

WELCOME TO

*The
Montessori
School
Academy*

**THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL
MAKEOVER**

By Ayopeju Falekulo
AN ONLINE PROGRAM

Resource Book 6- Montessori Curriculum

Notice

THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL ACADEMY

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Modules

THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL ACADEMY

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2. The Montessori Philosophy
3. The Montessori Child
4. The Montessori Teacher
5. The Montessori Environment
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An overview-This is a brief introduction to the vast scope of the Montessori Curriculum which has five core Subject Areas

Worthy of note

♥ **THE MONTESSORI CURRICULUM IN THE EARLY YEARS IS VERY WIDE IN SCOPE AND IF IMPLEMENTED PROPERLY IS A GREAT FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN.**

The Montessori Curriculum for the 3 to 6 years has 5 major subject areas: Practical Life, Sensorial Education, Language Development, Mathematics and Cultural Subjects.

In this Module we will explore each area and look into the scope that can be covered in each subject.

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Practical Life Activities

What are Practical Life Activities?

“Little children, from the moment they are weaned, are making their way towards independence”

Maria Montessori

Practical Life Activities are simple activities which adults perform daily to maintain and control their environment in which they live and work. The activities may also relate to the social environment as well.

These activities have a purpose and are a means to an end; the end result is more important than the process and therefore is usually hurried by the adult. On the other hand the process is more important than the end result (which is often ignored) for a child.

A child is very interested in these exercises as he watches the adult's daily routine, he wants to learn to do what we do, to imitate the activities so he can adapt to the world around him and construct reality. These exercises give a child the chance to put that desire to imitate the adult into action.

The Importance of Practical Life Activities

Maria Montessori created Practical Life Activities to help the child become independent which is a strong drive for the young child. Their desire is to be independent. Maria Montessori was once asked by a child to “Help me do it myself”. This shows the young child's inner drive to create a functional person.

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There is a big problem being created in Nigeria by the newly rich parents today, who think that doing house chores are below them and therefore employ house maids to do everything for them and their children. We are developing a non-functional society. Therefore Montessori Teachers, Schools and Parents need to take heed, Practical Life Activities are central to the child's education, as these exercises alone help lay the foundation of developing the child and bringing out the true adult he will become later in life. A well rounded, independent, self-disciplined and controlled individual, who can function well in the society he finds himself.

Another very important objective of the activities are that they form the bases of preparing the child for writing, mathematics and language development.

The Practical Life Activities

The best way to include this into the school/home setting is to involve the child in daily activities at school/home. Find things that the child can learn to do safely, show him how to do it and let him practice the new skill he has learnt. Children can get many things done if given the chance they love to participate instead of spectate.

If a task is too difficult for his current ability or skill level then think of a way to break this down into smaller steps and let the child do one of the steps he is capable of. You can later increase the child's involvement as his skills develop.

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The following are some activities you may want to consider as appropriate lessons.

- Opening and closing doors, cupboards etc
- Opening and closing lids, boxes, bottles, trunks and windows safely
- Hanging a towel on a rack neatly
- Folding clothing
- Making the bed
- Putting on a pillowcase
- How to use and answer the phone
- Sweeping the floor
- Washing body and hair
- Turning on the computer
- Organizing a drawer
- Braiding hair
- Making an apology
- Offering a visitor a seat and a drink
- Learning his home address and parents phone number
- Mopping the floor
- Using an egg whisk and beater
- Hanging clothes on a hanger
- Hanging clothes on a line
- Playing a DVD
- Watering plants
- Drying the dishes
- Making a sandwich

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Polishing shoes

Dusting the furniture

Fastening and unfastening jewelry clasps

Handing someone a pair of scissors or a knife safely

Watching out for danger in traffic

Stop and look both ways before crossing the road

Pouring, transferring and sorting liquid and objects

Encourage parents that young children should start helping around the house as soon as they are able, they will be helping them to develop the good habit of contributing to the household from a tender age. These activities help to develop muscle strength, coordination, visual and spatial awareness, independence and a sense of responsibility. When you involve the child in such activities the child becomes competent and confident, he loves doing things alongside the adult and you are helping to develop the inner man.

