

Montessori Summer School Resources



Summer School Montessori Maths

It's that time of the year, with the long vacation for children and those visits to school yet again, called summer school. So how do we make this time count for the children? If you are tired of the worksheets and drills and you also want the children to be inspired and motivated then activities might work for you. Today we will talk about a few activities you can do to spice up your Mathematics stations lessons.

Why mathematics you may ask? Well something happened a few months ago and this got me thinking about what may help during summer school. Let me tell you what happened: a few months ago a lady brought her daughter, Ronke, to the school and wanted us to put her in a class that would move the child to Primary 1 (Grade 1) next session. I talked to the child a bit, made her feel comfortable and then proceeded to ask her to pass me some objects on my table. Her mum said she could count from 1 to 250 comfortably she was just 4 years old.

"Ronke, can you give me 4 pencils please?" I asked. There was a stack of 10 pencils in a pencil holder on the desk right in front of her. She counted and counted and gave me 7 pencils.

"Thank you, so much Ronke" I said

"Can you give me two erasers please?", she handed me three erasers instead.

"Thank you very much", I said yet again and then got a Class Assistant Teacher to take her out to join in with the other children playing outside in the playground area. It was break-time. I wanted to have a serious talk with mum, but did not want her there.

Mum was not happy when I proceeded to inform her that Ronke was definitely not ready for Primary 1, neither would we be able to get her ready for it within the time frame we had left till the end of term. Luckily I added, Ronke was too young anyway, so it would be better for her to stay in Nursery 2 then go to Nursery 3 the following session, while we start working on helping her to understand the numbers she was able to recite so well!

I've seen this over and over again, children have a great capacity to memorize a lot of stuff, but please do not mistake this gift for a true understanding of what ever information they are able to learn by rote

So how do we get the children to learn and understand during the summer long vacation? Here are some activities, we used to help Ronke and I hope you will find that they would help you also along the way.

Summer School Montessori Maths

1. For children who need Counting exercises, count fingers, toes and objects around the class and school. Give them sets of objects to count. Assess what the child knows, consolidate and build upon their knowledge. The objective here is to encourage one on one correlation when counting. It is the first skill a child needs in order to succeed in Mathematics. (If Ronke had this skill, she would have been able to give me the correct number of pencils and erasers she was asked for.)
2. For children who can count properly, confirm their ability to recognize the numbers correctly and then get them to match object sets to the numbers
3. Understanding the concept of zero. You can use 6 similar objects to explain zero. You will also need the numerals 0 to 3 cut out or written on cardboard paper. Set out your objects counting 1 - 3 in sets and then placing your figures underneath the corresponding set with the zero to the left of the 1 with nothing above it. Point to the 1 and say "This is 1. How many pencils do we have here?" Let the child/ children answer, point to the numeral 2 and say "Here is 2. How many pencils do we have?" get the to answer or ask just one of the children to answer, and to the numeral 3 and say "This is 3. How many pencils can you count here? Let them answer, "We have 3 pencils here". Now point to the zero, that is the numeral '0' and say "This is zero. how many pencils do we have here?" The answer they give should be "None, zero means none, nothing!" Then pointing to the empty space on the left you count "Zero, One, One Two, One Two Three" Always allow lots of time for repetition so that the concept has time to stick in their minds.
4. Play the Zero Game, children love this and it helps to consolidate their ability to count and remember that the number zero means nothing. If a child understands this then a lot of arithmetic misunderstandings would be avoided! For example a lot of people sometimes think $0 \times 3 = 3$, but if you think "nothing three times" then your answer would be "nothing, that is zero". So how do we play this zero game? You will need sheets of papers with numbers written on them from 0 to 9, folded and placed in a basket. Prior to the class place different objects in sets of 1-9 around the classroom. Get each child to pick a folded piece of paper, check what is written on it and find the correct set of objects, the child with zero would be tempted to join in searching until they remember that zero means nothing. It's fun, there is movement and we are reinforcing important maths concepts.
5. Simple Word Problems, I am always amazed at how quickly children can add and subtract in their minds once they can count correctly. Ask them questions like, "Mummy gave you two sweets in the afternoon and one more after lunch, how many sweets did you have all together?" or "I like fruits and I ate 1 banana at breakfast and 2 apples for lunch, how many fruits did I eat?" or "Daddy bought 4 toys, he gave you one, how many are left?" You can use objects in the environment to represent the numbers and let them use these to solve the problems posed, very soon the children will be posing their own questions and answering them. It is a process, one skill gained becomes a concept understood.

