

Primary Classroom Curriculum

“Free the Child’s potential and you will transform him into the world.” - Maria Montessori

Curriculum Overview

At Elements Montessori, we strive to nurture a child’s intrinsic curiosity by providing them with an enriched and challenging environment to freely learn, explore and express themselves. Our educational philosophy is based on the inherent characteristics of the child between the ages of three to six. Our curriculum and classroom is based on the fact that children this age demonstrate:

- A love of order
- A love of work
- Profound spontaneous concentration
- Attachment to reality
- Love of silence and of working alone
- Sublimation of the possessive instinct
- Obedience
- Independence and initiative
- Spontaneous self-discipline
- Joy
- The power to act from real choice and not just from idle curiosity.

Our Classroom offers hundreds of unique self-correcting materials in five different subject areas. These materials accommodate many levels of ability and are arranged in progressing order of difficulty. The materials invite the child to touch and explore, motivating them to learn through natural interests. Concentration, coordination, cognitive development and good work habits are established through the child’s work process. Each child progresses at his or her own individually appropriate pace, allowing each to be appropriately challenged and to become proficient in each area according to individual development and needs.

Peace Education

Elements Montessori recognizes children as the redeeming factor in the evolution of humankind. Having a peace curriculum in our Montessori classroom is a sure way to prepare your children to be peace-seekers. We believe education is the most powerful and universal way to construct a peaceful society. As Montessori teachers, we realize that it is not enough to simply talk about peace but we must also create an environment that will promote the development of peaceful individuals. Our Montessori teachers look inward and take note of their own beliefs and values and teach peace in our classroom, which strives for peace in our lives, in our home, and in our workplace. We are teaching and nourishing the peace keepers of the future.

Grace and Courtesy

In the Elements Montessori classroom, children and adults take care to be gracious toward and courteous of one another. This area of the curriculum encourages respect for oneself, for other members of the community, for the living things in the classroom, and for the environment. Carrying things carefully, returning them to their place so others may use them, moving gracefully and carefully, using polite and respectful language, showing consideration to others, good table manners, properly introducing oneself, and interrupting politely are all part of the lessons in Grace and Courtesy.

Practical Life

Practical Life is the gateway to the Montessori environment; it is the area in which a child is first introduced to work in a Montessori classroom. The materials used in the practical life area are familiar ones taken from their daily lives. Some of the more purposeful tasks in Practical Life include: pouring water, how to carry a chair, folding clothes, polishing, using eye droppers, lacing, buttoning, zipping, setting the table, watering plants, washing the windows, preparing food, doing the dishes, arranging flowers, etc. Through these exercises and repetition of “practical” skills, children learn how to complete work from beginning to end by following a sequence of performance steps. These exercises give children the opportunity to refine their fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, hand strength, balance, concentration and ability to do things for themselves. These activities help the child to properly take care of himself so that he may feel as though he is independent and does not have to rely on an adult for his basic needs. When the child has a solid foundation in Practical Life they are ready to master lessons with imagination and purposefulness in other areas, inside and outside of the classroom.

Sensorial

In the Sensorial area, children are provided opportunities to acquire clear, conscious information and to make classifications in their environment. Sensorial activities assist children in refining this skill and becoming good observers of the world. The materials are designed to aid in the development of sensory motor skills. They are a series of materials with physical qualities such as color, size, shape, sound, texture, and weight which, when introduced properly to the students, lead to knowledge. Each material is intended to train the five senses. 3-6 year olds are increasingly able to make finer and finer discriminations of the many stimuli all around them. These exercises are specifically designed materials that allow the child to refine their auditory sense, tactile sense, olfactory sense, gustatory sense, thermic sense, baric sense, stereo gnostic sense, and discrimination of form. The materials in the sensorial curriculum all share the same developmental or direct aims: refinement of the ability to observe, compare, discriminate, differentiate, reason, decide and solve problems. All the sensorial materials are sequential, for example: left to right, top to bottom, simple to complex.

