

Appendix I: Observation Guidelines

Welcome to the classroom. We are pleased that you are able to visit and we hope that this experience will be informative and positive. To “observe” is difficult: one loves to get involved. But, in order for your observation to be of value to you and for us to maintain the regular day-to-day equilibrium of the class, we ask you to kindly stay seated and refrain from interacting. You should plan on observing at least 30 minutes, but not longer than 45 minutes.

The classroom environment is a warm, friendly, encouraging atmosphere, designed to foster positive learning experiences. This prepared learning environment is structured to be responsive to the child’s special developmental needs and desires. Picture your own child in this environment.

Dr. Montessori identified the adult in the classroom as the directress, rather than the teacher. The directress guides the flow of activities in the environment and serves as the catalyst in the development of learning experiences. Children in the Montessori classroom enjoy independence and freedom within limits. They also enjoy order and self-discipline. This is a point of arrival, not of departure.

- ★ Observe objectively.
- ★ Observe one child over a period of time.
- ★ Observe children interacting.
- ★ Observe how the class functions as a community.
- ★ Observe one student teaching/helping another student.
- ★ Look for these qualities in the students:

concentration	self-direction
coordination	adaptability
independence	love of work
self motivation	respect for others
order	

Observation Points

Following are some questions you may want to keep in mind while observing. They were taken from an article entitled, "Observing Your Child's Class at Work." (*Tomorrow's Child Magazine*, Back to School issue, 2003, Vol. 11, Number 5)

- ★ As you sit down to carefully observe in a Montessori classroom for the first time, what catches your eye?
- ★ How is the classroom organized? What do you notice about the layout of activities, furnishings, and shelves?
- ★ Pay attention to the way the adults interact with the children. What do you notice?
- ★ Perhaps during your observation you will see the teacher correct or discipline a child. What do you notice?
- ★ As you observe, try to look for any unwritten rules and procedures that the children are following. What do you notice?
- ★ What is it about the Montessori material that seems to be most attractive to the children?
- ★ Focus on a few different Montessori materials. What concepts or skills does each isolate?
- ★ Notice how the teachers introduce children to the materials. Try to catch one child learning from another.
- ★ How do you as an adult respond to the Montessori materials? Are you drawn to them? Do you wish that you could have gone to a Montessori school?