

Q: How do you measure progress? Are there progress reports given? If so, when and how often?

A: Teachers measure progress of student achievement through observations, work samples, records of lessons given, and CMS formative assessment data. The daily observations are focused on interaction with materials and ability to independently complete tasks. The work samples come from subject copy books. Through the combination of all of this data the teacher plans whole group, small group, and individual lessons based upon skill mastery and independence working towards abstraction. The school also uses tests such as MAP and DIBELS to help measure student progress. Progress reports will be sent home quarterly for students in K through 2 and twice a year for pre-k students. These will be sent home at the end of 2nd and 4th quarter.

Q: At what age does homework start? When homework is sent home will there be instructions for the parents if it is a non-contemporary way?

Q: At what age do children receive homework? I notice my child can better recall what she has done that day when she brings something tangible home.

A: Homework in the Montessori setting is considered the “work of the home”. Children need opportunities to process their workday and be an active member of their home environment. Helping clean their room, taking a walk with their family, and helping to set the table for dinner are all wonderful home work opportunities. The Montessori philosophy also highly emphasizes working until mastery. Your child’s teacher will share how they will help your child master their work plan each week. Work that is not completed on their work-plan may be sent home. It is highly recommended to read to or have your child read each night for 20-30 minutes.

Q: Sentence analysis: What is the significance of using symbols with words?

A: In Montessori grammar instruction symbols are used to identify parts of speech. This helps children see the patterns in sentence structure. This visual structure is transferred to their writing, guiding the child to include all pertinent information and create grammatically correct sentences. The symbols also help the children remember the function of each part of speech. For example, a verb is a red ball. A ball can be bounced, rolled, or thrown, thus showing a verb is an action....something you do.

Q: Do teachers need assistants to handle 20 kids? Does TSM plan to hire any assistant teachers?

A: TSM currently has an assistant teacher in each class. This is ideal for a Montessori environment because of its structure. The teacher is able to give individual and small group lessons while the assistant monitors the rest of the class.

Q: What can parents do or find in store/online to assist with reinforcement of work/lessons?

A: The children use a variety of Montessori materials to practice on a daily basis. It is not recommended that parents buy these materials as they are very costly. One of the most important things you can do is to read to or with your child on a daily basis. Set aside some time after school for reading and response time. You can also help your child with simple mental math problems. Parents should also encourage independence in their child. Allow your child to complete practical life as part of the family. Children can pour their own cereal, clear their own plate, help with cooking, sort clothing etc. Having child sized tools (such as a child size broom) allows your child to be successful. Your child's Guide can give you specific skills that your child can work on.

Q: Please explain the letter sounds instruction before letter names? I notice that my three year old will say the sound of the letter first when we ask him.

A: As adults we understand that the letter B makes the 'buh' sound but the letter name is b. However, we sound out words using letter sounds not letter names. Knowing the sound letters make is critical for your child to begin the process of reading by sounding out words and blending the sounds to create words.

Q: Can you address how the Montessori way manages Common core, math in particular?

A: The Montessori materials aligned beautifully with the Common Core Standards. Common core skills are taught daily using the Montessori materials and many standards can be taught using a variety of Montessori materials. For example, the common core standard 'count to 100 by ones and tens' (k.c.c.a.1) is taught using the teen board, ten board, bead chains, and hundred board.

Q: Montessori is a choice based learning style. Are there cases when a child does not choose to do a certain center or activity, how are children encouraged to do them?

A: Within a Montessori environment, children are given freedom within limits. As Guides, we are responsible for ensuring your child is prepared to move on to their next prepared environment. Our focus is on providing each child with a holistic education. In order to do so, many Guides use Work Plans with their students to ensure that each child is choosing appropriate lessons from every area of the classroom. Your child's Guide will use observations to inform her as to what your child is doing on a daily basis. The Guide will have a conference with your child to discuss the findings and to encourage your child to complete lessons that he/she may not have practiced for the week.

