

Follow The Child



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Editor's Note



Welcome to the year 2022!!!!
And Happy Birthday to
Dr. Montessori

So delighted that ushering in the New Year with the hope and confidence that things will return to normal soon brings a sense of relaxation and joy. In so many ways, this has been a life-changing year for all of us. What a year it's been so far: For all of us, 2021 will be a year of terrible sorrow and significant challenges. Beautiful, amazing shows of kindness and giving were also seen. There were moments of joy and laughter in the midst of devastating difficulties. As things began to fall apart, impermanence-as well as resilience-were visible everywhere. This has been a life-changing year for all of us in so many ways. Here are a few of the

things that I have learned this year that I'm taking with me into 2021. I have learned that it is possible to slow down and reflect on the many ways that as educators we often take for granted and miss on the small elements that are crucial of observation and mindfulness. The pandemic not only taught me, and I'm sure all of us, the value of our profession and why we all refer to ourselves as Montessorians.

Adaptations became second nature. Some of us were obliged to educate using previously taboo methods, such as using online, offline, videos, and other means of ensuring that we were involved in the child's learning. How many of us took a breath and remembered the youngster!!!! Was the child's adaptation straightforward? Did the child feel compelled to please

both his parents and his teacher? Or did the child genuinely enjoy himself, as many people believe and claim? This is the "Secret of the Child," who elevated it to a whole new level with the resilience and ease with which he/she handles everything. Salutations to this child, who never fails to accept peace and compassion in the face of life's restrictions and hardships. And salutations to the great educator of all times our dearest Dr. Montessori who showed us the path to respect and love this wonderful development of the child.

Wishing you and your loved ones a most reflective and peaceful year and all the best for 2022.

Smathi Ramindranath

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Dr. Montessori Approach to Language in the Second Phase of the Child's Development

Mario M. Montessori

Archived Article

Time and again Montessori teachers raise the question how to teach reading and writing to children when at five or six years, they first enter the elementary school. For the children of this age group who are on the threshold of facing the immense accumulation of knowledge and begin to feel the urge of an exciting mental contact with the world and humanity, to be held back by the inability to read and write is a pitiful drawback indeed.

In all things when confronted with a problem, Dr. Montessori seemed to be able to see, as if by intuition, what was essential.

With regard to writing she discovered the essentials to be:

a. To bring the children to the realization that words were composed of sounds; so she brought them to analyze the words into sounds; b. to relate the symbols of the alphabet with these sounds (not with the names of the letters). For this she invented the sandpaper letters; c. to enable the children to acquire the physical





ability of reproducing the letters in writing.

For the whole complex she devised two parallel sets of exercises: the physical (through the metal insets and related activities); and the mental (composing words with the moveable alphabet). The ensuing results are illustrated in her book "The Montessori Method".

But it did not always work, and often she was confronted by teachers who had trouble in transmitting the ability of reading and writing. What were the reasons?

Again she found the essentials. Generally they were either or both of the following two:

1. The attitude of the teacher herself. The drudgery she suffered in her own school days unconsciously prevailed and made her oblivious of the wonder and

miracle achieved through the alphabet.

2. The children were too old to respond the ways the materials were presented in the Children's House.

For the children of the age-group of three to six who are getting to know the world through their sense and manipulations, the letters and exercises are presented mainly as means of exploration. In his environment the child is surrounded by language-sounds-why not help him to explore these sounds with the key of the few that compose the alphabet? The child is surrounded by letters, why not help him explore them? See how many he can recognize?....

The main emphasis then should be on exploring. Exploring the sounds of the language when he yet does not know the letters; exploring by touch the form of the symbols once

he has connected the sounds to the letters. There is then also the part of analyzing the words into sounds and expressing them in terms of symbols, with the moveable alphabet. This is what is important. These are the aspects, the exciting aspects the teacher should keep in mind. Forget about teaching reading and writing.

The tendency to explore the environment through the senses is at its height, one might say, around three or four years of age. At five or six years, when in the approaching second phase of childhood new sensitive periods begin to assert themselves, few children seem to feel the urge of indulging repeatedly in the sand paper letters. For gone is their interest to experience things solely through touch, smell or sight. Almost gone also is their interest to get acquainted with the visible immediate world; their quest for what is this, what is that. They are

now at the threshold of entering the phase in which the urge is to explore that world which is invisible, which is beyond the immediate : the world of reasons.

