

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

A C A D E M Y

Q: Are Montessori schools as academically rigorous as traditional schools?

A: Yes. Montessori classrooms encourage students to go beyond the basics of rote memorization or learning facts to pass state-mandated exams. Montessori learning embraces the in-depth exploration of interconnected concepts across the curriculum, and helps students to develop skills that lead to higher-level thinking and a complete and well-rounded understanding and internalization of lessons being taught.

Q: Are Montessori lessons fun?

A: Of course! Lessons are presented in a unique and exciting way so as to inspire curiosity. Once presentations are given, students are empowered to choose from materials that interest them most. They are encouraged to be self-directed, and are given the opportunity to participate in picking the types of lessons they will complete throughout the day. Children become an active partner in their education, being able to control the mastery of their own personal academic skills.

Q: Why do Montessori classrooms look different from traditional classrooms?

A: The arrangement of a Montessori classroom is based on the method's distinctive educational practices and materials. Rather than making the teacher at the focal point of the class, a Montessori classroom has a child-centered approach. Children work at tables or on floor mats where they can spread out their work, and the teacher circulates about the room, giving both group and individualized lessons and providing assistance to students as needed.

Q: Are Montessori children free to do whatever they want in the classroom?

A: Montessori children are given an integral say in the development of their own individualized lesson plans, and are then given the freedom to choose within these options. The classroom teacher and assistant ensure that children are only allowed as much freedom as they can responsibly handle, and that children do not interfere with each other's learning. They monitor each child's progress to ensure that each child is progressing at their own appropriate pace in all subjects.

Q: Is it true that Montessori schools have no textbooks or homework?

A: Montessori education is primarily experiential and hands-on learning, especially at the lower grade levels. This means that children work with specially designed materials in the classroom before moving on to pencil-and-paper methods. As students grow and move through the upper elementary and middle school years, written resources begin to make more appearances. Students at this level are encouraged to engage in research rather than to just rely on textbook descriptions. Middle school students may also be assigned homework such as math problems, writing and reading assignments, and research papers, but Montessori educators are careful to try not to over-schedule a child's afterschool time.

Q: Since Montessori classrooms traditionally emphasize non-competitiveness, how are students adequately prepared for real-life competition?

A: Montessori classrooms emphasize innate learning, where a student self-monitors, self-corrects and uses a variety of other higher-thinking and reasoning skills aimed at their own continuous self-improvement. Students typically become comfortable with their strengths and learn how to properly address their weaknesses. In upper grades, students often participate in group activities such as debate or theater, in which they are encouraged to give not only their best performances, but to simultaneously encourage their peers to do the same.

Q: How do Montessori graduates fare in the "real world" when they have to follow a structured agenda?

A: Increasingly, the modern world favors creative thinkers who can combine personal initiative with strong collaborative skills. These traits are exactly the types of characteristics that a Montessori education nurtures. Adults who previously attended Montessori schools have spoken positively of their childhood experiences using the Montessori method, saying it gave them not only the ability to work cooperatively, but also the confidence, creativity, and communication skills needed to make innovative and ground-breaking changes in their work or home environment.