Q: Do we assume "no news is good news" as in, if there are no notes in book bags and no email they are doing okay and not disrupting class or having to go to time out?

A: Each Guide has their own method of communication, but be on the look-out for monthly newsletters that will update you on things happening in your child's classroom. If there is ever an area of concern, your child's Guide will contact you. Always feel free to call or email if you are have questions or concerns!

Q: What is Pre-K vs. Lower Grade that we saw at stations?

A: Dr. Montessori believed in multi-aged classrooms. Our Primary classes are composed of Pre-K and Kindergarten students. Our Lower Elementary classroom has 1st, 2nd, and next year 3rd grade students. As our school grows, we will also have Upper Elementary classrooms which will have 4th, 5th, and 6th grades.

Q: When do the teachers determine when the student is ready to progress to the next level of materials? What if a student continues to do the same work over and over without choosing new work?

A: Guides are always observing students and keeping records of when lessons have been presented, when skills are being worked on, and when a child has mastered a skill. By following the child, Guides are able to determine the right moment to present a child with the next lesson. Work Plans hold students accountable for working on certain skill sets and ensuring they are receiving a holistic education.

Q: Do you follow the sensitive periods when introducing materials, e.g. sandpaper letters?

A: 'Sensitive periods' can be thought of as windows of opportunities and these are fundamental when working with children of all levels. Typically the sensitive period will last for a certain period and does not reoccur. Guides observe when a child is ready for particular lessons and follows the child's interest. The Guide must be mindful of the prepared environment and ensure that it meets the child's/children's needs. Maria Montessori believed that the human brain was able to absorb and retain information during the 'sensitive periods'. The sensitive period for each child is noted through careful observations and followed accordingly.

Q: How do we know what they are working on weekly?

A: Each Guide will have her way of communicating to you what your child is working on. Newsletters will provide you with information pertaining to what is happening in the classroom. If you feel as though you're not quite sure what is happening, please email your child's Guide for feedback on your child's current lessons and progress.

Q: Do different teachers teach different materials?

A: All the primary classrooms are equipped with pretty much the same Montessori materials. The materials are presented in a systematic way to each child as he/she has mastered the previous lesson. There are materials in the lower elementary classroom that are not found in the primary classroom. The sentence analysis lesson is one example. Practical life in the primary classroom looks different to practical life in the lower elementary classroom.

Q: How do I know my child is learning if he comes home and can't tell me anything new he learned? When he does come home and tell me something he learned how can I reinforce it at home?

A: Some children may have difficulty explaining what they did in the Montessori environment. Your child typically moves through various lessons throughout the day/week. It would be helpful for you and the Guide work with your child on identifying one specific lesson he/she worked on to come home and explain. They are great ways to phrase questions that will help your child articulate what they have done and give you an insight into what he/she is learning: 'What was the most challenging part/lesson of your day/today?' 'What was your favorite part/lesson of the day?' 'What did you do today that you enjoyed the least?' 'Name one lesson that is your favorite.' Why is _____ your favorite lesson?' 'Can you explain to me how you do the _____ lesson?' 'Draw your favorite lesson and color/label it.' 'What other math/language/sensorial/practical life lesson do you like?' 'How are _____ and _____ math/language/sensorial/practical life lesson different/the same?' Reinforcement comes with having that dialogue with your child. Encourage your child to find one thing each day to come home and explain. This will help your child with retention and articulation. If your child is having many challenges, your child's teacher will have a conference with you to discuss those challenges and what you can do to help at home.

Q: As far as language, how can I tell if he is developing in the right level?

A: Your child's Guide will use observations, formal and informal assessments to see where your child is based on his/her results. If your child is not on track in language or in any other area, the Guide will set up a conference with you to put strategies in place to help your child get on and stay on track. Children will develop at his/her own level and so it is very important to note where your child is developmentally and reasonable goals must be set for him/her to achieve them in order for him/her to be successful.