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WELCOME TO WAKE FOREST MONTESSORI

Introduction

Wake Forest Montessori is dedicated to providing an enriching and challenging educational environment where each child is encouraged to grow to his or her fullest potential academically, emotionally, and socially. Through the dynamic partnership of child, parent and teacher, a consistent Montessori framework for learning is developed, offering an “education for life”

Wake Forest Montessori promotes, assigns, trains, and compensates applicants and employees for all job classifications without regard to race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status. The school makes employment decisions and personnel actions in accordance with the principles of equal opportunity employment.

History

Wake Forest Montessori, founded in 2007, is dedicated to upholding the right of every child to progress at their own pace, in their own individual way, and to be provided with the tools they need for their physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development.

Admission

Wake Forest Montessori accepts children from 2 years eight months to 8 years of age. We are dedicated to a nonsectarian Montessori education for children.

WAKE FOREST MONTESSORI MISSION STATEMENT

Wake Forest Montessori Philosophy

Montessori philosophy recognizes that children have a natural drive that inspires them to reach their potential. Their minds are like fertile fields, and their inherent love of learning is stimulated when they are given opportunities to engage in meaningful activities with the proper balance of anatomy and guidance from specially trained teachers. Montessori children develop skills of concentration, motivation and self-discipline. With this framework, each child progresses with his or her own pace and rhythm, according to his or her individual capabilities, and is inspired to learn with wonder and confidence. Our school bears witness to the viability and brilliance of this educational approach. We are committed to using the philosophy and curriculum as developed by Dr. Maria Montessori. Our classrooms brim with the Montessori educational materials to enable the Montessori credentialed teachers to provide a “true” Montessori environment. Wake Forest Montessori serves children with a mission to enable the children to develop their individual gifts within a respectful, loving and supportive community.

Wake Forest Montessori

237 Friendship Chapel Road
Wake Forest, NC 27587

Tuition

CHILDRENS HOUSE (8:30 -12:30) Monday-Friday \$550/month

CHILDRENS HOUSE (8:30 -12:30) Monday/Wednesday/Friday \$500/month

EXTENDED DAY (12:30 - 2:30) Monday-Friday \$175/month

One Time Application Fee \$50

Yearly Supply Fee \$150

Sibling Discount- There is a 10% discount off the tuition of a second child, for siblings enrolled during the same term.

Late Fee- Tuition not received by the eight of each month will be charged a \$50 late fee

Wake Forest Montessori 2011-2012 School Year Calendar

September 1st	First day of school
September 5 th *	Labor Day
October 21 st	School Pictures
October 29 th	Fall Harvest Celebration
November 11 th *	Veteran's Day
November 21-25*	Thanksgiving Break
December 22nd-January 2nd*	Winter Break
January 1st 2012*	New Years Day
January 16 th *	Martin Luther King Jr.
February 20 th *	President's Day
February TBD	Parent Conferences
March 1 st	Re-enrollment begins
March TBD	Open House TBA
April 2nd –April 6 th *	Spring Break
May 25 th *	Last Day of School
May 28 th	Memorial Day

(*) Denotes days school is closed

Calendar is subject to change

School Policy

Tuition Policy

A 30 day written notice is required prior to withdrawal of any student from the school. If a child is not in attendance for any reason, or the tuition payment has not been received, the child's space will be filled from our waiting list. Re-admittance would require a new application and application fee, provided there is a space available. (If 30-day notice is not given, you will be liable for the present month's full tuition.) A non refundable \$35 application fee is required when an application is submitted. This fee is not applicable to monthly tuition. Re-enrollment for the following school year is done in February. Tuition rates are subject to change.

Tuition is due on the first day of each month and may be placed in the tuition slot inside of the classroom. A late fee of \$50 will be charged for any payment received after the 8th of each month. A service charge of \$15 will be charged for any returned checks. You may also pay using your Credit or Debit card.

Morning arrival

Please bring your child in the morning between 8:30am and 9:00am. It is very important for parents to say good-bye quietly at the door. If you wish to observe your child please allow him or her to enter the classroom, pursue his or her individual interests and begin his/her day. You may then return at anytime to observe your child. This helps to decrease problems that may arise when separating from parents.

