



Montessori in the Woods - CURRICULUM SERIES

Montessori work cycle

Montessori work cycle (MWC) is an uninterrupted learning time that is usually 3hr long during which students are pursuing their own tasks with minimal interference from the Directress (teacher). The students are free to choose from any activity that they have been presented. During this time periods of concentration, calm and quiet classroom can be observed with a spike of higher activity called false fatigue.

MWC is one of the key features of the Montessori classroom and one that parents should be getting and insisting on when looking for an authentic Montessori education.

We also believe that we do not teach the children in the traditional sense of the word. That is why in the Montessori education teachers are called Guides or Directress/Director. We merely present the activity, but the major learning is done by the child by repetition. We guide the children towards learning and ensure the rules are followed, and we direct them towards meaningful and peaceful school learning.

Our morning routine during the Montessori work cycle looks like this: When the student enters the school he/she independently undresses and hangs up all his/her belongings, puts indoor shoes on and washes hands. As soon as we enter the classroom the Montessori work cycle starts. From that moment they start pursuing their own learning. Because the work cycle is long, it allows the students to be relaxed and to get into concentration. The concentration is necessary to be able to absorb the learning. We are hoping for a deeper concentration and the ability to stay with a chosen task for longer periods of time. The ideal is for the child to get so absorbed that it almost seems as if nothing else exists, as if they are not even aware of what is around them. The children are choosing their own tasks according to their interest and ability, carving out their own educational journey. We believe that children should have a choice and a say in what they learn and do, within certain rules, of course. This includes the fact that they get tired, or lose interest temporarily, and might just want to observe, sit in the library, rest, or be with another student, or are seeking our company.

What is the meaning of MWC? Children under age 6 are in their absorbent mind, so being able to freely follow their interest while learning, to make their own choices, and to be as independent as possible, will be pivotal for the rest of their lives. They are learning about themselves, by choosing a task that might be challenging, and when they overcome the challenge, they now realize that they are very capable. So, the next time a challenge comes they are not intimidated. If they are a bit scared of something more complex, they can choose it and if it is not going well they ask for help, that means they are expressing and speaking for themselves, they also know that they have a long time to work at a certain task, in fact they have unlimited time. They can ask a friend for help or the Directress. Dealing with challenges and harder learning is easy in the Montessori environment. They see older children doing advanced learning, and they observe them. They have been leading up to challenges by smaller steps. Most importantly, they follow "their heart", meaning that it is up to them. If they want to do art or math or wash linen, it is their choice. The Directress monitors and observes their choices and concentration and progress and that is how the next lessons are decided. Everything the child is doing and pursuing is giving us information and this is incorporated in the lesson planning and the overall well-being of the child to make sure he/she thrives and is getting what is needed.



To sum up, the MWC is a key feature of the Montessori learning in the preschool level. It is an uninterrupted learning cycle lasting around 3 hrs., during which the children are choosing their own activities. The Directresses are giving presentations or observing/making notes, and everyone is busy pursuing their own choices.