



## PHILOSOPHY AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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## **Purpose and Preamble**

The Montessori system of education is both a philosophy of child growth and a rationale for guiding such growth. This approach involves a dynamic interplay between the children, the adults and the environment. This document will outline the role and work of the child, adult and the environment and how they relate to each other based on the words of Dr. Maria Montessori and her collaborators.

This document is to be used as the basis to which our school refers when making all decisions that affect the school (mission/vision statements, long range planning, etc.). It describes how each child, parent, teacher, support person, and administrator plays a part in the success of the school. This document contains the fundamental tenants of Montessori education and includes the role we play as adults in this community to support the child.

We, the community of Mammolina Montessori International School, in order to prepare children for life will provide the most authentic Montessori educational experience possible, and agree to follow the pedagogical principles set forth by Dr. Maria Montessori. We support the following document as the touchstone for school policy, practice and vision.

## **Mission, Vision and Beliefs**

### Mission Statement

Our mission at Mammolina Montessori is to provide a nurturing and secure environment where to guide young children in developing inner discipline, self-responsibility, and a desire for learning in order to allow them to self-construct the human personality to develop their own potential from within, and possess "clarity of vision that will allow (them) to be able to direct and to mould the future of humankind" (Montessori, M. 1988, *The Absorbent Mind*, pg. 8)

### Vision Statement

Mammolina Montessori School's vision is to apply the principles developed by Dr. Maria Montessori to create and sustain a safe, supportive, environment that offers rich opportunities to meet the academic, emotional, physical, and social needs of each child, and in which children can become independent and responsible members of the world community while giving them freedom to explore, cooperate, create, and become lifelong learners.

### Beliefs

Our mission is based on the belief that:

- Children have an innate love of learning
- Children have the ability to reach their full potential through their own efforts
- Children develop a vision of the universe in order to understand the unity that is in all things

The implementation of our mission depends upon a prepared environment which encourages:

- Time of exploration
- Opportunities for responsibility
- Love for our world and its diverse inhabitants
- A sense of gratitude for the special gifts which have been provided by others
- An awareness for gifts that they themselves may share with others

## **Montessori education**

### Description

Montessori education is often described as "education for life". It is an individualized, hands-on approach to learning that allows children to explore and progress at their own pace, through

direct experience and through the process of investigation and discovery. The child is presented lessons with concrete, self-correcting learning materials that are ordered and displayed on shelves from the simple to the complex, in a carefully prepared environment designed for their particular stage of development. This process is facilitated by a specially trained Montessori teacher, called guide.

### Core principles of Montessori Philosophy and Practice

(as described by Lillard, A. S., *The Science behind the Genius*, 2005)

- Movement and Cognition are Closely Aligned

Montessori wrote at length of the close connection between hand and mind, action and thought. A wealth of research in psychology today supports this idea. Montessori education is imbued with movement that is aligned with cognition. Letters are learned by tracing sandpaper letters while uttering the sounds, rather than merely by visual recognition; mathematical concepts are always introduced with materials that clearly show how the mathematical operations work; geography is learned by making maps oneself.

- Choice and Control Assist Learning and Well-being

Montessori education is unique among educational programs in the degree of choice and control it gives children. Children are not free to misbehave or avoid parts of the curriculum, but each day they arrive in the morning and choose what to work on, with whom to work on it, and how long to work with it. Psychology research strongly confirms Montessori's insight that a sense of choice is beneficial. Among other benefits, choice enhances creativity, well-being, and problem solving.

- Interest Improves Learning

Research has shown that learner interest significantly impacts the quality of one's learning. Montessori education begins with learner interest and is structured to allow individuals to pursue their personal interests. Dr. Montessori designed specific materials and lessons to provoke interest in the child.

- Intrinsic Rewards Inspire Sustained Interest and Learning

Montessori said, "The prize and the punishment are incentives towards unnatural or forced effort. The system of prizes may turn an individual aside from [their true] vocation." When one expects to be rewarded for something one already likes to do, after getting the reward one subsequently loses interest in the activity. People also choose easier tasks when they expect to be evaluated or rewarded. Montessori education keeps rewards intrinsic, and monitors performance with self-correcting materials, peer correction, and teacher observation. There are no grades or tests.

- Learning with Peers is Effective

Developmental psychology shows that young children are not particularly social and often engage in parallel play. By elementary school, however, children become very social. Before the age of six, children tend to work alone; after age six, they almost always work collaboratively. Research has shown children not only learn well in collaborative circumstances, but they learn to get along better with peers in such learning situations resulting in a more positive classroom social climate. Montessori education capitalizes on peer tutoring which benefits the tutor just as much as the one being tutored.

