

Traditional versus Montessori

Traditional Approach

emphasis on rote knowledge and social development

teacher's role is dominant and active;
child is a passive participant

teacher is primary enforcer of external discipline

individual and group instruction conforms
to the adult's teaching style

same age grouping

most teaching done by teacher
and collaboration is discouraged

curriculum structured with little regard for child's interests

child is guided to concepts by teacher

child usually given specific time for work

instruction pace set by group norm or teacher

errors corrected by teacher

learning is reinforced externally by
rewards and discouragements

few materials for sensory, concrete manipulation

little emphasis on instruction on classroom maintenance

child assigned seat; encouraged to sit still
and listen during group sessions

voluntary parent involvement, often only as fundraisers,
not participants in understanding the learning process

Montessori Approach

emphasis on cognitive structures and social development

teacher's role is unobtrusive;
child actively participates in learning

environment and method encourage internal self-discipline

individual and group instruction
adapts to each student's learning style

mixed age grouping

children encouraged to teach,
collaborate, and help each other

child chooses own work from interests and abilities

child formulates concepts from self-teaching materials

child works as long as s/he wants on chosen project

child sets own learning pace to internalize information

child spots own errors through feedback from material

learning is reinforced internally through child's own repetition
of activity, internal feelings of success

multi-sensory materials for
physical exploration development

organized program for learning care of
self and self-care environment

child can work where s/he is comfortable,
moves and talks at will (yet doesn't disturb others);
group work is voluntary and negotiable

organized program for parents to
understand the Montessori philosophy
and participate in the learning process