



Educating today's child for tomorrow's world



Our Mission

The Montessori Children's Academy is committed to inspiring and motivating young children to learn by providing the finest Montessori educational experience. Using traditional Montessori methods, we provide a developmentally challenging, yet appropriate learning environment that engages children's natural curiosity and helps them to develop a lifelong love of learning. We respect, nurture and expand the academic, social and emotional gifts of each student while preserving the true spirit and purpose of childhood.



Our History

The Montessori Children's Academy opened the doors of its Madison Campus to 45 students in September of 1999. Demand quickly necessitated the addition of more classes, including an Elementary Program in 2002. The need for more space brought the opening of the Chatham Campus in 2003 and MCA expanded again to meet the growing needs of the Short Hills community in 2007 and Convent Station in 2010. At present, MCA serves more than 450 families and offers programs for toddlers through early elementary. The demands of today's world make a Montessori education more important than ever, and MCA plans to continue to grow to meet them.

The Montessori Philosophy

The educational method that guides our school was pioneered by Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator passionately devoted to the welfare and development of young children. Her keen observations led her to the finding that children have "sensitive periods" that coincide with the human developmental process. During those periods, which are self-limiting, children are able to focus on certain types of learning with eagerness and intensity and, as a result, are able to absorb information naturally and almost without effort. By recognizing those periods and fulfilling the children's needs during those times, adults are uniquely positioned to not only help children realize their potential, but to promote their awareness of themselves as capable and in control of their environment.

Central to Dr. Montessori's philosophy is the belief that we must "...observe the needs of the child and answer them...". This is accomplished by providing authentic and meaningful learning experiences that guide children from a concrete to an increasingly abstract understanding of their world. Although founded more than 100 years ago, the Montessori method has been validated by the most current research on human learning and development. Ultimately, the goal of a Montessori education is to give students the skills, motivation and path to become independent, secure, responsible individuals who remain lifelong learners and caring, contributing members of society.

"Montessori has become part of who my children are and they will benefit from it throughout their lives." M.A. MCA Parent





The Hallmarks of a Montessori Education

When you look through the window of a Montessori Children's Academy classroom, you immediately sense that something is different. Whether in small groups or alone, children are engaged and enthusiastic about their "work" – the term Dr. Montessori used to describe the activities that await students on the classroom shelves. Their concentration is evident as they practice controlling their movements while carrying work to a table or a rug. They are intent upon completing tasks and they do so with interest and enjoyment. It is clear that, in a childlike way, they have appreciation for the materials available to them and respect for each other, their teachers and their school environment.

The Environment

One of the hallmarks of Montessori is its carefully prepared, beautiful, organized environment filled with an abundance of the highest quality Montessori materials. At MCA, this environment is where children explore, problem solve and learn by using these unique and increasingly complex materials and through interacting with their peers.

Learning Experiences

Every aspect of Montessori is designed to provide a learning opportunity. Lessons are carefully designed to guide children to materials that will build academic readiness, skills and proficiency. Independent and group learning activities develop social awareness and maturity, while taking turns, helping others and caring for the classroom and pets foster responsibility and respect for self and friends. Respect is a core value in a Montessori classroom and it is evident in the close relationships children form at MCA between one another and their teachers.

Teacher Qualifications

The success of the Montessori method requires that teachers possess the training and ability to guide each individual child to the specific learning experiences that he or she is ready for and to provide lessons that will instruct and inspire. In addition to an undergraduate degree, all Head Teachers at MCA have their Montessori certification and many have other certifications as well. Every teacher is also required to continue his or her education through teacher training workshops, continuing education programs, professional development seminars and Montessori conferences throughout the year.

Responsibility & Community

From our toddlers to our elementary students, to our most experienced teachers, to our parents – the Montessori philosophy seeks to promote amongst all a strong sense of community and the importance of respect, tolerance and responsibility for ourselves, one another and our world. At MCA, children, teachers, parents and staff all work together to create classroom communities where we share our successes, work through problems and help each other to be the best that we can be. By nurturing children in such an environment, Dr. Montessori hoped to inspire children to make a difference in the greater world, and at MCA, we are committed to making that happen.

