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Three Period Lesson

The three period lesson is an integral part of the Montessori curriculum. The three period lesson assists the Directress to immediate feedback as to a child's understanding of the work. At each level the child learns vocabulary that relates to work. There are three periods to the lesson:

- Naming
- Recognition of Object and Its Name
- Remembrance of Object and Its Name

First Period: Naming

When the Directress observes that a child is ready for a lesson, she begins by selecting a few objects and laying them on a table or rug. The Directress may lay out three color chips (called color tablets) of red, yellow, and blue (primary colors). The color chip on the far left is pointed to first and the Directress says, "This is red." The color chip on the left is pointed to first as everything is done in a left to right, top to bottom progression to reinforce reading and writing skills. The Directress names each color while pointing to the color. The name of the color is said clearly and distinctly so the child's attention is focused on the name of the color. The process continues for the other color(s).

Second period: Recognition of Object and Its Name

The Directress checks for recognition of the color and its associated name during the second period. She points to a color, red, and says, "This is red." She points to the color yellow and says, "This is yellow. Show me yellow."

The child points to the yellow tablet. It

Third period: Remembrance of Object and Its Name

Remembering the object's name is the goal in the third period. The child is asked, "What is this?" as the Directress points to an object. The child identifies the object and thus verifies that the child understands the relationship between the object and its name. It is in the third period that the Directress is testing the child for understanding. Using the three period lesson is one way Directress' evaluate the child without using a formal, written assessment.

The Three Period Lesson is an activity a parent can do at home. Remember, your child's response dictates whether they do one, two or all three periods of a lesson. Infants and toddlers often do the first period and or the first and second period at one sitting. Often the first or first and second period have to be repeated many times before the child progresses to the third period. This should not cause alarm as it is very common for the young child. The third period could be reserved for another day. At the 3-6 year old level and beyond, the child often completes all three periods in one sitting.

The three period lesson can be used very successfully to assist a child in learning a new skill.

Information in this article has been adapted from: The Discovery of the Child by Maria Montessori.



Tips From Teachers: Cosmic Education

Dr. Montessori defines Cosmic Education as "...the universal syllabus that can unite the mind and the consciousness of all men in one harmony." (Lecture notes from India from The Child, The Society and the World) Cosmic Education includes astronomy, geography, geology, biology, physics and chemistry. It is the relationship between each subject that one hopes to inspire the child's interest.

The Montessori Directress gives the children in her care a broad picture of the Universe – creation of the universe (a variety of possibilities are given) and then works toward the child. Prior to the 3-6 environment the cultural lessons are limited. At each level the child studies subjects more in-depth.

Following is a list of areas of the classroom and activities that can be found in the Montessori environment and things you can do at home.

Astronomy: Visit a planetarium; study the solar system – it is frequently in the news; study astronomers (old and new)

Geography: Visit a variety of landforms and point them out to your child (mountain, volcano, plain...). The study of landforms is limited to the area in which you live but you can also see landforms on vacation or search for real examples of landforms in books or on the internet.

Biology: Nature study – plants, parts of flower/stem/leaves; animals – visiting a zoo, the Humane Society, a pet store...

Physics: light and color spectrum, study of magnets, science experiments exploring how things work

Chemistry: A child is introduced at the lower elementary level to the Periodic Table of Elements. Soon after their introduction to chemistry the child works with models of molecules.

Cosmic Education and Going Out

Montessori had an idea for children to experience their community in a slightly different way than most traditional programs. Depending on the school situation, it isn't always possible to follow the Going Out Experience.