In doing this the adult needs to slow down and have fun, you will no longer be able to just whiz through the chores, at home, neither would you as a teacher simply present once and quickly and assume that the child got it. Resist the urge to interfere and help, children need to figure things out, make mistakes, clean up the mess etc., these are all part of the process.

Grace and Courtesy

Good manners are basic social skills, it is important to pay particular attention to this and teach our children to learn to say Please, thank you, pardon me, Excuse me, also greeting people and saying sorry when things go wrong. Be a good example as well.

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Safety Issues

One of the reasons adults don't want our children to handle most activities has to do with the fear of injury etc. The way to deal with this is to talk to the child about being safe and not to prevent them from participating in the life experiences because of our fear.

When you teach a child safety rules it helps if you give clear reasons for each rule and not just have an attitude of 'because I told you so' Be fair and do not over exaggerate the consequences. Help the child develop and listen to her voice of conscience, rehearse safety situations turn them into a game of scenarios: What would you do if your ball rolled onto the street? What if someone you didn't know came to school and told you to go home with him? What would you do if you couldn't find me in Just Right?

If the child is confused offer an answer, or allow her to choose from two or three alternatives that you provide. The child/children may produce some pretty wild answers so be prepared. Try not to laugh, offer a better alternative, then ask the question the next time you play the game.

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Sensorial Education What is Sensorial Education?

"The things he sees are not just remembered; they form a part of his soul."

"The senses, being explorers of the world, open the way of knowledge"
Maria Montessori

Sensorial Education is one of the Five Core Areas in the Montessori Curriculum. Maria Montessori believed that it is very important to work on and refine the senses it is easier to then identify and correct abnormalities from a very early stage, as it is one of the major tools of learning for the child.

The child in the first stage of development is very interested in his environment, he wants to learn and understand the world around him and he does this through his senses.

Maria Montessori said in 'The Discovery of the Child' that

"The Mind of a little child is certainly not a blank when he begins the education of the senses, but his concepts are all confused. He begins to distinguish various traits in objects already known. He distinguishes quantity from quality and separates form from color. He distinguishes dimensions in objects that are long or short, thick or thin, large or small. He separates colors into groups and calls them by name. He notices the varying intensities of colors,

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calling the two extremes light and dark. Finally, he distinguishes tastes from smells, lightness from softness, and sounds from noises. He succeeds through the education of his senses in ordering his mental images. This is the first act of ordering in his developing mind. This sense of order that has been acquired early is of utmost importance for later life."

A child's mind develops through movement and the use of their hands to hold objects, thereby acquiring sense impressions from their surroundings. The child actively develops their brain nerve architecture and concepts of the world through their muscles and senses. In the early years Montessori said children have absorbent minds that are continuously absorbing and processing information about their world. It is therefore important to provide the 2-6 year old child with a lot of sensorial experiences, once the child has experienced his world through his senses, and been able to order his mental images that he so rapidly absorbs, his understanding of his world make the abstract concepts of alphabets, numbers, mathematics, etc. easier to understand.

This brings us to the realization that there is a lot going on in educating the mind of the child, it is more than identifying numbers, reciting the alphabet and writing it. The Montessori method may be slow but it is in-depth, and once it is completed it is faster than the traditional method. There is much to do but so much more to achieve.

Maria Montessori developed some beautiful materials that help the child to focus attention on sounds, smells, sights, tastes and tactile impressions: helping the child to make comparisons, find distinctions, decisions and ordering

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of objects based on his sense impressions. All these help develop strong brain architecture and skills such as observation, comparison, judgment, reasoning and decision-making. When the child sees, hears, smells, tastes, and feels, electrical impulses race to his brain, where they are interpreted as sights, sounds, smells, tastes and objects that are being touched, these sense impressions are very powerful brain nerve stimulators.

There are numerous traditional Montessori Sensorial materials such as: The Pink Tower, Broad Brown Stairs, Knobbed Cylinders, Knobbless Cylinders, Red Rods, Sound Jars, Smell Jars, Color tablets, Barric Tablets, Geometric Solids, Binomial Cubes, The Montessori Bells and a few others. Considering the cost it is not possible for most Montessori schools to be able to afford buying these materials. Start with what you can afford, then improvise fun ways to create materials to help give the child/children the same kind of experiences.

