

MONTESSORI Vs TRADITIONAL

Montessori emphasizes learning through all five senses, (Practical Life, Math, Sensorial, Science Culture and Language Arts), not just through listening, watching, or reading. Children in Montessori classes learn at their own, individual pace and according to their own choice of activities from hundreds of possibilities. Learning is an exciting process of discovery, leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning. Montessori classes place children in three-year age groups (3-6, 6-9, 9-12, and so on), forming communities in which the older children spontaneously share their knowledge with the younger ones. Montessori represents an entirely different approach to education.

If you are new to Montessori education, often the first question you might ask is “what makes Montessori different?” Truly, the answer to that question is immense! So, in effort to make this bountiful banquet of information a little more digestible, I have organized some of the key concepts into these ten BIG differences:

1. The Prepared Environment
 - a. Montessori classrooms are prepared in advance based on observations of the students’ individual needs. They include student-centered lessons and activities. Traditional classrooms are based on teacher-centered lessons or activities.
2. Active vs. Passive
 - a. Montessori lessons are hands-on and active. Students discover information for themselves. Traditional school lessons are often orated to students who listen passively, memorize, and take tests.
3. Give ‘Em Time
 - a. In the Montessori classroom, children work on lessons as long as need be, and interruptions are avoided whenever possible. Time limitations are mandated by arbitrary schedules in traditional classrooms.
4. The Teachers’ Role
 - a. Montessori teachers act as guides and consultants to students on a one-on-one basis. They assist each child along his or her own learning path. Traditionally, the pace and order of each lesson is predetermined. The teacher must deliver the same lesson, at the same pace, in the same order, for all of the students.
5. Age Groups and Grade-levels.
 - a. In Montessori schools, “grade-levels” are flexible and determined by the child’s developmental range, i.e., 0-3, 3-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-15, and 15-18 years of age. In traditional schools, grade levels are not flexible and strictly defined by chronological age within a twelve-month period.
6. Adaptable Curricula
 - a. Montessori curricula expand in response to the students’ needs. Traditional curricula are predetermined without regard to student needs.

7. Pace Yourself
 - a. The individual child's work pace is honored and encouraged in the Montessori classroom. Traditional classrooms expect all children to work at the same pace.

8. Self-Made Self-Esteem
 - a. Montessorians understand that the child's self-esteem comes from an internal sense of pride in his or her own accomplishments. In traditional classrooms, self-esteem is thought to come from external judgement and validation.

9. For the Love of Learning
 - a. Montessori curricula are intended to appeal to the child's innate hunger for knowledge. Children learn to love learning. Traditional curricula focus on standardized test performance and grades. Children learn because it is mandatory.

10. Change is Good
 - a. The Montessori Method was created by Maria Montessori and is based on a lifetime of study and observation with regard to the way children really learn. Traditional education is based on...well...tradition.

Montessori Education	Traditional Education
Based on helping the natural development of the human being	Based on the transfer of a national curriculum
Children learn at their own pace and follow their own individual interest	Children learn from a set curriculum according to a time frame that is the same for everyone
Children teach themselves using materials specially prepared for the purpose	Children are taught by the teacher
Child is an active participant in learning	Child is a passive participant in learning
Understanding comes through the child's own experiences via the materials and the promotion of children's ability to find things out for themselves	Learning is based on subjects and is limited to what is given
Learning is based on the fact that physical exploration and cognition are linked	Children sit at desks and learn from a whiteboard and worksheets
Child can work where he/she is comfortable, move around and talk at will while not disturbing others	Child is usually assigned own chair and encouraged to sit still and listen during group sessions

The teacher works in collaboration with the children	The class is teacher led
The child's individual development brings its own reward and therefore motivation	Motivation is achieved by a system of reward and punishment
Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline	Teacher acts as primary enforcer of external discipline
Child works as long as he/she wishes on chosen project	Child generally given specific time limit for work
Uninterrupted work cycles	Block time, period lessons
Mixed age groups	Same age groups
Working and learning matched to the social development of the child	Working and learning without emphasis on the social development of the child
Shared emphasis on intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development	Main emphasis on intellectual development
Shared focus on the acquisition of academic, social, practical and life skills	Main focus on academics