



# The Village School

Montessori Education | est. 1977

## Primary Program (Ages 3 to 6 years)

The Village School primary program is specifically designed to meet the needs of children ages 3 – 6 years. For details of our curriculum please see the descriptions of the individual areas below.

**A key principle of the Primary Program (indeed, of all our programs) is the multi-age classroom.** We know that children progress at different rates in different areas. In a mixed-age group the younger children have role models in the older children, and the older children acquire additional confidence by being the classroom “elders”. For them, teaching a younger child is an excellent way to consolidate their own learning.

**The Primary classroom environment is carefully planned and is rich with Montessori materials that encourage hands-on learning.** The children learn by doing; they work with concrete self-correcting materials that aid in the grasping of abstract concepts. Materials are carefully organized from the simplest to the most complex, with each activity broken down into logical and sequential steps. The children are given individual lessons by their teacher on each material and are encouraged to master one before moving on to the next. Everything in the classroom is child sized; each classroom includes a child sized private bathroom. It is the children’s environment, designed to support their feeling comfortable and confident in their own ‘work’ place.

**The Primary Program focuses on the whole child; close attention is paid to each child’s academic, social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth.** The Village School works to provide the child a wholesome learning experience where each individual child is respected. The children become naturally self-motivated as their independence is developed and encouraged. This in turn nourishes their self-image and helps them to be self-motivated. Each child feels success and enthusiasm because they are appropriately challenged to their abilities.

**Teachers keep thorough notes and observations and plan appropriate work for every child.** Respect for each other, as well as for the environment is part of the Grace and Courtesy that is modeled and encouraged, not just at the Primary level but also throughout The Village School. The children are introduced to public speaking as they are given opportunities to speak to their class as a group and respond to questions and comments. They begin to understand the idea of research and investigation through various activities found in the environment. Children work independently, in pairs and small and large groups, learning problem solving, social skills and organization in the process.

The Primary Classrooms include the following integrated curriculum areas: **Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, and Cultural Studies (including Geography, Science, Art and Music).**

### Practical Life

Practical Life activities are the first lessons the child is invited to experience and explore. These beautiful and enticing materials are carefully set up to draw and speak to the child’s curiosity and exploration. Exposure to these activities lays the foundation for future academics. They prepare the child for activities which require more developed levels of order, concentration, coordination and independence.

The Practical Life area at The Village School encompasses the refinement of everything you do in everyday life. The materials enable the child to develop independence, a sense of order, the ability to focus, concentrate, build coordination, and develop organizational skills. The tasks help children learn to control their movements, master the care of themselves and care for their environment. The activities in Practical Life include objects and materials normally encountered in everyday living experiences, such as cleaning, sweeping, pouring, dressing, learning to tie, and caring for class plants and animals. The underlying, indirect aim of the work, to aid in the training of the eye for reading and the strengthening of the hand and pincer grip for writing is what makes these materials so important at this stage of development. Grace and courtesy form an integral part of all classroom activities. Children are encouraged to shake hands, act as hosts, use polite manners, clean up after snack, and serve peers first after food preparation, all helping to develop important life skills, such as patience and understanding.

### **Sensorial Materials**

Maria Montessori said that a primary purpose of the sensorial exercises is that “the child train himself to observe, that he be led to make comparisons between objects to form judgments, to reason and to decide”

The Sensorial area enables the child to gain information through the exploration of his or her senses. Our beautiful Montessori materials encourage children to use their five senses to develop classification and discrimination skills. Between the ages of three and six, the child is drawn to things that stimulate their senses. With the use of various materials, the child begins to develop the foundation for math skills, spatial relations, preparation for reading and writing, visual discrimination of length, height and width, volume, colors and shapes. All of these exercises are designed to enhance and refine the child’s sensory awareness.

### **Language**

Language is an intricate part of The Village School Montessori classroom. Maria Montessori said, “Language is an instrument of collective thought.” It is the thing that separates us from other forms of life. Early childhood is the sensitive period when language is formed. It is during this time that children take pleasure in listening to and then repeating the spoken language.