- Meaningful Contexts Assist Learning

Knowledge is best accessed when the meaning and application of that knowledge is understood. Montessori's hands-on materials show children quite clearly what their learning applies to and why different procedures work. Mathematical concepts, the study of literature, the sciences, etc. are all presented in their historical context. A great deal of research suggests Montessori education is well aligned with how humans naturally learn and develop. A well-implemented Montessori education positively and profoundly impacts children's intellectual, social, and personal development.

### Montessori Vocabulary

**Absorbent mind:** The ability and ease with which young children ages 0-6 learn unconsciously from their environment.

**Reasoning Mind:** The emerging ability of the child in the Primary years (6-12) to learn through abstraction and imagination.

**The Control of Error:** The possibility inherent in the Montessori materials of making apparent the mistakes made by children, thereby allowing them to see their errors and to correct them. This "friendliness with error" promotes self-discipline and increases motivation for learning.

**Cosmic Education:** Dr. Montessori's plan for education appropriate to the developmental needs of the elementary aged child. It is characterized by a multicultural, interdisciplinary, and interdependent approach.

**Cycle of Activity:** Periods of concentration on a particular task that should be worked to completion.

**Didactic Materials:** The instructive, hands-on materials, which allow for auto-education.

**Discovery of the Child:** Dr. Montessori's awareness and realization of the young child's abilities and the spontaneous love of work and learning.

**Freedom:** The child's free movements and experiences in an environment that provides discipline through liberty within limits.

**Individual liberty:** The child must act without unnecessary help or interruption, act within limits that are determined by the environment and the group, in order to construct one's own potential by one's own efforts.

**Prepared Environment:** An atmosphere created to enable the child to be free to learn through activity in peaceful and ordered surroundings adapted to the child's needs and interests.

**Spontaneous Activity:** Children learn by doing, based on a variety of materials and experiences chosen freely.

**Uninterrupted Work:** Cycles of uninterrupted work where the child is able to choose work freely, work with materials and complete the work cycle by putting each work away before choosing another must last 3h. to allow him to develop work habits, concentration and understanding.

### Montessori: A Paradigm Shift in Education

- Prepared kinesthetic materials with incorporated control of error.
- Working and learning according to the social development of the child.
- Unified, internationally developed curriculum.
- Integrated subjects and learning based on developmental psychology.

- Uninterrupted work cycles.
- Multi-age classrooms.
- Students are active, talking, with periods of spontaneous quiet, freedom to move.
- School meets the needs of students.
- Process-focused assessment, skills checklists y puntos de referencia de dominio.

## The Child

The Montessori Method is rooted in a deep understanding, belief in and respect for the child. Montessori identified specific planes of human development. Additionally, she isolated a list of universal human tendencies that all humans possess as a way to satisfy their fundamental needs.

### Human Tendencies and Fundamental Needs

Montessori believed that all humans, regardless of time and location, share common basic needs that, when met, allow for human freedom, respect, cooperation and environmental accountability, which are crucial for survival.

**Fundamental needs** are divided into two areas: material and spiritual. Nutrition, clothing, shelter, protection and other factors contribute to a secure and comfortable existence. The second area of fundamental need is spiritual in nature, the quest for understanding what cannot be seen; the sense of wonder that needs to be nurtured; the urge to express our deepest longing through our creative efforts.

All **humans** have certain **tendencies** or behavior patterns that drive the fulfillment of the fundamental needs. No matter the location, culture, or ethnicity, all humans follow the same natural laws that lead to actions and interactions with the environment and each other. These tendencies are present at all ages of life but some are stronger than others during different developmental periods. The tendencies also vary in the way and strength in which they appear in different people but they all exist in some form in every person. It is these tendencies that guide human development as humans seek to have their fundamental needs, both material and spiritual, met. In the child, all of these tendencies can be readily witnessed. These tendencies are not simply part of the young child; they control the child's actions. They drive the child to learn, to improve, and to master knowledge.

All humans are driven:

- To Explore- to know
- To Orient - to find one's place in the world
- To Order - to put things in their place, physically and mentally
- To Communicate - to express oneself, to be understood, which leads to sharing, cooperation, and preservation of our knowledge, skills and achievements

#### **Intellectual Tendencies:**

- To Know, Reason, and Understand
- To Abstract - taking the essence of something and applying it to other situations
- To Imagine - the ability to visualize what has never been done or seen before, to call up something from our own experience, to picture something that is not present. Imagination is based on fact. Reality is the base upon which the imagination can be launched.

- To have a Mathematical Mind - to organize and put things in order, to perfect and organize one's ability to think abstractly, to think in mathematical terms, to order one's mind to think clearly and logically, to reason.