Math

The Math area of the Elements Primary classroom, allows students to embrace the concept of numbers through a hands on experience. The Math area provides an opportunity for children to explore math through concrete materials and move to more abstract ones. Children develop a mathematical mind from everyday activities, such as sorting, counting and seeing patterns. The basic skills are: order, concentration, coordination and independence. A sense of order teaches the child to successfully accomplish a task, from the way the lesson is set up through the way the lesson is conducted. A sense of order is needed in most math activities. The Math area of the classroom stimulates the child's interest of order, movement, language, beauty and detail. The shelves move from simple to most complex, beginning with the numbers 0-10 and moving from decimals to tens and teens and then to operations. Math also allows movement. The materials, many of which require more than one trip to carry, are kept on a stationary shelf. This allows the children to move around carrying things often. The materials are welcoming, clean and complete; they are also sequenced and accessible to the child. Each material builds on the last one presented, to allow the child to anticipate what will come next. As the child enters the Math area, the focus is on understanding numbers through ten. Once the child has grasped this concept, the decimal system is introduced. The focus here is the hierarchy of the decimal system and how it functions. The materials then progress to counting beyond ten (tens, teens, linear and skip counting). Children in a Montessori environment are drawn to hands on materials and objects. By combining, separating, sharing and counting these objects children are introduced to math operations through concrete materials rather than abstract ideas. Repetitive work in this area of the classroom allows the child to commit these math facts to memory, and gain an understanding of each operation. This allows for an easy and fluid transition to abstract math in later years.

Language

Language pervades the Elements Montessori classroom and crosses all curriculum areas. The young child is introduced to the names of things, and sounds and letters, while the older child may be beginning to read. Language materials are often tactile taking advantage of the 3 and 4 year old's sensitivity to learning through touch. Writing often comes early to the Montessori child through the use of concrete materials, like the pre-cut letters of the Moveable Alphabet, that allow her to express her knowledge without needing precise control of a pencil. Language Materials include Sandpaper Letters, Language Objects for initial sounds practice, word and picture Matching Cards, vocabulary building activities and Early Reader books. The language area of a Montessori environment encompasses oral language, pre-reading skills, reading and writing skills. The initial lessons in the area of language are presented individually and in small groups. After the initial lessons are presented the child is given the opportunity to work with the material until mastery. The materials and concepts in the area of language cover a three year span of development. The material/lessons in the area of early language concentrate on the development of oral language. The early language material leads to an enriched vocabulary, clarity of speech and an overall enjoyment of the spoken language. The emphasis is placed on speaking, not reading or writing. The child is learning new words through classifying and sorting objects/pictures that are related and relevant to real life. The material/lessons in the pre-reading Montessori language sequence focus on print awareness, auditory discrimination, letter recognition/phonetic association of letters, narrative skills, and print motivation. One of the goals of the pre-reading language area is for the child to understand the link between the words in a book and relationship between illustration and text. It is with lessons in this area that the students are learning to recall and describe things, characters and the

sequence of events in a book. Bob Books and Primary Phonics are the reading books being used in the 3-6 Primary environments. Quarterly assessments of phonetic association and letter recognition of lower case and capital letters for the Primary students allow the teacher to properly place each student within the language sequence. The DIBELS and DRA are administered to the Kindergarten students quarterly. The DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) assesses the 5 critical reading skills of phonemic awareness, alphabetic principle, accuracy, fluency and comprehension. The DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) aids the teacher in identifying a student's reading level through the assessment of reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension.

Handwriting

Beginning at the age of three, the children are learning to control and strengthen their hand with specially designed lessons that naturally promote the prehensile grasp. As a prelude to writing, the students trace sandpaper letters to gain muscular memory of the shape of letters. To help develop the lightness of touch needed to use pencils, the children will trace metal insets. The students begin writing by tracing and gradually move to three-lined paper. To reinforce the Montessori handwriting curriculum, all students work with the 'Handwriting Without Tears' program. The program incorporates developmentally appropriate tasks that are specifically designed to help develop the control of the hand. The lessons include formation of upper and lower case letters and numbers 0-10. 'Handwriting Without Tears' begins at the age of three up to Kindergarten.

Library

The use of the library becomes an integral part of the students search for knowledge as they explore their many areas of interest.

