

# Introduction to

## Our Nest & Children's House

### *The Absorbent Mind and Sensitive Periods*

At birth human beings are helpless; they have no language, no understanding of the world, no coordinated movement, and no instincts. An infant is an inexperienced member of his new society. He must discover how he relates to the world around him. Since, he has no experience with his world, he is unable to screen or judge the information he receives. Learning is unconscious and without effort because the child doesn't have the experience to know that he should learn. So the child unconsciously constructs himself. This unique learning process is the result of a mind different from that of an adult. Dr. Maria Montessori called this the **Absorbent Mind**.

The child is his own maker. He constructs himself and gains knowledge simply by living. He learns without effort. In fact he is completely unaware that he is learning. He doesn't become tired, but seems to gain energy as he learns. The child cannot screen information or make judgments on what he sees; instead he takes in everything. A child watches the world and takes in information much like a photograph. Everything he sees becomes a part of his mental flesh. He learns through a process called incarnation, which means he becomes one with the world around him. Everything and everyone that come in contact with the child is an educator. His mental process is completely objective, while that of an adult is always personal because it is based on past experience. So it is important that good models surround him.

The natural inner force that drives the child in his first six years of life acts according to his sensitive periods of development. Sensitive periods are blocks of time that a child is passionately interested in a certain part of the environment with exclusion to all others. These sensitive periods are universal and easy to observe. During such a period, a child's inner urge directs him to a certain aspect of his environment, and through repetition of this activity is to perform a new function. After work, children come out rested because the work responded to what they needed. Some sensitive periods occur simultaneously but not with the same intensity. Each has a gradual beginning, a peak, and then it fades out. The six main sensitive periods are; language, order, refinement of the senses, tiny objects, social behavior, and movement

The longest sensitive period is language. It begins at infancy and ends about age six. During this time the child learns with ease all the languages that surround him. No other language will ever be as perfect as the mother tongue because language is very emotional and constantly changing. A baby always looks at the person who speaks and sometimes touches the speaker's mouth in order to experience how the speaker is speaking. At six months babies practice universal sounds, and at eight months he drops all the sounds that aren't used in his environment. He practices pitch, volume, and placement of the tongue. At ten months, he begins to understand that sounds from the mouth have meaning. Some time around the age of ten months to one year, the baby says his first word. This is a very frustrating time because he understands that words are used

to relay messages but he can't form the words. In other words, he understands more than he can say.

At eighteen months, he has developed more words and talks to himself a lot. From eighteen months to two years, he puts phrases together. Shortly after that, he can express his emotions. Children at this age use language to organize themselves with others. They love to talk about what they are going to do though they may never get to the activity, but the discussion is what is important. From 2 ½ to 4 years old he can learn 250 new words a week if he is presented many new words in his environment.

At age four, he becomes a storyteller, and it is important to really listen because it gives him a positive communication experience, and it lets him know that what he is saying is worthwhile. Stories in his environment should be about real objects and activities because he is still discovering the world he lives in. Fairy tales do not belong in his environment because they are too frightening and he doesn't understand the moral messages. After age six, fairy tales are very appropriate.

During their sensitive period for language, children need a model that speaks clear, rich language. This model should use new and different words frequently, and use positive acceptable language in social relationships. She should use the actual name for each object, and always speak in full sentences, no "baby talk". Language is a gift, and we must remember there are always beautiful ways to express ourselves through language.

There is nothing as abstract as language, and when it comes to reading and writing, writing comes first. This is because writing comes from the child; it is making permanent what is known. While reading is unknown and the child must interpret someone else's ideas.

Order is very strong between zero and three it peaks at two years of age. While adults use order to create beauty and efficiency, children need order to find structure. Order is the basis of reasoning. It helps the child to orient himself in a new, large, unpredictable environment and leads to his own internal order. Even as adults we find security in predictability, but for the child it is a necessity. He is constantly grouping impressions and classifying information based on the order of his environment, if things are unpredictable, they do not make sense. If his environment responds to this need for order it is easy to classify the environment and take in new experiences and connect them to previous experiences. Thus he learns that certain things are predictable and others are changeable.

At the peak of their sensitive period for order, if things are in disorder, children can become physically ill. He becomes greatly distressed and frustrated if things aren't the way he can understand. It hurts him deep in his inner soul. Tantrums are the result of insensitive dealings with adults.

Adults must avoid all confusion by providing order. Through family rituals children learn to understand human relationships. They also develop a sense of time. Hence, the ritual at bedtime should always be at the same time and the same routine. Adults must create an orderly environment that looks and feels good and comfortable. In the classroom, if something is out of place, the directress should take care of it without saying anything. The Montessori Method allows children to experience complete and orderly work cycle with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

The refinement of the senses takes place between 1 ½ to 4 ½ years of age. During this time the child has extremely keen senses. It is very important to allow them to explore with all their senses, even if they are putting a material in their mouth, we simply disinfect it when they are finished. They are gathering information about color, form, shape, sound, smell, touch, and taste. Their environment should be filled with a wide variety of materials and activities that will stimulate the senses.

