

Why Montessori still matters in the age of full-day kindergarten

We know that the first six years of a child's life are the most critical. In this finite window, children learn not only to walk and talk, but to think, problem solve, and empathize. This is the time of establishing patterns of learning and caring. As a parent, you are faced with several educational options during this crucial stage of your children's development; clearly you want to make the decision that will benefit them the most. There is no better place to do so than a Montessori school.

Montessori schools offer a unique philosophy of education that fosters the development of the whole child: that means the entire curriculum is designed to cultivate your child's mental, physical, and emotional growth. Each classroom is child-centred, in which the teacher gives lessons one-on-one or in very small groups throughout the day. A true community is built by grouping children aged 3-6 together, and by staying in the same class for a full three years; in doing so, the little ones look up to the older ones, and the older ones are there to help and mentor the younger ones. This also means that a child starting at age 3 will have heard the lessons given to her peers several times before she is given the lesson herself, allowing for a great deal of comfort and enrichment in any given subject.

Physical activity is embedded within each material the children use every single day, ranging from strengthening delicate fine motor skills to coordinating more robust gross motor skills. Such movements give your child the physical freedom he needs to stay focused and engaged on the full day of learning.

There is a free flowing pace to the day, enabling children to stick with an activity for as long as they need before moving on to the next. This means that on any given morning your five year old could learn about African animals, build a tower, make a floral arrangement, practice writing her letters and numbers, have a music lesson, eat a snack, help a friend solve a conflict, paint a picture, read a book, count by 5's, experiment with shape and colour, and learn to tie a bow.

Great confidence, concentration, and satisfaction arise from such a pace:

imagine the difference in your feelings about school if you are allowed to work away at something and repeat it joyfully once you get the hang of it, versus being told to put it away, regardless of your progress or enjoyment, just because “time’s up.” Imagine the point of realizing, at age four, “if I could overcome that challenge, then what else can I do?” **Imagine the lift in confidence and pride.**

The Montessori approach provides an individualized curriculum, tailor-made for your child’s unique personality, strengths, and weaknesses.

There is no other program available, even in the age of full day kindergarten, that offers such a nurturing, social, creative, and enriched environment for

children of this age. Though it can be tempting to enroll in a more traditional school program, the difference a Montessori education offers is unparalleled. It is truly designed to stoke the inquisitive fire of learning that each child possesses naturally.