Science and Nature

Children are introduced to many topics and learn to make predictions in their Science and Nature activities. The land and water work, introducing the concepts of Lake and Island, is closely connected to the Geography curriculum. Children learn about volcanoes and the solar system. They learn to classify things, predict the results of experiments and test their predictions. The Science and Nature curriculum is designed not only to help children discover facts, but to honor the sense of wonder they have about the world. Activities include Living or Non-Living, Sink or Float, Magnetic or Non-Magnetic, Land and Water Forms and Botany. Science is an integral part of the Elements Montessori curriculum. Among other things, it represents a way of life: a clear thinking approach to gathering information and problem solving. The scope of the science curriculum includes a sound introduction to botany, zoology, chemistry, physics, geology and astronomy. The Elements Montessori approach to science cultivates children's fascination with the universe and helps them develop a lifelong interest in observing nature and discovering more about the world in which we live. Students are introduced to central ideas which invite them to ask questions about the world around them. Children begin to explore the natural world and start to make connections to their environments. From a young age, the children begin to differentiate between living and non-living, which in turn prepares the child to have respect for different things in their environment. The child will also start to make classifications and categorize the environment around them. We also assist the child in exploring the biological aspects of their environment and develop an

appreciation for the delicate balance of nature. The study of botany is child centered using live plants as an inviting catalyst for exploration. Children by their very nature are fascinated with animals. We learn about how to respect the animal's needs, habits, and characteristics by caring for the animals in the environment. Students begin to classify between, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and birds. They also learn the anatomy of each class of animals, and are able to label most parts of the animal by the time they leave Kindergarten.

Geography

Geography is an important part of the Montessori curriculum. The curriculum begins with the two hemispheres of Earth and becomes more and more detailed as children learn about continents, and then countries. The very young child will use the wooden puzzle maps as puzzles, but the older child can use the pieces as a guide as he makes his own maps, labeled with his own handwriting when he is ready. Geography gives the child an understanding of the world and their place in it. The geography area in the classroom allows children to explore continents, countries, and states. The children begin to think outside of their own world and make the connections and realizations of diversity and culture. In following the mission of Elements Montessori, we want to inspire our students to be caring and responsible world citizens, and this begins with building an understanding of geography. Children learn about the world and its continents through the land and water globe, a sphere with sandpaper continents that allow the children to get a tactile sense of the difference of land and water. Children are exposed to the continents more in depth through continent maps (puzzles), which are made up of pieces that can be manipulated and put back together. Children categorize air, land and water, and the different systems that live in each through hands on experiences. Children and families are encouraged to talk about and share items from their cultures or travels. This area of the classroom acts as a basis to spin off in depth lessons about many aspects of our world.

Technology

As a 21st Century School, we introduce technology to our students according to their developmental level and interests. Our children need to enter today's world with a strong foundation in how to use technology. Elements Montessori classrooms are equipped with iPads to prepare children for the use of technology. Not only do these iPads support the administrative needs of the classroom, they also have Montessori educational apps available for children to use.

Art, Music and Movement

Movement, Music and arts at Elements Montessori embrace the philosophy of the school as a whole. The program, at each level, is responsive to the needs and interests of the children, and the ultimate goal is the joyful discovery of movement and its benefits, both physical and psychological.

Children are encouraged to use their imagination through experimentation. From the beginning, work with the Montessori sensorial materials helps to refine the sense of color, balance and design, preparing the child to see harmony in his/her surroundings and using this in artistic expression. The art environment

is planned, set up and maintained by the teacher, as are the activities, so that the children can function independently to use their materials and tools, work in their space, and most importantly, create their own unique pieces of art.

The music curriculum combines individual and group work with work designed to appeal to a variety of learning styles. This directly relates to our philosophy of enhancing the Montessori philosophy with other innovative methods. The music curriculum also offers significant opportunities to build community through our numerous performances and field trips. Musical games, chants, nursery rhymes, finger plays and songs are used to help the children develop their sense of pitch and rhythm, and improve their coordination, focus, and enjoyment of group activity. Children deepen their understanding of basic musical concepts such as singing in tune, beat, tempo, dynamics and melodic awareness. Some of the skills being introduced in age appropriate ways include matching a pitch with one's own voice; easiest singing intervals; high-low pitch awareness; moving to a steady beat; responsibility to group activity and sound; learning by repetition; and musical structure.

The ultimate goal of the movement program is to assist all children along the path to lifetime physical fitness. The benefits of this journey are many: health, longevity, positive body image, improved overall self-esteem, and increased energy and concentration in all areas. All students from toddler to primary participate regularly in movement classes and activities.

Spanish

Exposing children to other languages and culture is extremely beneficial and can result in enhanced academic achievement. Through our Spanish classes, children will be introduced to the basics of the language like colors, numbers, songs, short phrases, months, and days of the week.