Have a great summer school, and even if you are home with the kids I am sure these activities will give you lots of practice and fun-time doing Mathematics the Montessori Way.

Summer School Language Development



Last chapter we looked at activities you could introduce during your summer school sessions in the Mathematics departments. In this chapter let us look at what we can do to make our Literacy/Language Development sections count this summer for our children.

Summer School Language Development

1. **Building Vocabulary:-** Vocabulary building is so important for children, it is actually easier for them to learn names of objects and other things in their environment than it is for most adults. So let's make the best of this time by ensuring that the children are learning new words everyday. You can do this by learning new Nursery Rhymes, songs and poems (depending on the age of the children. Do make the content age appropriate.) Children love rhymes and songs, include actions as they sing and they will love it even more. They learn a lot by doing activities like this. I will put up a resource page shortly it give you ideas of age appropriate materials for this activity. To start you along you make consider teaching or singing the following and discussing new or difficult words, ensuring that the children actually do understand what they are saying. Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star, Humpty Dumpty, Three Blind Mice, My Mother, There are Five Magic Words. Another thing you could do is choose a theme each week and teach, discuss around the theme teaching new vocabulary, themes could be The Kitchen, The Bathroom, A bank, Transportation, The Planets, make this age appropriate as well. You can make this very interesting by bringing in pictures, flash cards, books and songs that relate to you theme. Get the children to do some creative work of their choice around your theme. That should be fun.
2. **Reading to the Children:-** This is something that does not happen often enough in our school settings and it is such a pity. Always choose books that are appropriate for the classes you are working with. Practice before you read to the children, the children will likely want to model you so you should be at your best, but natural. After reading the story or non-fictional passage discuss and ensure the children understand the script by asking questions, difficult and new words should be explained, use a dictionary and show them how to use one. You may even ask them to make a word list book for themselves, this is where they record all new words they come across and write the meanings beside the word, they should do this in alphabetical order as well. If you have read them a story you can ask them to dramatize the piece and present it to the rest of the school in the next couple of days. This will help develop their communication skills and confidence as they work together to achieve the common goal of making a presentation to the school.
3. **Learning the sounds of the alphabet:-** There may be a few children who are struggling with reading or need to continue learning their sounds of the English Language. So this will be a very good activity for your toddlers and preschool children. I always advice to make these activities fun for the children, it should not be a drill under any circumstances. Visit Youtube and listen to the [Letterland Alphabet Sound songs](#), I love these, you may decide to use another brand provider. Sing and dance, use these songs to help the children get to grips with the sounds of the English Language.

Use these simple tips to make your Literacy/Language Development sections enjoyable for the children this Summer.

Summer School Good Manners



Teaching Good Manners, Etiquette, Grace and Courtesy.

Summer School Good Manners

In this chapter we are going to be looking at promoting **Good Manners** among the children. In **Montessori** classrooms we would teach children **good manners** under what we call the **Practical Life** exercises. An important part of the Practical Life curriculum is called **Grace and Courtesy** and this is where we would concentrate on good manners (**Etiquette** for children is another way this subject is taught.). You would have noticed that this has always been an important part of our culture, teaching children to behave respectfully and in the right manner. Yet there are more and more concerns about children not knowing how to behave. So today we shall consider a number of basic activities and pointers to help the children learn or be reminded of some basic good manners.

