaining responsible for tackling challenging and difficult work head-on. This balanced structure of freedoms and responsibilities is created and maintained through the ongoing observations, inspiration and redirection of the classroom guides (we call our teachers 'guides'). The Montessori curriculum is organized as a continuum with one step building precisely on the previous one. The concept of mixed ages promotes an atmosphere of cooperation, teamwork, and peer teaching. The design of the materials and the structure of the tasks lead children in the development of self-discipline.

Outcomes of a Montessori Education

a. Independence

The social and physical organization of the Montessori prepared environment, as well as the guiding actions of the teacher, promote individual independence. Each child develops independence through a balance of freedoms and responsibilities. These include self-selection of opportunities for constructive work, care of environment, and care of self and others in the community. With the support of a meticulously-prepared environment and the consistent nurturing guidance of the teachers, this balanced structure of freedoms and responsibilities leads to the development of concentration, inner discipline, internalization of the learning and learning strategies and metacognition (thinking about thinking).

b. Confidence and Competence

Confidence is built upon success. A Montessori environment creates many occasions for success. In the spiraling framework of the Montessori curriculum, each educational experience builds towards another. Each lesson and activity prepares the child for more complex learning to come, providing greater chances of success for the child throughout his experience.

Confidence and perceived competence are also built upon mistakes made. The teacher's respect for each child's efforts and the realization that each child constructs his or her own intelligence create a supportive learning culture where it is also safe to *fail*. Mistakes and difficulties are seen as valuable stepping stones to the development of perseverance, self-perceived competence (*I can do that.*), and ultimately, individual confidence. A child growing in success is growing in confidence.

c. Autonomy & Collaboration

Grace and courtesy in the classroom contribute to the students' understanding of each individual's desire to work alone or with others. In a Montessori setting children are able to hone their collaboration, cooperation, and negotiation skills in working through choices of work partners. Children develop from the earliest ages the vocabulary and skills needed to accept or decline inclusion in others' work with equanimity, ask for and accept help graciously and resolve conflicts peacefully and respectfully.

d. Intrinsic Motivation

The Montessori guide knows that each child possesses the natural desire to know and the “work is its own reward” in a Montessori environment. External rewards such as gold stars, stickers, or “smile” stamps and other forms of praise undermine the child’s development of intrinsic motivation and are not present in a Montessori environment. Instead, the Montessori curriculum and materials stimulate each child’s natural curiosity and promote engaged exploration and discovery. The child’s freedom to choose his or her work (within limits) nurtures individual initiative and personal responsibility. And the guide’s focus on acknowledging the elements of the child’s work, e.g. their effort, their approach, etc., encourages the child’s concentration and effort on the process of learning not just the end products.

e. Social Responsibility

Independent and autonomous persons are always a part of a group and must attain independence and autonomy through participation in group activity. Children in Montessori classes are “free” within the carefully crafted, mutually agreed upon limits of the group. These limits are articulated in the course of the school experience through clearly defined class agreements which are modeled by the guide and the children. The physical organization of the classroom contributes to the successful conformance to the class agreements by all members of the classroom community. Social responsibility develops from the child’s willful adherence to and enforcement of these agreements. Children in a Montessori environment attain independence and autonomy, and at the same time, develop social responsibility.

f. Academic Preparation

In Montessori education, children learn by doing. Academic preparation is achieved by nurturing each child’s natural curiosity into a life-long love of learning. The spiraling nature of the Montessori curriculum, one experience building toward successively complex experiences, scaffolds learning for the child. Through the use of the Montessori didactic materials, the child achieves first perceptual and then cognitive understanding of concepts. The interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum allows the child to make connections between disciplines, leading to deeper understanding and application of skills and knowledge. As an active participant in his or her education, each child becomes the builder of meaningful knowledge helping her or him learn how to learn.

g. Spiritual Awareness/Cosmic Education

Dr. Montessori’s distinctive notion of the child as a “spiritual embryo” emphasized her key principle that the growing human being is not simply a biological or psychological entity, but a spiritual energy seeking expression within the physical and cultural world. The Montessori curriculum develops in children the awareness of ecology of existence that gives every living thing a meaningful function in the larger system and encourages each child to make his or her own unique contribution to the world.

h. Global Citizenship

From the earliest experiences of negotiating and adjusting one's behavior with other students through the study of people of various cultures, Montessori education guides children to move far beyond the family and school, towards global citizenship. Personal responsibility is configured for the child in successively broader terms to include an awareness of the importance of stewardship of the planet. Children acquire civic virtue and an understanding of the natural world and of the necessity to cherish, respect, sustain and live harmoniously within it.