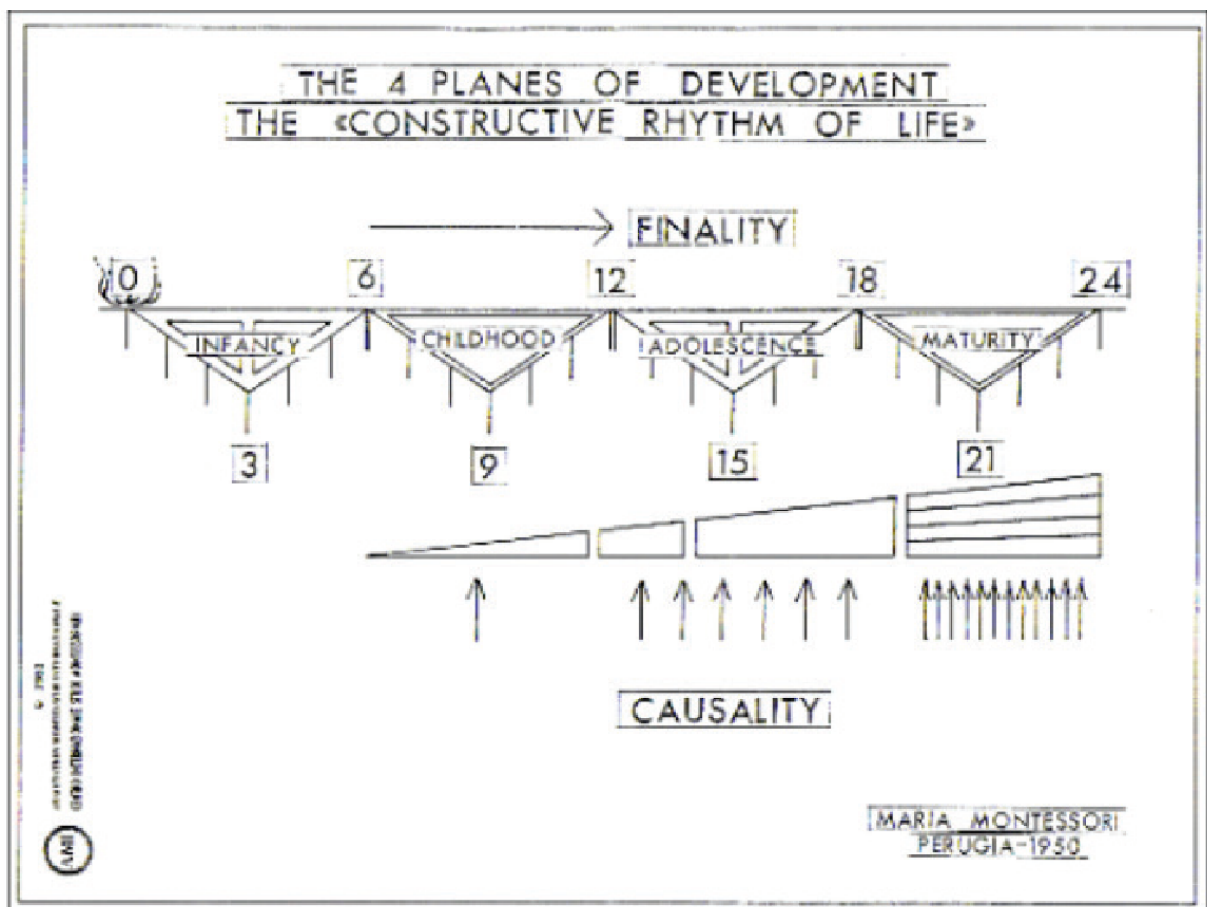
**Creative Tendencies:**

- To Work - humans create themselves through purposeful work
- To Repetition - experiences are repeated in order to understand
- To Exactness - to do things correctly; to be exact and precise in order to be accurate
- To Persevere - to continue until something is completed, or corrected
- To Perfection - the urge to strive to be the best one can be

When the basic human tendencies of human behavior are understood and respected, children become what Dr. Montessori called "normalized." They have a sense of internal peace, joy, tranquility, and happiness. They can concentrate. They can choose and complete the work. They can handle frustration and make rational choices. They can adapt. They have self-discipline/self-control, are independent, and are secure within themselves. They have a positive, balanced self-image, have healthy self-esteem, and are aware and considerate of others.

The four Planes of Development

The four planes of development illustrate an overall vision of Montessori's developmental psychology. It shows the cyclical and non-repeatable nature of human development.



(From first lecture (with illustrative chart) July, 10th 1950. In Lectures for the (Italian) National Montessori Course. Unpublished transcript, Perugia, Italy.)