Between the ages of 1 ½ and 2 ½ years children become fascinated with tiny objects. Through this fascination they gain an awareness of the small parts in the world. The child's ability to observe is heightened. At this time they notice the smallest objects in a picture, things that an adult may not even see.

From 2 ½ to 6 years old children learn how to act in a social group, and this behavior is directed towards relationships with others. They are very conscious and aware of the way people act. First they observe, and then they imitate the people around them. The adult has a key role in this sensitive period because he/she is the model for social behavior both at home and at school. Children need to be exposed to the customs of the culture, and they must be shown how to be polite. This is the time when they want to practice those customs and learn them with ease.

The sensitive period for movement occurs from one to four years of age. At birth, babies have one main motion; sucking, which is performed to receive nourishment. Soon after that they have a natural urge from within to practice certain movements. Their bodies are in constant motion in order to strengthen the legs for walking, the body and neck for holding up the head, and the arms and hands to reach and grasp. However around the age of one, the use of these voluntary muscles is directed towards achieving a goal. The sensitive period begins when the mind and body begin to work together. Now he contains the physical capabilities of movement, but before he moves, his mind decides what to move towards. The child learns to crawl, walk, push, pull and grasp always first deciding where to go or what to get, and then acting. Through movement the child extends intelligence.

When we arrange a Montessori classroom, we keep these key aspects of development in mind. Both Our Nest and Children's House are arranged in an orderly way and they promote movement, language, and socializing. We ask ourselves how the physical environment can best serve the children within it. Instead of "child proofing," we ask ourselves how to "help [them] to do it alone".

# Our Nest Curriculum

Our Nest is our classroom that contains children from 15 months to 3 years. This is a child with an absorbent mind who is going through several of the sensitive periods (see introduction to Our Nest & Children's House). This beginning stage of the absorbent mind is one in which the child is doing all this absorbing subconsciously. So it makes it vital that the adults give him the opportunities to explore that which interests him. The teachers in Our Nest are always coming up with ways to change their classroom to help the children be independent learners.

## Our Nest Curriculum – Sensorimotor

### Concepts

Visual Discrimination of shape

Visual discrimination of color

Auditory exploration of sound

Tactile exploration of objects

Exploration of Smell and Taste

### Montessori Materials

Simple cylinder block

Geometric Shape Box

Geometric Solids

Puzzles

Sorting

Color Matching

Sorting

Bells

Drum

Instruments

Music Box

CD player

Sounds in the environment

Voice: tone and volume

Mystery Bags

Geometric Solids

All manipulatives in the classroom

Texture and temperature in the environment

Food Preparation

# Our Nest Curriculum – Movement

## Concepts

## Montessori Materials

### **Movement**

#### Gross Motor

Pushing & Pulling

Push Toy  
Pull Toy  
Wheelbarrow

Carrying

Trays  
Furniture  
Materials

Climbing

Baby Doll  
Stairs  
Tunnel  
Ladder

In Motion

Rock  
Hill  
Swing  
Hill  
Slide  
Riding Toys  
Hanging Bars

Stamina

Balance

Long Walks  
Walking on a straight line  
Balance Beam  
Wheelbarrow

Self Control

Sandbox  
Walking in a line  
Silence Game  
Yoga

Crossing the Midline

Raking  
Sweeping  
Shoveling

#### Fine Motor

Objects Permanence

Objects in a container  
Box with Ball

Development of pincer grasp

Nesting objects: Cubes, barrels  
Russian Doll  
Peg Block  
Vertical Ring or Bead Post  
Horizontal Ring or Bead Post

Pouring and water transfer

Stringing beads  
Geometric Figure Box  
Puzzles  
Opening and closing containers  
Nuts and bolts  
Locks and latches  
Hammering  
Spooning  
Dry Pouring  
Pouring Water  
Pouring with a Funnel  
Transferring Water with a Sponge  
Transferring Water with an Eyedropper

# Our Nest Curriculum – Practical Life

## Concepts

## Montessori Materials

### Care of the Person

Use of the Toilet

Potty  
child-sized toilet  
cloth underpants

Dressing and Undressing

Child's clothes  
dressing frames

Washing Hands

Sink  
Soap  
paper towels  
handwashing station

Wiping Nose

Tissue  
Mirror  
trash

### Care of the Environment

Cleaning the shelves

Dust cloth  
dust brush

Drying Spilled Water

towel

Cleaning the Floor

Sweeper  
Dustpan  
Broom  
Mop  
carpet sweeper

Washing Windows

Spray bottle  
Squeegee

Washing the Table

Cloth  
Sponge  
Spray

Laundry

Soap  
Scrub Brush  
Cloth washing  
folding

Caring for Plants

Child-sized watering can  
leaf polishing  
flower arranging  
sowing seeds

Caring for Outdoors

Child-sized rakes

Child-sized snow shovels  
Child-sized gardening tools

## **Food Preparation and Serving**

Self-Feeding

Plates  
Glasses  
Utensils  
Food

Pouring Water

Single Serving Pitcher  
Glass

Spreading

Child-Sized spreader  
Jam, butter, cream cheese etc  
Bread, cracker bagel etc

Slicing

Chopper  
Apple slicer  
Butter knife  
Egg slicer  
Variety of fruits, vegetable etc.

