



Guidelines for Observing a Montessori Class

Welcome to the Montessori School of East Orlando. We are pleased that you are taking the time to visit and observe one of our classrooms. We have a high regard for the children's classroom environment and take great care not to interrupt their concentration and focus. We ask that you stay seated in the classroom, and try not to engage the children in conversation. A polite "Hello" and a direct response about who you are would be appropriate. Below you will find guidelines to assist you in ensuring that your experience is as valuable as possible. Attached is a list of questions for your use while observing the classroom. Enjoy your visit!

Classroom Atmosphere

A great deal of effort and thought is devoted to the "prepared environment" of a Montessori classroom. Each piece of material has been placed on the shelf to help the child independently develop a particular skill. Each of our classes is proportionately divided into age groups of 3, 4, and 5-year olds; 6, 7, and 8-year olds; and 9, 10, and 11-year olds. Children of different ages are intermingled so that they might help and learn from one another.

Degree of Self-Direction

Notice that the children learn in different ways. With some types of materials you will see groups of children working cooperatively, and with others you will find an individual child working intently. Still other children may be walking through the classroom seemingly not engaged in any direct activity. Very often, this last type of child is engaged in absorbing the other children and materials through observation.

Role of the Teacher and Assistant

The teacher is a facilitator of the children's autonomous learning processes. She prepares the environment and gives children the tools to utilize the materials. Sometimes the teacher provides direct encouragement or indirect appreciation, and at other times judicious absence. There is a basic respect for each individual child's particular style of learning in the Montessori classroom.

Sociability

Watch the ways in which the children offer assistance to one another—with the materials and with everyday tasks. Note how the younger children absorb the older children's work simply by being near them and how conversely, the older children will assist the younger ones with work that they have already mastered. The child's natural desire to form friends and be part of an ongoing community is ever present in the Montessori classroom.