



chesterfield
M O N T E S S O R I
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www.chesterfieldmontessori.org

passion for learning; success for life

GUIDELINES FOR OBSERVING A MONTESSORI CLASS

Welcome to Chesterfield Montessori School. We are pleased that you are taking the time to visit and observe one of our classrooms. We have a high regard for the children's classroom environment and take great care not to interrupt their concentration and focus. We ask that you stay seated in the classroom, and try not to engage the children in conversation. A polite "hello" and a direct response about who you are would be appropriate. Below you will find guidelines to assist you in ensuring that your experience is as valuable as possible. Attached is a list of questions for your use while observing the classroom. Enjoy your visit!

Classroom Atmosphere

A great deal of effort and thought is devoted to the "prepared environment" of a Montessori classroom. Each piece of material has been placed on the shelf to help the child independently develop a particular skill. Each of our classes is proportionately divided into age groups of 3, 4, and 5-year-olds. Children of different ages are intermingled so that they might help and learn from one another.

Degree of Self-Direction

Notice that the children learn in different ways. With some types of materials you will see groups of children working cooperatively, and with others you will find an individual child working intently. Still other children may be walking through the classroom seemingly not engaged in any direct activity. Very often, this last type of child is engaged in absorbing the other children and materials through observation.

Role of the Teacher and Assistant

The Teacher is a facilitator of the children's autonomous learning processes. She prepares the environment and gives children the tools to utilize the materials. Sometimes the teacher provides direct encouragement or indirect appreciation, and at other times judicious absence. There is a basic respect for each individual child's particular style of learning in the Montessori classroom.

You will notice that the classroom assistant is not actively involved with teaching. She is another calm and gentle presence in the classroom, quietly helping to maintain the environment and unobtrusively supporting the teacher in her work with the children.

Sociability

Watch the ways in which the children offer assistance to one another—with the materials and with everyday tasks. Note how the younger children absorb the older children's work simply by being near them and how, conversely, the older children will assist the younger ones with work that they have already mastered. The child's natural desire to form friends and be part of an ongoing community is ever present in the Montessori classroom.



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THINGS TO LOOK FOR DURING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

The Environment

1. Is the room attractive?
2. Are the materials in good condition?
3. Are the materials visible and easily accessible to the children?
4. Do the materials seem to be logically arranged?
5. Is the room neat and clean?

The Teacher and the Assistant

1. Does she seem comfortable and relaxed in the room?
2. Does she speak softly and gently?
3. Does she move slowly and gracefully?
4. Does she seem aware of what is going on in the room?
5. Does she respond to the children appropriately?
6. Does she treat each child with respect and courtesy?
7. Do the children obey her cheerfully and readily?
8. Does she contribute to keeping order in the room?
9. Does she demonstrate materials clearly and seem aware of the child's response?
10. Does she maintain classroom limits (by intervening when necessary)?

The Children

Please choose one or two children to observe, plus the class as a whole:

1. Do they seem comfortable and relaxed in the room?
2. Do they follow the ground rules?
3. Do they ask for help when they need it?
4. Do they seem happy at school?
5. Do they follow instructions willingly?
6. Do they work well together and get along?
7. Do they concentrate for extended periods of time?
8. Do they choose work independently?
9. Do they finish the chosen work?
10. Is their work orderly and are materials returned to their original locations?

Our aim is to provide the children with a loving, respectful, and supportive environment in which they will blossom into human beings who...

- *have a good self-concept*
- *have respect for themselves and for the work around them*
- *initiate tasks with interest and enthusiasm*
- *are self-motivated*
- *can complete the tasks they initiate*
- *can love and live in peace with their fellow man*