

Greystone Montessori School

Preschool Curriculum

Practical Life Curriculum

Practical life includes pre- academic exercises that prepare the child to work effectively in the Greystone Montessori environment by refining movement, teaching sequences, introducing left to right processes and providing a foundation in early learning attitudes and dispositions. Most importantly, practical life exercises provide children a sense of accomplishment as they engage in real, meaningful work with tangible results. The familiar home-like environment of the practical life corner allows children to gain independence and confidence as they carry out thoughtfully prepared activities, similar to those a child would participate in at home. Preliminary exercises include walking around furniture, rolling out a rug, pushing in a chair, opening and closing a door and carrying a chair or table. These exercises enable the child to manoeuvre gracefully in the environment and develop gross motor coordination and control. Other exercises focus on care of the self and environment; handwashing, dressing frames, polishing, vegetable preparation, sweeping, and other practical skills prepare the child for more advanced work and develop positive attitudes and dispositions that are useful to the child as his work grows more academic. Young children frequently repeat these activities and thus develop concentration and learn to enjoy completing tasks. Another aspect of the practical life curriculum is lessons in grace and courtesy. Through modelling, children learn polite behaviour such as how to serve food, how to greet a person, how to excuse oneself and how to make introductions. Further lessons revolve around the language and process of problem solving. Children at Greystone Montessori learn to identify feelings and needs, state problems and propose solutions using nonviolent communication, predict results, and implement what they consider the best solution. Some practical life lessons such as care of the self and care of the environment are given individually, while lessons in grace and courtesy and problem solving are best presented at circle time where the entire group can learn a lesson at the same time. Most children enjoy group lessons at circle time and use the modelled behaviour immediately.

Exercises of Practical Life

Practical Life Curriculum Outline

Preliminary exercises and movement

- Ground Rules of Classroom Conduct
- Pouring
- Transferring
- Opening and Closing
- Threading
- Cutting
- Introduction of Sewing
- Folding
- Walking on a Line
- The Silence Game

Care of self

- Dressing Frames
- Washing and Drying Hands
- Putting on Shoes
- Blowing Nose
- Care of Teeth, Nails and Hair
- Use of Toilet
- Coughing and Sneezing

Care of Environment

- Cleaning
- Classroom Skills
- Cooking Skills
- Fire Drill

Social Skills and Grace and Courtesy

- Greetings
- Interrupting
- Coping with and Offence
- Behaviour on Outings and with Visitors
- Helping out
- Table manners

Sensorial

Montessori believed that young children learn through direct manipulation of learning materials, and the sensorial materials are designed to teach the senses. Largely pre-academic in nature, the sensorial curriculum provides early experiences for children in discrimination of size, dimension, texture, weight, sound, smell, colour, taste and temperature. Along with refining a child's senses, the exercises introduce precise vocabulary and concepts of comparison. Once a child has worked with an introductory material, there are opportunities for progressive exercises in sorting and classifying. The curriculum also introduces concepts related to math and geometry, including plane shapes and geometric solids. Physical geography is an additional component of the sensorial curriculum. Each child progresses at his or her own pace through the sensorial curriculum and learns through individual presentations from the teacher, presentations from older children and by observing more experienced children working with the materials. Many of the introductory materials appeal to the youngest children, and, along with practical life exercises, they spend a large portion of their day exploring the materials and exercises on the sensorial shelves.

Sensorial Curriculum Outline

Visual

- Dimension
- Size
- Colour
- Shapes

Geometry

- Regular plane shapes through decagon
- Irregular plane shapes
- Geometric solids
- Constructive triangles
- Binomial and trinomial cubes
- Table of Pythagoras
- Superimposed geometric figures

Auditory

- Sound boxes
- Bells

Olfactory

- Smelling boxes

Gustatory

- Tasting bottles

Tactile

- Rough and smooth boards and tablets
- Thermic tablets
- Baric tablets

Stereognostic (muscular and tactile mixed)

- Mystery bag
- Bean bowl

Physical Geography

- Globes
- Puzzle maps
- Land and water forms

Language

Children from age three through six are particularly receptive to acquiring language, and the Greystone Montessori environment is filled with a full range of learning materials and activities designed to support the natural development of language. In particular the materials and activities encourage the refinement of sensory discrimination and the acquisition of precise vocabulary, which