Montessori's view of human development is holistic in two aspects. First, Montessori considers all levels of development (physical, intellectual, emotional, etc.) and secondly, Montessori considers all the phases of developing life. The four planes of development are identified as infancy, childhood, adolescence and maturity.

Dr. Montessori believed that certain psychological characteristics are inherent in all children throughout the world during identified age spans. Adults can best support the child by observing, understanding and nurturing these characteristics in order for natural development to unfold without obstacles.

The transformation of children from birth to adulthood occurs through a series of developmental periods. The focus of Montessori education continually changes in scope and manner to meet the child's changing needs and interests.

The first plane of development occurs from birth to age six. At this age, children are sensorial explorers, studying every aspect of their environment, their language, and culture.

From six to twelve years of age, children become conceptual explorers. They develop new powers of abstraction and imagination and apply their knowledge to further discover and expand their world.

The Montessori classrooms prepare children for each successive developmental plane. It allows them to take responsibility for their own education, giving them the opportunity to make choices and become unique human beings.

#### Children in the First Plane

(0-6 years)

Social characteristics:

- The child aims to become independent within the home (a small, secure, and orderly environment with simple opportunities to explore).
- The child works primarily alone, thereby constructing the self.
- The child plays primarily alone, even when playing with another.
- The child is self-centered. Issues are considered only from their own point of view.
- Self-evaluation is primarily based on adult approval.

Mental characteristics:

This is the period of the "**absorbent mind**". Child takes everything (information and sensations) indiscriminately from the environment using his senses. From 0-3 this is an unconscious absorption and from 3-6 is a conscious absorption.

This child is a sensorial explorer who works primarily with concrete materials and learns via the senses. This child learns by practicing the same activity repeatedly. Repetition is key,

The younger children are guided by what Montessori termed "**sensitive periods**", which are defined time frames when a child has a heightened sensitivity or proclivity to acquire certain skills or learning, naturally and effortlessly. A child in a sensitive period is believed to exhibit spontaneous concentration when engaged in an activity that matches a particular sensitivity. For example, children in a sensitive period for order will be drawn to activities that involve ordering. They will be observed choosing such activities and becoming deeply concentrated, sometimes repeating the activity over and over, without external reward or encouragement. Young children are naturally drawn towards those specific aspects of the environment which meet their developmental needs.



## Children in the Second Plane

(6-12 years)

### Social Characteristics:

- This child, having established a degree of independence within the environment of home and school, wishes to build themselves as an independent, functioning member of society.
- This child shows a preference for working in groups with others who have similar interests.
- This child forms mini-societies while exploring what is fair/just (clubs, scouts, gangs).
- This child has a deep sense of morality and justice, often testing adults to find out what is acceptable and what will not be allowed. This concern with justice is what leads to "tattling" at this age, to discern if rules apply to all fairly.
- Self-evaluation is based on group evaluation. This child is sensitive to peer pressure.

### Mental Characteristics:

This child operates on "**a reasoning mind**" and learns by his own discoveries; exploration is through research.

This child's exploration moves from the concrete to the abstract with age/ability. This is aided by the development of the "imagination." The child's mind can now grasp the reality of what is experienced beyond the impressions received (envisioning what cannot be literally seen).

This child begins to relate and integrate knowledge, asking the questions, "Why?" and "How?"

This child learns by repeating and elaborating on an activity. Repetition comes by practicing with a variety of activities with similar emphasis. What was once repetition, completing the same work over and over in the CH classroom, becomes repetition through elaboration in the Primary classroom. This is the time of "Great Work."

Great work is about the quest, about the process, and about the connections children make within their world. Questions are asked, appropriate research materials are gathered, information is taken, and a visual representation is created.

## The Normalized Child

Maria Montessori first identified normalization during her work with children in Rome in 1907. "Normalization is a technical word borrowed from the field of anthropology. It means becoming a contributing member of society. Dr. Montessori used the term normalization to distinguish one of the processes that she saw in her work with the children at San Lorenzo in Rome.

The process of normalization occurs when development is proceeding normally. She used the word normalization so people would think that these qualities belong to all children and were not something special, just for a few." (Dr. Rita Shaefer Zener, lecture, April, 2006) Normalization of the child is nurtured through freely chosen work within a prepared environment. Montessori Outcomes for Normalized Children:

### Social:

- Shows respect for others
- Respects materials and environments
- Participates and works appropriately in a group
- Displays leadership

Personal:

- Copes with transitions and challenges
- Exhibits self-control
- Show responsibility for own actions
- Displays self-confidence

Work Habits:

- Chooses appropriate and challenging work
- Works independently
- Listens to and follows directions
- Organizes work and materials
- Works with concentration
- Completes work with care and pride
- Demonstrates persistence
- Displays a strong interest in learning and working
- Demonstrates responsibility for own learning

## **Support for the Child: The Prepared Environment**

The environment of the usual home is made for adults, and therefore adapted to the adult's needs and mode of living and not the child's.

