



Key Components of Montessori Programs at Bright Horizons

There is a lot to the Montessori Method, and there are several important characteristics of our program, which are outlined below. This information, along with discussions with your family, friends, and our Montessori school leaders, may help you determine if the Montessori approach is a good fit for your family's needs.

Deciding what is the best educational environment for your child is a crucial consideration for any parent. At Bright Horizons, we understand that you want to provide your child the best start in life, with educational opportunities that allow him or her to develop a lifelong love of learning.

The Montessori Method, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is based on the theory that children develop individually, at their own pace, in a carefully prepared environment.

Although children progress according to their individual growth stages, the hallmark of a Montessori education is its rich and highly sequential academic curriculum. At a young age, children are exposed to reading, mathematics, geometry, science, and cultural studies. Classrooms tend to be quiet and calm, with children working independently, learning and exploring actively.

The strong foundation for learning — fostered by the practical life and sensorial materials in the classroom — enables children to move through a continuum of curricula, naturally advancing with each step.

- **Mixed-Age Groupings:** Montessori programs consist of a mix of ages in a classroom. Younger children have the ability to observe older learners working with challenging advanced materials, which helps prepare younger children for the next level. Older children serve as mentors and guides to the younger children and embody the concepts of peaceful interaction.
- **Focus on the Big Picture:** Learning is most successful when it is associative. That means that children learn best when they have background knowledge. This way they can learn details and make connections based on what they have already learned. Montessori's curriculum is described as "cosmic," meaning that it is a comprehensive, integrated design that successively builds on prior educational exposure, creating breadth and depth of knowledge.
- **Recognition of "Sensitive" or "Critical" Periods:** There are certain times that are optimal for the development of a particular skill. Dr. Montessori, applying her expertise in neuroscience, was the first to design an educational system that recognizes these opportune times of "brain-based learning." Montessori education matches the appropriate instruction to the individual child's sensitive period for acquiring that skill.
- **The Prepared Environment:** The Montessori learning environment is designed with the child in mind. Furniture and décor is appropriate in size and level, and is aesthetically pleasing and comfortable. The environment is prepared with the full array of developmentally appropriate activities, both indoors and outside. Children are delighted and intrigued by materials before them, simply by virtue of the intensity of interest that accompanies each evolving sensitive period. Self-correcting materials help children practice independently, an essential step in mastery. In the outdoor environment, sensory education stimulated by interaction with the natural world promotes brain development and plants the seeds for scientific inquiry.

- **Encouraging Independence:** As children are drawn to particular materials during their sensitive periods, the Montessori-trained teacher provides direct instruction. After that, the child begins to work with the materials independently. The ability to work individually with self-correcting materials promotes independent learning. The sequential display of materials, which advance in degree of difficulty and subtlety, encourage children to challenge themselves toward their personal best.
- **Promoting the “Spirit of the Teacher” and the “Spirit of the Child”:** Promoting the “spirit of the teacher” means that teachers are viewed as models for the children; therefore it is a teacher’s responsibility to demonstrate devotion to lifelong learning, a caring, compassionate character, and respect for the natural world. Teachers make a commitment to unconditional and equal acceptance of every child. Focusing on the “spirit of the child” means that children are afforded the same dignity and respect as adults. The program’s responsibility is to unfold the child’s potential, not mold the child.
- **Creating Full Family and Community Partnerships:** Montessori programs celebrate the individual in the context of the community. The formulation of a strong sense of community is critical to the learning environment. The program provides a concrete experience for learning values, morals, and responsibility. Families are welcomed, as they are key to a child’s educational experience and are integral to the program.
- **Inspiring Peace:** Dr. Montessori believed that proper education and empowerment of children would lead to a generation that can truly engender a peaceful society. Education should include fundamental respect for all life forms and the planet, teaching the practices of inner peacefulness, peaceful interaction and communication, community service, and social justice.

About Bright Horizons

Bright Horizons is the world’s leading provider of child care, early education, and work/life solutions. At Bright Horizons, children are empowered to become confident, successful, lifelong learners and secure, caring people. We help children to see the world as an invitation to learn, to grow, and to live fully — to see a world full of possibilities that are within their reach. We help children approach school and academics with skills, confidence, and the drive for excellence.



www.brighthorizons.com/montessori

Maria Montessori’s Legacy

Social reformer, spokesperson for women’s rights, physician, and educator, Dr. Montessori was the first woman to graduate with a medical degree in Italy. While working with mentally challenged children in Rome, she created a unique curriculum based on how she believed these children learned best. She achieved outstanding results and, in 1907, opened the first in a series of Montessori schools in an impoverished area of Rome. Her innovative schools treated children with a respect that was unheard of in her time, and she insisted that parents stay involved in their child’s education. She introduced child-sized furnishings and developed a system of sequential math materials for children to explore their interests at their own level. Dr. Montessori’s methods helped shape early education around the world, with now an estimated 7,000 Montessori schools worldwide.

The Montessori Approach

Montessori is an approach to education grounded in the belief that a child learns best within a social environment that supports and respects each individual’s unique development. The primary goal is to help each child reach his or her full potential in all areas of life. Activities promote the development of social skills, emotional growth, and physical coordination as well as cognitive preparation. The holistic curriculum, under the direction of a specially prepared teacher, allows the child to experience the joy of learning, time to enjoy the process and ensure the development of self-esteem, and provides the experiences from which children create their knowledge.