Pick-up

Half Day children are to be picked up promptly between 12:15 and 12:30, extended day children between 2:15 and 2:30

Snack

Parents are required to bring a nutritious snack for their child each day. Snacks should consist of items such as fruit, vegetables, cheese, crackers etc. Please do your best to provide a healthy snack that your child will enjoy. If your child has any known allergies please alert your child's teacher. Also parents are required to provide a labeled 8oz cup to be left at school so that your child can drink water throughout the day.

Change of Clothing

A labeled change of clothing in a gallon sized plastic zip lock bag should be given to your child's teacher on the first day of school. If an accident occurs, soiled clothes will be sent home for you to launder and return the next school day. The change of clothing should include tee-shirt, pants/shorts, underwear, socks, and shoes. During the winter months parents are required to bring an additional hat and pair of gloves for their child that will be left at school to ensure your child will not be cold while on the playground.

When dressing your child please think of his or her comfort, providing clothing that is free if complicated fasteners. Children should be dressed according to the weather, in washable, durable and comfortable clothing. Please bring jackets and sweaters for cold weather, sunscreen and hats for warm weather, all labeled please.

Snow Days

If Wake County Schools are closed or have a delay WFM will mirror that decision.

Toy Sharing

In order to avoid problems, please do not bring toys to school. Children are encouraged to bring books or a special item to share at circle time. The special items may include shells, rocks, items the child has made, postcards from different states/countries, or other items of interest.

Conferences

Formal Parent Conferences are held in February, to discuss the progress and development of your child. Please make every effort to keep your appointed time. We encourage consistent communication between parents and teachers. If you have a concern/complaint please convey to your child's teacher or Administrator immediately. Your input is very important! It is the only way to maintain and improve the quality of our Montessori school.

Observation

Parents are welcome to observe any time for 10 minutes or less, if a parent/guardian would like a visit that exceeds 10 minutes please call your child's teacher to arrange a date/time that will not interfere with the learning occurring in your child's classroom.

Forms

Please be certain that the school has your current home and work numbers. It is very important to advise the school of any changes in address, phone numbers, custody, medical and personal information. Your child will not be released to anyone that is not on the release form. Please inform any person picking up your child from school, to bring a driver's license or some form of picture I.D. (Never assume a staff member has met these other people!) If at all possible, let a staff member know, as soon as possible, if someone other than you will be taking your child from the school.

Telephone Calls/email

Please advise the school if your child will be absent more than two days, or if your child has contracted a contagious disease i.e. chicken pox, strep throat, measles, etc. Please email Kristen Marrisett at Kristen@wakeforestmontessori.com or call at (919) 827-1148.

Emergency Awareness

Please be assured that in case of any emergency occurring while your child is at school, our staff is prepared. Emergency supplies are kept for every child, and all staff is familiar with the action plans and required to attend CPR/First-aid courses. We have also designated an out of state contact, should our phone lines be out of order for any reason. The number is Darlene Younger (928) 210-4795. Each class has a designated home in case an evacuation is necessary. Contact teacher for further information.

Dear Montessori Parents,

As a reminder, children who are ill are to be cared for at home. If your child becomes ill at school, you will be promptly notified, and will need to make arrangements to take your child home. Children with the following symptoms will be sent home: fever, vomiting, excessive coughing, and runny nose that is yellow or green, runny eyes, rashes, or sores. All children need to be free of such symptoms for at least 24 hours before returning to school. If your doctor has prescribed an antibiotic, your child should be kept home for 24 hours after sharing the medications (after which time he/she would be considered non-contagious.) If your child does come to school before the 24-hour period has expired, a doctor's note will be required.

The following symptoms may mean that an illness is contagious and that your child should stay home:

- Repeated diarrhea, vomiting fever
- Thick mucus or pus draining from eyes and nose
- Sore throat, especially if combined with fever or swollen neck glands
- Rashes unrelated to diapering, heat or other known, non-contagious causes

Also the law requires that children do not carry medications nor keep them in their possession in any way. All prescription medications must be given to the teacher and a medication form must be filled out. No over-the-counter medication will be administered unless prescribed by a doctor. Please note, the prescription must accompany the medication.