1. Sensorial Bins
2. Sorting trays
3. Matching Colors
4. Measuring Dimensions
5. Memory Games

Here are a list of sensorial activities you can encourage parents to do at home with their children

- Smelling food cooking
- Sounds of food preparation
- Spice smell matching

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Feel the difference in touch of metal and wood

The cold freezer

Heat of the cooker

Tasting

Food and fruit color

Language Development

This is an area that starts even before the children come into your school and classroom. It is important to understand that children need language. Do this by filling the air and environment with language, nursery rhymes, stories, reading lots of talking, role play, introducing new words daily.... Never start with teaching the symbols/letters of the alphabet, concrete to abstract remember? Let them experience language and it's sounds first.

Introduction to Phonics.

There is a lot to learn with phonics, as this is the bedrock of the child's understanding the art of reading and writing the English language.

It is important to say at this junction that times have changed and gladly so from the times of children being forced to memorize every word they read. We mostly learnt to read from memory alone. Today's child learns to read via decoding the sounds of the English Language represented by letters on the page.

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Here are a few facts about the English Language

First thing is that you have 26 letters in the English language but then there are 44 sounds. In order for a child to be able to read and spell correctly these sounds must be known and mastered.

We cannot deal with the whole Phonics aspect here but we will learn the common sounds of the vowels so that we can get our children started on the right path. If you are interested in learning the full phonic code of the English Language or want to know how to help struggling children read, then contact me for further help as the book Teach Your Child to Read may help to fill in a lot of gaps.

The Early Code Vowel Sounds

At Addlo Montessori we use the Letterland Phonics system to teach the children the sounds and how to read. The simple reason for this is that the Letterland model is child friendly and the kids love it.

These are the first choice sounds of the five vowels, they are called first choice as the vowels have other sounds they make but these are the most common sounds.

a as in hat, apple, ant, cat

e as in elephant, egg, leg

i as in ink, pig, igloo

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o as in orange, ostrich, dog
u as in umbrella, jug and up

You need to learn the consonants as well. You may be using Jolly Phonics which is fine as well.

Now lets deal with the process of helping your child learn to read and write in a Montessori setting.

1. Phonics - The first thing is for the child to learn the sounds of the English code.

You will teach your child the Phonetic Alphabet, this is not ABCD, we are not learning the names of the letters or reciting it. Here is what you need to teach your child.

1. Can you hear the sound a in apple, alligator, ant?

Let them work on just hearing the sounds.

There are lots of games to play.

2. Let's see how we write the sound a

Start this around the age of 3 when the child is ready and can hear the sounds in the words.

To help your child learn the sound symbols you will use what we call the 3 period lesson.

Step 1: Material: Sandpaper Letters

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1. Identification: This is aaa - show the child, trace and he may repeat the sound.

2. Recognition: Show me aaa - child answers by pointing to the right letter

3. Recall: What is this? - ask 'what does this letter say?'

We have gone through this before so you know the benefits of using this method.

Once the child has started learning these initial sounds and can accurately match sounds they hear with the correct letters, the next step is word building. Very soon reading skills are developed and achieved.

Writing:

Montessori believes in preparing the child for writing long before the child actually holds a pencil and attempts to write. The Sensorial and Practical Life Activities all help to lay a solid foundation as the pincer grip is strengthened and developed.

It is essential for us as educators to look out for correct posture and handling of writing materials, the way a child holds the pencil will affect correct handwriting skills. If writing is learnt the wrong way to start with correcting it is so much more difficult.

Points to note about a child's handwriting

Children should be taught

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- a. How to hold a pencil/ pen correctly,
- b. How to join up writing once they are secure in movements of each letter
- c. How to write neat, fluent and a legible style of handwriting
- d. A style that follows writing from left to right, top to bottom of the page,
- e. How to start and finish letters correctly, regularity of size and shapes of the letters, regularity of spacing letters and words.
- f. How to develop an awareness of the importance of clear, neat presentation and layout.
- g. The use of different forms of handwriting for different purposes; such as printing for labelling maps or diagrams, a clear neat hand for presented work, a faster script for notes etc.