"The idea is not to reproduce the adult world in miniature, or to distort reality into a make-believe paradise in which children's wishes and fantasies are the only things considered. Rather, the prepared environment should bring the world at large, and thus the adult world, within reach of the child at whatever stage of development it is at a given moment." (Montessori Jr., *Mario Education for Human Development: Understanding Montessori*, 1992, p.83)

While the contents of the prepared environment for each "plane of development" will differ as it responds to the particular social, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of the children at a particular "plane of development," there are some "essential characteristics" that should guide us in the construction of all appropriately "prepared environments" whether in the home or the school.

According to Montessori, the Prepared Environment should:

- promote INDEPENDENCE
- provide BEAUTY and SIMPLICITY
- provide ORDER
- provide NATURE and REALITY
- provide SOCIAL INTERACTION
- promote FREEDOM of CHOICE

## Independence

Whether at home or at school the “prepared environment” should be designed, as far as it is possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult. It should be a place where the children can do things for themselves – live their own lives - without the immediate help of adults. As the child is guided to “help themselves” they grow in self-confidence and responsibility. Each time an adult does something for a child, that they could be shown how to do for themselves, they are robbing the child of an opportunity to grow and feel better about themselves. The child should always be encouraged to direct more and more of their own activities.

The adult's role, in this process, is the initial “preparation” of the prepared environment and the subsequent alterations based on continued observation of the children's interaction with it. The adult is also the “link” between the child and its environment. This involves showing the child how to interact successfully with the environment and, especially with the older child, inspiring his/her imagination so the child wants to engage with it. It is essential to remember that the children must not only “do for themselves” but also “think for themselves.”

## Beauty and Simplicity

Montessori environments should be beautiful. Uncluttered and well maintained, the environment should reflect peace and tranquility.

The atmosphere of the room must be relaxing and warm, and invite participation.

A properly prepared environment should contain only those activities that are necessary for the child's self-construction.

For the older child these support the “key” lessons. Through constant observation of the child's interaction with the environment the role of the adult is to keep only those activities that meaningfully engage the child.

## Structure and Order

Montessori believed that a child comes to internal order through external order. The child has a need to learn to classify, categorize all the objects he sees, learn their names and their uses. Order should pervade the Montessori environment down to the smallest detail.

## Reality and Nature

Another component of the Montessori environment is its emphasis on reality and nature. The child must have the opportunity to internalize the wonder of nature and the limits of reality. Only in this way can he develop the self-discipline and security he needs to explore his external and internal worlds and to become an acute and appreciative observer of life. Montessori encourages opportunities for authentic experiences rather than virtual ones, particularly for the child under the age of six, in the first plane of development.

The child must be grounded in reality – given authentic hand-to-mind activities in order for the healthy development of the brain. According to Montessori, reality and truth should be the starting point for the imagination from which springs creativity. Creativity then will be based not in fantasy, but in truth, for as Montessori says, “The more perfect the approximation to truth, the more perfect is art.” (Montessori, M., *The Advanced Montessori Method I*, 1991, p. 195)

Montessori emphasized the importance of contact with nature for the development of the body and spirit of the child.

“Montessori was aware that, with the spread of urban life, it would be increasingly difficult to satisfy this deep need of the child. She was, however, insistent: ‘There must be provision for the child to have contact with Nature; to understand and appreciate the order, the harmony, and the beauty in Nature; and also to master the natural laws which are the basis of all sciences

and arts, so that the child may better understand and participate in the marvelous things which civilization creates." (Lillard, P.P. p.58)

"Also, in keeping with the real world, where everyone cannot have the same thing at once, there is only one piece of each type of equipment in the Montessori classroom. Because he has no alternative, the child learns to wait until another is finished." (p.58)

"The child comes to see that he must respect the work of others, not because someone has said he must, but because this is a reality he meets in his daily experience." (Montessori, M. The Absorbent Mind, 1988, p.203)

The Montessori environment aims to support a free flow of movement between the indoor and outdoor environment where the child has a choice. In a Montessori environment the outside environment is prepared following the same principles as the inside environment, with activities set up so as to encourage the child's independent activity and exploration. Many of these activities will be real and practical ways of tending and caring for the outside space or garden. Inside, lessons are given as a model for the expected behavior outside which lays the foundation for larger "going out" experiences in the elementary.

### Social Interaction

Where there is freedom to interact, children learn to encourage and develop a sense of compassion and empathy for others. As children develop, they become more socially aware, preparing to work and play in groups. This social interaction is supported throughout the environment and is encouraged with the nature of multi-age classroom settings.