"The first duty of an education is to stir up life, but leave it free to develop."

Maria Montessori





The Montessori Curriculum

Every aspect of the rich curriculum at The Montessori Children's Academy is designed to be faithful to Dr. Montessori's principles of early childhood education; principles that have been validated by current scientific and educational research. Dr. Montessori believed that learning is a natural process and that children learn best by doing. MCA's shelves offer the most beautiful, well-designed and integrated Montessori materials available to stimulate children to follow their natural interests and to hone their skills. The elements of the traditional Montessori curriculum include:

Practical Life

Through exercises such as washing, lacing, pouring and preparing food, children learn to care for themselves and their environment. At the same time, they build essential fine motor skills and interpersonal communication skills as they work cooperatively with their peers. Learning to concentrate, complete tasks and build confidence pave the way for later academic success.

Mathematics

Students explore number concepts, geometry, money, time, weights and measures by using concrete, hands-on materials. The Golden Beads, Hundred Board, Stamp Game and Spindle Boxes extend students' knowledge and move them further toward more abstract concepts at a pace that is right for each child.

Language Arts

Phonics-based materials lead children through a natural and enjoyable acquisition of reading and writing skills. Using the extensive array of Montessori language materials in carefully sequenced order, children move seamlessly toward reading and the rules of grammar and punctuation. Sandpaper Letters, the Moveable Alphabet, Metal Insets and the Montessori Farm are but some of the language materials available to students.

Sensorial

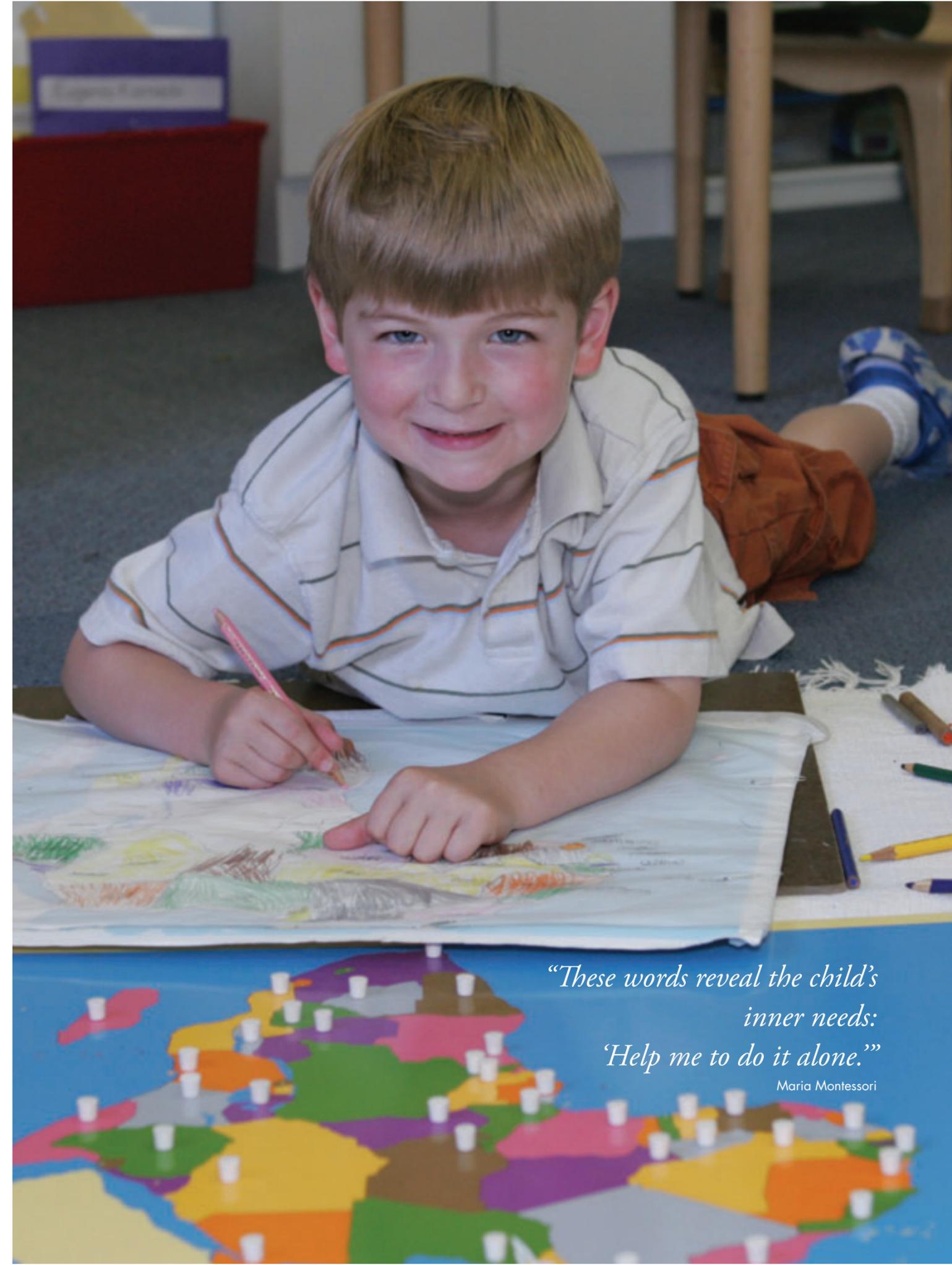
Long before learning styles were formally described, Dr. Montessori understood the advantages of teaching children how to acquire knowledge and information by utilizing all their senses. By using materials such as the Pink Tower, the Montessori Bells and the Geometric Cabinet, children learn how to gain access to other cues that aid learning. Children also begin to appreciate their world from a multi-sensory perspective.

