Montessori Education at YMS: Inspiring a Love of Learning

Grace and courtesy skills are demonstrated throughout the day and often initially taught through the modelling of behaviour by the teacher and the older students in the classroom.

In addition to greetings and the use of manners, Montessori students also learn the importance of respecting one another's feelings and take pride in helping to ensure that each other's needs are met.

Practical Life skills are introduced in a sequential fashion. As skills are mastered, and opportunities arise these skills are applied to real life situations.

Teaching a child the skills to care for themselves and complete age appropriate self-help tasks is the most constructive way to promote independence and self-confidence.

Practical Life materials are often comprised of objects which can be found in the home and typically contain components which are noticeably breakable. Montessori students learn to handle the materials with the utmost of care and have the ability to experience firsthand the meaning behind natural consequences.

There are several materials in the classroom which are used in order to help develop and strengthen the controlled movements of one's hands. The skills obtained while working with such exercises as the Screwdriver, the Tweezers Transfer or Pouring are closely linked to early successes while writing with a pencil.

In addition to our students obtaining the skills and confidence to care for their own needs, they also develop the ability and have access to the resources required to help them care for their environment.

Respecting and caring for the classroom environment is taught in a variety of ways. Emphasis is placed on keeping the classroom organized and orderly as well as on maintaining its aesthetics.

In the first Language lesson, students are introduced to the lowercase letters of the alphabet by the phonetic sounds that they represent. As they hear and speak the sounds aloud, they are taught to trace physical representations and learn to memorize the symbols of the alphabet through the use of their visual, audio and tactile senses simultaneously.

Before writing with a pencil on paper, students are introduced to the Chalkboard. This allows them to develop the use of their pincer grasp and practice the formation of their letters and numbers in a less permanent fashion. Students work across the board from left to right to help prepare the hand and eye for writing and reading across a page from left to right.

Once students are familiar and able to recognize the sounds and symbols for the letters of the alphabet, they are introduced to spelling and the idea that words are built out of sounds. They first learn three letter phonetic words in order to introduce beginning, middle and end sounds. Once they have mastered reading and spelling three letter phonetic words, four or more letter phonetic words are introduced.

Once a child has developed a strong pincer grasp, they are presented with material that introduces them to the practice of making purposeful, permanent makings with a pencil.

As students become more comfortable with reading, grammatical concepts such articles, adjectives, nouns and verbs are introduced through a variety of materials. Over time, students learn how to create complete sentences using proper syntax as well as appropriate grammar including punctuation.

After demonstrating complete understanding of phonetic sounds and how to create words, Casa students are introduced to Phonograms. This is where two sounds are put together in order to make new sounds.

Once a child is able to read fluidly, they are introduced to grammatical concepts such as conjunctions, prepositions and capital letters. Whenever possible, connections are created between curriculum areas in order to ensure that skills are being practiced through practical application.

By the end of their third year, not only are many Casa students reading fluently, but they are also able to compose their own narrative. Through the use of the skills they have patiently developed over the previous three years, students are offered the opportunity to confidently create their own stories and accompany them with an original illustration.

Through early work with the Sensorial exercises, Casa students learn how to utilize the self-corrective components of the materials. Students are able to identify and correct their own errors without adult supervision or intervention in order to promote their independence.

The Sensorial curriculum offers wonderful opportunities for group work and creative exploration. Once basic presentations have been mastered, students are free to experiment and discover connections and patterns between various pieces of material simultaneously.

Materials found within the Sensorial curriculum are designed to enhance the child's ability to order, match, classify, and differentiate based on concrete attributes such as sound, texture, colour, smell, weight, size, and so on.

Sensorial materials awaken the student's interest in shape. They discover how various shapes can be created and how to identify them using accurate terminology inside and outside of the classroom environment.

Mathematical and geometric concepts are often introduced through work with the Sensorial material. Sensory experiences and representations of concepts such as binomial and trinomial theorem are offered and presented in such a way that students are able to complete the exercises independently using their skills of classification as well as the built-in control of error.

Several of the materials available within the Sensorial curriculum contain a knobbed component. Working with such exercises promotes the use of a proper pincer grasp and prepares students for future use of a pencil.

Many connections can be drawn between the Mathematical and the Sensorial curriculums. One of the most obvious of these can be found while working with the Decanomial Square, which is a tangible representation of the Table of Pythagoras.

As within the other four curriculums, Sensorial materials and exercises are very sequential in nature. Skills must be observably mastered before the student is presented with the next level of difficulty.

In the Casa classroom, numerals are taught in the same way that letters are taught. As students become more familiar with the symbols from zero to nine, they are introduced to the corresponding quantities through a separate exercise.

