Practical Life & Sensorial Development

Practical Life is one of the keys to Montessori education. It involves specific lessons on activities that are very engaging for the child, thus allowing for the development of concentration and independence in the child. For young children, when they are building the foundations of learning these are the skills that allow them to care for themselves, care for their environment, care for others while developing tremendous personal confidence.

The Practical Life area of the classroom is often the favourite choice of our toddlers; it is highly concrete and focused on helping toddlers learn to care for themselves and their environment. The activities are fun and engaging and help the child: develop large and fine motor skills; learn to manage their feelings and impulses; and become more self-sufficient.

Some activities found in the Practical Life area include using a sponge, sweeping, pouring, clamping, folding, rolling, using simple tools and utensils, opening and closing things, cleaning, sorting, using zippers, buttons and snaps, combing hair, washing hands and preparing food.

In the Toddler level, there is also a specific area of the classroom dedicated to Sensorial Development. Toddlers' primary learning tools are their senses, and the materials in this area are deliberately designed to help children refine the use of their senses. The sensorial materials are designed to simplify learning through the senses by isolating qualities such as sound, size, shape, colour or odour. These unique Montessori materials are simple and engaging; designed to encourage mastery through repetition and to be self-correcting. They include the use of cylinders, rods, bells, blocks, beads, geometric puzzles, and a variety of wood and metal.
Toddler Curriculum (18 months to 3 years)

Cultural Studies

The term “culture” in Montessori historically includes Science, History, and Geography. Montessori philosophy is firmly rooted in the interconnectedness of things, particularly in the cultural areas – understanding historically why or how a group of people migrated from one place to another without geography seems a challenge, as does understanding the geography of continents without science.

At the Toddler level children are introduced to the idea that there are different people, places, creatures, environments, and cultures in our world. They learn about the words used to describe the plant and animal world, and how to identify living and non-living things. They use puzzles, games, songs, pictures, stories, recognition games, and special events to begin their introduction to culture.

Mathematics

In a child’s mind, things are seen through a basis of order and perception through the senses. Developing an understanding of mathematical principles must then logically develop from concrete to abstract, from simple to complex.

At the Toddler level, children use enjoyable activities that help them begin to put order to what they perceive with their senses. They use counting songs, counting of items such as animals/children/objects, categorizing games, using sandpaper numbers and tracing for numerical recognition, concepts of time from day to season.

Language

One of the fundamental needs of human beings is the ability to communicate; and language is the primary vehicle of this communication, be it in written or verbal form. Understanding others, expressing their own thoughts and feelings, learning in other curricular areas, demonstrating respect and courtesy; all of these require children to learn language skills.

Children in the Toddler program use activities that help them understand verbal communication, how to speak and listen clearly, and expand their vocabulary. They use object/card matching, listen to stories, engage size and shape exercises, work with sounds and play recognition games.
Toddler Curriculum (18 months to 3 years)

Library & Technology

Young children are introduced to this area through a rich book collection. These books are made available in the classrooms; they are bright, engaging, and age-appropriate, and are regularly changed in order to connect to themes of study in the classroom at a given time. Technology is not used to any significant degree at the Toddler level.

Specialty Programs

French

From the time children enter Montessori Academy they are exposed to the French language. Children are pre-disposed to languages from a young age, and it is our belief that exposing children to a broad array of cultural and language experiences is very healthy to their development.

Toddlers use activities that help them understand oral vocabulary using cards, songs and games, and they use materials that are available on the shelves of their classroom at any time. By the time they reach preschool the children use concrete activities that help them understand oral vocabulary using cards, songs and games, and they use materials that are available on the shelves of their classroom at any time. In addition, they are given opportunities with a trained French instructor and begin to use exercises in grammar and develop additional vocabulary.

Music

Music is a human activity that benefits the student in many respects. It is a study of who we are culturally, it is a mechanism for self-expression, it is a mathematical activity, it nurtures the development of many aspects of cognition, it supports collaboration and it is a form of communication. For all these reasons children are offered music throughout their experience at the Montessori Academy.

At the Toddler level, the music program begins with the child’s body, both voice and movement. There are many opportunities for the children to experience music through games, songs, dance, rhythm activities, and special events, and at times soft classical music is played in the classrooms during the day.
Toddler Curriculum (18 months to 3 years)

Physical & Health Education

The Physical and Health Education program provides the skills and encouragement to help children grow and develop in a healthy way, and helps them develop habits that will promote positive health and fitness choices throughout their lives.

From their entry into pre-school until their movement into high school, children undergo an extreme degree of physical, cognitive and emotional growth. Time after time researchers have proven that these growing bodies need movement – they need it for physical development, to stay healthy, to help manage emotional change and to keep their minds focused and alert. The MA program uses age-appropriate activities to give many opportunities for the children to move those bodies.

Students are moving all the time in a Montessori classroom. They move to learn, to stretch and go on to new activities. They move in their Physical Education classes, and weather permitting, they are outdoors for a minimum of one hour daily.

At the Toddler level, Physical and Health Education is part of the daily activity in the classroom and is often integrated to other activities, for example, a picture related to eating healthy foods. The toddlers are given a great deal of freedom to move at all times in the classroom. They participate in many music and movement activities such as dancing, marching, stretching, and playing games. In addition, they spend time outdoors in the gardens and playgrounds where they have organized and free play time.

Visual Arts

Visual Art is used regularly in the Toddler classrooms and is generally integrated to other activities, for example, a craft related to a continent or cultural study. Toddlers are given a great deal of freedom with many artistic media from coloured pencils to paints, clay and creating materials.