Let's work together to keep our environment healthy and safe for all of the children and staff.

Thank you for your cooperation,

Wake Forest Montessori Staff

SCHOOL TRANSITION

The first day of school is a milestone in a child's life. Parental understanding of this turning point is important to the child's future attitude toward school and or his or her growth and development.

Experts in child mental health and development say that parents can play an important role in starting their child off with the self-confidence needed throughout life. This self-confidence is built upon good feelings about parents, about authority figures at school, about other children, and about the child as a worthwhile human being

Parents should recognize that the day the child first goes to school is an important event. Realizing this can help make a positive experience.

It is the first major separation from the secure and familiar world of home an family, and it marks entrance into a new universe of friendship, learning and adventure. It's a world parents can never again entirely shape. A parent's greatest gift to his or her child at this time is loving support and understanding.

Remember that learning to like school and liking to learn are closely related. The child's first experience can contribute to a good or bad attitude towards school in the years ahead.

Prepare your child for the new school experience by explaining what to expect and answering all questions honestly. Children need to know the number of days and length of time they will be in school.

A child may be anxious and need to know the details in order to handle the stress involved. Working mothers and fathers should make certain that the child knows the arrangements before and after school care.

F you care for your child at home by yourself, arrange short separations. Have your child spend a morning with a trusted friend or grandparent. Do your best to ensure that these first visits away from you are enjoyable and predictable. As you leave, always say good-bye and return promptly as promised. Your child will learn that separations are for a finite time and always end happily.

Parents can help by establishing schedules for getting up in the morning and going to bed in the evening. You know best how much sleep your child needs. Adjust the bedtime accordingly. This will take all your perseverance, but it's worth it. A tired child is neither happy nor able to learn. No matter how interesting the teacher's lesson or Montessori materials, they will be lost on your child if they are too tired.

It is also important that you child arrive on time. Children who are present when the daily activities are discussed are informed, on track, and self motivated throughout the

day. Stragglers, on the other hand, will be confused, out of touch, and feel left out our behind.

We hope all parents take charge at bedtime. Let your child set the alarm. Have time for breakfast. Have something nutritious and substantial.

Arm your child with social graces that will enable him or her to make friends, but also gives them practical information. “Here are the cubbies where you can hang your coat and put your school bag. Here is the book corner where you can sit quietly if you want” etc. The message is that school will not be a room full of strangers and unfamiliar equipment, but a place lovingly prepared for their use.

Dress your child in easy comfortable clothes like, t-shirt track suits, and shoes with Velcro fasteners, which they can manage themselves.

Many children regress at dismissal time when they see their parent, just to be cuddled and loved even if only for a second or two. Being brave and sophisticated all day melts away in a parents embrace. Is this not wonderful and the way it should be?

You can reduce anxiety and apprehension by preparing yourself first then your child. A good place to start is the dinner table, especially when there are older children around who can help younger ones. Another great time to bring up the subject of school is when we get ready to buy new “back- to-school” clothes. Casually talk about the new class, the new teacher, or the new school. But most importantly let your child tell you what they are worried about, what they are looking forward to what they are expecting etc.

Another thing a parent can do is tell a few stories about their own school-related experiences. They can be both positive and negative, but if negative be sure to include what you do to overcome the defeat or difficult experience. Be humble, it draws you closer and makes you more human and more approachable.

PARENT INFORMATION

COLLABORATION: PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Parents and teachers need to work together in order to support and follow the whole Montessori process. The school is not a daycare; effective use of the school comes best through communication. Children often confide in their parents, and it is important for the teacher to know how the child perceives the day. And of course, the teacher sees the child in a “scientific environment” and has a unique facility for serving children in the content of other children and materials. The parent and teacher each hold jigsaw pieces which, when put together, generate a more complete picture.

The Montessori program also offers parents creative principles for redesigning aspects of their home, for discipline, and general understanding. Parent education gives parents another way of seeing which may enhance decisions related to child development. Thinking and talking about children along with other concerned adults offers heightened awareness and a better response to your child’s needs.

