

THEVENET MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Curriculum for the Primary Program

The following is a brief overview of **Thevenet Montessori School's** core curriculum for our students. Please keep in mind that this only represents an overview of the course of study, and is not meant to be complete. Since our students progress at their own pace, it is not possible to divide up the curriculum by grade levels.

- Practical Life
- Sensory Training
- Language Arts: Pre-Reading
- Language Arts: Reading
- Language Arts: Handwriting
- Language Arts: Composition
- Mathematics General
- Mathematics Geometry
- Geography: Physical Geography
- Geography: Cultural Geography
- History and the Needs All People Share
- Science
- Spanish
- Art and Music

Practical Life

One of the first goals of **Thevenet Montessori School** is to develop in the very young child a strong and realistic sense of independence and self-reliance. Along with love and a stable environment, this is the child's greatest need. This area of the curriculum focuses on developing skills that allow the child to effectively control and deal with the social and physical environment in which he lives. There is a growing pride in being able to "do it for myself." Practical life begins as soon as the young child enters the school and continues throughout the curriculum to more and more advanced tasks appropriate to the oldest students.

- Dressing oneself
- Learning home address and phone number
- Pouring liquids without spilling
- Carrying objects without dropping
- Carrying liquids without spilling
- Walking without knocking into furniture or people
- Using knives and scissors with good control
- Using simple carpentry tools
- Putting materials away on the shelves where they belong when finished
- Working carefully and neatly
- Dusting, polishing and washing just about anything: floors, tables, silver
- Sweeping and vacuuming floors and rugs
- Flower arranging
- Caring for plants and animals
- Table setting – serving yourself – table manners
- Folding cloth: napkins, towels, etc.
- Simple use of needle and thread
- Using common household tools: tweezers, tongs, eye-droppers, locks, scissors, knives

- Increasingly precise eye-hand coordination
- Simple cooking and food preparation
- Dish washing
- Weaving, bead stringing, etc.

Sensory Training

These are exercises in perception, observation, fine discrimination, and classification that play a major role in helping our children to develop their sense of logic and concentration. They begin at age 3 and are a major area of concentration typically through age 5.

- Discrimination of length, width, and height
- Discrimination of volume
- Discrimination in multiple dimensions
- Discrimination among color tones
- Discrimination among geometric shapes for shape and relative size
- Discrimination among solid geometric shapes by sight and touch
- Solving of complex abstract puzzles in three dimensions
- Discrimination of intensity and nature of sounds
- Discrimination among musical tones
- Discrimination of texture by touch
- Discrimination of weight by touch
- Discrimination of temperature by touch
- Discrimination of scents

Language Arts: Pre-Reading

Due to our multi-age classroom design, our youngest students are constantly exposed to the older children in the class who are already reading. The total environment of the Primary classes (3 to 6 years old) tends to create and reinforce in our young children a spontaneous interest in learning how to read. We begin to teach reading as soon as that interest is first expressed.

- Using a total immersion approach, we help the youngest children to develop a highly sophisticated vocabulary and command of the language.
- The children are taught through many early approaches to listen for and recognize the individual phonetic sounds in words.
- We introduce the children to literature by reading aloud and discussing a wide range of classic stories and poetry.
- We help our youngest students to recognize the shape and phonetic sounds of the alphabet through the 'sandpaper letters,' a tactile alphabet.

Language Arts: Reading

- The development of the concept that written words are actual thoughts set down on paper. (This takes children much longer than most people realize.)
- Sounding out simple three or four-letter phonetic words. (Typically before age 5)
- Early exercises to practice reading and to gain the concept of a noun: labeling objects with written name tags, mastering increasingly complex words naming things that interest them, such as dinosaurs, the parts of a flower, geometric shapes, the materials in the classroom, etc.
- Learning to recognize verbs: normally exercises in which the child reads a card with a verbal "command" printed out (such as run, sit, walk, etc.) and demonstrates his understanding by acting it out. As the child's reading vocabulary increases, verbal

commands involve full sentences and multiple steps: “Place the mat on the table and bring back a red pencil.”