Mathematics

Mathematics is one of the subjects a vast majority of people worldwide don't like. Children in general find it difficult to understand mathematical concepts. The reason for this in the traditional school setting is that mathematical work is done in the abstract without first giving the child a chance to understand maths in concrete terms.

The Montessori Mathematics curriculum takes this on board and helps the child understand Mathematics from the concrete to the abstract in little comfortable steps that brings the subject alive and interesting for the child.

Mathematics is very important in our daily life because we can see that numbers are everywhere. From The Absorbent Mind, Dr. Montessori wrote,

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" Children at an early age are urged by the laws of their nature to find active experiences in the world about them. For this they use their hands, and not only for practical purposes, but also for acquiring knowledge."

The Montessori Mathematics Sequence

Age 2-3 Amounts and Numerals - At this age you build gradually to counting 1-10 objects during Practical Life and Sensorial activities.

Age 3 Amounts and Numerals - Identifying amounts of 1 - 10 objects in a group and then start to use Sandpaper Numerals

Age 4 Amounts and Numerals - Matching Amounts and Numerals 0-10, writing Numerals and learning amounts and numerals 11-100

Operations with Numbers - Making 10 activities, Addition, Subtraction & Multiplication

Other Math Activities - Handling Money, making change, Fractions, Telling Time

Age 5 -6 Amounts and Numerals - The Hundred Board and The Decimal System

Operations with Numbers - Division

Other Math Activities - Weights & Measures

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There are no hard and fast rules here, some children may be ready earlier or later than shown for various reasons. The above sequence assumes that a child is doing regular activities.

Cultural Studies

What are Cultural Studies?

Cultural studies in the Montessori setting are those topics that enrich a child's understanding of his environment. A child spends the first period of life learning and absorbing information about the world in which he lives. Cultural studies are those study areas that reveal information about the environment and life around us.

The aims and objectives of Cultural Studies?

The purpose of education according to Dr Maria Montessori is to provide the child with an aid to life. Education should therefore provide the child with the ability adapt to his culture and become an independent member of his society.

Montessori education therefore insists that the child learns about the real world as early as possible so the child will ultimately learn to distinguish between the natural and the man-made environment.

The objectives of teaching Cultural Studies are as follows:

1. To enrich the child's understanding of the world.

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2. To help the child attain a global perspective of all topics covered
3. To enrich the vocabulary of the child
4. To develop the child's interest and awareness of plants and animals
5. To give the child the first understanding of the concept of time

Cultural studies are very important as they are the foundation that enables the child to understand and respect the world.

Cultural studies in the Montessori setting are known as the "corner stone of world peace." The premise is this: that a child who understands and loves the world will not become a hindrance to world peace as an adult.

I will also add that a good understanding of the History and Geography of the country will help to lesson the tribal tidal wave and bring in harmony to our existence.

There are many arms of the cultural studies curriculum, such as Geography, Botany and Zoology, Science and History.

Ensure that children's early learning is enriched with hands-on, real life experiences. It is so important to let the child engage with nature, children who have this foundation struggle less with depression, obesity and have strong brain architecture. Children who are exposed to nature are better learners, less stressed and have increased attention span.

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Take the children out on nature walks and talk about what you see. Visit Omat at Abule Egba, or The Gardens at Lekki when you visit these areas in Lagos, there are many more botanical gardens please search and let the children explore nature. There is a lot to learn, there is a lot of wonder in nature we need to experience this and explore, so that we build a complete well-rounded adult in the end.

Topics to explore include:

How do plants grow, you could do some gardening in pots if need be.
The different kinds of animals: Mammals, Birds, Insects, Fish, Crustaceans,
Reptiles

The Human Body: Parts of the Body
Continents & oceans

Travel the world: Use videos on the internet, e.g. You Tube and do a culture swap with a family on another continent or another part of our country. The world is shrinking so help your child experience this.

Let them learn about our past heroes. Make a list and weave beautiful stories from the lives of men and women who made a difference in our world. Let our children know that others came and led lives full of impact, so that they can start wondering and imagining what they can do too. It all starts here, this is how your school makes a difference..

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THE END

Assignment 7

Make a list of 10 heroes you would like to teach your 3 to 6 year old