

Introduction to sensorial



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Introduction to Sensorial Sensorial education is the education of the senses. It is the heart of a Montessori education. Nature has endowed us with ten senses. There is the visual sense, the sense of sight. The acoustic sense, the sense of hearing. The olfactory sense, the sense of smell. The gustatory sense, the sense of taste. The tactile sense, the sense of touch. The muscular sense, the awareness of movement. The stereognostic sense, the ability to determine three dimensional shapes. The stereognosis sense, a combination of both the muscular and stereognostic senses. The thermic sense, the sense of temperature. The baric sense, the sense of weight. Lastly, there is the sense of pain. These ten senses give us the opportunity to develop our human potential. The child's senses are his link with the world around him and his only means of exploring his environment. The formative years, from birth to six, are a time of great sensory exploration for the child. Since birth, the child has been absorbing impressions from his senses. Now, through the Sensorial materials, the child is given the tools needed to sharpen and refine his senses, as well as to understand, order, name and classify the various sensations he receives. The child passes through a sensitive period for refinement of the senses between the ages of 2.5 and 6 years old. The Sensorial area assists the child to educate his senses. While much of this type of education occurs naturally in the child's life, the didactic materials in the Sensorial area help to isolate and further refine specific sensory impressions in an ordered and methodical way. The general aim of the sensorial materials is to awaken, develop, and refine the senses. The function of the sensorial materials is not to present the child with new impressions of dimension, shape, color, etc., but to bring order and system into the myriad of impressions he has already received, is still receiving and

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is going to receive. Education of the senses in the Montessori environment generally proceeds in the same order: first, the child must recognize identities by matching something with its corresponding pair (through visual, tactile, smell, weight, etc). Next, the child progresses to a recognition of contrasts. These are presented as the differences between two extremes i. e. rough, smooth, dark, pale, heavy, light. Finally, the child is ready to perceive, recognize and discriminate between fine differences, and they practice this by grading the various materials. The sensory stimulus that is being presented is, as far as possible, presented in isolation so as to better fix the child's attention on that particular impression. This helps to order the senses in the child's mind. Like all Montessori materials, sensorial is aesthetically pleasing. It is attractive and engaging. The child wants to look at, feel, smell, manipulate and work with them. Materials are concrete, graded from simple to complex and sequenced. This helps to develop and refine each individual sense fully. Most sensorial materials have a built-in control of error, allowing the child to work on his own, and to notice and correct his own mistakes. This promotes independence and helps to develop concentration and sharpen perception. The materials are designed for mathematical precision and are based on ten. In general, the sensorial area provides an essential intellectual preparation for the learning and understanding of mathematics. All materials and exercises require manual handling and movement. The activities in the sensorial area promote both gross motor and fine motor skills and coordination. The child is actively involved in exploring the materials. By observing, comparing, judging and categorizing the concrete materials, the child refines and heightens his senses. By using his senses in many various ways he also broadens his range

of sensorial impressions. He is able to order and name the impressions he is receiving and this is the basis for his understanding of himself and the world around him. The concrete exercises and experiences lead the child into the formation of abstract concepts. Concepts and shapes in the sensorial area are presented by the directress using the correct and precise language. This enriches the child's language development, and is an aid to precise, ordered and detailed thought. The sensory input a child receives is vital to his intellectual and mental development. The impressions and experiences that the child is exposed to in his environment help to form and develop his mental abilities. As his mental abilities increase, the child uses these same sensory impressions and experiences to build up his mental representations of the world around him and to develop concepts. A limited sensory environment has a negative impact on the child's ability to develop fully. Through the sensorial area, the child is methodically exposed to the variety of stimuli needed to fully develop his senses. Sensorial education enables the child to make sense of what he is experiencing, not only in the classroom, but in his wider world. Sensorial education in the Montessori classroom occurs as part of a total activity which involves both intelligence and movement. Both neurological and physical development rely on the ability to learn in an orderly manner, as well as the balanced education and use of all the child's available senses. The prepared environment for sensorial education includes love, security and consistency. The orderly arrangement and careful design of the materials, the precision and consistency of the directress' actions, and her deep love and concern for the child provides the ideal environment for the refinement and education of the senses. The child feels secure and can work at their own pace, finding the right level of

challenge in the graded activities available. Every child is unique, with a unique way of perceiving and understanding the world. The Montessori sensorial equipment and area, through the methodical and thorough approach to sensory education, allows the child to fulfill his individual sensory needs, and to develop a solid sensory foundation and framework for life. “ Beauty lies in harmony, not in contrast; and harmony is refinement; therefore, there must be a fineness of the senses if we are to appreciate harmony. ” - Maria Montessori