Let's start with the basic concept of the magic words: thank you, please, sorry, excuse me, are the first ones that always come to mind. I usually always like starting with the song 'There are Five Magic Words' – Do you know it?

There are Five Magic Words. 2ce

There are Five Magic Words that I know

Please, Excuse me, Sorry, Thank you

And the last ones Pardon me.

(Can't find the tune online? Send me a WhatsApp message on +234 9097343982 and I will send it through to you – Or you can create your own tune!)

Teach the children the song and then you can decide to do several activities around these words giving them lots of practice and situations where they would use these magic words. You could do presentations, role playing or have discussions, these make it interactive and more fun for the children. Please avoid situations where you are the one doing all the talking. Telling them is not as effective as getting them to role play saying 'Sorry', since this is something they would struggle with and even when they are asked to say sorry it is done grudgingly, getting them to role play a sincere 'sorry' and a grudgingly said 'sorry' and then discussing which one they believed would probably have a more lasting effect, is a better and more effective way of helping children get the message. Also discussing the different situations when you would say 'please and thank you' can be very helpful.

A point to note is not to spend your time criticizing the children, when they make mistakes, especially the younger ones, they want to learn good manners, but most of the time children need to practice and repeat things over and over again before they get it, at this point it becomes second nature and they won't struggle so much to remember, therefore patience is key. If you have shown them something and they get it immediately, you may want to give them specific feedback rather than saying something general like 'very good, excellent work or well done.' Instead you may want to say something like 'It was good you said 'Thank you' to Ade for letting you use his sharpener.' Also if you feel that the children did not get it to start with, plan to repeat the exercise another day. . Shouting at them in order to teach good manners is not a good way to go about this part of aiding a child's growth.

Summer School Good Manners

This brings me to a touchy subject, you as the teacher or parent are the role model the child is using as a yardstick. Children will do what you do, not necessarily what you say. So please make sure that you are doing everything you are showing these children to do. They are watching us.

Another activity you may want to explore during this period is: Knocking at a door and waiting for an answer before entering. This is a very important issue, good manners will protect children from being exposed too early to things they shouldn't be exposed to. It takes practice and concentration, but if we do not prepare them and introduce these concepts to them, then really, how do we expect the child to know that they should knock and wait for an answer before barging into a room. This activity is one where role playing would work beautifully.

Other activities you may want to explore include:'

How to wash your hands

Toilet Manners

Table Manners

How to write a 'Thank you' letter, (for children in middle and upper primary classes)

How to wait your turn when two people are talking, (the point is not interrupting conversations)

Let's create interesting and motivating activities for them, rather than just tell them what we want them to know. That's it for this week. Have fun with the children teaching them Good Manners, Etiquette or Grace and Courtesy.

Summer School Connecting with Nature

Tips on how to have fun with Connecting to Nature



Summer School is now well underway, most schools and camps are more than half way through their program. Unfortunately, a lot of children are still being subjected to a lot of lessons and the same old same old teaching structure during this time. Let's be different, and on our own part encourage our children to love learning, by having fun doing it. So this week we shall be focusing our attention on **connecting with nature**.

Summer School Connecting with Nature

Why **connecting with nature**, you may rightly ask? Let me tell you a littler story. Just over ten years ago I started the Kidzone Lagos, it is a centre where children come out to play and have fun. We organized special big events during Christmas, Easter, Children's Day and Independence Day, schools were also invited to bring the children to the centre during term time so that the children could get an opportunity to run around, view nature and connect with the earth. I started this project because I saw a dire situation going bad, as children were locked up at home, watching telly, playing video games; getting no exercise and even worse they had no connection with or to nature. Children today sometimes hardly touch plants, flowers or know what a chicken looks like except on their plate. Surely this is not right. Needless to say it took several years to get parents bringing out their children to have fun, and as for the schools, sadly only a few made it to the centre, and most do not have a playground for the children in their care. I can tell you lots of stories about this, but we'll leave those stories for another day. Today let's look at a few things we can do to help the children connect with nature.