- Reading specially selected or prepared small books on topics that really interest the child, such as in science, geography, nature, or history.

Language Arts: Handwriting

Control of the hand in preparation for writing is developed through many exercises, including specially designed tasks in the use of the pencil. Such exercises begin with very young children and extend over several years so that mastery is gradually, but thoroughly, attained.

The young children practice making letters from the time of their first initial “explosion into writing” at age 3 or 4:

- Moveable Alphabets, made up of easily manipulated plastic letters are used for the early stages of phonetic word creation, the analysis of words, and spelling. They facilitate early reading and writing tasks during the period when young children are still not comfortable with their own writing skills. Even before the children are comfortable in their handwriting skills, they spell words, compose sentences and stories, and work on punctuation and capitalization with the moveable alphabets (age 4 -6)
- At first, by tracing letters into sand.
- Later, by writing on special tilted, upright blackboards: unlined, wide-lined, and narrow-lined.
- Later, by writing on special writing tablets, becoming comfortable with script.
- Cursive writing (Typically around age 5).

Language Arts: Composition

At an early age, before handwriting has been mastered, the children compose sentences, stories and poetry through oral dictation to adults and with the use of the moveable alphabet. Once handwriting is fairly accomplished, the children begin to develop their composition skills. They continue to develop over the years at increasing levels of sophistication.

- Prepare written answers to simple questions.
- Compose stories to follow a picture series.

Mathematics

- Our students are typically introduced to numbers at age 3: learning the numbers and number symbols one to ten: the red and blue rods, sandpaper numerals, association of number rods and numerals, spindle boxes, cards and counters, counting, sight recognition, concept of odd and even.
- Introduction to the decimal system typically begins at age 3 or 4. Units, tens, hundreds, thousands are represented by specially prepared concrete learning materials that show the decimal hierarchy in three-dimensional form: units = single beads, tens = a bar of 10 units, hundreds = 10 ten bars fastened together into a square, thousands = a cube of ten units wide and ten units high. The children learn to first recognize the quantities, then to form numbers with the bead or cube materials through 9,999 and to read them back, to read and write numerals up to 9,999, and to exchange equivalent quantities of units for tens, tens for hundreds, etc.
- Linear Counting: learning the number facts to ten (what numbers make ten, basic addition up to ten); learning the teens ($11 = \text{one ten} + \text{one unit}$), counting by tens ($34 = \text{three tens} + \text{four units}$) to one hundred.
- Development of the concept of the four basic mathematical operations: addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication through work with the Montessori Golden Bead Material. The child builds numbers with the bead materials and performs mathematical operations concretely.

(This process normally begins by age 4 and extends over the next two or three years.) Work with this material over a long period is critical to the full understanding of abstract mathematics for all but a few exceptional children. This process tends to develop in the child a much deeper understanding of mathematics.

- Development of the concept of “dynamic” addition and subtraction through the manipulation of the concrete math materials. (Addition and subtraction where exchanging and regrouping of numbers is necessary.)
- Memorization of the basic math facts: adding and subtracting numbers under 10 without the aid of the concrete materials. (Typically begins at age 5 and is normally completed by age 7.)

Mathematics: Geometry

- Sensorial exploration of plane and solid figures at the Primary level (Ages 3 – 6): the children learn to recognize the names and basic shapes of plane and solid geometry through manipulation of special wooden geometric insets. They then learn to order them by size or degree.
- Stage I: Basic geometric shapes (Ages 3 – 4)
- Stage II: More advanced plane geometric shapes – triangles, polygons, various rectangles and irregular forms. (Ages 3 – 5)
- Stage III: Introduction to solid geometric forms and their relationship to plane geometric shapes. (Ages 2 – 5)
- Study of the basic properties and definitions of the geometric shapes. This is essentially as much a reading exercise as mathematics since the definitions are part of the early language materials.