### Freedom of Choice

Freedom is the most essential element in a Montessori environment. It is only in an atmosphere of freedom that the child can construct himself. If the child possesses within himself the pattern for his own development, this inner guide must be allowed to direct the child's growth.

"The child must be aided in developing his will by being encouraged to coordinate his actions toward a given end and to achieve something he himself has chosen to do. Adults must be on their guard against tyrannizing him and substituting their wills for his." (Lillard, P. P. Montessori A Modern Approach, 1972, p.53)

The children are therefore free to choose their own activities in the classroom. This protection of the child's choice is a key element in the Montessori Method, and it must not be violated. Because they momentarily impose on the child's freedom, lessons should be brief. It is in the subsequent free choice and the repetition of the exercise that the child should spend most of his time. In order to have a choice of activities, the child must be presented with a variety of exercises designed for his auto-education.

"To be thus helpful it is necessary, [sic] rigorously to avoid the arrest of spontaneous movements and the imposition of arbitrary tasks." (Montessori, M., The Montessori Method, 1964, p.88)

The children are free to speak to each other and initiate activities whenever they like. They are not forced, subtly or otherwise, to join in any group activities or to share themselves with others when they are not ready or interested. Because they are not forced to compete with each other, the natural desire to help others develops spontaneously. This phenomenon is particularly interesting to watch between the older and younger children in the classroom, whose age differential may be as much as four years.

Through the freedom he is given, in a Montessori environment, the child has a unique opportunity to reflect upon his own actions, to determine their consequences both for himself and for others, to test himself against the limits of reality, to learn what gives him a sense of fulfillment and what leaves him feeling empty and dissatisfied, and to discover both his capabilities and his shortcomings. The opportunity to develop self-knowledge is one of the most important results of freedom in a Montessori classroom.

## Freedom of Choice must be accompanied by Responsibility

While "freedom" is naturally essential for self- construction it is important that we understand what Dr. Montessori considered to be "appropriate freedom." Montessori described a classroom that had achieved her concept of free operation as "a room in which all the children move about usefully, intelligently, and voluntarily, without committing any rough or rude act." (Montessori, M. *The Montessori Method*, 1964, p. 93)

Montessori believed that a child must be free to explore and follow his own natural impulses, thus developing his potential and increasing his knowledge of the world around him. Within the prepared environment, the child must experience freedom of movement, freedom of exploration and freedom to interact socially. This freedom ultimately leads to a greater freedom: freedom of choice.

Limitations: Freedom of Choice always has "limits"

The Collective Interest:

"The liberty of the child should have as its limit the collective interest; as its form what we universally consider good breeding. We must, therefore, check in the child whatever offends or annoys others, or whatever tends toward rough or ill-bred acts." (Montessori, M., *The Montessori Method*, p.87)

Knowledge Must Precede Choice:

The child may not choose any piece of material unless he already knows how to use it.

Correct Use of Materials:

"The child is allowed to occupy himself with any material only so long as he keeps on using it in the right way...Each of the Montessori occupations consists of a definite material, precisely determined to a particular use, the purpose of which is the child's development; and this development comes through a progress towards perfection which is attained precisely through this correct use of the materials. If the materials were vague and indeterminate in their aim and structure, they would not lead to development. It is just their scientific precision, which makes all the difference." (Standing, E.M. *Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work*, 1998, p.286-287)

Number of Materials in the Environment:

"There is one other limitation set to the free choice of the children which should be mentioned, especially as it is not a very obvious one. We refer to the fact that only certain occupations are allowed to find their way into the prepared environment. This involves a selection or choice made before the child comes to school at all. Yet in a sense, this choice is also made by the children themselves; for only those materials remain in the schoolroom that have previously stood the test of other children's interest and approval. They are occupations which by experience have been shown to correspond to some activity the germ of which is in the child. A material might be prepared with much effort and good will and yet not be chosen by the children. It should therefore be eliminated. Those only are retained which bring about that concentrated self-activity which is the basis of all auto-education." (p. 292)

## The Montessori Environments

### The Children's House Program (Ages 3-6)

"The first aim of the prepared environment is, as far as it is possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult." (Montessori, M. *The Secret of Childhood*, 1966, p. 267)

Montessori's idea of the prepared environment was that everything the child came in contact with would facilitate and maximize independent learning and exploration. This calm, well-ordered environment has a lot of movement and activity.

Children are free to choose and work on activities at their own pace. Here, they experience a combination of freedom and self-discipline, as guided by the environment. In addition to small tables, chairs and shelves, the environment contains: the materials necessary for carrying out the exercises of practical life; the sensorial materials; the materials for acquisition of culture-reading, writing, mathematics and cultural subjects.

