

OBSERVATIONS

We encourage parents to visit the class during the school year. If you want to see the class as it usually is then it is important to minimize the effects of your presence. If someone stops to talk, feel free to respond naturally, but briefly. If someone asks for help, explain that you came to watch and suggest he ask the teacher. We've found that strangers are less distracting if they are sitting down. If you wish to observe another part of the room, feel free to move there and again sit.

Some general points of interest about the Montessori classroom are offered below:

Maria Montessori learned through her observations that small children are lovers of spontaneously chosen work. The classroom is a "prepared environment" of exercises and materials which are attractive to the children. The purposes of the exercises are to develop independence, order and concentration. Notice the individual differences in motivation, attention span, and areas of interest.

The role of the director/directress in the Montessori class is different from that of a traditional teacher. He/she carefully and continually observes each child in order to prepare the environment to meet his/her needs. Note how he/she presents lessons and observe individual reactions to the presentations.

A unique aspect of the Montessori concept is the mixture of age groups in the same class. This arrangement has a number of sound advantages. It allows the opportunity for peer teaching and for the younger children to learn from observation of older children. It also provides the opportunity for the older children to experience the self-confidence and satisfaction of being able to help others. Notice that each child, regardless of age, is expected to respect the rights and integrity of the others.

We encourage you to write down your observation questions so that you may discuss them with the director/directress after the class session.