

A Brief Look at Montessori Education

Maria Montessori



Maria Montessori graduated from the medical school of the University of Rome in 1896, and was the first woman to practice medicine in Italy. As a physician, Dr. Montessori was very involved with the care of young children. Through scientific observation, she came to see how children interacted with one another, learned through the use of materials she provided, and went through specific phases of development. Her approach to education was developed based on her observations, in collaboration with her background in psychology and her belief in the education of children as a means to create a better society. She continued to observe children around the world, and found that the universal laws of development she had recognized were inherent to children of all cultures. The Montessori approach to education continues to be respected and practiced internationally.

About Montessori Education

A truly educated person continues to learn long after the years spent in the classroom because he is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Maria Montessori felt the goal of education should not be to fill the child with facts but rather to cultivate his own natural desire to learn.

Dr. Montessori, in decades of observing and studying children, concluded that they pass through sensitive periods when they possess a unique and amazing aptitude for learning. To take advantage of these sensitive environment properly prepared to stimulate their particular interests and allow them to exercise their innate ability to learn. If the sensitive period is missed or if the environment is not properly pre-

pared, learning becomes difficult and tiresome.

The "Montessori method" consists in a carefully developed set of materials which create the proper environment for children at each stage of their development. In this environment and with the guidance of trained teachers, they can develop their intellects and acquire all the skills and content of human civilization. Over sixty years of experience with children around the world proved Dr. Montessori's theory that children can learn to read, write and calculate as easily and naturally as they learn to walk and talk.

Parents should understand that a Montessori school is neither a baby-sitting service nor a play school. Rather it is a unique cycle of learning designed to meet the natural development of the child. Those children who

learn the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic in this natural way have the advantage of beginning their education without drudgery, boredom or discouragement. They gain an early enthusiasm for learning which is the key to their becoming truly educated persons.

At this stage of development, children have an "absorbent mind", soaking in facts like a sponge. They learn through concrete experience, and they tend to work best by themselves. The curriculum of the primary Montessori classroom is designed to meet these characteristics. ■