together form the basis of personal and academic expression. The sequence of the language curriculum first emphasizes the development of spoken language and the acquisition of vocabulary through stories and poems, naming objects and classroom materials, social conversations and lessons in both grace and courtesy and problem solving. Simultaneously, the teacher presents work that provides early preparation for reading and writing with activities that develop fine motor control and spatial and sequential perceptions, including left to right activities that instil a sense of direction for written language. In addition, the teacher models correct spoken language and provides a consistent source of new and interesting information through her own speech and through rotating materials and activities in the classroom. Word games, rhymes and word study of initial and final sounds help to develop phonemic awareness. Direct preparation for reading and writing begins as the child establishes sound-symbol correspondence and a sense of the shape of letters by moving his fingers on the sandpaper letters. Shortly, he will want to construct language with letters, and, before his hand is ready to write, he will manipulate movable letters to synthesize short written words. This is the beginning of writing, which usually precedes the ability to read by some months. As the child gains confidence with forming words, he then begins to analyse the individual sounds and then recombine them and thus starts to read. Children develop control for handwriting through practicing numerous fine motor activities before finally writing with a pencil. Each child progresses at his or her own pace through the language curriculum and learns through individual presentations from the teacher and by observing more experienced children using the language materials. Most children exhibit natural interest in forming words with letters by about age four to four and a half and begin to sound out words by age five to five and a half, though there is some variability. Once the child has learned the beginning mechanics of writing and reading, a range of language activities exists in the classroom from phonetic readers, to labelling, to short books on many topics and children's research materials. Children also practice reading sight words through games and activities. Most children completing the last year in the Greystone Montessori program will be able to read and write short phonetic words with blends and digraphs, read short phonetic primers with some common sight words and enjoy a range of language activities, including using language for practical purposes - from filling needs to solving problems; to conversing socially; to listening to and enjoying stories, poems and books that are read aloud.

Language Curriculum Outline

Indirect Preparation for reading and writing:

- Practical life exercises that provide left to right movement and sequences
- Cylinder blocks and metal insets to prepare hand for handwriting
- Geometry, botany and geography materials to develop sense of shape and direction

Spoken language skills and vocabulary development

Word games leading to phonemic awareness Reading Mechanics:

- Sound-symbol correspondence
- Phonograms

- Phonetic words
- Sight words
- Reading nomenclature from classroom studies

Language Study:

- Function of words (parts of speech)
- Writing Mechanics
- Sound - symbol correspondence
- Forming letters without writing
- Alphabet- lower case

Comprehension

- Listen purposefully and enjoy a range of literary forms
- Identify and describe characters and their feelings
- Indicate chronological order of events
- Recount plot or information from texts
- Make reasonable predictions about what will happen next in a story

Participate in group discussions

Mathematics

Greystone Montessori's math curriculum is designed to support children's natural interest in math and provide a strong foundation in numeracy through the use of specially designed math materials. Through concrete mathematical experiences, the youngest children learn about dimension, size, number, shape and sequence. Then with the use of increasingly abstract materials, children make the passage from concrete experience to paper and pencil exercises, all the while relying on the foundation of understanding built through their direct experiences. Every math concept is taught with a corresponding material. At Greystone Montessori, young children typically begin their exploration of math concepts through the use of the sensorial materials, which are pre-academic in nature and give a sensory impression of quantity, dimension, shape, size and other physical qualities. Next come more abstract and formal mathematic concepts, such as number-symbol correspondence and place value, which children first explore with the use of number rods, counters, beads, bars, squares and cubes. Once the concepts of quantity and place value are established through the repeated activities with the math materials, the child begins work with numeric operations and will practice addition and subtraction, "sharing" and "sets of" with the use of increasingly abstract materials. Each child progresses at his or her own pace through the math curriculum and learns

through individual presentations from the teacher, presentations from older children and by observing more experienced children working with the math materials. Teachers gently encourage children not exhibiting a natural inclination toward math to work with the materials, and preschoolers complete weekly work plans that include daily math practice to ensure adequate exposure. While there are some general expectations as to when most children will work in each part of the curriculum, there is also variability depending on the individual's readiness, interest and ability. Most children finishing the last preschool year will use at least 2 number operations without exchanging with numbers up to four digits, while those with a strong propensity for math will also work with advanced math concepts.

Math Curriculum Outline

- Association of quantity and symbol for numbers 1-10
- Linear counting and number combinations to 10
- Geometric shapes, forms and nomenclature
- Fundamentals of the decimal system: understanding numbers to 9,999
- Static numeric operations

Cultural

Greystone Montessori's cultural curriculum includes a mosaic of activities that explore the full range of human cultural studies and activities, from art to zoology, including such traditional subjects as social studies and science. Teachers and assistants organize cultural activities that are available during the work cycle, and children often enjoy these activities in small, social groups, often with a new activity or craft demonstrated by the classroom assistant. Throughout the year, teachers and assistants develop activities and projects related to art, music, movement, food preparation, geography, history, zoology, botany and science. Children also benefit from weekly group lessons in French. As with all preschool programming, lessons include activities and movement, as well as songs and games that help young children acquire speaking and listening skills.

Cultural Curriculum Outline

Arts

- Art, including two and three dimensional representations and art appreciation
- Foreign language study, including French instruction
- Movement, including dance, creative movement, yoga and PE
- Theatre, including puppetry, dramatic expression and storybook theatre
- Music, including the bells curriculum, performance, notation and music appreciation

Botany

- Leaf forms
- Parts of a Plant and Flower
- Gardening and Growing things

Zoology

- Pet care
- Parts of Animal
- Life Cycles

Cultural Geography

- People of the World
- Continents and Countries
- Flags

Physical Geography

- Land forms
- Volcano

Science

- Sink and Float
- Magnets
- Land, Air and Water
- Cooking and other activities

History

- Zimbabwe
- Wonders of the Ancient World
- Prehistoric Timeline