Then the role of imagination begins to come into its own as it enables the children to visualize what they are eager to understand Such as what really happened in the past and to discern the causes and the effects of all sorts of events. The majority of children seem to be therefore too old to be interested in the mechanical operation of touching the letters. At the same time, the forming of words with the movable alphabet in itself offers too little challenge as an intellectual operation.

Dr. Montessori felt that one should then assume a new approach

towards these children. An approach that would satisfy the new pre-dominant tendencies of this second phase of growth which included besides other tendencies such as hero worship to create groups with their own “secrets” and “laws” sometimes even an own language which others would not be able to understand; to use imagination. All could perhaps be made use of in order to arouse their interest in humanity and its achievements; With regard to literacy one could perhaps kindle even greater interest in the alphabet than that shown in the first phase.

It was the illustration of how these new tendencies could be used to arouse in children appreciation for humanity that Dr. Montessori stressed in her later courses.

With regard to thought communication she gave the future teachers the impact of the miraculosity of the alphabet. She illustrated some aspects of this miracle and dramatized whatever aspect struck her at the moment. Following are a few of them.

(a) To make himself heard, man no longer depended on the volume of his voice. With the alphabet he could be heard from one continent to another, from yesterday to tomorrow. He could reach people distant in space and in time. Without uttering a sound in silence, his thoughts could be heard all over the world at the same time.

(b) With the creation of alphabet the impact of power of death was destroyed; the impact of the sermon on the mountain of Christ





for instance, could be felt even after 2000 years after His death.

(c) The alphabet constituted a border line between legend and history. Before the appearance of writing stories of past events went down by words of mouth, from generation to generation or from nation to nation each adding or changing them. Writing started recording and therefore history.

To stress the miraculous power of writing, she also related incidents such as the one of an illiterate man who had been ordered to carry some pears to another person and who could not understand how the fact that he had eaten one of the fruit contained in the basket could be revealed to the recipient in spite of his having taken the precaution before eating, to hide the letter under a mound of leaves so that it

should not see him in the act. To him this was magic.

But what most continues to awaken interest, after this new approach was put in practice, is the history of the alphabet from the primitive times when nobody knew how to read, upto the moment when the alphabet gave this almost magical power to the people who knew the secret.

If the story is well told and properly illustrated by charts, it arouses enormous enthusiasm in children of this age-group.

Dr. Montessori gave illustration from different countries such as Egypt, China, Mexico and so on, countries which at the time could have no possible connection with each other, to show that this impellent need was common to all

civilizations. She gave examples of different systems such as picture-writing, hieroglyphs, ideographs, syllable-writing etc. to make the children come to feel the marvel of the alphabet by means of which one can write anything in the language merely by representing each sound with a symbol. How numerous must have been the symbols when each represented an idea or an object instead of a sound! How much more difficult it must have been to know and remember them all!

With dates and maps Dr. Montessori illustrated that it took thousands and thousands of years and the contribution of many different people, to reach the alphabet of our time. Now people have to learn only twenty or thirty signs and yet with them they are able to express as efficiently as

though they were speaking, whatever comes to their mind.

And more important still, furnished with this key they can absorb, in silent communion, all the accumulated wisdom of the past and the present; they can share the emotions and the sentiments that moved great people who may be dead since thousands of years.

Perhaps it is worth recalling here an almost unknown passage in the *Autoeducazione*, to which few people pay attention, where Dr. Montessori describes a child who upon finding a page with something written on it, read it and was struck by the fact that it conveyed something he found stupendous. The wonder of the child that a story could be told in such a silent way! The excitement! Dr. Montessori used this approach for all subjects. Which or how many of such stories about the invention of writing could be used by an imaginative teacher to arouse the interest of the illiterate child, is left to the common sense of the teacher and to the circumstances in a class.

After having aroused the interest, the procedure is as follows. In the first place, to have several entertaining sessions with the children so as to bring them to the realization that words are composed of sounds; for example, that the word “hand” is made of the sounds h-a-n-d. when this is done in a group instead of with an individual, it creates more interest and excitement. And once this process has caught the mind, the children analyze the words



spontaneously whenever they hear a new one.

The second step is to show that whatever word there may be in a language it can be represented by a few signs and that these contain vowels and consonants. One brings in either the box of movable alphabet or displays a wall chart with all the letters of the alphabet where the vowels are written on the top or in a different colour, generally in red which stands out more.