The purpose of the Montessori environment is to develop the whole personality of the child, not merely his intellect.

Much time and effort is involved in creating a prepared Montessori classroom that is designed to meet the individual needs of all children. Through developmentally appropriate, sensorial material that moves hierarchically from simple to complex and concrete to abstract, children are given the freedom to fully develop their unique potential through a carefully prepared learning environment.

Critical Areas of the Primary Prepared Environment:

Practical Life - Practical life exercises instill care for oneself, for others, and for the environment. These activities include many of the tasks children see as part of the daily life in their home such as washing, ironing, doing the dishes, arranging flowers, polishing, and preparing food. Elements of human social skills are introduced with the exercises of grace and courtesy. Through these and other activities, children develop muscular coordination, enabling movement and the exploration of their surroundings. They learn to work at a task from beginning to end, and develop their will, (defined by Dr. Montessori as the intelligent direction of movement) their self-discipline and their capacity for total concentration.

Sensorial - Sensorial Materials are tools for development. Children build cognitive abilities and learn to order and classify impressions. They do this by touching, seeing, smelling, tasting, listening and exploring the physical properties of their environment through the specially designed materials.

Language - Language is vital to human existence. The Montessori environment provides rich and precise language. Children are given the opportunity to enrich the language. They become aware of its properties by being allowed to discover and explore themselves. If children are not hurried, they will learn to write and then naturally learn to read.

Cultural Extensions - Geography, History, Biology, Zoology, Art and Music are presented as extensions of the sensorial and language activities. Children learn about other cultures, past and present, which allows for their innate respect and love for their environment and a desire for it to flourish, creating a sense of unity with the world and its habitat.

Mathematics - The mathematics materials help the child learn and understand mathematical concepts by working with concrete materials. This work provides the child with solid groundwork for traditional mathematical principles, providing a capacity for abstract reasoning.

Grace and Courtesy: walking carefully, carrying things, opening and closing a door, tucking in a chair when finishing work, rolling up a floor mat, offering food, saying "please" and "thank you" and so on. It is in learning to do such seemingly mundane activities as dressing, dusting, sweeping, preparing and serving food, and fixing or building, work that the child sees going on around her all day long, that she learns to use her body and mind for a purpose, to concentrate, to complete cycles of activity, to finish what she started, and most importantly to contribute to the important work of the family, the social group.

Children's house is a "living room" for children. Children choose their work from among the self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves (and they work in a specific work area, over a period of time, the children develop into a "normalized community," working with high concentration and few interruptions.

## The Primary Program (Ages 6 - 12)

The Primary program extends the opportunity of Montessori education to children aged 6-12 and offers a warm supportive atmosphere that incorporates a high level of expectation for the quality of thought, work and mastery of content and skill.

The Montessori primary environment is designed to develop basic skills as well as spark the child's active imagination and encourage creativity. The unique Montessori curriculum challenges the child to find answers to the questions and interests already emerging at age six - how, why and wherefore? At least as important as the "facts" about the world that are learned, is the development of a rigorous questioning and investigative process within the child. Students learn not only answers to their questions, but also are encouraged to wonder, discover what questions must be asked, think through problems, analyze situations and find answers for themselves.

Cosmic education is the central focus of the curriculum throughout the Primary experience; integrating history, language and literature, mathematics, geometry, science, geography, art, music, botany, zoology and physical education.

These areas of study provide experiences for the child that enable him to understand the keys to who we are, where we came from and why we are here. The classroom environments are arranged for small group lessons and work is often collaborative, incorporating intriguing Montessori learning materials and models, maps, charts, historical artifacts, scientific specimens and apparatus, and animals and plants for which the children are responsible.

Interdisciplinary studies combine language, mathematics, sciences, geography, history, and the arts. Mastery of mathematical and analytical processes, writing and communications skills, and reading comprehension are the disciplines emphasized at these levels. Young people are naturally fascinated by the universe. Science is an integral element of the curriculum and includes botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, geology, and astronomy.

The trained and certified Montessori teachers are specialists in the child at this stage of development, and their work is that of a guide and a generalist, providing positive reinforcement for the child's exploration of knowledge. This discovery approach toward learning allows each child to actively be involved in his own education. Emphasis is placed on a love of learning, self-discipline, and respect and community cooperation.

The Primary classroom is a mini society where children actively seek to find and create a place in the group. Students share the responsibility of managing their community; they learn to respect and care for themselves, others, and the environment. In the Primary Program, children are encouraged to go out beyond the classroom to extend their learning. Research field trips, as well as community service projects, are utilized as appropriate for the ages and interests of each group.