Making Juice

Orange, lemon, lime  
juicer

Baking

Variety of baking materials and recipes

Setting the Table

Place mats  
Plates  
Glasses  
Utensils  
Napkins

Serving Others

Spoon  
Bowl  
Plates  
Food

Clearing the Table

Rubber scraper to scrape food into the  
garbage

Washing Dishes

Dish washing station

## **Grace and Courtesy**

Greeting and Saying Goodbye

Asking for Help

Waiting

Watching a Work

Walking in the Hallway

Sitting in a Circle

Carrying a Chair

Rugs: Rolling/Unrolling/Carrying

# Our Nest Curriculum – Language

## Concepts

### **Language**

Vocabulary Enrichment

Conversational Skills

Beautiful Language

Animal Sounds & Animal names including babies

External Speech – Internal Speech

Auditory Development of listening skills and recognition of sounds

## Montessori Materials

Naming objects

Books

Rhymes

Objects in the environment (3 period lesson)

Mystery Bag

Classified Objects

Vocabulary Cards

Matching Objects with Cards

Telephone

Conversations with peers and teachers

Dialogues

Stories

Modeled by Teachers

Books

Rhymes

Songs

Farm

Other Animal Work

Animal Songs

Conversations

Teacher Modeled Narration

Sound Game

Listening Games – Simon says, who am I, sounds in the environment

I Spy

Stories and Recitation

Silence Game

Music – Instruments, sung, recorded, clapping a rhythm

Sound Cylinders

Bells

Isolating sounds in words

# Our Nest Curriculum – Art

## Concepts

### **Plastic**

Exploring with line

Exploring with Color

Exploring with Shape

Exploring with form

### Music

Voice

Making music with instruments

Recorded Music

### Dance

Free Movement with Rhythm

Movement with Music

## Montessori Materials

Chalk Drawing

Crayon Drawing

Painting with water on Chalkboard

Easel painting

Finger painting

Water color painting

Crayon, Chalk, Paint, Paper

Gluing

Pasting

Cutting paper

Tearing Paper

Clay Molding

Tearing Paper

Cutting Paper

Rhymes and Songs with Actions

Exploring tone, pitch and volume

Musical Instruments

CD Player

Music Box

# Our Nest Curriculum – Math

## Concepts

Counting from one to ten

One-to-one relationship

Shape Names

Size relationship – big, small, long, short  
etc

Sequencing

Concepts next-to, on top of, behind, etc

Left to Right

Order

## Montessori Materials

Learn through Conversation with teacher  
modeling

Setting the table

Matching works

3 period lesson with teacher

Hands on work with materials differing in  
these categories

Teacher Lead Directional Games

All our works are set up left to right – an  
indirect preparation for reading and  
mathematics

We maintain an orderly classroom in which  
items all have a place and things happen in  
sequence – a preparation for mathematics

# **Children's House Curriculum**

(See Introduction to Our Nest and Children's House)

Between the ages of three and six years old, the child's consciousness emerges and his language, movement, and intellect are further developed. He now tries to perfect what he took in with his absorbent mind and activates it. During this time his will develops; he can make choices and is self-disciplined. At this point children need to be provided with the opportunity to choose for themselves. Children absorb information with great ease; hence their memory capacity is amazing, and it must be nurtured.

From three to six years of age, the opportunities we provide for the child should be opportunities for her individual construction. It needs to be work of the individual not of the group. This is an area where we really differ from traditional education.

## **Children's House Curriculum – Practical Life**

The practical life exercises are the most important because they integrate all aspects of the child's development. They are simple, ordinary tasks adults still perform to maintain, prepare, and beautify their environment. The purpose of the practical life activities is to develop cooperation, independence, coordination, concentration, refinement of movement, self-discipline, and to help the child adapt to his environment.

These activities form the basis for the child's intellectual activity; through them the child learns to organize his sensations and experiences. They are meaningful activities because the child is working towards a goal and can see the end result. They fulfill the child's biological need to move as they engage the entire body and provide him with an opportunity for a positive experience with his hands. These activities respond to the sensitive period for movement, social behavior, and language and indirectly prepare the child for all other subjects in the same way nature indirectly prepares a child to speak.

