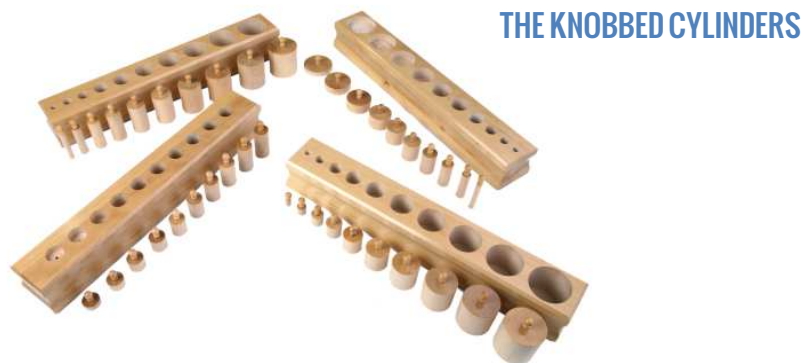


Sensorial Curriculum

“There is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses” – Aristotle

The function of sensory materials is to isolate for the child the properties of things, and to help him/her refine and organise in their minds what s/he is absorbing through his/her senses. The purpose is not simply to provide a lot of sensory stimulation, but rather, to provide order. “Not so much to give the child new impressions as to give order to the impressions already received”. (Standing, E.M.).



The sensorial area is the bridge to the rest of the curriculum. In manipulating these materials the foundations for more complex and abstract learning are laid. The knobbed cylinders and insets are writing readiness activities, for example, and many of the sensorial materials prepare the child for discovering more complex mathematical relationships. For example, the relationship of the red rods is used to describe length (i.e. short – long), as well as the red and blue rods (used in matching numbers from 1 –10) are the most direct. Likewise, the practical life area is a bridge to the sensorial area from the child’s ordinary experience. Practical life activities centre around familiar objects, but deal with them in ways which prepare the child for sensorial learning. The sorting activities are essentially matching and grading readiness. This is why the mystery bag is an early sensorial material, and why when it is first used, the objects placed in it should be from the practical life area—familiar objects are now experienced in a special way.

SOUND CYLINDERS



The child absorbs the world around him/her through their senses. The sensorial materials, assist the child in developing detailed and accurate sensory perceptions. Through their work in matching and grading of colours, sounds, textures, weights, shapes, heights and forms etc., the child's perception of the world around him/her becomes much more discriminating.

The sensorial materials offer the child opportunities to develop the ability to make fine discriminations. Before the child is confronted with having to make such fine visual discriminations as between b, d, p and q, they would have first had a wide variety of experiences with making progressively finer discriminationspract with concrete objects. For example, in using the three sets of colour tablets, the auditory sense has been refined through the use of the sound cylinders. The listening games make up sensorial experiences.



OBJECT PERMANENCE BOXES

Tactile preparation begins with feeling the rough and smooth boards to develop the lightness of touch needed for writing. Knobbed puzzles develop the pincer grasp (the grip needed to hold a pencil). The geometric insets (metal insets) provide opportunities to perfect these skills and serve to bridge to more direct writing readiness.

Tasks are programmed so that each new step is built on what the child has already mastered. With this approach the materials are specifically designed to increase children's self-confidence. Montessori equipment is very concrete in nature, based on the senses rather than abstract ideas, which develop in later years. The materials are sensorially explored repeatedly. The materials allow the children to discriminate, compare and classify using their senses.

These indirect pre-writing and pre-reading skills build a good foundation at an early age.