Connecting with plants and animals: Take the children on a walk around a garden and talk about the plants, flowers and leaves, you see in the garden. There are lots of things to learn: Are they living or non-living things? What do they need to grow? You can talk about the different parts of plants, flowers, and leaves. The different shapes of leaves is something else you could pay particular attention to, you could teach them the names of some leaf shapes (Cordate, Linear, Spatula, Ovate, Obovate, Reniform, etc.) the children can do a little project about this by drawing and painting or colouring the different shapes, leaf rubs, leaf painting work and the list goes on. The children are engaged learning, broadening their knowledge about things around them and most of all will be having fun.

You could also take the children to visit a farm, or an animal resort centre before planning a visit to the shopping mall or cinema (especially if you are a school), not that there is anything wrong with these activities, but this is usually where they go to on outings with their parents anyway! So let's expand their experiences and introduce them to the natural world, which in many towns and cities is fast receding into the background.

Places you may want to visit include: The Farm Center Agege, Shodex Garden at Antony, Lufasi Park Lekki and the Lekki Conservation Center

Another important thing you can do is plant something together and watch it grow. Children love this activity, a bean or corn seed is all you need with some good soil and water in a container and a new plant is born.

Summer School Connecting with Nature



Something else you may want to do is get them outside daily exercising. This is so important and yet in so many establishments around the nation, children do not go out and play. One bonus the State Schools have is land, and the children do run around a lot during their break times. Private schools may not have much land, but please they should have enough outside space and some play equipment to help develop the gross motor skills of the children. The fresh air and sun on their skin is all part of connecting with nature. Another activity they can do outside is swimming or learning how to swim. If a swimming pool and a qualified swimming instructor are available let the children have fun **connecting with nature**, I am sure you will be creating lasting memories of a great summer school experience for the children.

Summer School Practical Life

Summer School is about to end, and I won't be available to send out the post as usual tomorrow, so I decided to do it today. I just want us to make sure that the children really have a great time this year at Summer School. Children are so precious and I love their vibrancy and energy to want to learn and do what we as adults do. Did you know that, that is their major desire, to become like you and do what you do, especially between the 3 to 9 years age groups?

I remember how several children cry on the first day of school as Mum or Dad dropped them off! And then for most they settled in very quickly when they saw other children doing different interesting activities.

The children soon joined in the fun and the crying ended for most. It usually takes one to three days to settle our children down into just walking in and waving 'bye' to the parent who drops them off at the door.

So what are the activities that grab their attention so much that they forget so quickly about wanting to go back to their familiar environment with Mum and Dad? These activities are what we call Practical Life in the Montessori environment.

Practical Life activities are everyday exercises and jobs that we do, to look after ourselves, our environment and the society at large. We actually talked a bit about some of these in a previous chapter [Summer School Good Manners](#). Today we are going to briefly mention some of these activities that we really should encourage our children to learn: as they aid their development, growth and build their confidence and concentration skills, which children need in order to learn effectively later on in life.

Questions for you: Do the children know how to sweep the floor? Dust the furniture? Wash their plates? Even wash a few small items of clothing? They should do. Please do not let the children grow up without getting the opportunity to learn all these things and so much more. To start with children really want to learn how to do these activities. Yes they won't do it so well to start with, but practice makes perfect doesn't it? Also it is a very good way to get to bond with them. You can also use these activities to expand their vocabulary, by teaching them the names of the utensils etc, that you use to accomplish the tasks. Always use the correct names. For example, 'broom, brush, dust pan (what is sometimes called packer-even if packer is the word used mostly in your community as a teacher, parent try and also teach the child the correct English word as well)

It is not acceptable that the house-girl does all the chores in the house! Do let your children learn and don't get so upset with your child's school because they have shown your child how to sweep or mop the floor. These are activities our children love.