Practical life exercises are divided into four main categories: movements, care of the environment, care of self, and grace and courtesy. Movement can be broken down further into lessons of graceful, respectful movements around the classroom which create a peaceful environment and fine motor movements that develop the hand. Care of the environment lessons are those that involve cleaning or caring for the classroom/outdoor environment. Care of self lessons focus on independence skills such as dressing and cleaning the child's own body. Grace and Courtesy lessons are those of manners – which are modeled by the teacher and practiced by the children in formal and informal lessons.

### Exercises

Spooning  
Pouring – dry media  
Pouring - water  
Pouring – pitcher to pitcher  
Pouring – into containers  
Pouring – with funnel  
Folding Napkins  
Squeezing  
Making Bubbles  
Using an Eye Dropper  
Lock and Key Exercise  
Hammering  
Popping Beads  
Large Bead Stringing  
Small Bead Stringing  
Patterning Activity

### Exercises

Food Preparation  
Setting the Table  
Dishwashing  
Clothes Washing  
Scrubbing a Table  
Polishing Silver  
Polishing a Mirror  
Sewing

### Exercises

Handwashing  
Dressing Frames: Button  
Dressing Frames: Zipper  
Dressing Frames: Snap  
Dressing Frames: Buckle  
Dressing Frames: Bow  
Dressing Frames: Lace

## **Movements**

### Activities

Carrying a Chair  
Sitting in a Chair  
Use of Rugs – rolling, unrolling, carrying  
Use of Water Supply (including clean up)  
Carrying a Table  
Walking in the Classroom  
Opening and shutting a Door  
Opening and Closing Drawers and Cupboards  
Putting on and Removing an Apron  
Carrying and Passing (general sharp objects)  
Storage of Cleaning Materials (e.g. hanging a broom)  
Squeezing a sponge  
Turning the Pages of a book  
Responding to a Bell  
Fire/Storm Drills

## **Care of Environment**

### Indoor Activities

Care of Pets  
Floor Sweeping  
Dusting  
Watering Plants  
Flower Arranging

### Outdoor Activities

CARE OF PLANTS  
Digging, planting watering, weeding,  
harvesting, cutting flowers  
CARE OF ANIMALS – feeding, brushing,  
cleaning  
GENERAL MAINTENANCE  
Sweeping, raking, shoveling snow

## **Care of Self**

### Activities

Hanging a Coat  
Putting on Shoes/Taking them off  
Taking Coat off and on/ turning sleeves  
Putting on boots/taking them off  
Cleaning Fingernails

## Grace & Courtesy

### Social Relations

Greeting/shaking hands  
Voice level Inside – Outside  
How to ask for something  
How to ask for help  
How to wait  
How to interrupt  
How to watch someone work  
Saying thank-you  
Apologizing  
Passing in front of someone  
How to greet a visitor  
How to introduce  
How to cough, blow or sneeze  
Use of the phone  
Table manners  
How to behave in public

### Interpersonal Relations

Awareness of Strangers  
Expressing Feeling/Responding to Others

### ***3 year olds are learning how to***

Walk in the school  
Talk with a low voice  
Name the directresses  
Use the bathroom and get there in time  
Sit in chair  
Keep furniture in right place  
Return equipment to right place  
Cover table correctly  
Deliver written messages  
Say “good morning”  
Say “good-bye”  
Close the door  
Tiptoe  
Walk in a line  
Walking hall without talking  
Listen to requests  
Listen to a command  
Roll a rug  
Unroll a rug  
Carry a rug  
Carry a box, etc  
Make it quiet  
Listen to sounds  
serve crackers  
Button someone else’s apron

### ***3 ½ y.o. are learning and practicing how to***

Get up from a chair  
Push chair under table  
Ask to leave the room  
Ask for a drink or use bathroom  
Tiptoe  
Watch a group lesson  
Watch another child’s work  
Keep equipment in right place (also while working)  
Serve 1 cup of juice on tray  
Deliver verbal message  
Behave when going to the bathroom  
Brush someone else’s clothes  
Sweep the Floor

***4 y.o. practicing and internalizing how to***

Talk to each other  
Get chair for another  
Watch one work at a table  
Watch one work on a rug  
Wait for help of directress  
Not interrupt when another is talking  
Carry equipment carefully  
Open door for one who is leaving  
Help another child with clothes  
Walk behind a person  
Say "excuse me" when passing in front

***5 y.o. Internalizing and utilizing attitudes and skills***

Opening and closing door soundlessly  
Conversing with consideration and comprehension  
Carrying material with care and purpose  
Serving all types of food  
Setting the table

***6 y.o. Reflecting inner structure through actions***

Respectful attitude toward adults, children, animals & plants  
Readiness to follow reasonable demands that appeal to feeling of responsibility and competence  
Consciousness of good working attitude and enjoyment of it  
Beginning of independent activity in society  
Initiating actions and taking responsibility for them

