

Differences between Montessori and Traditional Classroom Approaches

The goal of both a Montessori and a traditional classroom are the same: to provide learning experiences for the child. The bigger the difference lies in the kind of learning experiences each school provides and how the methodology differs in accomplishing this goal.

Montessori educators believe both differences are important because they help shape what children learn, their work habits as well as their future attitudes about themselves and the world around them.

Montessori

1. Child-centered class
2. Small teacher-pupil ratio
3. Teacher is facilitator
4. Environment and method encourage self-discipline
5. Mainly individual instruction
6. Mixed age grouping
7. Grouping encourages children to teach and learn with each other
8. Child chooses own work with teacher guiding in prepared environment
9. Child discovers own concepts and is gently guided by teacher
10. Child works as long as he/she chooses on a specific project
11. Child sets own learning pace and develops the ability to manage time
12. Child spots own error from feedback of material
13. Child reinforces own learning by repetition of work that internalizes feelings of success
14. Multi-sensory materials for physical exploration
15. Organized program for learning care of self and environment
16. Group work can be voluntary

Traditional

1. Teacher-centered class
2. Class size varies
3. Teacher is controller
4. Teacher acts as primary enforcer of discipline
5. Mainly group instruction
6. Same age grouping
7. Most instruction by teacher
8. Curriculum structured for child
9. Teacher is source of concept discovery
10. Child generally allotted certain time for work
11. Instruction pace set by group norm
12. If work is corrected, errors usually pointed out by teacher
13. Learning is reinforced externally by repetition
14. Few materials for sensory explorations; emphasis on worksheet
15. No organized program for self-care instruction—left primarily to parents
16. Child usually assigned own chair, and required to participate, sit still and listen to group lessons