Geography: Physical Geography

- The Primary Globes (Ages 3 – 5): specially prepared globes for the very young child that isolate single concepts of globe study – how land and water are shown, and the corresponding shapes of the continents that they learned from the puzzle maps.
- The Puzzle Maps (Ages 3 – 7): These are specially made maps in the forms of intricate, color-coded, wooden jigsaw puzzles representing the continents, the countries of each continent, and the states of the U.S. They are presented to the children at an early age, and are at first enjoyed simply as challenging puzzles. Soon, however, the children begin to learn the names of given countries, and by age 6 are normally very familiar with the continents of the globe, the nations of North America, South America, and Europe, along with most of the states of the U.S. As soon as the children can read they begin to lay the puzzle pieces out and place the appropriate name labels to each as a reading and geography exercise.
- Land & Water Formations: materials designed to help the very young child understand basic land and water formations such as island, isthmus, peninsula, strait, lake, cape, bay, archipelago, etc. At first, they are represented by three-dimensional models of each, complete with water. Then the children learn to recognize the shapes on maps, and learn about famous examples of each.
- Transference to maps: Introduction to written names and various forms of maps, along with early study of the flora, fauna, landscapes, and people of the continents.

Geography: Cultural Geography

- Countries are studied in many ways at all levels at *Thevenet Montessori School*, beginning at about ages 3 – 4. A number of festivals are held every year to focus on specific cultures and to celebrate life together: an example being Chinese New Year, when the entire school might study China, prepare Chinese food, learn Chinese dances, and participate in a special dragon dance parade. Anything that the children find interesting is used to help them become familiar with the countries of the world: flags, boundaries, food, climate, traditional dress,

houses, major cities, children's toys and games, stamps, coins, traditional foods, art, music, and history. This interweaves through the entire curriculum.

- Study of the regions, culture, and natural resources of the United States, including geography, climate, flora and fauna, major rivers and lakes, capitals, important cities, mountains, people, regional foods, traditions, etc. This begins at age 5 and continues at increasing depth at each level.

History and the Needs All People Share

- The basic needs of man are food, shelter, clothing, defense, transportation, culture, law, religion or spiritual enlightenment, love, and adornment. (This study begins at ages 5-6 and continues throughout the curriculum.)
- The concept of time and historical time is developed through many activities and repeated at deeper complexity from age 5:
 - Telling time on the clock
 - Time-lines of the child's life
 - Time-lines showing the activities of a day, week, month, year
 - Family trees
 - Time-line of the Earth's history
 - Time-line from 8,000 B.C. to 2000 A. D. to study ancient to modern history

Science

- Differentiation between living and non-living things. (Age 3 – 4)
- Differentiation between animals and plants; basic characteristics. (Age 3 – 5)
- Observation of animals in nature.
- First puzzles representing the biological parts of flowers, root systems, and trees, along with the anatomical features of common animals. These are first used by very young children and puzzles, then as a means to learn the vocabulary, then are related to photos and/or the 'real thing', then traced onto paper, and finally with labels as a reading experience.
- Nomenclature Cards:
 - Botany: identifying, naming, and labeling the parts of plants, trees, leaves, roots, and flowers.
 - Zoology: identifying, naming, and labeling the external parts of human beings, insects, fish, birds, and other animals.
- Introduction of the families of the animal kingdom, and identification and classification of animals into the broad families. Introduction to the basic characteristics, life-styles, habitats, and means of caring for young of each family in the animal kingdom (Age 5 – 7)
- Study of the internal parts of vertebrates: limbs, body coverings, lungs, heart, skeleton, and reproduction. (Age 5 – 8)

Spanish

Once a week, our Spanish teacher works with children in the primary and lower elementary classrooms. The teacher works with a group of 6 to 12 students at a time. Each month the teacher chooses a theme, like relatives, numbers, or the home, and introduces 10 to 15 new words to the children. The children might do crafts, cook or play puppet games.

Art and Music

Art and Music is incorporated in the daily routine through the material that is offered throughout the room or the teacher by singing songs and offering special craft projects.