

Homework for Montessori Directress/Director Training -- Sensorial

This is the first time I've come across any kind of formal curriculum that deals exclusively with developing the senses. So it is with a lot of curiosity and interest that I sat through the sessions on this aspect. I fully understand the value of developing the senses. It's just that this is the first time I've seen a structured, organized, even established curriculum for it.

It's quite interesting to note that while the sensorial aspects of Montessori is meant to enhance our senses, most of the activities to do this also meets other needs directly or indirectly. This is also probably why the sensorial program is, together with the practical life program, kind of the basic foundation entry point for a Montessori class. It will be somewhat difficult for the child to grasp the other aspects of, say, the math program or the language program, without going through the sensorial program first.

I like the sensorial program in that it is quite practical and simple enough but actually contributes to the development of the child in a multi-faceted way. For the child, it's presented in a fun way and arouses his/her curiosity. From a sensorial developmental standpoint, it develops the hand and eye coordination (e.g., through such materials as the pink cubes); it develops the sense of touch (e.g., fabric box), sense of smell (e.g., smelling cylinders), sense of hearing (e.g., sound cylinders), sense of taste (e.g., tasting bottles), and sense of sight through increasing one's power of observation (e.g., knobbed cylinders). Beyond that, from other aspects, the child can increase his/her language skills through learning terminologies from the use of materials like the geometric solids – all the sensorial materials, for that matter, have some language aspects to them; he/she can be exposed to even some form of algebra in his/her different senses through the use, for example of the binomial cube and/or the trinomial cube; he/she is introduced to the world around him/her through materials like the leaf shape cabinet with cards; he/she learns of geometry through the various geometric solids and how this material is used or presented. There are just numerous facets for sensorial materials which make it really ideal to the developing and curious child.

And as is common to the other aspects of the Montessori program, we can expand and/or add variety by creating our own materials at low cost or using materials already available at home. Example would be matching keys to open different locks, or letting the child feel different kinds of textile available at home. Even the standard Montessori materials can be home-made too.

Actually, having gone through this training, I now realized that there are lots of things around us where the child can develop all his/her senses more fully. We, as adults, need to be sensitive to these areas of opportunities around us. I am now more fully aware of the importance of this aspect since it is a foundation skill to all other types of learning. At the same time, we need to be

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guided by the interest of the child and not by our own thinking of what the child needs. Since the world is full of opportunities to develop the senses, there is no strict need to confine the child to certain dimensions if it is of no interest to him/her.

The other realization I have is that no one learning material or opportunity can be totally isolated to certain aspects of any developmental program. One cannot say, for example, that the knobbed cylinder is only for the sensorial aspect. Even though this may be the main purpose of the material, I believe that it contributes directly to the development of other aspects, like language and even math since the knobbed cylinder is a matching and grading activity and helps to identify differences – all of which are key components of learning math as well.

Finally, as is one of my learning in the language area on the disadvantages of prolonged exposure to the flashcard method, the best learning is the active form of learning where all the senses of the child is used. Even for adults, this is a true statement. For example, let's say in the area of baking, even if I attend the best training available to bake a certain favorite cake and have all the right ingredients and procedures written down for me to read, it is when I've actually done the baking of the cake myself that I can truly say I know how to do it – which is the time when I've used all my senses. I've heard how the baking is done through the training (sense of hearing); I've seen how it's done (sense of sight); I've done the baking myself (sense of touch); and I've smelled and tasted the final product (sense of smell and taste). Even closer to home, I've just finished 90% of my Montessori training but, in reality, until I've been able to apply what I've learned via using the methods to teach other children (through the JELIC center in DB) and my own son, I've not really mastered it and am at risk of forgetting most of it without the practice I am able to do through my own child and through the DB JELIC center.

So, I believe it is very good that in Montessori, the sensorial aspect is one key program of its curriculum.