Science and Culture

Children's natural curiosity about their world is fully unleashed as they experiment with magnets, simple machines and properties of matter and explore the seasons, plant and animal life and how things work. Culturally, children are introduced to the wide diversity of geography and national customs that make up our world, as well as the history of the universe through the use of Puzzle Maps and countless artifacts and models from local museums.

Peace

Dr. Montessori saw children as the guides – and our hope – to a more peaceful world. Every activity in the classroom is governed by the principles of respect, responsibility and positive, meaningful interaction between children and adults. Children learn about peace through the use of stories and by example, settling differences through conflict resolution and by practicing self-control throughout their classroom experiences. Of timeless importance, peace is a fundamental and important aspect of the curriculum and one that MCA values and supports.



“These words reveal the child's inner needs: ‘Help me to do it alone.’”

Maria Montessori



Core Programs

One of the cornerstones of Montessori education is that each stage of children's development has what Dr. Montessori called "sensitive periods". Our programs are designed to maximize the potential of those periods with rich learning opportunities that build the foundation for the more complex skill development that follows.

2 ½ to 3 ½ Year Old Program

In an environment created specially for toddlers, MCA's youngest students can explore safely with all of their senses and expand their independence and confidence in a space that grows with them. Children follow their natural curiosity while learning to make choices and follow directions under the nurturing guidance of specially trained teachers. Lessons include practical life activities that build readiness for academic tasks, gross motor activities, sensory discoveries, positive social interactions and learning to be part of a community.

Pre-Primary Program ½ or full day program for 3 to 6 year olds

In MCA's beautifully prepared, stimulating, multi-age classroom filled with child-centered materials, children navigate every area of the classroom and experience all aspects of the curriculum, including math, language arts, science and geography. Working individually, in small groups or with the entire class, children are gently guided to the level and type of materials that will advance their knowledge at a pace that is right for each child. Music and foreign language classes and educational field trips further enrich MCA's pre-primary curriculum.

Full Day Kindergarten Program

MCA's kindergartners enjoy a year of spectacular growth as they embrace their new leadership roles in the classroom. In this culminating year of the Montessori 3 - 6 cycle, students explore special units of study and focus increasingly on academic skills in preparation for their transition to elementary. Students work with their multi-age class in the morning and exclusively with their kindergarten peers in the afternoon. In addition to music and a foreign language, MCA kindergartners participate in gym and computer classes, Field Day, special kindergarten events and field trips.

