

FAQ

The most important discovery that Dr. Montessori has contributed to the field of child development and education is the fostering of the best in each child.

She discovered that in an environment where children are allowed to choose their work and to concentrate for as long as needed on that task, that they come out of this period of concentration (or meditation or contemplation) refreshed and full of good will toward others.

Protection of the "best" in each child through respect of choice and concentration

The teachers know how to offer work, to link the child to the environment who is the real teacher, and to protect this process. We know now that this natural goodness and compassion are inborn, and do not need to be taught, but to be protected.

Q. What is the difference between Montessori and traditional education?

A. Montessori emphasizes learning through all five senses, not just through listening, watching, or reading. Children in Montessori classes learn at their own, individual pace and according to their own choice of activities from hundreds of possibilities. Learning is an exciting process of discovery, leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning.

Montessori classes place children in three-year age groups (3-6, 6-9, 9-12, and so on), forming communities in which the older children spontaneously share their knowledge with the younger ones. Montessori represents an entirely different approach to education. In Malaysia, only the 3-6 yr age group exists as older children are expected to join primary school.

Q. Is Montessori good for children with learning disabilities? What about gifted children?

A. Montessori is designed to help all children reach their fullest potential at their own unique pace. A classroom whose children have varying abilities is a community in which everyone learns from one another and everyone contributes. Moreover, multi-age grouping allows each child to find his or her own pace without feeling "ahead" or "behind" in relation to peers.

Q. What ages does Montessori serve?

A. There are more Montessori programs for ages 3-6 than for any other age group, but Montessori is not limited to early childhood. Many infant/toddler programs (ages 2 months to 3 years) exist, as well as elementary (ages 6-12), adolescent (ages 12-15) and even a few Montessori high schools. In Malaysia, children who attend Montessori Kindergartens typically are between 2.5 to 6 years old

Q. Why is my daughter reading and my son not?

A. Children all learn at their own pace. It is unfair for us to compare children, even children from the same family.

However there is a general (unwritten) rule to gauge the children's speed and maturity in learning. Generally, girls mature earlier than boys, and therefore are able to grasp more complex ideas at a younger age. Children who are the eldest or an only child, generally do not develop adaptation skills and do not socialise with peers - somehow, this also seems to affect their learning ability for the first few years.... we notice that second, third and subsequent children seem to pick up new ideas very quickly and are more independent learners.

This, however does not affect later learning, as the boys generally catch up with the girls by the time they hit puberty.

Q. Are Montessori children successful later in life?

A. Research studies show that Montessori children are well prepared for later life academically, socially, and emotionally. In addition to scoring well on standardized tests, Montessori children are ranked above average on such criteria as

following directions, turning in work on time, listening attentively, using basic skills, showing responsibility, asking provocative questions, showing enthusiasm for learning, and adapting to new situations.

Q. How will my child cope when they go to Year1 and there is no more freedom and the system is more rigid? Will he be able to cope transitioning from the Montessori system to our Malaysian school system?

A. I will start off answering this question by stating that CHILDREN ARE VERY ADAPTABLE. Most of the time, it is the adults who have a problem with change, the children just sail through it.

Of course, there is some adjustment required when moving from a Montessori school. At our school there is a lot of choice of materials to use, the children are allowed to express their opinions freely. They are unafraid to speak their mind, and ask questions, no matter how silly. They are also allowed to be quite familiar with the teachers, hugs and cuddles being quite a normal occurrence. Leaving can be a culture shock to many of the children. However this is an adjustment which they must make, when they leave home - we view it such: if they have to make that adjustment at age 3, (leaving home and entering a very rigid and "prepare-you-for-std1" type of kindergarten; when they do not really understand and they spend their days crying and hating school, we would rather they make that adjustment when they are 6 and better able to comprehend and make that adjustment. Those 3 years of loving school and forming a very positive attitude towards learning can do wonders towards their lifelong learning.

Q. I recently observed a Montessori classroom for a day. I was very impressed, but I have three questions. 1. There doesn't seem to be any opportunities for pretend play 2. The materials don't seem to allow children to be creative 3. Children don't seem to be interacting with another very much. Any help you give me would be appreciated. Thank you very much.

A. I can give you three very incomplete answers to your perceptive questions:

(1) When Dr. Montessori opened the first Children's House it was full of pretend play things. The children never played with them as long as they were allowed to do real things - i.e. cooking instead of pretending to cook. It is still true.

(2) The materials teach specific things and then the creativity is incredible. Like learning how to handle a good violin and then playing music. It is not considered "creative" to use a violin as a hammer, or a bridge while playing with blocks. We consider it "creative" to learn how to use the violin properly and then create music. The same goes for the materials in a Montessori classroom.

(3) There is as much interaction as the children desire, but the tasks are so satisfying that, for these few hours a day, children want to master the challenges offered by them. Then they become happier and kinder—true socialization. Also, since concentration is protected above all, as all "work" is respected, children learn early on not to interrupt someone who is concentrating.

Reference from <http://www.michaelolaf.net>, THE MONTESSORI METHOD.