It may happen, once the children are stuck by the fact that there are only a few letters in comparison to the quantity of words, that they want to test this and ask the teacher to make very difficult words which they suggest. Then the teacher composes them with the movable alphabet and also refers to the chart where the letters are written.

Later, one points out that the vowels form the main part of every word and that they are much fewer in number in comparison with the consonants.

Once this is established, the vowels are the first ones to be taught. In showing each letter (sand paper or printed) one should show also how they are formed. The letter “l” for example, is formed (in the cursive form) by a hook with a dot on top of the long arm; the letter “u” has two hooks with no dots, etc. Of course one must show how to trace the letters, where to begin, where to end.

This can be done in various ways. But in the first collective lesson the most efficient way is to trace the letter(s), first on the tablet of the sand paper and then ask the children to do it in the air (You make an “a”, you make an “u” etc.).

subsequently, as individual exercise the children are asked to trace the sand paper letters by themselves.

The position of the letters is also important. This is taken up somewhat later. The teacher shows a sand paper or a printed letter in different position, for instance placing the upside down or sideways, and asks the children “Is this the way it should be?” Subsequently, to offer the children a further opportunity to dwell upon it, she uses the movable alphabet and placing the letters in the wrong way asks the children to correct their position.

To draw attention to this is important specially later for certain consonants, for example, the letter “d”; if the half circle is placed on the right hand of the stroke, it becomes a “b”, if the



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stroke is placed below the line where the circle is, it becomes either a “p” or a “q”

The first impact given after the children have learnt the vowels is to show a chart which reproduces any piece of writing in which the consonants and the vowels are distinguished by colour. This makes the children realize that they already can recognize, that is “read” almost half of what is written.

In her own dramatic way Dr. Montessori asked one of the pupils to print with a stick all the letters he knew from a text which was prepared in the above mentioned way. As the pupil pointed out all the vowels one by one, she asked the others if they too knew them. They said “yes”. “You See”, she said, “you can already read more than half!” “But we don’t understand it!” “Yes, you see how many ‘a’s, ‘e’s and ‘u’s etc. there are? Let us see how many words we can make if we learn just two or three of the consonants.....”

The next exercise would be then to learn two or three consonants which should be intelligently chosen by the teacher so that using the movable alphabet and combining them with the vowels a great number of words can be formed. (In a collective exercise the teacher can also use the blackboard). For instance, if in English, one were to take the letters “t”, “p” and “r”. To begin with one could combine two of them “t” and “p” for instance, with each of the vowels. Thus one would get:

pat
pit



pet
 pot
 put
 then reversing the order of those
 two consonants one would get:
 tap
 tip
 tep*
 top
 tup*
 the ones marked with a cross make
 no sense and are therefore taken
 away.

This often surprises the children
 who ask why: why there are some
 combinations which make sense
 and others do not? This may
 provide the occasion for another
 dramatic lesson: the invention of
 spoken language by man. In the
 beginning man could not talk
 because there were no words; the
 great spirit of man was
 imprisoned. Each word had to be
 invented by some one, given a

meaning and this meaning
 accepted by all the others. So that
 words represent a sort of mutual
 agreement among all men, women
 and children to use those particular
 sounds to convey those particular
 meanings. One can make indeed
 fascinating stories about this which
 was one of the first struggles of
 man to free his soul from the
 congenital silence that stifled
 primitive humanity. Later one can
 make use of etymology to show
 origins and the changes, both in
 form and in meaning, the words
 have undergone in one's own
 language and, wherever this is
 possible, also in a family of
 languages.

For example, in the Latin group the
 original Latin word panis has
 become pan in Spanish, pane in
 Italian, pain in French....etc. the
 same word in the Anglo-Saxon
 group is bread in English, brood in

Dutch, Brot in German, braud in
 Icelandic, brod in Danish and
 Swedish.

This not only arouses the
 enthusiasm of the children but also
 a sense of appreciation for
 humanity, a sense of gratitude for
 the thousands of unknown human
 beings who shaped the words and
 left them to us so that we can
 express ourselves. The teacher
 should be an artist, able to play on
 the chords of the child's emotions
 to produce an unforgettable
 melody to accompany the dramatic
 story of man.