Summer School Practical Life

They would also like to join us in cooking the meals, but we don't let them. When they grow older and we expect them to contribute and help out, they won't want to do so, if they have not been doing it from when they were younger. In actual fact they will hate the idea of doing any chores around the house. Children can only give you back from what experiences you have given them. So please parents and teachers let's help the children practice doing what they really love to do: learning how to do all those wonderful chores and activities around the house that you think they can't do. Children are usually silently screaming the words: 'I can do it, let me do it myself!' And that is the secret to why children settle down in Montessori schools much faster. The activities they love doing are provided as part of the school's daily routine. Once they start they usually don't want to stop, they keep repeating the exercise over and over again.



Summer School Practical Life

Here is a List that you can start with:

Care of Self: brushing teeth, blowing the nose, putting on shoes, buttoning a shirt or blouse, combing the hair, washing the face, washing hands and nails. Care of the Environment: sweeping the floor, moping the floor, setting the table, dusting the furniture, folding clothes, carrying a chair, rolling a mat. Other activities include: opening and closing boxes and bottles, pouring beans, rice or water from one container to the other, scooping with a spoon items from one container to another etc. etc. etc. If you do these activities with the children you will see them shine, with joy written all over their faces they love these activities a lot. So have fun doing Practical Life activities this summer and have a wonderful time with the children.

Summer School Cultural Studies



Summer School Cultural Studies

There are so many other areas of learning that we still have to explore so I thought we should end this Summer School series with Cultural Studies which for me brings everything else together for the child. Cultural Studies is great because it helps to expand the child's vocabulary, use of Language and brings in all the other skills into use such as literacy skills, concentration, mathematics, cognitive development and most of all its so much fun for the child.

Every child really wants to understand her world and that is what Cultural Studies is all about. The sad thing is that the core basics that make up this body of learning for the child, that is History, Geography, Biology and Zoology are no longer important part of our nursery or primary school curriculum, and then the one subject that we do teach is sometimes not applied to real life. I am referring to Science. I wonder why we don't think that these subjects are important? During this last week of Summer School surprise yourself and the children. Here are a few activities you may wish to explore with the children.



History – Learning about and from the past

Summer School Cultural Studies

History: Open up those history books, ntell them stories of Mansa Musa, Kosoko, Madam Tinubu, Madam Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, Nnamdi Azikwe, Obafemi Awolowo and Tafawa Balewa. A child that does not know where this country has come from will not know where it should be going to when he becomes an adult.



Geography: Let them study the seasons in Nigeria. We say 'Summer School', but really is it Summer for us or the Rainy Season? We make them recite the names of states and capitals, but do the children know where they come from? Let them do a short project about their State, Town or Village! You will be surprised what they will come up with. So much to learn and explore, the history, birds, plants, food, animals, weather, resources in these different areas provide children with so much rich experience of life, and they are basically being deprived of these experiences right now.

Summer School Cultural Studies

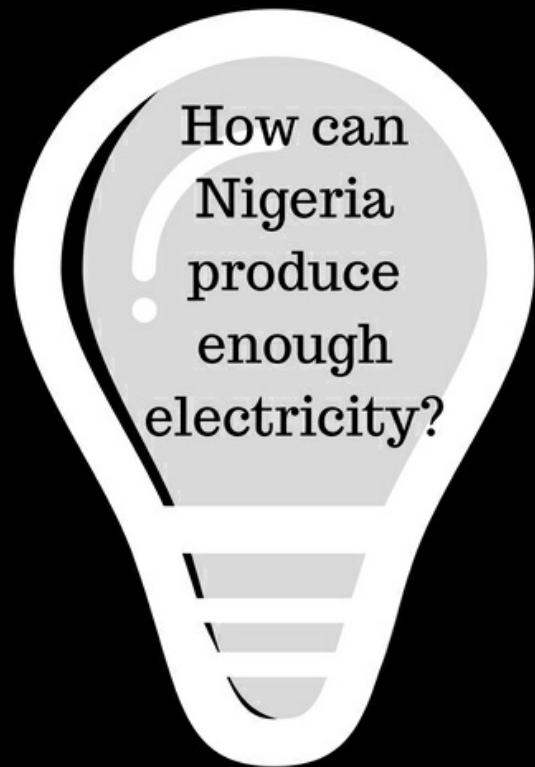
E.C.N.

