

# Knoxville Montessori School

## Guidelines for Observing a Montessori Class

Welcome to the Knoxville Montessori School. We are pleased that you are taking the time to observe one of our classes. Our goal is to provide a loving, respectful, and supportive environment in which children will blossom into human beings who

- Respect themselves and others
- Are self-motivated and take responsibility for their own work
- Initiate tasks with interest and enthusiasm
- Complete the tasks they begin
- Respect and care for the environment
- Live in peace with their fellow human beings

Below are some guidelines and a list of questions to help make your experience in our classroom as valuable as possible. Enjoy your visit!

### **Observer Behavior**

We have a high regard for the children's classroom environment and take great care not to interrupt their concentration and focus. We ask that you stay seated in the classroom and try not to engage the children in conversation. If a child asks who you are or what you're doing in the class, a polite "Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. I'm here to watch you and your friends work" is appropriate. If a child attempts to involve you in a longer conversation, please attempt to redirect them back to work.

### **Classroom Atmosphere**

A great deal of thought is devoted to the "prepared environment" of a Montessori classroom. Each piece of material has been placed on the shelf to help the child independently develop a particular skill. Each of our classes includes children of different ages so they can help and learn from each other.

### **Self-Direction**

Notice that the children learn in different ways. With some types of materials, you will see groups of children working cooperatively, and with others you will find an individual child working intently. Still other children may be walking through the classroom seemingly not engaged in any direct activity. This type of child is often engaged in absorbing the other children and the materials through observation.

### **Role of the Teacher and Assistant**

The Teacher is a facilitator of the children's autonomous learning processes. She prepares the classroom and gives the children the tools to utilize the materials. Sometimes the teacher provides direct encouragement or indirect appreciation, and at other times judicious absence. There is a basic respect for each individual child's particular style of learning in the Montessori classroom.

You will also notice that the classroom assistant is not actively involved in teaching. She is another calm and gentle presence in the classroom, quietly helping to maintain the environment and unobtrusively supporting the teacher in her work with the children.

### **Sociability**

Watch the ways in which the children offer assistance to one another – with the materials and with everyday tasks. Note how the younger children absorb the older children's work simply by being near them and how, conversely, the older children will assist the younger ones with work they have already mastered. The child's natural desire to make friends and be part of an ongoing community is ever present in the Montessori classroom.

## **THINGS TO LOOK FOR DURING A CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

### **The Classroom Environment**

1. Is the room attractive?
2. Are the materials in good condition?
3. Are the materials visible and available to the children?
4. Do the materials seem to be logically arranged?
5. Is the room neat and clean?

### **The Teacher and the Assistant**

1. Does she/he seem comfortable and relaxed in the room?
2. Does she/he speak softly and gently?
3. Does she/he move softly and gracefully?
4. Does she/he seem aware of what is going on in the room?
5. Does she/he respond to the children appropriately?
6. Does she/he treat each child with respect and courtesy?
7. Do the children obey her/him cheerfully and readily?
8. Does she/he contribute to keeping order in the room?
9. Does she/he demonstrate materials clearly and seem aware of the child's response?
10. Does she/he maintain classroom limits by intervening when necessary?

### **The Children** (*Please choose one or two children to observe, in addition to the class as a whole*)

1. Do they seem comfortable and relaxed in the room?
2. Do they follow the ground rules?
3. Do they ask for help when they need it?
4. Do they seem happy at school?
5. Do they follow instructions willingly?
6. Do they work together and get along?
7. Do they concentrate for extended periods of time?
8. Do they choose work independently?
9. Do they finish the chosen work?
10. Is their work orderly, and are materials returned to their original locations?