

How Can Montessori Teachers Meet The Needs Of So Many Different Children?

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Montessori teachers do more than present curriculum. The secret of any great teacher is helping learners get to the point that their minds and hearts are open and they are ready to learn, where the motivation is not focused on getting good grades but, instead, involves a basic love of learning. As parents know their own children's learning styles and temperaments, teachers, too, develop this sense of each child's uniqueness by developing a relationship over a period of years with the child and her parents.

Dr. Montessori believed that teachers should focus on the child as a person, not on the daily lesson plan. Montessori nurtures and inspires the human potential, leading children to ask questions, think for themselves, explore, investigate, and discover. Our ultimate objective is to help them to learn how to learn independently, retaining the curiosity, creativity, and intelligence with which they were born. Montessori teachers don't simply present lessons; they are facilitators, mentors, coaches, and guides.

Traditionally, teachers tell us that they "teach students the basic facts and skills that they will need to succeed in the world." Studies show that in many classrooms, as much as 40 percent of the day may be spent on discipline and classroom management. Montessori educators play a very different role.

Wanting to underscore the very different role played by adults in her schools, Dr. Montessori used the title "director" or "directress" instead of "teacher." In Italian, the word implies the role of the coordinator or administrator of an office or factory. Today, many Montessori schools prefer to call their teachers "guides."

Whatever they're called, Montessori teachers are rarely the center of attention, for this is not their class; it is the "Children's House."

Normally Montessori teachers will not spend much time working with the whole class at once. Their primary role is to prepare and maintain the physical, intellectual, and social/emotional environment within which the children will work. Certainly, a key aspect of this is the selection of intriguing and developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning to meet the needs and interests of each child in the class.

Montessori guides have four principle goals:

Montessori teachers rarely present a lesson to more than a handful of children at one time, and they limit lessons to brief, efficient presentations. The goal is to give the children just enough to capture their attention and spark their interest, intriguing them enough that they will come back on their own to work with the materials.

Lessons center around the most CLEAR and simple information necessary for the children to do the work on their own: the NAME of the material, its place on the shelf, the ground-rules for its use, and some of the possibilities inherent within it.

Montessori guides closely monitor their students' progress, keeping the level of challenge high. Because they normally work with each child for two or three years, guides get to know their students' strengths and weaknesses, interests, and anxieties extremely well. Montessori guides often use the children's interests to enrich the curriculum and provide alternate avenues for accomplishment and success.