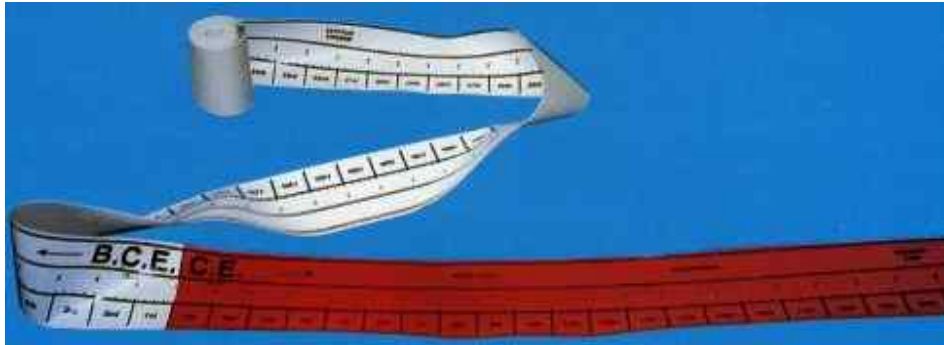
Once the child reaches the 3-6 age level and beyond they are exposed to a variety of cultural areas that spark their interest. A class may be studying life cycles of animals. One child may be especially interested in the life cycle of a frog. After researching the topic, the child may discover the parts of the life cycle but still want a more genuine, personal experience. The child may want to visit a pond to view first hand the frog habitat and witness parts of the life cycle. The child may want to visit a local zoo or hatchery to observe the life cycle. Arrangement for the visit is made by the child. The adult will need to assist the child, depending on the age of the child. This is one of many areas that cross a variety of areas in the classroom. The child may begin by researching the topic and research a possible location to visit. The child would make contact, written or via phone. The child would need appropriate phone skills before making a phone call. A visit would be made and then the child will finish with a note of appreciation.

The Going Out Experience works hand-in-hand with the goals of Montessori Cosmic Education; to see the relationship between all things on earth.

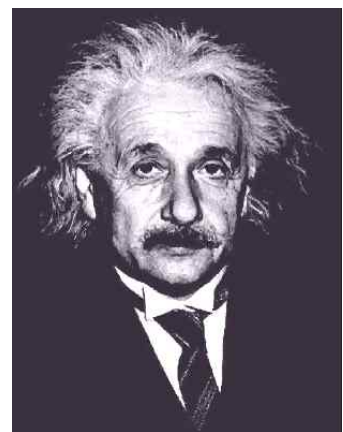


Magnificent Montessori Materials: Cultural

Timelines: This is an example of the BCE/CE timeline (sometimes called the red and white timeline by the children). It gives the children a visual representation of Before Common Era (or B.C. Before Christ) and Common Era (or A.D. Anno Domini – the Year of our Lord). The children use or make picture and description cards to show the needs of humans from different eras.



Story-telling: Many aspects of our culture are shared through storytelling. Storytellers can cover historical figures from the past. Guests to a Montessori classroom may include Dr. Montessori, Archimedes, Einstein... The guest typically fits in with a current unit of study. Storytelling of real figures provides a sense of awe and wonder with the children while respecting their intelligence.



Lessons using Montessori materials: Other cultural lessons are presented to the children individually, in small groups or in a whole group setting. The lesson is then put on the shelf for the child to work on or explore during work time.



Q & A



Q: How does a Montessori class allow time for social interaction with other children?

A: The Montessori environment allows children to make many choices, including if they want to work with a partner, by themselves or with a small group. The material can dictate how many people work with the material. For example, the North America map can easily be worked on by one or two children at a time. One of the Montessori finger charts (fact work) is not conducive to work by more than one child. When giving a lesson the Directress will tell the children their options as far as where the work can be completed and with/without a partner. In this way the Directress is giving parameters to the children.

At every level, from infancy through high school, the children have the ability to interact appropriately. How much the child interacts during work time depends on the individual child as well as the Directress. The Directress sets the tone for the classroom and some have a high tolerance for noise and some have a low tolerance. This is one reason Montessori environments can look different. Some Montessorians are highly encouraging of children working together and others encourage children to work on their own.

Some of the things that happen in a Montessori environment to promote social interactions:

- Choice by the children (where they sit, with whom they work)
- Community meetings: These are called different things by Directress', but they are a time for the class to come together and discuss things going on in

- classroom. It is often a time for the children to learn how to handle social situations.
- Empowering the students so they can handle social situations and conflict without over reliance on the adult to intervene.

Q: Is there too much freedom in a Montessori classroom? My child seems to have complete choice over what she does and I am not sure she is completing the work she needs to be accomplishing.

A: Too much freedom is a matter of opinion. If you are concerned your child is making inappropriate choices it would be best to meet privately with the Directress. She can address your concerns about your child's work. When a child transitions from one level to the next (in a 3 year cycle) the child has an adjustment period that includes learning the new expectations of the Directress and the class. By encouraging your child and talking to them regularly about school, their work, their work habits you can influence what is going on during the day.

You would likely benefit from observing in the classroom; to observe how much work your child does as well as the work of the other children. Not to say you should expect your child to do the same thing another child in the room is doing, but it will give you some idea about work and choices they are making.

Any Montessori/education related questions can be directed to the editor at: iweland@cox.net