To continue with the previous
 illustration, the letters "r" and "t"
 can be combined then in the same
 way; and finally all the three
 consonants, producing:
 trip reversed: prit* but then
 trap prat* part and rapt
 trop* etc. port

trup* pert etc.
trep* etc.
(none of which would be valid)

Gradually the number of consonants is increased. The possible combinations increase consequently. From the first exercise of such compositions the teacher writes the words out on paper or on the black-board and asks the children to read them. As more consonants are given the number of words augments enormously and so does the possibility of the children to compose words. Those the teacher gives to read cannot include them all but they should include both the new combinations and some of the previous ones. At first the words are written in two colours, one for the vowels and one for the consonants, then in one colour.

At all stages there should be a

variety of books in the class, preferably illustrated. These should not be not only the silly books produced for children of that age, containing only few words that they are expected to read, but real books. For these offer the children the exciting challenge of seeing how much they can already read and understand.

Very soon the teacher can start writing not mere words but sentences, including the Montessori “commands”. Most of these lessons and presentations are collective but they incite individual exercises to compose words with the movable alphabet, to write them out and to read them.

To acquire the elasticity of the hand the children use the same means as in the children's house: making figures with the metal insects or other means and filling them in with coloured pencils, filling in any

out-lined pictures such as landscapes, houses, flowers, birds etc. the directives that should be kept in mind in this connection are (a) that the figures should offer the possibility of making long strokes and a variety of short ones; (b) that in filling them in, the children must keep within the outlines; (c) that the variations of colouring should include also effects of “shading” by varying the pressure used on the pencil, some times hard, some times less hard and some times very very little. This type of exercise appeals to the sixyear olds, but in order to be effective the three directives should be insisted upon. It should be kept in mind also that this is an exercise which should be introduced quite early in the class and continued parallelly with the learning of reading and writing.

Once the children have learnt to read and write to some extent one can then take up the aspect of calligraphy or “a good hand writing”. This is done by asking the children to write carefully, each day a little piece, on lined papers in which the spaces for long and short letters are duly defined.

As it may have become evident by now, learning to read and to write, for these children who come to school without having frequented and Children's House, goes more or less parallelly. But given the right impetus and the realization that the alphabet is just an easy means to enter the vast, new, exciting world of human experiences, children generally get to read and write within the span of a few months.



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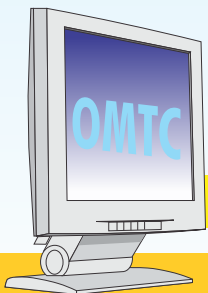
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“Language is one of the most striking things he absorbs - one of the characteristics of man - but later he absorbs everything. He becomes a living representative of living humanity.”

Dr. Maria Montessori

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Learning and Teaching

Sujata R. Kumar

Is there a difference between the two?

Yes. One is inner, the other is from outside.

If I can use a metaphor, It's like fish and water... fish is in water and keeps drinking it. It retains what's needed by the body and eliminates what isn't. Same way, teaching is all around us. We learn what makes sense to us. (We learn for the exams and promptly forget it. Having said that, we remember certain facts- because they caught our interest/whatever the reason is)

In some ways, they are very close, intertwined in fact. Just because the teacher teaches, we do not learn. We need to want to learn. That's when we make the effort and make the learning our own!

Teaching happens. We retain that's important for us, we like it or we like the teacher.

In a conventional classroom, learning happens with experience-teaching is just listening to the teacher. Over a period we learn and then forget it if we do not put it to use. The information that we



use, is the one we can use over a period of time because we have learnt it of our own interest or used it often enough.

It's from our 'schools' that we get our pressure to 'teach'. Obviously, we did not have motivation to learn most of our subjects as we had no clue about them. Whereas, imagine we know about shapes- created them, handled them, had noticed them in the environment around us- and the teacher had taught us connecting the teaching to real stuff around us! Can you imagine how the learning would have been!! And enhanced by using the knowledge around us.... Often it happened by accident for most of us. Of course, there are intuitive teachers. Did you have one? Look at the teacher whose subject you

excelled in. That is still remembered. Look at the situations surrounding it. Does any of the above reason ring true?

A teacher need students to teach, while a student can learn without a 'teacher.'

There WILL be a teacher involved in any learning, only may not be in conventional way, the one we know.

If I look at my learning in this instance, it was the fact that we decided to have a live on the FB. We decided to examine this topic and my interest in the whole, brought me a great big learning about teaching and learning and the distinction and closeness between them.

The teacher may take any form- a schoolmarm, an event, the surrounding, an incident happening with someone else...the list can go on and on!

