

10

Most Asked Questions

1. *What is Montessori?*

Dr. Maria Montessori, namesake of the Montessori model of education, was a noted physician and early childhood development pioneer of the 1900's. She viewed education as an "aid to life" that promoted the natural "unfolding" of the unique potential in every child.

Montessori curriculum is interdisciplinary and interactive. Each child draws upon his or her natural desire to learn in a unique classroom environment. Specially designed materials for development invite children to select and engage in a variety of learning activities. Under the guidance of a Montessori trained teacher, children learn by making discoveries with these materials, thus cultivating concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning.

2. *Is Montessori education religious in nature?*

While many independent schools in the U.S. may be affiliated in some way with a specific religious organization, Montessori education is not religiously oriented. Students do, however, learn about and celebrate various aspects – and religions – of the many cultures they study or that may be represented in their individual classes.

3. *Without the use of grades, how can a student's progress be evaluated?*

Monitoring student progress is an ongoing part of Montessori education. With the use of a comprehensive, individual assessment program based on the knowledge of how children learn and how they demonstrate their abilities, teachers can follow each child's academic development in subjects including language, math, reading, and writing, as well as his or her level of social, emotional, and physical development.

Personal observation of students, their work samples, related anecdotal records, and testing instruments are used to measure individual academic progress, and identify patterns of development and behavior. The information obtained is then used by the teacher to evaluate each child's progress as it relates to the program's goals, while identifying areas that need attention and improvement.

4. *How does a Montessori education compare academically with traditional learning programs?*

In a Montessori classroom environment, skills and concepts are presented in the most concrete way possible. Students are then allowed the time needed to absorb, apply, and become proficient in these lessons. They are not restricted to or frustrated by predetermined schedules for learning subject material. In this way, students are provided with more opportunities for successful learning.

While Montessori education makes no claim to make children more intelligent, studies using traditional measures of academic achievement have shown that children with Montessori preprimary experience score higher in such assessments than those with traditional preschool backgrounds. Follow-up studies further note that these academic gains, compared with those of other programs, are less likely to deteriorate over time and may not fade at all if Montessori education is continued beyond preschool.

5. *When my child leaves a Montessori program and enters a traditional learning environment, how well will (s) he adapt?*

Documentation and testimonies, from parents whose children have made such a transition and teachers who have received former Montessori students into their classes, reflect no significant adjustments. In fact, because Montessori students are so confident in their ability to learn and are taught how to be critical thinkers, to ask questions, problem solve, and obtain whatever information they need to accomplish the task at hand, many traditional educators have commented on the ease with which Montessori students are able to acclimate to their new environments.

6. *How are structure and organization achieved in a Montessori education?*

Montessori classrooms and instructional activities are laid out in a logical, methodical order that helps children experience progressive achievement of the skills and concepts presented. Structure is achieved in this prepared environment through the ability of trained teachers to present lessons, using carefully designed learning materials, in a way that captivates a child's attention and draws him or her into the activity presented. Children naturally focus on their work, as they become intent to see where an activity will lead.

Remarkably, little teacher intervention is required in a Montessori setting as students are often the ones who insist on the order needed for them to concentrate. Students are allowed to select work from given choices and have their own defined space in which to work. Montessori teachers circulate among the children, presenting individual lessons and directing learning activities as needed to ensure each student's progress. It must be stressed that Montessori education is based on the principle of free choice of purposeful activity. If a child is being disruptive or is using classroom materials in an aimless way, the teacher will intervene and redirect the child either to more appropriate materials or to a more appropriate use of the materials.

7. *How can my child learn and mature in a class environment that combines three age levels?*

Children in a Montessori classroom are challenged according to their abilities. As they grow and develop, they gain a sense of pride in accomplishment and self-confidence from their achievements. This instinctively inspires children to become leaders, encouragers, and mentors among their classmates. Thus develops a continuum of child-to-child teaching, cooperative problem solving, and socialization that often motivates younger

students to achieve what they see their older friends doing.

8. *Why doesn't Montessori require homework assignments?*

Homework may be required from time to time, but Montessori students are typically given the time in class to explore and practice the skills and concepts they learn. Traditional education settings often use most of their class time to present specific skills and concepts, requiring students to use after school time to practice what they have learned.

9. *Does Montessori education also provide for music, art, physical education, foreign language, and computer instruction?*

Most definitely. Montessori education has always recognized the importance of offering children a full range of curriculum components to enhance their cognitive and creative development. Specifically, as the Montessori program in Florence – currently 2K through 6th grade – continues to grow, these programs will further develop and become more detailed at each age level.

10. *How does Montessori tuition compare with traditional program tuition?*

The school's program is largely funded by tuition revenues, which are in line with other Pee Dee and Florence area independent school tuition. Tuition may be paid in one payment, in quarterly payments, or on a monthly payment plan. Please consult the office for each level's pricing.

Thank you for learning about Montessori education!