



GRACE MONTESSORI ACADEMY

EARLY CHILDHOOD CURRICULUM

The Prepared Environment

The prepared environment is Maria Montessori's concept that the classroom environment can be designed to facilitate independent learning and exploration by the child. The Montessori classroom invites activity and participation appropriate to each child's age and maturity. It is active yet calm. Here, the child experiences a blend of freedom and discipline in an orderly space designed to meet his needs.

Practical Life Skills

The Practical Life exercises found on the pink shelves are an essential part of the Montessori curriculum. The purpose of Practical Life is to provide the child with the opportunity to develop a sense of independence. The teacher prepares the environment in such a way as to entice and excite the child. Lessons are set up individually on trays and are regularly rotated with new and/or developmentally higher tasks. The child learns basic fundamental activities such as: care of self, grace and courtesy, control of movement, care for the environment, basic nutrition and food preparation, and order. This area also promotes the fine motor skills in preparation for writing. The development of hand coordination also assists in conceptual development and the materials are design to encourage independent thinking, logic, problem solving skills and an understanding of sequence, order and natural limits. The young child is given the opportunity to be spontaneous while fulfilling his natural curiosities and developing self-esteem and self-confidence.

Sensorial Skills

The sensorial area found on the peach shelves consists of Montessori's materials that are designed to help the child sort out the many varied impressions perceived by the senses. The two functional concepts of the sensorial materials are: how to make careful distinctions between similar and different objects; and how to grade a set of similar objects that differ in a regular and measureable way from the greatest to the least degree. These materials are self-correcting, allowing the child to see the problem without being shown by an adult. The child gains visual and muscular knowledge of geometric forms, leading to an awareness of form in the environment, with use of the geometric cabinet, geometric solids, constructive triangles, and binomial and trinomial cubes. The materials give our students a foundation for the later study of mathematics and geometry.

Summary of the purposes of the Sensorial Work:

1. Develop and refine senses
2. Classify and categorize

3. Develop mathematical base
4. Develop order, coordination, visual perception, and independence
5. Develop conceptual thinking
6. Prepare indirectly for language and math development
7. Develop aesthetic sense of beauty and harmony

Language Skills

The language avenue found on the blue shelves has a wide range of activities to develop pre-reading skills. Language begins with nomenclature exercises that teach the names of things in the child's everyday environment. These naming exercises focus on the correct pronunciation of words and segue into many ear-training exercises and lessons that prepare the child for a phonetic foundation to reading. Children spend time matching objects, then picture cards to strengthen the visual discrimination skill necessary to recognize letter symbols when reading. They trace letter shapes using Montessori's sandpaper letters while repeating the letter sound, thus using a highly successful multi-sensory to letter recognition and proper letter formation. Once the children recognize their basic phonic sounds, they begin putting three letter words together. The program prepares the child to begin simple phonetic reading from Bob Books and A-Z Readers. The language program provides the child with the concrete foundation for all further language development. At GMA, phonemic and phonological awareness skills are strongly emphasized through a variety of materials and activities. We also introduce basic grammar lessons with fun, concrete, attractive material. Our program believes in bringing classical literature and poetry into the classroom by reading aloud stories from the Junior Great Books Series and other original sources of beautiful literature.

Math Skills

The Montessori math materials found on the yellow shelves provide beautiful lessons that move from the concrete to the abstract in teaching math concepts. We start by introducing quantity, then the symbol and finally the association between quantity and symbol. Mathematics is taught by giving the child objects to hold, count and manipulate. In small sequential steps, each learner develops a mathematical mind. These activities help the children learn fundamentals of the four mathematical operations (simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division), as well as measurement, fractions, time telling, and exercises in the value of money to ensure a solid mathematics foundation. The children do not merely learn to count, they are also able to visualize the whole structure of our numeration system.

Science and Nature Skills

The science program covers topics in Biology, Botany, Zoology. Included are the studies of: living things and how they are affected by the environment, plant and animal life, health practices, and nutrition.

In order to stimulate their minds and curiosity as well as to prove the basic concepts of various disciplines of science, the students are given the opportunity to conduct experiments and utilize many hands on materials.

History and Geography

In geography, students learn about the solar system, land and water forms, globes, maps, flags and multicultural awareness. In history, they will learn time, calendar, seasons and personal family history. The children gain an awareness of the world around them by exploring other countries, customs, food, music, climate language and

animals. This helps raise their consciousness about other people, to gain an understanding and tolerance and, therefore compassion for all the people in the world.

Art and Music

Art and music are essential extensions of the sensorial and language activities. We use the Musikgarten Program for development of skills and appreciation for music. The art curriculum exposes children to all forms of art expression. This introduction includes studies of pictures by famous artists through our “Child Size Masterpieces” curriculum.

Bible

Our bible curriculum is “God’s Family.” We focus on God’s providential work through history, emphasizing Christian values and encouraging each child’s personal relationship with God on a daily basis. The children have weekly bible lessons with basic scripture memorization. Parable boxes are available for the children to explore which will help reinforce the lessons being taught. We apply bible truths in every subject.

Spanish

The children are introduced to basic conversational Spanish that includes numbers, colors, and basic phrases.

Physical Education

Outdoor time with a climber, swings, and equipment to develop gross motor skills is scheduled daily. The time spent outdoors is important to develop your child’s social and physical skills. The children also engage in care of the outdoors through planting flowers and tending to a small garden.