***4 ½ y.o. perfecting and internalizing how to***

Ask for something specifically  
Exercise manners and social graces  
Use and enjoy polite behaviors  
Straighten equipment on shelf perfectly  
Knock on door of another room  
Watch animals and consider their needs

***5 ½ y.o. Developing inner structure through utilization of skills and attitudes***

Developing calm and orderly attitude, coming from inner discipline  
When disorderly, responding to reasoning and corrective procedures  
Building respectful attitude towards others: adults, children animals  
Building up conscious awareness for animals as pets not toys  
Helping a younger child

# Children's House Curriculum – Sensorial

The sensorial materials are manipulatives which provide children with a concrete experience for an abstract idea. The concepts of dimension, form, color, touch, taste, and smell are isolated and children are given the opportunity to refine these sensations. These materials are scientifically prepared, made with exact measurements and have both psychological and physical limits according to how much the child can comprehend or how big of a challenge he needs. They are neither too simple nor too difficult, as long as they are introduced during the child's corresponding *sensitive periods*.

Children are first introduced to materials, which focus on only one sense (vision, smell, taste, auditory, or touch). With their visual sense, children perceive dimensions, shape, and color. They use their tactile sense to experience rough and smooth surfaces, weight, and temperature. The auditory sense is stimulated by the human voice, musical tones, and by distinguishing between loud and soft. Children use their gustatory sense to experience sweet, sour, salty, and bitter and their olfactory sense is presented with scents such as culinary, medicinal, and herbal. The more advanced materials combine two of the senses.

Built into the sensorial materials is a control of error, which allows the child to evaluate for himself whether he is reaching his goal or not. So that children do not need a teacher to check their work, they can check it themselves. Because these materials are so beautiful and appealing to the young child, they actually encourage a child to repeat an activity time and again, thereby developing his attention span, concentration, coordination, control and ability to make judgments. The geometric nature of these materials inspires creativity and an appreciation for the beauty of line and form.

Dr. Montessori created materials, which indirectly prepare children for future endeavors in the same way that nature does. Therefore, each sensorial material has a direct purpose and an indirect purpose. Children are prepared for geometry, algebra, reading, writing, geography, art, music, and many more subjects. But at this stage they are just being introduced to the materials and experiencing them, later those ideas will be addressed. By the time these ideas are actually introduced, the child eases into them and may even figure them out for himself, because he has been working with them all along.

After gaining sufficient experience with the materials, the language is introduced in a *three period lesson*. First the positive and the opposite is named (big and small), then their comparatives (bigger and smaller), and finally their superlatives (biggest and smallest). Language is key because it allows us to express what we know.

<u>Concepts</u>	<u>Montessori Materials</u>	<u>Age</u>
Visual discrimination of height	Cylinder blocks	3 y.o.
	Knobless cylinders	3 y.o.
Visual discrimination of size: big, bigger, biggest, small, smaller, smallest	Pink Tower	3 y.o.
	Cylinder Blocks	3 y.o.
	Knobless Cylinders	
	Sorting	
Visual Discrimination of thickness: thick, thicker, thickest, thin, thinner, thinnest	Brown Stairs	3 y.o.
	Cylinder Blocks	3 y.o.
	Knobless Cylinders	3-4y.o.
Visual Discrimination of length: long, longer, longest, short, shorter, shortest	Red Rods	3 y.o.
Visual Discrimination of form – shape names – sphere, ovoid, ellipsoid, cube, cone, triangular based pyramid, square based pyramid, rectangular prism, triangular prism, cylinder	Geometric Solids	4 y.o.
Preparation for Geometry	Geometric Cabinet Demonstration Tray	3 y.o.
Visual discrimination – building a cube	Geometric Cabinet	4 y.o.
	Constructive Triangles	4 y.o.
	Sorting	
	Geometric Cabinet	4 y.o.
	Binomial Cube	3-5y.o.
	Trinomial Cube	4-5y.o.
	Power of Two Cube	
To show the various plane figures and how they can be constructed by triangles	Constructive Triangles Large	4 y.o.
	Hexagonal Box	
	Constructive Triangles Small	4 y.o.
	Hexagonal Box	
	Constructive Triangles Rectangular Box	4 y.o.
Visual Discrimination Color	Color Tablet Box I, II & III	3-5y.o.
	Sorting	
Development of the Auditory Sense	Sound Cylinders	4 y.o.
Loud, soft, high, low	Montessori Bells	3-5y.o.
Tactile Discrimination	Sorting	3-4y.o.
	Mystery Bag	3-4y.o.
	Rough & Smooth Boards I & II	3 y.o.
	Touch Tablets	
	Box of Fabrics	3 y.o.
Discrimination of Weight	Sorting	3-4y.o.
	Baric Tablets	
Discrimination of Temperature	Thermic Tablets	
Experience and Categorize Tastes	Tasting Jars	
Olfactory Sense	Smelling Bottles	
Preparation for higher level math – squaring, cubing and powers of numbers	Binomial Cube	3-5y.o.
	Trinomial Cube	4-5y.o.
	Power of Two Cube	
	Table of Pythagoras	

Preparation for Mathematics

Red Rods 3 y.o.

