



# Observation Guidelines

Welcome to the Whitegate Montessori Land School. Thank you for expressing an interest in gaining a deeper understanding of our Montessori Environment. This sheet covers some guidelines we ask all visitors to observe and it covers some of the most frequently asked questions we hear. Please take a moment to read this sheet **before** you begin your observation experience.

If you are new to Montessori, we think you will find that our classrooms are unlike most you have ever seen before. Montessori classrooms are made of mixed-age groupings and the children are free to move about the environment if their movement is purposeful and serves their work. Our goal at Whitegate is to provide a loving, respectful, and supportive environment in which children will blossom into human beings who—

- Respect themselves, others and their environment
- Are self-motivated and take responsibility for their own work
- Initiate tasks with interest, enthusiasm and resourcefulness
- Complete the tasks they begin with resilience
- Live in peace with their fellow human beings

## Observer Behavior

We are pleased to have you visit our classrooms but ask that you please keep the following in mind, as the presence of a visitor does affect the classroom atmosphere: Please arrive on time for your appointment and check in with the office first. You will be escorted to the classroom and your observation should last about 25 to 30 minutes.

We have a high regard for the children's classroom environment and take great care not to interrupt their concentration and focus. We ask that you stay seated in the classroom and try not to engage the children in conversation. If a child asks who you are or what you're doing in the class, a polite "Hello, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. I'm here to observe you and your friends work" is appropriate. If a child attempts to involve you in a longer conversation, please attempt to redirect them back to their work.

During your observation, please feel free to take notes and jot down any questions. At the close of your observation, please stand up and exit the room quietly. Don't feel the need to say goodbye to the children. Return to the office. You will then be taken to another age classroom for observation, if you so desire. When all of your observations are complete, return once again to the office where we can discuss your questions and observations at that time.

## Classroom Atmosphere

A great deal of thought is devoted to the "prepared environment" of a Montessori classroom. Each piece of material has been placed on the shelf to help the child independently develop a particular skill. Each of our classes includes children of different ages so they can help and learn from each other.

## **Self-Direction**

Notice that the children learn in different ways. With some types of materials, you will see groups of children working cooperatively, and with others you will find an individual child working intently. Still other children may be walking through the classroom seemingly not engaged in any direct activity. This type of child is often engaged in absorbing the other children and the materials through observation.

## **Role of the Teacher and Assistant**

The Teacher is a facilitator of the children's autonomous learning processes. She prepares the classroom and gives the children the tools to utilize the materials. Sometimes the teacher provides direct encouragement or indirect appreciation, and at other times judicious absence. There is a basic respect for each individual child's particular style of learning in the Montessori classroom.

You will also notice that the classroom assistant is not actively involved in teaching. She is another calm and gentle presence in the classroom, quietly helping to maintain the environment and unobtrusively supporting the teacher in her work with the children.

## **Sociability**

Watch the ways in which the children offer assistance to one another – with the materials and with everyday tasks. Note how the younger children absorb the older children's work simply by being near them and how, conversely, the older children will assist the younger ones with work they have already mastered. The child's natural desire to make friends and be part of an ongoing community is ever present in the Montessori classroom.

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## **Notes and Questions:**