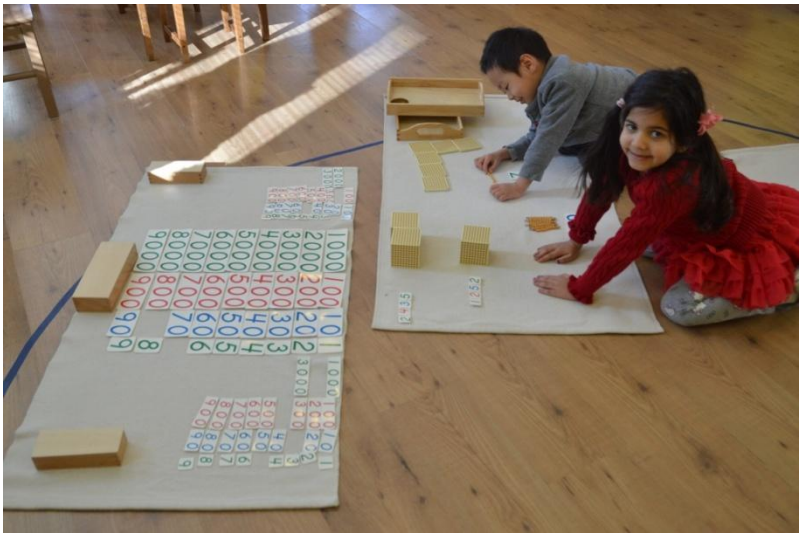
Several exercises are available within the Casa Mathematics curriculum to ensure that a strong foundation from one to ten is developed. At the same time that students are learning to associate the symbols and quantities from one to ten, they are also learning about concepts such as the meaning of zero as well as less and more and odd and even numbers.

Just as with the numbers from one to ten, quantities of teens, tens, hundreds and thousands are also introduced separately from their corresponding symbols.

Mathematics exercises require immense amounts of focus and organization in order to be completed successfully. Casa students are developing these skills through work with materials from all areas of the classroom from the moment they enter its doors on their first day.

In addition to learning to complete equations, Casa students are also introduced to such concepts as number patterning and skip counting. The development of these skills helps to enhance one's ability to organize their thoughts logically as well as sequentially.

Casa students are introduced to all four operations of mathematics through tangible, sensory experiences. Collaborative exercises are completed between two or more children in order to complete static and dynamic operations of addition, multiplication, subtraction and division.



Once students understand how to complete mathematical equations using sensory exercises, they are presented with similar concepts in a less concrete and more abstract fashion.

The memorization of essential equations is introduced to Casa students once they have a solid understanding of how to complete four digit dynamic operations. By the time they are completing data collecting exercises such as these, they are also expected to be recording and checking their own answers.

From learning the names of the continents through three period lessons, to completing projects based on the Solar System, Land and Water Forms or the Wonders of the World, understanding geography and appreciating what the different parts of the world have to offer plays a major role in the development of compassion, empathy and respect for the global community.

History and the passage of time are fairly abstract notions; however Casa students are introduced to these concepts through such exercises as discussions about the calendar, sorting past and present images and the Montessori birthday celebration.

Discovery and exploration is what science is all about. In the Casa classroom, students are encouraged and offered resources in order to help facilitate their natural curiosity.

Children are naturally curious about the living components of the earth. While learning about botany, they first experience names and shapes of leaves, trees and flowers.

Once basic presentations of materials have been mastered, extension exercises are offered. In the Culture area these extensions often present themselves in the form of project work.

Children display a natural love for other living beings and are therefore drawn to the zoology material of the Cultural curriculum. They are taught to identify order and classify animals first by concrete differences and then by increasingly more abstract notions.

Enough emphasis cannot be placed on the importance of paying close attention to small details. Casa students are encouraged to take the time to acknowledge, admire and respect all aspects of the world around them.

From learning about the Solar System to the Earth and then the continents to the countries, Casa students begin to develop a true sense of patriotism and pride for where they come from by the end of their third year.

TODDLER PRACTICAL LIFE

The Practical Life curriculum can be broken down into four categories: grace and courtesy, care of self, care of environment and control of movement. In the Toddler classroom, emphasis is placed on the practical application of skills obtained. The students develop a sense of confidence through making age and stage appropriate contributions to the functionality of the classroom community as well as a sense of independence through their ability to complete self-help skills with less and less assistance as the year continues.

TODDLER – SENSORIAL

Montessori philosophy suggests that for anything to exist within our intelligence, we must first experience it through our senses. Through their work with the Sensorial material, Toddlers learn to organize, sequence, classify, problem solve and discuss based on size, shape, colour, sound and a variety of other available sensory experiences.

TODDLER – LANGUAGE

A large part of the Montessori Toddler curriculum as a whole is based on Language acquisition. Whether it is development of vocabulary or skills related to conversational speech, the young Toddler mind is always developing new ways to communicate with increased efficiency.

TODDLER – MATHEMATICS

Mathematical concepts present themselves organically throughout each day in the Toddler community. Whether it is counting ingredients while making bread, counting feet while putting on shoes or rote counting during circle time, our Toddlers are consistently developing their understanding of counting and quantity.

TODDLER – CULTURE

Development of vocabulary is not limited to the Language curriculum by any means. While working with the Cultural material, the Toddlers are learning to name and identify elements of zoology as well as geography and history; specifically the passage of time through the use of the calendar. Toddlers are drawn to nature and possess a natural curiosity and appreciation for the world and all of its living and working components.