

### *Basic Information for those New to Montessori from a 4-6 Classroom*

Welcome! To a Montessori classroom, you're in for a treat. This information will set the foundation for a successful day's work for you and the children.

This is a combination 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. Typically, each year only about one third of the class is new in the room, so the fifth and sixth years really know the expectations and classroom set-up well. This year, half of the class is new, so it's taken a bit longer to *normalize*<sup>1</sup>. If you have a sense of humor, this is a great age group to use it, especially with the sixth graders! Students know the freedoms given them in the class and the responsibilities that come with them. When a freedom is misused, it is taken away. (See "Freedoms and Responsibilities" form)

The day begins by greeting the students in groups of six to enter the coatroom. Typically, they have some kind of morning warm up work in language and math to start their day. (These do not count as math and language core work for the day!) Students are often allowed to work in many areas such as the library, coatroom, or floor.

We then go over the day's expectations with the class first thing in the morning, typically after morning announcements. They are always posted so students can refer to them throughout the day. Before morning announcements, students should take care of pencil sharpening, and restroom trips. Students are assigned tasks on a responsibility chart. For example; Lunch count goes down to the cafeteria after morning announcements and Attendance goes to the office each morning. They have jobs to complete at the end of the day. Many classrooms use a "Responsibilities" chart as well as description cards for each of these jobs.

Probably the hardest part to deal with in a Montessori classroom is that it is rare for all students to be working on the same subject at the same time. Typically, a volunteer will be working with one grade level (seven to ten students per grade level) while the other two levels are working independently. Students are expected to use quiet voices and to be on task when they are not in group. They are allowed to talk so long as it doesn't disturb others or interfere with getting work done. They may not talk across the room or across to other tables. (You should model this, too). If they are too loud, we may ring the chimes and request quieter voices. Students will receive ten minutes of "no talking time" if I have to ring the chimes yet again. Teachers may use the chimes at the front of the room any time if they want attention from the whole class.

Students in a Montessori classroom are expected to be responsible with the materials in the classroom. They are to be respectful of the materials and each other at all times. They expect their teachers to be role models of respect in how they are dealt with. Serious issues to discuss with a student, may happen outside the classroom where we can discuss the issue in private so as not to humiliate anyone.

Students in a Montessori classroom do not receive letter grades. They are rated on a scale of 1 to 4. A 1 is no progress, a 2 is slow progress, a 3 is satisfactory progress, and a 4 is strong progress.

It is desired that students complete all assigned work before moving on to choice subject area work. They all know this, but a few need reminders sometimes! We have a practical life/art shelf in the classroom. Students do not have to complete all core subject areas before choosing work from these shelves, but they may not do several activities in a row from these shelves either. Maria Montessori believed students would choose their own work in a room prepared in a sequential, inviting way.

Often you will see students as peer tutors in the classroom, which is encouraged. This is one of the major benefits to the three-year age grouping that Maria Montessori incorporated in her method, which is based on child development. Sometimes a younger child will ask an older student for a lesson on something he/she hasn't tried yet, and this is also encouraged (may require some input from the teacher). I often explain the difference between helping and doing it for someone. I model ways to help, not do.

Students are expected to walk in the halls in single-file **quietly**. We have to navigate stairs, and the acoustics in our building are terrible!

In many classrooms students are allowed one personal, healthy snack in the morning and/or afternoon, which each child is expected to bring for himself/herself. One daily snack is provided on the counter by the sink for those who forget to bring their own snack. In some classrooms there may be a student assigned as the host/hostess and you could ask that person to serve you. You can check the responsibility chart to see whose job it is this week. The host/hostess responsibility is part of the "lessons in grace and courtesy" Maria Montessori felt was important to teach children.

Have a wonderful day with the students! We are grateful you can join us today!

<sup>1</sup> "Montessori observed that when children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration, working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and contented. Through continued concentrated work of their own choice, children grow in inner discipline and peace. She called this process "*normalization*" and cited it as "the most important single result of our whole work" (*The Absorbent Mind*, 1949).