Pink Tower 3 y.o.

Brown Stair 3 y.o.

Cylinder Blocks 3 y.o.

Knobless Cylinders 3 y.o.

Preparation for Writing

Cylinder Blocks 3 y.o.

Sorting

Rough & Smooth

Touch Tablets

Box of Fabrics

# Children's House Curriculum – Language

Language in the Children's House is not like the other materials. All aspects of language are alive. Children are surrounded by speech, written language and read language. The classroom is full of meaningful, rich vocabulary, and the *directress* is a role model for beautiful, clear, artistic language.

Spoken language is the foundation on which writing and reading develop. A child cannot write unless he has something to say, and he cannot read until he is able to comprehend speech. The prerequisite to successful spoken language is confidence, which is developed in the way adults speak with and to the child and the way that adults listen to him intently so that he realizes what he says is important. Adults have to become active listeners and draw children into conversations, continuously giving vocabulary to the child. Adults must present the child with new words that are meaningful to him. New vocabulary comes through books, poetry, and through the directress. The directress always names the material before she gives a lesson and then after the child has worked with the material, she gives the names of the parts and qualities. Everyday she brings new words into environment and invites the children to ask her when they don't know what one of the words she uses means.

Dr. Montessori found that writing must come before reading. So she developed a variety of games to prepare the ear of the child to hear sounds in words. Then she developed the sand paper letters, which give the child the opportunity to hear the sound the letter makes, see the shape of the letter and trace it with their fingers (an auditory, visual and kinesthetic learning experience). After mastering several sandpaper letters, children can begin to make their letters visible using the moveable alphabet. Finally after many exercises of the hand (with the metal insets and chalkboard) the child is able to write words on paper.

Dr. Montessori concentrated on total reading, which is not just decoding a word (though that is a necessary skill at first). But she said true reading includes an understanding of the meaning, the context, and the thoughts conveyed by the author. Until the child obtains from the written words transmission of ideas he is not really reading. Writing prepares the child to read on a mechanic level, sounding it out, but total reading involves a sophistication of the child. First the child is introduced to phonetic reading, words whose letters make the same sounds that the child learned with sandpaper letters. Then he is taught phonograms, combinations of two or more letters that produce a new sound (sh, ch) and puzzle words (sight words) which are words that follow none of the rules (two, the, was, etc).

<u>Concepts</u>	<u>Montessori Materials</u>	<u>Age</u>
<u>Vocabulary Enrichment</u>		
Vocabulary Development of Common and uncommon objects	Telling and reading stories – including dramatization Learning to recite from memory – poems, finger plays, nursery rhymes, songs Three period Lesson “I Spy” Nomenclature Object to Object Picture to Object Picture to Picture Naming Cards 3 Part Vocabulary Cards Booklet – pictures & words Picture to Label Label to Label Booklet of just words Labeling Classifying Sequencing Stories Poetry	3 y.o. 3 y.o.  3 y.o. 3 y.o. 3 y.o. 3 y.o.    5 y.o. 5 y.o. 4-5y.o. 3 y.o. 4 y.o.
Conversation Skills	Practice speaking to the whole group, to one individual Practice listening Lessons in Grace and Courtesy Line Time – Question Game Line Time – News Period	3 y.o.
Developing Sequential, Logical Skills Develop Classification Skills	Sequencing Classification	
<u>Writing: Sounding Out Words</u>		
Auditory Development of listening skills and recognition of sounds	Listening Games – Simon says, who am I, sounds in the environment I Spy Stories and Recitation Silence Game Music – Instruments, sung, recorded, clapping a rhythm Sound Cylinders Bells Isolating sounds in words	3 y.o. 3 y.o.  3 y.o.  3 y.o.  3 y.o.
Become familiar with the letter shapes	Sandpaper Letters	3 y.o.

and sounds Sand Tray 3 y.o.

Exploration of what the child knows  
putting together the sounds he knows to  
make words Initial Sounds – I Spy 3 y.o.  
Moveable Alphabet – Initial Sounds 4 y.o.  
Moveable Alphabet – 3 letter words 4 y.o.  
Initial Sounds Booklet 4 y.o.  
Phonetic Object Basket 4 y.o.

Writing: Pencil Grip

Indirect preparation for pencil grip Cylinder blocks 3 y.o.  
Rough and smooth boards 3 y.o.  
Direct preparation for writing Metal Insets 3 y.o.  
First Stages of Writing Freehand Chalkboards 4 y.o.  
Making booklets on lined paper 4 y.o.  
Tracing sandpaper letters w/ crayon 4 y.o.  
Writing w/ structure – line &  
placement 5 y.o.  
Capital letters 5 y.o.  
Punctuation 5 y.o.