You may question, "How does it make a difference whether we teach the child or the child learns?" For this, we need to understand a few things about Teaching and Learning.

Teaching does not guarantee learning (we all have proof for it) Teaching and learning are NOT two faces of the same coin. But both of them complete the act.

There is ALWAYS a learner and a teacher in any form of learning!

Teacher/teaching

Learner/learning

It comes from outside. teacher may take any form	Is an inside business. The impulse for it comes from inside.
There is someone/something teaching.	Learning is a personal act- only the person can decide what to learn
The teacher can only guess or create that interest in the learner(prime the mind). Only then, the learner will learn.	The learner decides what to learn.
Works well with teaching a subject/science/study.	Works well with life skills.
Understanding is based on learning. Then it is memory for exams in subjects	Role modelling/exposure, demonstrating then practicing and understanding is the route to learning.

Often we are asked, what's the big difference between Montessori and Conventional schooling? The difference lies in the learning-the Joy of Learning. What's learnt with

joy, is retained. And anything learnt in the first 6 years, drives our thoughts, feelings and actions LIFELONG! So, if learning happens with joy, the joy of

"Learning" is retained lifelong.

So, how to make this "joy of learning" happen with my child?

* Help create interest in the child.



*Then create opportunities for the child to learn. Can you give experiences rather than lecture?

*Then create opportunities for the child to practice his learning.

This completes the cycle of learning and we have an independent child as a result.

All this is not as difficult as it sounds. Enjoy the time and the fact that your child explores the world around. If your child enjoys reasonable freedom, we are good to go!

Just for a rough idea- A young child(3-6) learns about the physical world. A slightly older one(6-12) learns about the intellectual world. The adolescent(12-18) learns about the bodily physical world and

the (18-24 or so) the spiritual world, learning about the vacation for self and the world betterment.

All this may leave you wondering, “How will my child learn if he's not taught/we are not teaching?”

If we understand the above, we will not have this question in mind. Who taught the child to walk? To talk? The child learnt, because people around were walking/talking.

Of course, we need to teach/state/reinforce certain things that are not practiced around them (that's food for thought for parents)

Is teaching harmful for the child then?

Not at ALL. Teaching forcefully and expecting the child to 'perform' is harmful.

There are occasions we need to teach. Best would be to expose the child to a variety of things and teach when the child shows interest in something! Of course, please involve the child in the teaching process :)

If we offer the choice to the child or explain why, the child is more ready to accept and that becomes a part of learning that's joyful and lasts life long.

In fact, we become the personalities that we are, all because of the teachers around-human or otherwise!



List of IMC Recognised Montessori Houses of Children

Karnataka

1. Ace Montessori, Padmanabha Nagar, Bangalore.
2. Aim Montessori, Uttarahalli, Bangalore.
3. Akshara Montessori House of Children, Jalahobli, Bangalore.
4. Ankuraa's Montessori House of Children, HBR Layout, Bangalore.
5. Anurag Montessori House of Children, Jayanagar, Bangalore.
6. Anveshana - Montessori House of Children, Banaswadi, Bangalore.
7. Arunodoy Montessori House of Children, Koramangala, Bangalore.
8. Atreya Vidyaniketan, Kurubarahalli, Bangalore.
9. Bright Beginnings, Nellurhalli Main Road, Bangalore.
10. Chimes Montessori, Basavangudi, Bangalore.
11. Child-Care Montessori, Koramangala, Bangalore.
12. Dew Drops Montessori, Rajarajeshwari Nagar, Bangalore.
13. Discover Montessori, J.P. Nagar 8th Phase, Bangalore.
14. Dishaa Montessori House of Children, HSR Layout, Bangalore.
15. Divine Education Society, Yeshwanthpur, Bangalore.
16. Floretz Academy Pvt Ltd, HSR Layout, Bangalore.
17. Floretz Academy Pvt Ltd, Off Sarjapur Road, Bangalore.
18. Fleurdalis Montessori House of Children, Sahakamagar, Bangalore.
19. Growing Wonders, Jayanagar, Bangalore.
20. Growing Wonders Montessori House of Children, Kempgowda Nagar, Bangalore.
21. Golden Arch Montessori House of Children, HSR Layout, Bangalore.
22. Head Start Montessori House of Children, Koramangala, Bangalore.
23. Hymamshu Jyothi Kala Peetha, Malleswaram, Bangalore.
24. Incarnations Montessori, Jayanagar, Bangalore.
25. Jackfruit House - Montessori House of Children, Malleswaram, Bangalore.
26. Parijatha Montessori House of Children, JP Nagar, Bangalore.
27. Prayag Montessori, J.P. Nagar, Bangalore.
28. Premanjali Foundation, J.P. Nagar, 2nd Phase, Bangalore.
29. Prerana Montessori House of Children, BEML Layout, RR Nagar, Bangalore.
30. Romasha Vidyaniketan, Okalipuram, Bangalore.
31. Seven Senses House of Children, Indra Nagar, Bangalore.
32. Shishu Griha Montessori and High School, New Thippasandra, Bangalore.
33. Shraddha Montessori House of Children, Giri Nagar, Bangalore.
34. Siksha Montessori House of Children, BTM 2nd Stage, Bangalore.
35. Touch Internationale Montessori House of Children, Kalyan Nagar, Bangalore.
36. Vidyanjali Academy for Learning, Cholanayakanahalli, Bangalore.
37. Vistas Montessori, Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore.

