

What makes the Montessori system different from Mainstream?

| Traditional / Mainstream | Montessori |
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| Teacher's role is dominant and student is a passive participant | While the teacher guides the learning process, the student is an active and primary participant |
| Group instruction that conforms to adult's teaching style | Individual and group instruction adapts to each student's learning style |
| Same age grouping | Mixed age grouping |
| Most teaching done by teacher and collaboration is discouraged | Children encouraged to teach, collaborate, and help one another |
| Emphasis on rote knowledge (inflexible) | Emphasis on cognitive structures |
| Teacher is primary enforcer of external discipline | Environment and method encourage internal self-discipline |
| Child is given concepts by teacher rather than by self-discovery | Child formulates concepts from self-teaching materials |
| Child sits in assigned seat, not allowed to move about classroom | Concentrated work time on a single subject |
| Instruction pace set by group norm or teacher | Child sets own learning pace to internalize information |
| Errors corrected by teacher | Child spots own errors through self-correcting materials |
| Learning reinforced externally by rewards, punishments | Learning is reinforced through child's own repetition of activity, internal feelings of successful repetition |
| Few materials for sensory, concrete manipulation | Large focus on Multi-sensory materials |
| Child is given specific time for work in one subject and then moved on to another subject perhaps before subject has been adequately covered | Child can work where he or she is comfortable, is allowed to move around classroom as long as he or she is not disruptive to others |
| Emphasis is on the abstract | Emphasis is on the concrete |
| Teacher provides stimuli to learning | Child provides own stimuli to learning |
| Teacher centred environment | Child-centred learning environment |
| All children are treated alike | Child is treated as an individual |
| Silence is on many occasions enforced | Liberty to speak (without disturbing others) as he pleases |
| Teacher does all and child is forced to follow | Teacher's part is to guide child to act and think for himself. |