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Motor Education

The education of a child's physical movements is very complex as it must correspond to all the coordinated movements which the child has to establish in his physiological organism. The child, if left without guidance, is disorderly in his movements. These disorderly movements are typically the special characteristic of the young child and yet as he "never keeps still," and he "touches everything." This is what forms the child's so-called "unruliness" and "naughtiness" in formative years.

--- Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook (1965)

Motor skill education has always been an important part of the Montessori curriculum. Dr. Montessori recommended helping the child learn orderly movements so that as they grow they will control their own movements. According to the Montessori philosophy, a child should not be restrained or confined (playpens, high chairs). When a child has the opportunity to move in an appropriate way they grow quiet and content. They become active workers full of purpose and joy.

Per Dr. Montessori, Motor Education refers to:

- primary movements of everyday life (walking, sitting, handling objects)
- Care of the person
- Gardening
- Manual work
- Gymnastics
- Rhythmic movements

(Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook)

In a Montessori environment children

are taught orderly movements by being shown every part of a lesson: how to choose a material from the shelf, how to carry it to the table, how to complete the work, rise from the chair, pick up the work from the table and return it to the shelf. The children learn these tasks easily and want to perform them, again and again.

In a Montessori environment, children require space to move and work in order to develop their minds through their motor activities. It is through their movement (hands and large motor) that their mind develops. Some people find it easier to memorize a sonnet while walking around. It is the repetition of movement and an opening of the mind together that facilitates learning.

Although Montessori classrooms have tables and chairs, the children have the freedom of movement to choose to work at a table and chair or to work on a rug (creating a defined work space on the floor). Depending on the age and personality of the child, some children prefer working on the floor while others prefer table work. In either case, much of the work and where to complete the work is selected by the child.

In traditional settings most schools have a physical education teacher. This is true at many Montessori schools as well. However, other Montessori schools integrate the physical education curriculum with the Montessori curriculum. For example, if a class is studying Africa the Physical Education teacher (or classroom teacher) could include games from that continent.



Tips From Teachers: Motor Education At Home

Think of Motor Education at home in broader terms than physical education. Think of helping your child refine their motor skills. Think about grace and courtesy and how you can help your child become more graceful in their movements.

Motor Education at home:

Fall Fun:

- Hit the trail.
Kids love to be outside. The out-of-doors is a huge playground to which children are naturally attracted. Exploring some of the hiking trails in and around your community is a great way to spend time together.
- Rake leaves.
Rake leaves (in your own yard or for a neighbor). Not only is it good exercise, but it's family fun. While raking leaves you can encourage your child to....
- Collect leaves.
Take home and arrange leaves on a piece of poster board measuring approximately 17 inches by 12 inches. Smooth a piece of clear contact paper over the poster board on both sides, laminating the board and leaves. Now you have a special placemat to use for the remainder of the season. Children can also pick a variety of leaves and sort them by different types of leaves, leaf edges...
- Contact your local library (or your local Agricultural Extension Agency).
Ask where you can find a guidebook on local flora and fauna. Take it on your hike and try to identify as many different trees, plants, and critters as possible.
- Special meals
- Setting the table
 - § Invite your child to share in the pleasure of setting a beautiful table to share with others. You can get books from the library that show proper placement of silverware and dishes for different dining events. Many children would find the variety of table settings (formal vs. informal) a point of interest.
- Polishing silver
 - § Allow your child to assist you in polishing the silver you may need to use in setting the table. Take necessary precautions (gloves, vented area) for yourself and your child as you are polishing.
- Folding napkins
 - § There is an art to folding napkins. You can find information on the internet or in books on how to create beautiful napkin folds. It's similar to paper folding (origami) and the right tools (napkins) and practice help make napkin folding beautiful. Use the folded napkins on the special meal table.
- Serving others
 - § In a Montessori environment children regularly serve each other – learning the skills of grace and courtesy and also societal expectations. When preparing for guests you can practice how to host a party and serve others' a meal. It is a good idea to give children specific tasks and give them time to practice.



Magnificent Montessori Materials: Dressing Frames

Motor education, as explained in the page 1 article describes the components of motor education. Care of the person is one area of motor education. Dressing frames are one part of care of the person in the practical life area of the Montessori environment.

		
<p>Button Frame:</p> <p>The children use this frame (large pictured, but there is also a small button frame) to learn how to insert a button into a buttonhole.</p>	<p>Snap Frame:</p> <p>Children are introduced to the snap frame and practicing snapping the male and female snaps together to help them learn.</p>	<p>Zipper Frame:</p> <p>Children have a large, easy to move zipper to learn how to zip. Children are also exposed to zipper terminology – foot and pull.</p>
		
<p>Buckle Frame:</p> <p>The children use this frame to learn how to buckle their belts and other clothes and shoes that use buckles.</p>	<p>Hook and Eye Frame:</p> <p>The children use this frame to learn how to connect/fasten a hook to an eyelet.</p>	<p>Lacing and Tying Frame:</p> <p>The children use this frame to learn how to lace and tie their shoes and clothes.</p>





Q & A

Q: I observed in a Montessori classroom and the children were given lessons and then directed to use the materials in specific ways. Does this allow my child to grow creatively and use his imagination ?

A: The Montessori Method is designed to meet all the needs of a child – academic, social, emotional, physical.

In terms of lessons the children are given, either by an adult in the environment or by other children in the environment, the intention of a lesson is to show the child how to use the material or to show them enough of the material that they can discover the purpose of the material on their own. Often in a Montessori environment, the children are given a brief lesson and then allowed to work on the material independently. The child is then left to make discoveries on his or her own. It is by making their own personal discoveries that children learn to “love-to-learn.”

Once a child has a lesson they are free to choose the work independently (or with a friend when appropriate). The general guidelines for what a child does with the work once they have the lesson is for the teacher not to interfere with the work of the child unless:

- The child is damaging the work
- The child is disruptive to the work of the other children

Many times in a Montessori environment you can observe children interacting with material in

a less than pure sense. For example, Raquel, a 3 year old Montessori child, was once observed holding two knobless cylinders and having a conversation between the two. It was quite creative and it was something she was doing with the work although not part of the presentation she was shown. She was not stopped by the Directress since it was not damaging to the material nor disruptive to other classmates.

Additionally, children are allowed and encouraged to explore things on their own. Most Montessori schools have an emphasis on storytelling as a means of helping the children learn about historical figures and events. So, an adult may dress up as Dr. Maria Montessori and visit the class and tell Dr. Montessori’s story. Through storytelling the children acquire a real sense of the person and some of their life events.

The Montessori Method is designed to meet all the needs of a child – academic, social, emotional, physical.

Any Montessori/education related questions can be directed to the editor at:

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..... **Montessori Terminology:**

Casa de Bambini: Italian term meaning house of the children. This is the name Dr. Montessori originally called her 3-6 year old class. It was intended at the time to be more home-like than school-like since schools at the time were rigid and not developmentally appropriate for

