



*Supporting children's early development in a safe and stimulating Montessori prepared environment and offering the opportunity to develop a second language (Spanish).*

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### **What is a Montessori prepared environment?**

A Montessori prepared environment is a space that is carefully organised and previously set to support the full and natural development of the children. The environment includes the inside and outside space, the adults that are in it guiding the children, the contents and as well as the way on which these aspects function.

### **Some characteristics of a Montessori environment are:**

- Beauty and simplicity
- Order
- Real and functional
- Child sized (objects and materials, as well as furniture)
- One of each activity/ material
- Mixed aged
- Respect, between everyone in the environment as well as the materials and space.
- Independence
- Freedom within limits (to choose activities, to move, to work in groups, etc. All limits are based in respect for others and the environment)

### **The Prepared Environment offers:**

- Activities for the development of co-ordination of movement
- Activities for the development of language
- Activities for the development of independence
- Opportunities for refinement of the sensory perception
- Opportunities for social development
- Keys to the world

### **The Montessori guide's responsibilities:**

- Link to the environment- In Montessori the adult will link the child to the environment by giving individual presentation of the materials offered connecting the child to the environment and helping with adaptation.
- Observation- This is a key factor of the Montessori approach. By stepping back and observing the child in a non-judgmental and neutral manner, the adult can notice the child's interest and abilities and know what to present to the child and how to support the child's development. This is what we called "following the child".
- Role model- Children have a type of mind that absorbs everything around them and as responsible adults we know the importance of being a positive role model in the early years.

## *The Montessori areas:*

### **Practical life:**

The practical life area consists of every day prepared activities that the child has probably seen in the home environment, such as washing hands, washing dishes, sweeping, dressing (zip, buttons, etc.), folding, opening and closing boxes and more. These activities support the child's adaptation to the environment.

These activities support the child's development of:

- Independence
- Co-ordination of movement
- Concentration
- Social behavior

### **Sensorial:**

One of the general aims of the Sensorial area is that of enabling the children's mind to organise, order and classify the stream of impressions they are receiving from the world around them. These will mean later on the children will be able to understand the world around them and will perceive everything with more detail, allowing the child's mind and intelligence to develop to full potential, according to Montessori "the training and sharpening of the senses has the obvious advantage of enlarging the field of perception and of offering an ever more solid foundation of intellectual growth." (The discovery of the child- Maria Montessori).

We recommend reading a bit more on this link:

<http://www.infomontessori.com/sensorial/introduction.htm>

### **Language:**

For enrichment of vocabulary we use activities such as, reading stories, poems or songs, naming objects, including details, such as the parts of the objects and classified cards, where the child is presented with a set of categorized cards and is shown the picture when giving the words for it.

In the case of developing structure and self-expression some of the activities offered are for example, News period, where by joining a small group each child is invited to give one piece of news such as, what did he have for breakfast, giving the child the opportunity to share and express himself. When concentrating in structure we have activities such as Question game where in a group the children are given a statement and the teacher asks questions concentrating in the noun, subject, verb, etc. The oral language activities are the foundation for the development of reading and writing.

While enriching vocabulary the child will be working with activities such as Sound game- a game where you bring attention to the sounds that form a word. Then the child connects the sound to the symbol using the sand paper letters. Sand paper letters give the child a multisensorial experience, while looking, feeling and saying the phonic of the symbol, making it much easier to absorb. Little by little the child moves through the recognition of symbols and moves through the language area. Each material isolates a difficulty and moves from simple to complex giving the children an opportunity to move through their own process of learning and giving them confidence to keep going.

Spanish will be introduced to the children in a natural indirect way, meaning we will not use translation or there won't be an exact time for Spanish lessons. It will be introduced and developed rather than taught. The vocabulary will be given through activities the children are interested in, as children find easier to absorb when they are concentrated and enjoying their activity. Danitza will speak Spanish and Katia will speak English, both of us will give the individual presentations to the children as well as doing group activities, giving the child the same experiences both in English and Spanish allowing a natural acquirement of the language, without the need of translations. Children have the capacity to acquire language by experiencing it in the environment without much effort, they are naturally attracted to it and creating an environment where they are exposed to the language is enough for their mind to absorb it.

Recommended reading: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/advantages\\_of\\_a\\_bilingual\\_brain](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/advantages_of_a_bilingual_brain)

## **Maths:**

Maths can be seen as another language and that is how Maths will be introduced to the children. Throughout all the other areas the children are indirectly prepared for maths. In practical life the children are learning to problem solve and making calculations such as "how much soap to use", counting how many boxes we have on the tray etc. When the child comes to work with the maths area they are first introduced to the idea of 1-10 and 0. This is done in a process that moves from concrete to abstract, introducing the quantity first, then the symbol and connecting quantity to symbol, giving lots of concrete experiences. In this way the children have a true understanding of what each symbol actually represents, it represents an specific quantity.

Giving a concrete and hands on experience makes it much easier to come to a true understanding of abstract mathematical concepts. To know more about the maths area please read the link below and we will hope to give out more information when the children come to work with the maths materials.

<https://sammamishmontessori.com/building-foundation-math/>

## **Culture:**

Culture is referred to the ideas, customs and social behaviors of a particular society. There are different cultures around the world, the child's adaptation to his/her environment will mean he/she learns the customs and social behaviors of that particular culture he/she lives in. But all human race lives in one environment, and that is Planet earth, our world. The child is introduced to the world he/she lives in first, showing a globe of the world and that's is formed of land and water. Then he/she starts being introduced to the parts of that whole world we all share, the continents, the countries, and the different cultures. This way the child gets an understanding that all people, animals and plants share one world. The child will then be introduced and explore the differences in culture and learning to appreciate that by understanding the similarities and being able to relate to all peoples of the world.

Culture is within all areas of Montessori. The children will be introduced to the world and the different worlds within it, the world of animals, the world of plants, the world of art, the world of music and the world of science. Understanding of the world and feeling connected to all parts of it, brings a sense of adaptation and appreciation. When you understand things, you come to value and appreciate them, therefore we want and feel like looking after them. If the child understands and knows about the world and what constitutes it, the child will grow to value and appreciate it, therefore look after it.

**"In the end we will conserve only what we love, we will love only what we understand and we understand only what we are thought"- Baba Dioum**