

Bethany Lutheran College

Classroom Management:
Montessori Method

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The key to a successful classroom is effective classroom management. Teachers have to decide what management style will make their classroom an environment in which their students can thrive. It also must be a style that the teacher is comfortable and agrees with. Some teachers have adapted to the structure of a Montessori school. The atmosphere of these schools are very different from the mainstream classroom. In a Montessori classroom students have the freedom to choose what they want to learn and have the control of when it happens. There are a variety of experiences provided for the children in which they can learn from. This type of environment focuses on simulating the real world. The discipline within the classroom is also done in such a way that it helps the child have a greater understanding and continue to learn through their poor choices. This method of teaching is catered and focused on the child to ensure that all of the needs of the child are being met.

Maria Montessori was a brilliant educational theorist who impacted how one educates the whole student. She was a very strong willed woman who had entered an all boys technical institute at the age of thirteen and concluded her instruction being one Italy's first female physicians (Maria Montessori Biography, 1). Her background in psychology is what she utilized the most to experiment and form her theory. Montessori originally began her working in special education to better understand how children learned. This led her to opening a childcare center in one of the more poverty stricken districts. While observing the students she noticed that, "the youngsters were unruly at first, but soon showed great interest in working with puzzles, learning to prepare meals, and manipulating materials that held lessons in math" (Maria Montessori Biography, 1). The general conclusion from this was that students learn from their surroundings

and educating themselves. Montessori's early childhood classrooms were from then on fostering the child's natural desire to learn.

The main focus in a Montessori classroom is the child and how teachers can best educate them. Therefore, the Montessori classroom environment is going to be structured much differently than a typical mainstream classroom. Children in this type of classroom have the freedom to explore and try new things. Students are able to choose what they want to learn throughout the day by participating in activities already given to them. This helps the students to develop a sense of independence. The teacher in the classroom serves as a guide and only interferes with the child's learning when necessary. Lessons that are taught by the teacher are always developmentally appropriate. Teachers monitor the students to look for periods in which the student is having a window of growth. When a teachers notice this window, "teachers match appropriate lessons and materials to these sensitive periods when learning is most naturally absorbed and internalized" (Introduction to Montessori Method, 1).

Another way in which students learn is through their peers. Older students are encouraged to teach the younger students. This gives the older students an opportunity to display and perform the skills they have learned, while reinforcing their learning. The skills that can be learned from this are collaboration, social, and gaining content knowledge. Classrooms should be examples of what society is, so that students can then become prepared for the world they are about to face. Through peer learning it, "mirrors the real world, where individuals work and socialize with people of all ages and dispositions" (Introduction to Montessori Method). Teachers are still present to monitor the interaction, but only involve themselves when necessary. In this way, they are still serving as a guide.

The lessons and materials provided are developmentally appropriate for each age group. Early childhood is focused on the senses: tasting, smelling, touching, and movement. This involves a lot of sensory activities that will stimulate them and keep them engaged. In the elementary years, the students begin to participate in independent thinking. The students think through problems using more advanced Montessori materials. Through this, the children are able to move from concrete thoughts to ones that are more abstract. The teachers then encourage the connections of the learning experiences to application of the real world. Teachers provide experiences that the students can choose to involve themselves in that engages students and reflects the real world. In both age groups, learning is still chosen by the student to partake in. Nothing is forced upon the child and they learn at their own pace because the student will tell the teacher what is appropriate for them to learn.

Students are constantly learning and experiment with their behaviors and discovering which behaviors are appropriate. Discipling students is when the Montessori teachers may have to make their presence more known and available to the children. The teacher must first approach the children with the thought that children are inherently good. Montessori believed that, “Children are not naughty by nature, it is wrong treatment that makes them naughty, mental starvation causes naughtiness, and lack of activity causes naughtiness” (Montessori Classroom Management: Sometimes Students Will Be Hard to Handle, 1). This causes the teacher to reflect on the situation and see if there is a way to create a better environment that would prevent certain behaviors. Children need to be instructed on how to behave and what behaviors are acceptable. If the teacher does not provide the student with opportunities to engage themselves in, the student will find other activities to occupy themselves with. When the student is occupying their time

with their own decisions and less teacher control, they are more likely to engage in poor behavior. Therefore, the teacher needs to create environments where the students can be engaged and are learning correct behaviors.

To prevent children from entertaining themselves, Montessori teachers have a number of techniques to curb the behavior of their students. First, teachers will use the diversion to help their students make better choices. When a student is making a poor choice, the teacher will quickly suggest another activity that the student could do instead. The teacher then may have a conversation with the student to explain why the behavior they were participating was not a good choice. Another strategy is to give the student warnings. A first warning is given to allow the child to make the decision to make a better choice. Then a second warning is given to let the student know if they continue in the behavior that they will lose that privilege. Lastly, the privilege that they had been given will be taken from them. The last strategy that a teacher may use is having the student talk through their behavior. A teacher may inform the student that they are making a poor choice, but then have the student talk about why it is a poor choice. Older students would probably utilize this strategy. This is another opportunity for the students to demonstrate what they have learned.

Children in a Montessori school are not forced or asked to say “sorry.” Montessori teachers believe that a child should only say “sorry” when they truly feel that they are. Students that are forced to say that word can then believe that “sorry” makes everything better and can get them out of trouble. This is because a lot of students are rewarded for saying “sorry” even when they do not really mean it. Children need to learn compassion and that saying “sorry” does not take away the consequence of their actions.

Another form of discipline that one will not witness in a Montessori classroom is punishments. Teachers do not punish their students, however they will give them consequences. Punishment tends to instill fear into a child and Montessorians do not believe that this helps the greater good (How are Conflicts and Discipline Handled?, 1). Instead, teachers will have a consequence that fits the behavior and will have conversations with the student. Montessori teachers find that discussing why certain behaviors are wrong with the student can be extremely effective.

There are many aspects of a Montessori classroom that a teacher could utilize in their own classroom. The students needs should always be taken into account so that the teacher can enhance their learning. In this way they are catering to the whole child. It is also important to make one's classroom reflect the real world. Students can then learn and grow to become functioning and contributing members of society. It is also important to keep discipline appropriate for the student. A teacher should not scare a student into doing the correct thing. Rather they should discuss with the student what better behaviors could be instead. Teachers should always have the students best interest at heart, which is what the Montessori Method entails.

Works Cited

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