There was always light

N.E.P.A

**No
Electricity
Power
Available
for
Nigerians!**

P.H.C.N



Science: Children love animals, so why not spend some time studying the ones found in Nigeria for a change, look at the different flowers, plants, land-forms found in the country. What about a special look at Electricity, how is it generated ask the children about what NEPA means to them, for the older children get them to do a project on PHCN. Just try this out, you may find some children writing a poem or a story, some drawing a picture, some may even do research on the history of NEPA and come up with their own solutions to the problems of insufficient supply that currently plagues the country. Isn't this what we all want in the end children who can think outside of the box and become solution providers for their community, nation the world. These are simply a few suggestions, I know that you can come up with more topics to explore. Let's make this last week of Summer School a memorable one as we explore different aspects of Cultural studies.

Summer School Reloaded



Since a lot of us are running Summer School and Summer Camps around the country and indeed the world I will use this chapter to cover something that has been bothering me for a while now. This is the sad fact that a lot of our children do not realise what the simple words to express positions of objects around them are. This for me is not only sad but dangerous. In a life and death event when you tell the child to stay behind the desk and the child goes in front of the desk where the danger is , you know what that means!

You know that one of the first rules in the Montessori setting is to start from the concrete before moving on to abstract concepts. Well I have noticed that a number of children struggle with prepositions. Meaning they do not really know what they mean physically. When you tell a child to bring the book behind the bag and he keeps looking for it inside the bag you know there is a problem.

Summer School Reloaded

So my solution to this is simple, why don't we spend some time during our Summer school using concrete ways to teach children these positional concepts. There is a place for teaching them what prepositions are but if the children are struggling with finding or understanding the actual words that describe the position of an object to a subject then we need to deal with that first before we start teaching them about the grammatical aspect of the words. This will enable us to follow another important Montessori principle which is taking a child from where they are at to where they need to be.

Here is what I suggest you do.

Use the following as your materials for demonstration:

1. a piece of paper and a book
2. a pencil and a box
3. a flower and a vase or

Tell the children you have something important you want to show them. Ask them to name the objects, and then do the following:

a. Put the paper on top of the book and then ask them: 'Where is the paper?' You should get several different answers from the children. If not, don't worry this is why we are doing this exercise, You describe it for them and tell them that there are many words we can use to represent the position of the paper to the book, for example:

The paper is on the book,

It is above the book,

It is on top of the book. etc

b. Change the position of the paper put it beside, in front, below, behind the book and see which positions your child knows and which ones you had to describe for them.

c. Use a chair and play a game with it by letting the child practice these positions. Call out a position command for the child to take in relationship to the chair so that they can practice understanding these positions, and ask the child to describe if need be where they are in relation to the chair. For example if you say 'sit', then where is he in relation to the chair? He is sitting on a chair. When you say 'stand', they are standing in front of the chair. Now start giving direct position shifts so they can work on 'behind, beside, under (any child will enjoy doing this one especially)'

Make it fun and you can use other objects as well and allow the children to think of new words or find other words to describe these position. Word building and understanding is happening. If the children have started work on grammar, you can always extend the lesson to explaining that all these different positions are called prepositions in English. Help them to see that prepositions describe the relationships between one noun and another.

Summer School Reloaded

Since this has been done in concrete terms, the children would be able to understand completely what prepositions are and most importantly would be able to find things easily because they now actually understand the difference between 'The pen is in the box' and 'The pen is behind the box!'

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