

Montessori Curriculum- Phonics and Language Development

Phonics-intensive

Systematic-phonics programs teach young children to read by helping them to recognize and sound out the letters and syllables of words. Students are then led to blend these sounds together to sound out and recognize the whole word.

In the Montessori reading curriculum, teachers take advantage of the sensitive period for reading (between the ages of three and five) during which children are more able to learn how to read. Children first learn to read (and write) through concrete material and sensory activities. For instance, they learn to trace sandpaper letters, and how to hold a pencil and control its use and others. This allows them to develop fine motor skills and learn through many of their senses.

When children have learned some letters, they use what's called a "large movable alphabet". These wooden letters allow children to construct words.

This sets the stage for phonics: sounding out letters and joining them together to form words. Children begin to distinguish sounds, and phonetically read words, phrases, and sentences.

As part of the whole language approach, children are then given picture reading cards. These allow them to practice matching words with objects and pictures. There's also a lot of focus on comprehension. Children are given special material to learn the meanings of words and sentences, as well as the basics of grammar.

After they've learned the basics, children are given books to read (usually non-fiction books). Often, many illustrated books about the real world are provided.

Writing

Children learn to write before reading in the Montessori education system. They start writing between the ages of three and four. During this sensitive period, they're thought to be attracted to the order of writing and can easily learn this skill.

Montessori writing, like reading and math, isn't taught by direct instruction. The focus is on practicing writing and doing engaging exercises.

Children first work with moveable alphabets. They then learn how to hold a pencil, practice different strokes, and learn about pencil pressure. This improves their fine motor skills, and builds up their finger and hand muscles.

Special writing exercises are also given. These allow children to realize writing is not just "making marks". This also helps them improve their handwriting. They then learn to write creatively and express themselves in unique ways.

Language Development

There are several aspects of the Montessori language curriculum. These include spoken and written language, reading, and spelling. These skills are taught together.

The Montessori classroom is designed to promote language skills. Language use is encouraged in the classroom, partly by giving students plenty of freedom to speak with their peers. Oral language skills are refined through songs, games, poems, and stories.

In the language area of the classroom, vocabulary is enriched in many ways. Precise names are used for all objects. Object classification and matching exercises are also used to improve comprehension and vocabulary.

Students mostly move at their own pace when learning to speak, read, and write. There's no strict time frame for developing these skills, unlike in many mainstream schools. Teachers do, though, take advantage of sensitive periods for learning these skills.