THE MONTESSORI PARENTS AS PRIMARY EDUCATORS

No matter how you regard the school, you must realize as parents you have the greatest influence on your child’s life because of your unique love. No one knows and cares for your child as well as you do. Educate means “to lead”. As parents you have the special opportunity to lead the child into activities which are your hobbies, your chores, your spiritual and intellectual life, your appreciation for the environment. What you share with your own, they remember with special relish. You desire what is best for yours even though this involves sacrifice and renunciation. You want to give, but not indulge, serve, but not subservient allow freedom but not license. The school will be a natural extension of your home and will help in establishing balance.

The teacher certainly can work with the child uniquely in the prepared environment and in the content of the other children, but your relationship is still key. As your child starts out on this great adventure called Montessori, remember that you are the most important adult, and for your effort there is no substitute.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Dear Parents,

You are invited to share in your child's birthday celebration at our Montessori school. The special day is celebrated the following way. A candle is placed in the middle of a circle the children have formed (this represents the sun). Your child will hold and walk around the "sun" (representing the earth rotating around the sun for each year of your child's life). As the birthday boy or girl walks around the circle and all the other children sing a special song. In addition, we ask that you briefly tell one special event that took place each year. If you will not be able to come, we would like for you to send this information for the teacher to read. On the following page you will see a sample narration. The birthday child then blows out the "sun" and all the children sing "Happy Birthday". Oftentimes a special birthday crown is made and the child wears it throughout the day.

We hope you will be able to share this brief, but special time with us. Please consult with the teacher before that day as to the time of morning the celebration the celebration will occur. Feel free to bring photos of your child at birth, one year, etc, and bring a camera if you like.

SAMPLE BIRTHDAY NARRATION

BIRTH TO ONE YEAR

_____ was born on May 23, 2002 in Raleigh, North Carolina. She was 6 pounds 15 ounces at birth. She was the cutest baby with such a sweet disposition.

She had her first tooth in September and learned to walk at 11 months. Her first word was dada.

On her first birthday we had a big bar-b-que party for all the friends and neighbors. A clown came by to do tricks and make animals out of balloons for the children. The children also loved the puppet show. It was a special day for all of us.

ONE TO TWO YEARS

The summer _____ spent a lot of time at Pullen Park. She enjoyed having lunch at the park and seeing all of the friendly people there.

For Halloween she was a princess. Grandma made her costume and it was beautiful. The following year she wanted to be Snow White.

TWO TO THREE YEARS

So on May 23rd it was with much excitement that we celebrated her second birthday. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins came. The party was at our home and everyone had a great time.

In September she started at Wake Forest Montessori. She has had a wonderful time and learned so much in a short period of time. Our only problem was that she didn't want to go home from school some days.

One of her accomplishments this year is having learned how to solve a puzzle of the United States. She is learning what states friends and relatives live in and the ones we would like to visit someday.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

INDIVIDUAL EMERGENCY KIT SPECIFICATIONS

Please create you child's emergency kit prior to the first day of school.

Each student will bring their emergency kit to class on their first day of school.

Each student's kit should be packed in a gallon sized zip lock bag labeled with the child's name.

Items to be included in the kit are:

1. A small towel
2. Small package of Kleenex
3. Small packet of hand wipes
4. Two cans or boxes of juice
5. Two small snack packages of commercially, vacuumed packed foods such as peanuts, granola bars, beef jerky, fruit rolls, etc
6. Old sweatshirt or sweater
7. 72-hour supply of any prescribed medication labeled with the child's name, the type of medication and instructions.
8. Small toy, game, book or item of comfort such as a family picture

PARENT'S RIGHTS

We believe that:

1. Parents/or guardians of enrolled children, upon presentation of identification, have the right to enter and inspect our school without advance notice, if the entry and inspection is limited to the normal operating hours of the school.
2. No parent, guardian or child should be discriminated or retaliated against for exercising their right of inspection.
3. Parents/and or guardians should be notified of their rights to enter and inspect.
4. A notice of parents' and/or guardian's right to enter and inspect should be posted in an accessible location at the school.
5. The person in charge of the school may deny access to the parent and or guardian under the following circumstances:
 - a. The parent and/or guardian is behaving in a way which poses a risk to the children at the school.
 - b. The adult requiring access is the non-custodial parent and the school has been requested in writing by the custodial parent to not permit access to the non-custodial parent
 - c. The number of inspections or the length of inspections by any parent and or guardian is becoming disruptive to the classroom.