Reading Comprehension

Indirect preparation left to right order All Practical Life 3-4y.o.  
Classification 3-4y.o.  
Sequencing 3-4y.o.  
Recognition and memory of words that  
you can't sound out Puzzle words/Sight Words 5 y.o.  
Development of reading skills Phonogram Object Box 5 y.o.  
Puzzle words/Sight Words 5 y.o.  
Command Cards 5 y.o.  
Label Cards/Naming Cards 3-4y.o.  
Sandpaper Letters Pink Series Game I  
& II 5 y.o.  
To help children become aware of the  
function of words Function of Words: The Noun 5 y.o.  
Function of Words: The Article 5 y.o.  
Function of Words: Verb 5 y.o.  
Function of Words: Preposition 5 y.o.  
Masculine & Feminine Noun 5 y.o.

# Children's House Curriculum – Math

In the Children's House, the mathematical materials are not presented until the child is about four years old. At that time we witness a readiness in the child. The child becomes quality conscious. For example, if two children under four years old share a cookie, as long as they each have a piece of the cookie, they are happy. However, if a four year old shares a cookie, he looks to make sure both pieces are equal in size. The child at four is also very aware of patterns and time. This child is ready to understand mathematical concepts, but we must remember that in math every step is gradual. The child must fully understand one concept before moving on to the next, because if it is not understood he won't be able to build on it. There are many indirect preparations for mathematics in practical life, sensorial and also language, which become a foundation for successful work in the area of mathematics

Practical life activities require order, sequencing and repetition. Sensorial materials isolate concepts of dimension and form, helping children to categorize these concepts. Many of these materials come in sets of ten, the base of our number system. The sensorial and language works both have a lot of matching activities – leading to a one-one correspondence, which is a crucial concept for mathematics. The language works give children the opportunity to precisely label items and express themselves – again skills they will need for math.

The child is guided through the math materials in gradual progressions so that each process is completely understood before a new one is introduced. The general procedure and presentation is the same throughout all the mathematical materials: first introducing the quantity, then the symbol, and then working with the two together. The quantity is a concrete experience and the child will follow it with practice and the symbol is an abstract representation of the quantity with which the child practices after he understands the quantity. After the quantity and the symbol are understood individually, they are united and the child again practices. Once he has practiced, he is tested in a subtle way to ensure that he can now move on. In math it is essential to incorporate in the process of learning. Moving from the simple to the complex and isolating difficulties, the child manipulates and works with concrete materials. So the child actually goes from the perceptual to the conceptual.

<u>Concepts</u>	<u>Montessori Materials</u>	<u>Age</u>
Introduce verbal names & Quantity of numbers 1-10	Red & blue rods	3 ½ - 4
Introduce the symbols - Number Writing 0-9	Sandpaper numbers	3 ½
Understanding the sequence of numbers 0-9 practicing quantity and symbol	Spindle boxes Cards and Counters Memory Game	3 ½

Concept of Zero	Spindle boxes	3 ½
	Cards and Counters	
	Memory Game	
Concept of Ten	Cards & counters	3 ½
	Memory Game	
To learn and understand the idea of teens – and recognize the relationship between the quantity and the symbol	Teen Boards of Seguin	4 y.o.
Learning the vocabulary, 10, twenty, thirty etc. Recognition of the relationship between the quantity and its symbol	Ten Board of Seguin	4 y.o.
Introduction to the decimal system quantity	Golden Beads	4 y.o.
Units, tens, hundreds, thousands		
Introduction to the decimal system symbols	Golden Bead Cards	4 y.o.
Units, tens, hundreds, thousands		
Overview of the decimal system – base ten – means no more than nine in each category	The Nine Layout with the Golden Beads	5 y.o.
Reinforcing the connection with symbol and quantity for the decimal system	The Forty-Five Layout with the Golden Beads	5 y.o.
Exchanging units to tens	Exchanging lesson with Golden beads	5 y.o.
	Snake Game	
Preparation for addition	Snake Game	5 y.o.
Reinforce counting and view decimal system patterns	One Hundred Board	5 y.o.
	One Hundred Chain	5 y.o.
	One Thousand Chain	5 y.o.
Preparation for multiplication & powers of numbers & geometry	Chains of the squares of numbers 1-9	5 y.o.
	Chains of cubes of numbers 1-9	5 y.o.
	One Hundred Chain	5 y.o.
	One Thousand Chain	5 y.o.
Extend the Child's ability to count beyond one hundred	Chains of cubes of numbers 1-9	5 y.o.
	One Thousand Chain	
Introducing addition – meaning to put two smaller quantities together to get a larger one.	Addition with the Golden Beads (quantities in the thousands)	5 y.o.
Practice Memorizing Simple addition facts	Addition Strip Boards	5 y.o.
Forming Numbers on Paper	Number Writing 1-20	4 y.o.
	Number Writing 1-1000	5 y.o.

# **Children's House Curriculum –** **Cultural Science**

The area of Cultural Science in a Montessori classroom can be broken down into three main parts: Geography, Biology and History.

## Geography

Dr. Montessori stressed that it is always important to give the child first the whole idea and then break it up into parts. So in the area of Geography, we begin our studies with the whole world. The child is first able to explore the globes and the world map. He is given the names of the continents. Then the world is broken down into parts. After the world globe and map, children can explore each of the continent maps and learn the names of the countries on those continents. They are also given the opportunity to explore the laws of nature as they relate to the states of matter and different land and water forms. These works are mainly language related and all the language they learn will be built upon in elementary.

## Biology

Through their practical life work, children are given the opportunity to care for plants and animals and in doing so, they observe many different characteristics. From these experiences with plants and animals, the children become aware that plants and animals have needs, and these needs have to be met if that organism is going to survive. Animals must have food and water. Plants must have water and sunshine. The children become aware of these needs and these facts because they have experienced first hand from their own activities and sensorial explorations, not because they have been taught it.

## History

In this environment we cannot help but give history to the children. We help them explore family life, and every family has a history. The stories that their family members tell are part of their personal history and part of the continuing story of human beings on earth. The way the child's family dresses, the foods that family eats, and the language(s) that family speaks are all connected to history. Grace and courtesy lessons are related to history someone long ago decided what was polite and impolite. The songs sung in different countries, the national anthems, the national dances, the poetry all have historical significance. Yet none of these are teaching history in a formal way. We need to look at these ideas as an introduction to the way of life of a group of people, and that's how we can help the young children build up this foundation for later work. So, in this way, our entire school community is a part of our history curriculum, and we encourage families to share with us their customs, clothing, food, etc. Please contact your child's teacher about setting up a time to do this.

## Conclusion

All of these subjects are presented to the young children as language extension activities. We are building their vocabularies, but we are also building a foundation for their later studies in geography, biology and history. We look at Cultural Science not as a subject to be taught, but rather as a help to orientating the child to her surroundings. So that she can grow to understand that our world has certain laws of nature – plants have certain needs, animals have other needs, and air, water and land have laws that govern them. Human beings all have the same basic needs – food, shelter and clothing – but depending on where we come from, we fulfill those in different ways.

“Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war.”

~Maria Montessori

<u>Concepts</u>	<u>Montessori Materials</u>	<u>Age</u>
<u>Geography</u>		
Introduce child to the earth's shape and composition & prepare for work with maps	Sandpaper Globe Colored Globe	
Concrete objects to learn about life on other continents and countries	World Map and Continent Maps Map Making	5 y.o.
To introduce and explore the concepts of land, air & water	Land, Air & Water Land Forms Water Forms	5 y.o. 5 y.o. 5 y.o.
Learning the Names of the Continents/Countries	3 period lesson Maps & Labels	
Gain an understanding of why/how we represent the earth on a flat surface	Linking of globes to map	
We can use words to direct people	Direction Cards Left and Right Hand	
Observing the laws of nature	Experiments with sound, solid, liquid, gas, magnetic/non-magnetic	5 y.o.
<u>Biology</u>		
Gain an understanding of the human body	Parts of the Body Cards Parts of the Skeleton Personal Growth Chart Nutrition	
Reasoning Through different Classifications	Living/Non-Living Plant/Animal Animal Families	
Understanding all living things have parts and there are different kinds of living things	Parts of the Plant Parts of the Flower Parts of the Reptile Parts of the Amphibian Parts of the Fish	5 y.o. 5 y.o. 5 y.o. 5 y.o. 5 y.o.

	Parts of the Mammal	5 y.o.
	Parts of the Bird	5 y.o.
Exploration of the many different types of plants	Botany Cabinet	5 y.o.
	Parts of Leaf	5 y.o.
Understanding that life goes in cycles and life forms depend on one another	Living/Non-Living Plant/Animal Gardening Caring for Pets	

### History

Understanding Simple time Concepts	Conversations involving: Before-after Yesterday, today, tomorrow Day-night, morning, afternoon, evening Time as duration	
Gaining an understanding of the concept of time and how it fits into the calendar	Daily Calendar Monthly Calendar Days of the Week Months of the Year	5 y.o.
Understanding of the passing of time and the changing of the seasons	Seasons Work	5 y.o.
Understanding of the passage of time and how it is shown by a clock	Setting up the Clock The hour, The Half Hour, Quarter Past, Quarter to Clock Card Material 60 Minutes	5 y.o. 5 y.o. 5 y.o. 5 y.o. 5 y.o.
Celebrating and understanding different traditions, holidays and customs	Celebrations – involving food, clothing, dance etc Plays Stories	
Understanding of the passage of time in child's own life	Child's Own Time Line	
Understanding of a time before people	Timeline of Pre-History The Story of Life	