Practical Life Curriculum

Children's personalities manifest themselves when carrying out the practical life exercises. They fully devote themselves to the tasks with great concentration and joy. Household tasks and our mealtime rituals are closely related to our culture. In this way the child learns how we do things "I belong to this culture because I use chop sticks to eat".

At a pre-school level we can show parents how children are introduced to the practical life activities in a Montessori environment especially set up for children between 15 – 36 months +. For example, how to transfer water from the water supply in such a way that is manageable and developmentally appropriate. Many children during this period enjoy maximum effort, so if they have to walk up and down many times with a big jug of water it does not bother them at all.

Maria Montessori recognised a particular trait in little children all over the world. This trait leads them to take on the culture of their birthplace, the language, the habits and gestures. We have a perfect vehicle to help children find avenues to satisfy this universal trait. Our daily tasks!

POURING MATERIALS

Tasks that have long since lost their attraction to us adults are still marvellous learning experiences for little children. In fact, most of the time we cannot keep them away. "Me do it" or "go away", are common pleas from toddlers. Tasks range from those of personal care (such as eating, dressing or bathing) to tasks related to our immediate surroundings (like washing up, sorting laundry, carrying shopping, food preparation, looking after plants, dusting, mopping, polishing). All of these activities, which happen in maintaining a home environment and caring for their Montessori environment, the child does naturally and with enjoyment.

CONTROL OF MOVEMENT:

In learning to control movement; the child walks on the line, or carefully moves around another person's work, walks up and down stairs, does balancing activities, climbs up and down a ladder. To help the child to develop sensory motor skills, they complete tasks involving the use of large and small muscle groups, enabling the child to gain increasing control over their movements. The specially designed apparatus and a large range of activities ensure this result.

MOTOR:

Imagine the control of movement needed to aim a brush at a dustpan and make sure the dirt lands in the right spot. The child learns ways of working with their hands. The two hands perform tasks together and messages reach the brain about these tasks, which are perfected more and more each time they are carried out. These activities also increase muscle coordination and concentration. Instead of being random movements, they become directed and precise.

GRACE AND COURTESY:

Grace and Courtesy are also part of the social relations in a Montessori environment. This involves greeting staff and peers, offering something to someone, inviting someone to work with them, making way for someone to pass, asking "pardon?" or "excuse me?", asking someone to watch their work, walking in front of another person, or not interrupting a person who is working. Respect of the environment is also necessary, leaving their working space clean and tidy, returning items to the shelf, placing a chair against the table. Social development and developing emotional intelligence by working with others, the child learns to cooperate. Spontaneous impulses that might infringe the rights of others are discouraged and the child learns restraint.

LANGUAGE:

Everything the child uses can be named. Each activity is named. The child is given the precise language for everything that belongs to the activity, for instance, "you washed the dishes". Children also develop a feeling of importance by being able to learn to do these things by themselves. The development of movement builds intelligence by providing stimuli for connections in the brain. Language expresses intelligence and the child's will (or level of independence) is giving form to how the intellect is used by each child individually. (Tineke van Gasselt)