



“Growing Our Future”

Montessori vs. Traditional Education

Montessori	Traditional
Emphasis on cognitive structures and social development	Emphasis on rote knowledge and social development
Teacher has unobtrusive role in classroom activity; Child is an active participant in learning	Teacher has a dominant, active role in classroom activity; Child is a passive participant in learning
Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline	Teacher acts as a primary enforcer of external discipline
Instruction, both individual and group, adapts to each student’s learning style	Instruction, both individual and group, conforms to the adult’s teaching style
Children are encouraged to teach, collaborate, and help each other	Most teaching is done by the teacher and collaboration is limited
Child chooses own work from interests and abilities	Curriculum is structured with little regard for the individual child’s interests
Child formulates own concepts from self-teaching materials	Child is guided to concepts by the teacher
Child works as long as she likes on a chosen project	Child is generally given a specific time-limit for work
Child sets own learning pace to internalize information	Instruction pace set by the group norm or by the teacher
Child often spots own errors through feedback from the material and process of learning	Work is corrected and errors pointed out by the teacher
Learning is reinforced internally through the child’s own repetition of an activity and internal feelings of success	Learning is reinforced externally by rote repetition and rewards/discouragements
Multi-sensory materials for physical exploration	Fewer materials for sensory development and concrete manipulation
Organized program for learning care of self and environment	Less emphasis on child involvement in care for self or classroom
Child can work where he is comfortable (at a desk or on the floor), moves around and talks at will (without disturbing the work of others), and group work is voluntary and negotiable	Child is assigned to a desk and is encouraged to sit still and listen during group sessions
Organized program for parents to understand the Montessori philosophy, bring concepts home, and participate in the learning process	Voluntary parent involvement, not participants in understanding the learning process

Adapted from the American Montessori Society