The primary aged child is encouraged at all times to take responsibility for his actions. He thereby develops a strong sense of independence, personal awareness and respect for himself and his society.

## **Support for the Child: The adults**

### The Role of the Guide

The first step an intending Montessori teacher must take is to prepare herself. For one thing, she must keep her imagination alive, the Montessori teacher is constantly looking for a child who is not yet there. The teacher, when she begins work in our schools, must have a kind of faith that the child will reveal himself through work. The teacher must believe that this child before her will show his true nature when he finds a piece of work that attracts him. So, what must she look out

for? That one child or another will begin to concentrate." (Montessori, M., *The Absorbent Mind*, 1988, p. 252)

"The teacher's first duty is therefore to watch over the environment, and this takes precedence over all the rest. Its influence is indirect, but unless it is well done there will be no effective and permanent results of any kind, physical, intellectual or spiritual. (p. 253)

Responsibilities of the Guide (as an Adult)

Creator and Caretaker —"This involves the selection, placement and upkeep of everything in the classroom. Careful thought and effort are put into the environment's initial preparation and its modification and re-creation every day...All people who interact with the learners are also a part of the environment. Give careful consideration to appearance and behavior. Adult appearance, behavior, attitude and mood can have an impact on what happens in the environment.

Exemplar —"Adults constantly serve as models and examples to the youngsters with whom they live and work. Adult behavior has a profound impact in the classroom... Teachers should constantly try to exhibit the kinds of behavior they expect and desire from students... In Montessori schools equality of all group members is encouraged. Students are expected to be leaders and active participants in learning and in group decision-making. Through modeling and good examples, values and habits of democracy and respect for others are fostered." (p.54)

Observer —"Careful observation and record keeping are important in planning for individual needs and curriculum."

Every Montessori teacher has some way of recording observations and student activity. Older students take increasing responsibility for record keeping and will usually maintain work records or diaries...Observation skills include an awareness of the entire environment...Skills of self-observation are also important. It takes a great deal of perceptive self-awareness to see how one's own attitudes and behaviors affect others...It is also important to step back, observe and not intervene so that children may practice, discover and solve problems on their own...

In the Primary as in the Children's House stage, the first step to take in order to become a Montessori teacher is to shed omnipotence and to become a joyous observer. If the teacher can really enter into the joy of seeing things, being born and growing under his own eyes, and can clothe himself in the garment of humility, many delights are reserved for him that are denied to those who assume infallibility and authority in front of a class.' (Maria Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*, 1989, pp.83-84)

Stimulator —To emphasize the importance of internal over external motivation, the teacher is more of a stimulator than a motivator of students in the traditional sense of the word. The teacher plays a role in motivation by inspiring it.

Instructor —"The main way students are introduced to materials is through careful demonstration, or presentation. In a presentation, the teacher slowly and precisely uses the material in its intended way while a learner or group of learners watch. During such presentations, unnecessary words and movements are avoided and actions are broken into discernible steps to increase understanding and the chance of success when the materials are used by the student later.

The decision to do a particular lesson or presentation often results directly from observations and assessments of other work. A common technique is called the three-period lesson." (p.57)

Supporter—"As much as nonintervention, self-teaching and liberty must be stressed, the adult's role as supporter and helper should not be neglected. When a student needs help and requests it, that help must be there. Part of the role of a supporter, however, is found in holding back... '[The teacher] must always be calm, always ready to run when she is called to show her



love and sympathy. To be always ready, this is all that is required.' Maria Montessori, *The Child*" (p.58)

Protector and Respector —"Respect for oneself, others, the environment and for life in general is fundamental and essential to the Montessori approach to education. Adults must:

- Protect each child from physical or psychological danger to health and well-being
- Respect and protect all people's basic right to learn and grow in their unique ways and at their own unique paces
- Respect and protect every child's right to make mistakes and correct them without adult intervention
- Respect and protect all children's rights and abilities to take responsibility for their own actions and deal with their own problems
- Respect and protect every child's right to choose his or her own activity
- Respect and protect each child's need to have secure and consistent limits for behavior.

### Community Building

At Mammolina Montessori School, we understand and recognize that our school is a community of which children and adults are vital members. This school community has a significant impact on our students' capacity to learn, grow, create, develop, incorporate values and relate peacefully and respectfully to others and to the world. Therefore, we strive to build a constructive partnership between the family and school in support of each child's educational development.

- We expect all members of our school community to respect and show support for the principles and values established in this document.
- There is a critical need to provide continuing education and support for our families. Participation in Parent Education events is expected.
- We value input from all of our community members in our decision making processes.
- All activities associated with the school, including but not limited to, charity and service, recruitment of families/teachers, marketing, communication, mentoring and parent education will support Mammolina Montessori's mission and vision statements.