Elementary Program

Tomorrow's world will require that today's children learn to be critical and independent thinkers who are excited by learning and have a deep desire to make a difference in their world. Achieving that goal depends upon education being not just about imparting knowledge, but about making it meaningful to students and then encouraging them to use what they learn in creative and unconventional ways. At MCA, our experienced, certified teachers offer children a wide range of academic, artistic and cultural experiences and challenge students to work to their fullest potential by seeing each child as a unique and capable learner.

MCA's elementary curriculum includes concentrations in language arts, math, science and history, and children may progress beyond grade level once mastery of subject material is achieved. Art, music and foreign language are studied individually and are also reinforced throughout the curriculum. Our state of the art computer program teaches students essential technology skills and MCA's physical education classes, led by a trained PE teacher, teach students the importance of fitness and good health. Special classroom projects, field trips and community involvement enhance the elementary experience as students grow, mature and learn to work together as a productive, peaceful community.





Special Programs

The traditional Montessori curriculum at MCA is taken to new heights by the inclusion of enrichment opportunities that span the arts, foreign language, technology and fitness – both within, and in addition to, our normal programs. Special care is taken to accommodate the busy schedules of our families and to make each child's experience at MCA one that broadens personal horizons in a familiar and caring environment.

Art and Music

Appreciation for the fine arts is a universal language and one that opens the doors to a lifetime of cultural awareness and enjoyment. At every age, students are exposed to the many sides and styles of music in their daily activities and learn rhythm and basic composition in dedicated music classes each week with MCA's trained music teacher. Study of the great artists and opportunities for artistic expression with fine materials are an integral part of MCA's curriculum, and our staff includes gifted artists who ignite the creativity of students during regular program time as well as in art-based enrichment classes.

Foreign Language

In order to keep pace with the globalization of tomorrow's world, children will need the desire and the ability to communicate across cultures. Early childhood is a sensitive period for the acquisition of language, and MCA's trained Spanish teacher brings foreign language instruction to each class every week in a meaningful, energetic, structured way. A variety of enrichment programs provide additional opportunities for children to sample the languages and cultures of other countries as well.

Technology

Along with a solid academic foundation, students today must learn how to appropriately harness technology for research, communication and presentation purposes. Starting with our kindergartners, students are provided with individual laptops and, under the direction of MCA's qualified computer teacher, acquire the tools to safely, efficiently – yet creatively, use today's technology.

Extended Hours and Enrichment Programs

MCA offers a convenient Extended Hours program every day from 8:00 AM until programs begin and until school closing time at each campus. Participation is open to enrolled students on a "drop-in" basis at a reasonable, additional hourly rate. MCA also offers a wide variety of fun, age appropriate enrichment programs that are optional and encompass music, art, karate, yoga, foreign language and sports-based activities.

MCA Summer Camp

Summer Camp is an opportunity for MCA children who are at least three years old and potty trained to enjoy up to six weeks of themed activities and seasonal fun at MCA in air-conditioned comfort and under the guidance of MCA's teachers. Although less structured than the normal Montessori program, children can continue to work with the Montessori materials and are encouraged to observe the same rules of community that guide their actions throughout the school year. Seasonal field trips, splash day and special guest visits are but a few of MCA's camp highlights.





“Our aim is not merely to make the children understand... but so to touch their imagination as to enthuse them to their inmost core.” Maria Montessori

The Montessori Children’s Academy offers a distinctive Montessori education. It differs from traditional schools in the many ways it engages and excites children and in the materials that are used to nurture their growth. The most powerful testaments to that mission come from parents who have observed:

“The opportunities given them within MCA for independence, acceptance, socialization, love and academic growth are unparalleled. We are very thankful for the time we have spent at this truly wonderful school.” S.T. MCA Parent

“Since being at MCA..., our son, age 5, has been independently writing and playing with mathematics for fun. I remember in my traditional learning to have found these tasks a burden. As parents, we are in awe of his enthusiasm and eagerness to learn and his self-directed desire to continue.” S.B. MCA Parent

“It is not just the quantity and type of information that Allison has learned that sets the experience apart. It is the fundamental appreciation of her world and the people in it.” K.S. MCA Parent

To learn more about MCA, or to schedule a tour, please call us at your preferred campus. A school directory is included in the pocket to the right.