Preliminary Recognition

1. Head Start Montessori, Whitefield, Bangalore
2. Bloom Montessori House of Children, Vijaya Bank Layout, Off Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore

Chrysalis

1. Mystique Montessori House of Children, Yelahanka New Town, Bangalore.
2. Prerana Montessori House of Children, Indira Nagar, Bangalore.
3. Vschool, Armane Nagar, Bangalore.

Caterpillar

1. Unicus Montessori House of Children, Kasthuri Nagar, Bangalore.

Tamilnadu

1. Aalam Montessori House of Children, Sowripalayam, Coimbatore.
2. Al-Qamar Academy, Kottivakkam, Chennai.
3. Bodhana Montessori House of Children, Velachery, Chennai.
4. Learning Tree Montessori School, Shastri Nagar, Adyar, Chennai.
5. Learning Tree Montessori School, Venkateshwara Nagar, Adyar, Chennai.
6. Patasala Montessori School, Mahalingapuram, Chennai.
7. Sharanalaya Montessori School, Nungambakkam, Chennai.
8. Sishya Academy, Cumbum, Theni District.
9. Sprouts Montessori House of Children, Mylapore, Chennai.
10. Stepping Stone Montessori House of Children, Chetpet, Chennai.
11. Vel International Public School, Kanuvai (PO), Coimbatore.
12. Vruksha Montessori House of Children, Alwarpet, Chennai.

Kerala

Preliminary Recognition

1. Springfield House of Children, Thalesseery, Kerala.

Advice for Teachers

Mario M. Montessori

Archived Article

Fragments out of a letter of Mario M. Montessori, in answer to some questions regarding the starting of a class.

We publish this as we think it may be of help to several of our readers.

It is not the first time that difficulties have been found in starting a class. Almost certainly this is due to the lack of guidance the children experience in their family life. The attitude of some parents seems to be that small children should allowed to obey whatever impulse motivates them in the belief that any restriction may harm the child psychologically. Generally, the result is that when the children collect in a class, there is a lot of disorder.

In many countries the family brings the children to respect both the environment and the members of society they may be involved with. Sometimes this is done by punishments or violence, other times by loving guidance, so in such countries when children come to school, the problems having to deal with unbridled and riotous behaviour do not arise. That is why generally in the courses given in these countries, the question of



how to start a class in such conditions is not treated. Of course there are always who have “deviations” but these do not disrupt the general order.

In her books dr. Montessori recommends not to go directly against these troubles but to create conditions that will re-establish connections between the children and those “inner guides” that will lead them to harmonious development.

Among her instructions to the teacher she gives certain basic principles: that she should respect child's work; that should not impose her personality on the child but only guide him to new fields of exploratory and/or self-corrective experiences; that her attention should be given to the environment as to keep it as attractive as possible and fully provided with the items of activity the children need for their development.

The recommendations to the teachers with regard to the children, are that they should

impress on the children respect to other children who are working, respect for the material and use it for the purpose it was meant for.

These two recommendations seem to be contradictory. Even more contradictory seems to be her statement that the teacher should make herself as attractive as possible, entertaining and almost seductive.





There are, however, certain considerations: the first and most important is that Dr. Montessori gave recommendations and not dogmas. The recommendations imply that persons who receive them are endowed with common Sense and are able to discriminate these according to situations.

