



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### About Montessori Education

**Q: How was the Montessori method established?**

A: Montessori education was founded in Italy more than 100 years ago by Dr. Maria Montessori, a physician and scientist. Dr. Montessori observed that children naturally develop in phases, which she termed planes of development. Dr. Montessori also determined that students have the ability to teach themselves when given guidance in properly "prepared environments." It is estimated that today there are more than 5,000 Montessori schools in the United States, and more than 20,000 in 110 countries around the world.

**Q: What are some differences between traditional learning methods and the Montessori method?**

A: There are many differences, including:

- Montessori programs work on three-year cycles. Children stay in the same classroom and have the same teacher for three years.
- Montessori classrooms have children of mixed ages. Multi-age classrooms encourage cooperative learning and allow for broad emotional and social development.
- Because children develop and master skills at their own pace, Montessori students work according to their developmental levels rather than their biological ages.
- The primary role of the Montessori teacher is not the transmission of information, but rather to nurture development and to guide activities, resources, and materials that allow the child to take the next step in learning.
- Montessori students are always free to move around the classroom instead of staying at desks. There is no limit to how long a child can work on a lesson, and the lessons are taught to one student or to a small group of students.
- The Montessori teaching materials are unique. Most were developed by Dr. Montessori to meet specific developmental needs of children of different ages.

**Q: What can I read to familiarize myself with Montessori philosophy?**

A: There are many excellent books to choose from, however, we recommend beginning with these:

*The Absorbent Mind* by Dr. Maria Montessori  
*The Secret of Childhood* by Dr. Maria Montessori  
*Montessori - A Modern Approach* by Paula Polk Lillard  
*Montessori, Her Life and Work* by E. M. Standing  
*Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* by Angeline Lillard, Ph.D.

**Q: Why do Montessori schools begin at age three?**

A: Children experience "sensitive periods" in their natural development. During these times, they seek certain stimuli with immense intensity. What a child can learn almost effortlessly at this critical time will take effort on his part later. Dr. Montessori devised special materials to aid children in each sensitive period. Between the ages of two and three, a special sense of order, concentration, coordination, and independence emerges. This time is ideal to begin a child's Montessori education, as he is at the perfect age to build a strong foundation for future learning.

**Q: What is the three-year curriculum?**

A: Montessori classrooms are organized around a three-year developmental cycle of learning, designed to respond to the needs and characteristics of each specific stage of a child's growth. A child has the same teacher and classroom for three years, and

each year the lessons build upon the prior year's work. Typically it is not in a child's best interest to enter the three-year program in the last of these three years.

**Q: My son keeps calling his lessons "work." Do the children have fun?**

**A:** The term "work" is used in the classrooms to give dignity and respect to the students' activities. Their time is spent on purposeful lessons. The children have free choice to decide what work they will complete. They have many options, and are empowered to do what interests them most.

**Q: If my child is left to choose her own activities, will she tend to do the same thing every day, or simply do nothing?**

**A:** No. The teachers are trained to observe children's activities. When a child has mastered a skill, the teacher provides a lesson that is more challenging, based on the age and interest of the child. Because the environment is so stimulating and exciting, children seldom do nothing. There are many prepared lessons for the child to choose from every day.

**Q: Will it be helpful for my child to have access to Montessori materials at home?**

**A:** Omni teachers advise against using Montessori materials at home. Unlike parents, AMI-certified Montessori teachers have mastered the presentation of each lesson. Work is presented with great precision and clarity, and the teacher is prepared to guide individual progress. It is, however, quite possible to provide a Montessori environment without these materials by using the principles of child development at home. Look at your home through your child's eyes. Providing opportunities for independence is the surest way to build your child's self-esteem. Find ways for your child to participate in daily life activities such as meal preparation, cleaning, gardening, and caring for pets.

**A: How well do children transition from Montessori to traditional schools?**

**Q:** The transition is usually very smooth. Research indicates that Montessori graduates typically score well on standardized tests, and consistently show enhanced ability for following directions, independent thinking, and adapting to new situations. Teachers are often impressed by the leadership abilities and depth of knowledge possessed by students coming out of Montessori programs.

**Q: How well does Montessori education prepare the children for success in later life?**

**A:** Research has shown that Montessori students are well prepared for later life, academically, socially and emotionally. In a Montessori class room, the passion for learning is fostered and internalized by the children, leading them to be lifelong learners. In today's world, being able to "think outside the box" is a vital component to success, and a Montessori education encourages the creative and critical thinking that fosters this trait.

## About Omni Montessori School

**Q: What training does Omni require of its teachers?**

**A:** Teachers at Omni Montessori School are highly-trained professionals, with average teaching experience of 19 years. All head teachers have earned, at minimum, a bachelor's degree and are certified in the grade level they teach by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) training. AMI was founded by Maria Montessori to ensure the integrity of her philosophy. The training is rigorous, with standards set according to Dr. Montessori's design. Each classroom must be equipped with special materials and be well maintained. Omni's AMI Certificate of Recognition confirms the school's faithful adherence to authentic Montessori principles.

**Q: What is the importance of an AMI certification?**

**A:** The word "Montessori" is not trademarked, and can be used by any school. Parents must conduct careful research and observe a classroom in operation in order to choose an authentic Montessori school for their child. There are several Montessori organizations to which schools can belong. The two major bodies operating in the United States are the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), and the American Montessori Society (AMS). Parents considering placing a child in a Montessori school should inquire about the school's affiliation(s).

**Q: How much homework can I expect my child to have, and how often do they take tests?**

**A:** A reasonable amount of homework is given, mostly in the Upper Elementary and Adolescent programs. Homework is often project-based rather than worksheet driven. Traditional testing is a minor part of the Montessori experience. Students work toward mastery of a skill or concept through more hands-on approaches. Teachers monitor the individual learning of each student and report to parents through progress reports and parent-teacher conferences.

## About the Admissions Process

**Q: When should I apply to Omni?**

**A:** Based on their birth dates, children turning three are interviewed for slots in Omni's Primary program in the late spring for a fall start, or in November for a January start. Omni Montessori School offers a rolling enrolment to transferring elementary and middle school students throughout the school year.

**Q: Can my child transfer to Omni Montessori if he does not have prior Montessori experience?**

**A:** The majority of Omni students were either enrolled in the school prior to age five or transferred from another Montessori environment. Omni has limited space in each classroom for students transferring from non-Montessori backgrounds and makes these judgements on a case-by-case basis. When a space becomes available for non-Montessori student, the school initiates interviews and discussion to ensure that a Montessori environment will be beneficial to the child and the classroom.

**Q: How does Omni's waiting list work?**

**A:** If space is available, a child may be accepted at any time during the school year. If an opening is not available, potential students will be placed on a waiting list and notified when an opening arises. Classrooms are balanced by gender and age. First priority is given to siblings of children currently enrolled at Omni and to students transferring from other AMI-certified schools.