

# Dr. Maria Montessori

## Maria Montessori (1870-1952): Founder of Montessori Philosophy



Just who was this woman who began an educational revolution that changed the way we think about children more than anyone before or since?

Maria Montessori, born in 1870, was the first woman in Italy to receive a medical degree. She worked in the fields of psychiatry, education and anthropology. She believed that each child is born with a unique potential to be revealed, rather than as a "blank slate" waiting to be written upon. Her main contributions to the work of those of us raising and educating children are in these areas:

- Preparing the most natural and life-supporting environments for the child
- Observing the child living freely in this environment
- Continually adapting the environment in order that the child may fulfill his or her greatest potential, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

### The Early Years

Maria Montessori was always a little ahead of her time. At age thirteen, against the wishes of her father but with the support of her mother, she began to attend a boys' technical school. After seven years of engineering she began premed and, in 1896 became a physician. In her work at the University of Rome psychiatric clinic Dr. Montessori developed an interest in the treatment of special needs children and, for several years, she worked, wrote, and spoke on their behalf. In 1907 she was given the opportunity to study "normal" children, taking charge of fifty poor children of the dirty, desolate streets of the San Lorenzo slum on the outskirts of Rome. The news of the unprecedented success of her work in this Casa dei Bambini "House of Children" soon spread around the world, people coming from far and wide to see the children for themselves.

### From Europe to United States

Invited to the USA by Alexander Graham Bell, Thomas Edison, and others, Dr. Montessori spoke at Carnegie Hall in 1915. She was invited to set up a classroom at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, where spectators watched twenty-one children, all new to this Montessori method behind a glass wall for four months. The only two gold medals awarded for education went to this class, and the education of young children was altered forever.

### Montessori Schools Today

Dr. Montessori gave the world a scientific method, practical and tested, for bringing forth the very best in young human beings. She taught adults how to respect individual differences, and to emphasize social interaction and the education of the whole personality rather than the teaching of a specific body of knowledge. Today Montessori teacher training centers and schools exist on all continents. There are Montessori parenting classes, "Nidos" ("nests" for infants), infant communities, "children's houses" (for age 3-6), and classes for children up to age eighteen in public and private schools. Montessori works in gifted and talented programs, and for children with developmental disabilities of all kinds. Many parents are using Dr. Montessori's discoveries to raise/educate their children at home.

### Learn More about Montessori



#### Montessori for Ages 3-6

<http://tsl.org/family/2010/06/montessori-for-ages-3-6/>

#### Montessori FAQ's

<http://www.montessori.edu/FAQ.html>

**"One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child."**

**-Maria Montessori**