Another consideration is that, on coming to school for the first time, these very young children find themselves:

- a) With a strange adult (the teacher),
- b) With other children of the same age-group. Each child in his family was the only one to have special rights. In the class he is in a community of individuals of the same age, who all have the same

rights as he. Each child therefore feels “out of place” and uncomfortable.

The first task of the teacher therefore is to remove this negative feeling, and to make the children feel at home. She should do so by establishing a peasant relation with each one of them: asking their name (which she must be careful not to forget), saying how nice it is to have them with her and in general by doing whatever her common sense suggests. That will lead the children to acquire confidence in her and to like her.

The second task is to provide entertaining experiences. A successful procedure is to ask if they know any songs. If some of them do, to choose one and start

singing and ask the children to join in. after one song, another, and so on. But she should not rely on songs only. Again her common sense should guide her to find sets of pleasant occupations and alternate among them.

After a few days, having gained the confidence of the children, she may begin to introduce individual occupations: not with mechanical toys but with something which requires a certain amount of attention. It may be stringing beads. The procedure may be give beads of the same colour first, then alternating beads of two colours, then of three. Other occupations might be separating beads of different colour or of different shape (square, oval, round) kept in a bowl, and to put each kind in a different container.

Again here common sense may suggest other occupations-building blocks, puzzles, plasticine, etc.

These individual occupations should be intercepted with collective ones: story-telling, singing etc. after some days and after several means of individual occupations have been shown-when the children come at the beginning of the day-she should start asking each child what he would like to do. Then as each of them has chosen what he prefers, the problems of riotous behaviour gradually will disappear. If not, as a relation of affection has already been established between the individual children and the teacher, she can easily deal with the situation.

Gradually, in group activities the teacher should introduce occupations which require some control and offer some challenge. A type of such games might be to ask to see who can carry a chair from one part of the room to the other without making a noise and then, when the children have done it, show the exact technique of doing it.

Another suggestion might be, after having put a number of chairs in a straight line to see who can first walk, then run, weaving between them without hitting the chairs. Or ask them to put the chairs along a wall in a straight line, but not touching the wall. Still another suggestion might be, to ask any two children to carry a table from one part of the room to the other

without making a noise, and later to put objects on the table and carry it without making the objects fall. If after such activities the teacher explains and shows how best to attain the aim, she will gain further confidence from the children who will become more collaborative and who will begin to acquire conscious self-control.

By now you will probably think that there is nothing of Montessori in all this because the teacher is guiding the children. Therefore the child is not independent and it has no free choice, no possibility of self-correction etc. but that is just the point.

The Montessori materials and procedures are introduced when the children are not entirely





dependent for activity on whatever impulse urges them, however erratic. One begins bringing in Montessori when children have begun to acquire the possibility of using their mind to direct their movements to reach an aim, even if this is suggested to them. Then the first Montessori individual tasks that are given are connected with exercises of practical life. To introduce them, the lessons are given collectively, seldom to the whole class but more often to a group. A simple exercise might be strewing paper confetti on the floor, draw with chalk a little circle in the middle of the room; then with a broom sweep the floor showing how to collect the confetti within the circle, from there with a hand broom in a dustbin and finally to a waste paper basket.

Another one might be dusting a

table after having spread it with some powder that does not stick too much to the surface. Generally, if the technique and the use of each item included in an exercise are shown clearly, the child learns not only to respect the environment but to take care of it. In the beginning while some children who have been shown the techniques, are doing this type of tasks, the others continue to do the non-Montessori tasks which they have chosen or which have been suggested to them.

Gradually all the children are introduced to exercises of practical life, and there are many of these. Then one finds that the children choose spontaneously which exercises they want to do and keep themselves occupied. They have begun to be attached to their “inner guides”.

It is then that the other set of Dr. Montessori's recommendations come into play. The teacher no longer tries to attract the attention of the children to herself but gradually retires in the background. But she is always vigilant if a guide is necessary. In the child it is the inner guides which are now present. For him the teacher becomes a help to be made use of. Sometimes when needed, she comes for a few minutes to give further light in the field the child is engaged in, or to open a new field. But the “drive” is in him. The teacher is an occasional item in the path of his progress. When this stage has been reached, free choice and freedom begin to appear in the class. The Montessori sensorial and cultural material are introduced later, guided by her common sense, considers the time has come.



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