Wake Forest Montessori reserves the right to dismiss a child at any time. Some of the criteria for dismissal include but are not limited to the following:

- Non-payment or continual late payment of tuition
- Unacceptable, disruptive, disrespectful, aggressive or unsafe behavior by a child or parent
- Failure to provide records
- Damage to school property
- Disruption of school property
- Disruptive behavior which impedes the progress of the rest of the students and/or infringes on the rights of others
- Inability of staff and family to work together in congenial and cohesive manner

WAKE FOREST MONTESSORI

THE ESSENCE OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

In order to incorporate Dr. Maria Montessori's ideas into your own family environment, you need to have some knowledge of her basic philosophy of child development. You will see it is not so very different from those of modern experts; and once the terms are explained, it is easy to apply them to your own everyday life.

Dr. Maria Montessori drew her ideas about how to handle and educate children from her observation of them at different stages in their development, and from her exposure to children of different cultures. She identified what she saw that was common in all children as "the universal characteristics of childhood," regardless of where children were born or how they were brought up. She then set out to act as an interpreter for children everywhere, advising adults to adopt a new approach to them and treat the period of childhood as an entity in itself, not merely a preparation for adulthood.

These can be summed up as followings:

- All children have "absorbent" minds
- All children pass through "sensitive" periods
- All children want to learn
- All children learn through work/play
- All children pass through several stages of development
- All children want to be independent

You may have several questions about the "Montessori Method," some may include:

You may be asking yourself, "Who is Dr. Maria Montessori?"

Dr. Maria Montessori was born into 19th century Europe which was laden with the ideals of social inequality between young girls and boys. Due to the progressive stance of her mother Renilde Montessori she was given the encouragement and opportunity to pursue and academic education at the University of Rome and studied math, physics, and natural sciences. Maria graduated from the University of Rome

After Maria Montessori graduated from the University of Rome Maria worked with mentally challenged children. Maria knew that it would take a different approach to teach these children so she re-enrolled into the University of Rome and studied psychology and philosophy. This additional education assisted Maria for what many may view as her largest contribution to the modern world the Development of the Montessori Method of education.

Maria accepted a position at the Casa dei Bambini in the slums of Rome. The children she cared for were no older than 6, and displayed behavior such as aggressiveness and uncontrollable crying. What many would have seen as insurmountable Maria saw an opportunity to learn. Maria understood each child to be a unique individual in need of order and a productive way of expressing his or herself. So

that is the type of environment she created. She created materials that gave each child purpose and direction. She created work that intrigued each child and observed their daily interactions. She redesigned the rooms to make it a more comfortable environment for each child. She implemented changes such as having the chairs and tables smaller to fit the size of the children. She made the shelving at the eye level of the children. With this system the children at Casa dei Bambini flourished.

Maria documented all of the information that she learned from working with the children into what is called Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work. Maria traveled the world sharing her work and teaching the world a different, and what many have called a better way of instructing children. Maria received many awards for her teachings which include but are not limited to multiple Nobel Peace Prizes. Maria has had some type of influence in almost all educational programs of young children. Her contributions are priceless and impact on the world limitless. Maria was laid to rest on May 6, 1952. Her body may be at rest but her contributions are still in motion.

Why did Dr. Maria Montessori develop her special teaching method?

Montessori developed her method because she was distressed with the usual rigid teaching techniques used in Europe. Feeling that the young children had more potential than educators realizes, she began to develop this potential by a sensorial approach (teaching the young child through his/her natural interests in exploring the world through senses.)

What is the Montessori Method?

It is an approach to education which emphasizes the potential of the young child and which attempts to develop this potential by means of a prepared environment, utilizing specially trained teachers and special teaching materials.

Is Montessori for my child?

Rich, poor, gifted, and special children – from a variety of cultures, from all over the world have benefited from a Montessori education. