



## CASA CURRICULUM INFORMATION

### **Practical Life**

The Practical Life area in a Montessori Children's House is fundamental to children's development and the Montessori philosophy. These activities help the child adapt to their environment as they learn to engage in everyday exercises and activities in a purposeful way.

The activities within the Practical Life area help the child to gain control in the coordination of their movement, and support the child in gaining independence as they adapt to their society. The Practical Life exercises also aid in the growth and development of the child's intellect and concentration and will in turn also help the child develop an orderly and logical way of thinking.

Practical Life exercises can be categorised into four different areas: Preliminary Activities, Care of the Self and of the Environment, Grace and Courtesy lessons and Control of Movement. Working within these areas allows the child to learn how to do every day exercises as part of their society, that enables them to care for themselves independently (e.g. washing hands), or care for their environment (e.g. dusting a table).

Grace and Courtesy activities are social lessons that help the child develop a respect for themselves, their peers and their environment. The child also is able to learn his or her own movements and how to refine his or her coordination through Control of Movement activities, such as pinpricking or walking on the line.

The repetition of working with the Practical Life materials, overtime gives the child a sense of responsibility and ownership of their learning environment. It helps them to feel as part of a community as they become a valued member. The work in Practical Life also contributes to the child's overall development of concentration, independence, fine and gross motor control, orderly working habits and logical and sequential thinking.

### **Sensorial**

The sensorial materials in a Montessori learning environment help to familiarize the child with their world through their senses. Exploring the world using all senses was important to Montessori and her beliefs on children's education as she viewed our senses as the gateways to intelligence.

Children in a Montessori environment are experiencing the sensorial materials during the first plane of development and are very much sensorial learners. Montessori felt that it was appropriate to support children's experiences with the materials in the environment by giving them the tools to acquire an

understanding of their world through their senses. The more classifications the child is exposed to, the more refined their thinking can become. The continued classification of their environment helps the child perceive the world more accurately. This allows the child to refine their senses. The more educated our senses are and the more experiences we have, enable our brain to become more perceptive. The sensorial materials in Montessori education also allow the children to further develop a love for their environment.

The sensorial materials invite the child to sort things by size, shape, colour, touch, sound, temperature, and weight. They further their experience with classification in a scientific manner when completing sensorial activities that incorporate grading (e.g. from light to dark, from large to small, and from rough to smooth). The sensorial materials allow for individual work, encourage repetition and include a control of error so that the child is able to correct themselves independently, without being afraid of making a mistake.

### **Language**

The acquisition of language is something that comes naturally for the child depending on their environment. The Montessori classroom is a language-rich environment and a child is immediately given a preliminary introduction to language. Their vocabulary begins expanding through spontaneous conversations, stories, songs, poems and classified cards. The child is then introduced to the letters of the alphabet, phonetically through a variety of sound games and experiences within the classroom environment. Next, the Sandpaper Letters are shown to the child, which incorporate the feel, sound and sight of the letter symbol. This allows the child to gain a holistic introduction to reading. The natural progression through working with the Language materials has the child developing the ability to compose words using our Moveable Alphabet and eventually they begin to read.

The child also begins their development of writing. Through their initial work in the Practical Life area, children have gained experiences working with a range of activities developed to refine their fine motor control and hand eye coordination. Their experiences working with the Sensorial materials also contribute to the preparation of writing. The child then is introduced to writing on a chalkboard and working with the Metal Insets to refine their skills before printing letters on lined paper.

In their third year, once the child develops an understanding of the phonetic and phonographic alphabet, as well as the formation of words we can then move on to the function of words. These lessons help the child to develop an understanding of the English language, as we introduce the article, noun, adjective, verb, conjunction, and preposition. As their work and understanding develops further, we continue their work in the language area by exploring creative writing.

### **Mathematics**

Numeracy skills are introduced very concretely to the child and the activities progress into more abstract concepts. Like other areas of the Montessori environment, the activities move from simple to more complex. For the child to understand the concept of Mathematics, they must first understand quantity. Order, coordination, concentration and independence are experienced by the child using uniquely designed Montessori mathematics materials.

The math activities are organised into six groups: Numbers 1-10, Introduction to the Decimal System,

Counting 1 to 1000, Memorising Essential Number Combinations, The Passage to Abstraction and Fractions.

**Culture: Geography, History, Religion, Zoology & Botany**

In addition to all of the other subject areas in the Montessori curriculum, the child needs to also be introduced to the cultures of the world, aside from their own. Culture means the whole of human experience. When a child is born into their environment they have to adapt into the world they have been born into and they have to acclimatise in order to fit into their community. The young child has to understand the world around him in order to become a member of his society. When we understand things we gain an appreciation for them and as children begin to make sense of their world they can start to distinguish between what they like and what they don't like, which contributes to the development of their individual characters. Montessori believed that we need to give the child the world in order for them to form an understanding.

The culture materials are presented to children as extensions of the practical life, sensorial and language areas and are spontaneously incorporated into the curriculum. The children are able to experience various cultures and gain cultural awareness by exploring through several medias such as art, music, language, and food. Our aim is to encourage the child to become respectful and appreciative of other people and cultures.

**Geography & History** - As part of the Casa curriculum, in term two we spend eight weeks focusing on the Continents of the World and explore the various countries within them. During our study, we focus on the geography, history, zoology, botany, cuisine, and cultural celebrations.

Living in the Cayman Islands, we also take the time to explore and celebrate our island, introducing students to the history and geography of Cayman. We spend time exploring our local environment and learning about the various landscapes. Special trips that we host each year such as a trip to Queen Elizabeth II's Botanic Park and a trip on the Nautilus around the George Town harbour help our students develop more of a well-rounded understanding of our island.

National and traditional Caymanian symbols and holidays are introduced, celebrated and explored and students are asked to share any stories and experiences. Local stories and books written by local authors are used to help children to grasp an idea of historical concepts. Once exploring our world through our Continent study, students are able to make comparisons between Cayman and the rest of the world.

**Religion** - Montessori valued the ideals and beliefs of all people and cultures. At Montessori School of Cayman we aim to introduce our students to the many different faiths and cultural practices that take place all over the world. Through our Study of the World in our second term, we are able to do this as we spend time exploring each Continent and learn about the different celebrations and festivals that take place throughout them. We also encourage those students from other countries to share their experiences and bring in items so that we can enjoy and engage in a sensorial experience whenever possible, therefore developing a better understanding and appreciation.

We give our students the opportunity to learn and experience the practiced celebrations that take place all over the world and to develop a respect for individuals who have different beliefs to ours. We aim to instil a sense of wonder for our World in each student at MSC. We allow children to discuss their values

and beliefs as they reflect on their own feelings and experiences. This becomes possible through our weekly Mindfulness and Mediation classes, as children gain a sense of appreciation for reflection as they learn to respect the beliefs and practices of all people.

### **Arts and Crafts**

Children are encouraged to explore their imagination freely, using a variety of mediums to express themselves. We emphasize the importance on the process of the work rather than the finished product. In our environment, Arts and crafts are traditionally done at the child's own will during the morning work cycle.

### **Outdoor Classroom**

Children are welcome to visit our Outdoor Classroom during their work cycle to experience in outdoor learning activities to further enhance their experience at Montessori School of Cayman. The Outdoor Classroom is fit with grow boxes for gardening, a large outdoor chalkboard for creative expression, water tables, a mud kitchen and an easel for painting.

### **Music**

A specialised music enrichment programme is offered for all students. Classes take place on a weekly basis and include singing, dancing and movement, games and exploration with instruments.

### **Cayman Islands Early Years Curriculum Framework**

At Montessori School of Cayman we incorporate the learning outcomes outlined in the C.I. Early Years Curriculum Framework into our curriculum in all programmes. The framework is focused around four areas of development: Exploration, Respect, Communication and Well-Being.

These learning outcomes can be found in the material description for all of the Montessori activities that make up our curriculum. Each lesson description can be found on our Transparent Classroom app.

### **Various themes that will be explored by our Casa students over this school year:**

- All About Me
- Halloween & Harvest
- Cayman Culture (Pirate's Week)
- Christmas
- Study of the World (exploring the seven Continents)
- Easter & Spring
- Being kind to our Earth (reduce, reuse, recycle)
- Plants & Seeds
- Dinosaurs
- Planets
- Community Helpers
- Coral Reef
- Life Cycles
- Seasons