

Some Differences Between Montessori and Traditional Pre-Schools

The goal of both Montessori and traditional pre-schools is the same: to provide learning experiences for the child. The biggest differences lie in the kind of learning experiences each school provides and the methods they use to accomplish this goal.

Montessori educators believe these differences are important because they help shape how a child learns, his work habits and his future attitudes toward himself and the world around him.

MONTESSORI	TRADITIONAL
Emphasis on: cognitive and social development	Emphasis on: social development
Teacher has unobtrusive role in classroom	Teacher is center of classroom as "controller"
Environment and method enforce self-discipline	Teacher acts as primary enforcer of discipline
Mainly individual instruction	Teacher acts as primary enforcer of discipline
Mixed age grouping	Same age grouping
Grouping encourages children to teach and help each other	Most teaching done by teacher
Child chooses own work	Curriculum structured for child
Child discovers own concepts from self-teaching materials	Child is guided to concepts by teacher
Child works as long as he wishes on chosen project	Child generally allotted specific time for work
Child sets own learning pace	Instruction pace usually set by group norm
Child spots own errors from feedback of material	If work is corrected, errors usually pointed by teacher
Child reinforces own learning by repetition of work and internal feelings of success	Learning is reinforced externally by repetition and rewards
Multi-sensory materials for physical exploration	Fewer materials for sensory development
Organized program for learning care of self and environment (polishing shoes, cleaning the sink, etc.)	Less emphasis on self-care instruction
Child can work where he chooses, move around and talk at will (yet not disturb work of others); group work is voluntary	Child usually assigned own chair; encouraged to participate, sit still and listen during group sessions
Organized program for parents to understand the Montessori philosophy and participate in the learning process	Voluntary parent involvement