Vocabulary building takes place daily in our classrooms through the use of big books, poetry, and daily read alouds. These many varied language experiences throughout the classroom create the foundation of writing and reading. The child is first introduced to the sounds of the letters. Children learn through their senses using sandpaper letters to trace with their fingers while at the same time saying the sound of the letter out loud. When we present a letter to a child and enunciate its sound, they fix the image of the letter by means of the visual sense. What they see they can recognize and read, and when they trace they learn how to write. After several sounds are mastered, they can begin to encode (spell) and decode (read) words by linking these sounds together. At any one time coming into a primary classroom at The Village School, you may see one child writing a story with our moveable alphabet, another may be reading a chapter book and still another may be learning their first sounds. Since the children progress at their own rate, we are able to constantly challenge their reading and writing abilities at the level that is appropriate for each child.

### **Math**

The Montessori math materials at The Village School are perhaps some of the most attractive and alluring materials in our classrooms. Children and adults are drawn to these materials. Visitors to our classrooms often wish that they had learned math this way.

Maria Montessori believed that children could absorb mathematical concepts naturally. She deduced via observations that there were periods in children's development where they absorb mathematical concepts and ideas naturally through the environment, as well as through the manipulation of concrete materials. The Practical Life, Sensorial and other areas in our Montessori classrooms help lay the foundation for math. These areas provide the children with opportunities to order, sequence, measure, and grade. Some examples of these are when children learn about estimating by determining how many objects are in a glass jar and about precision and exactness by learning to measure out the snack they serve themselves every day. These activities not only help the child gain independence, but also provide the indirect preparation for higher-level math skills.

Math comes alive in our classrooms, as the children work through the math materials in a sequential order, learning basics such as numeral recognition to developing concepts of addition, multiplication, subtraction and division. Children are able to internalize the concepts of number, symbol, sequence, operations fractions and more. The concrete materials help the children to internalize the basics with understanding and help them obtain a clear vision of what they are learning. It is not uncommon in our primary classrooms to see young children adding four digit numbers together using Montessori math materials.

## **Science & Cultural Studies**

### **Science**

Primary science curriculum aims to cultivate a lifelong interest in observing nature and discovering more about the world in which we live. Children work with activities that include exploring magnetism, growing plants, learning about the lifecycles of plants and animals, animal classification, the solar system, the human body, dinosaurs, and doing simple physics & chemistry experiments.

### **Geography**

The Geography curriculum creates opportunities to explore and develop concrete foundations for understanding the world. The children study the seven continents over the three-year cycle in Primary. They experience concrete examples of each continent's countries, people, language, literature, dress, and wild life. Exploration and research through use of maps, puzzles, booklets, and artifacts introduce the child to the planet's great diversity of land and people.

### **Art & Music**

Art and Music develop the child's creativity and sense of beauty through expressive use of materials and activities. The art curriculum is integrated throughout the classroom environment through various activities and also includes a designated area for children to explore and express themselves through various art implements. Music is incorporated in many ways in the Primary classrooms from circle time songs and games to formal music classes where different instruments are introduced and children are given the opportunity to learn tone and rhythm through singing.

## **Kindergarten Program (Ages 5 & 6)**

**The Village School Kindergarten program is a unique and wonderful experience for children that are 5 years old by September 30.** The class consists of 12 children with one teacher. This program offers the opportunity for the sustained independent work that is the core of the Montessori Method, as well as additional academic challenges within a whole group experience. The Kindergarten year is a critical component of our three-year Primary Program. This is a period when the work that students have practiced during the first two years in Primary is integrated academically and conceptually into a new level of understanding.

**Our Kindergarten program is a full-day academic program and serves as a bridge to elementary (particularly Montessori elementary), offering in-depth explorations of academic materials.** Children are in a Montessori environment for the entire day, which affords them many advantages. One half of the day is spent with their same aged peers, while the other half is spent in the multi-age (3 to 6 years) classroom. In the multi-age classroom, they often naturally assume positions of responsibility and leadership while serving as mentors to their younger peers. They develop increased attention to a task as they work on activities that require multiple steps and a longer period of time to complete. Leadership skills emerge and social skills are refined as the children accept more responsibilities within the mixed age group.

The classroom contains the traditional areas of our primary (3-6) Montessori classroom, which are **Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, Geography and Science** with the addition of many advanced Montessori materials. The children have a teacher-created work plan that guides them through their required activities for the week, such as writing books, math books, and journals. It helps them learn important life skills such as time management and independence. Opportunities are made available for students to expand the research abilities learned in their Primary class. They build upon their public speaking skills during group activities and reading aloud.

**The Special Programs, Art, Music, Physical Education, Technology and Health** are taught by dedicated specialists in those fields and form an important part of the Kindergarten program.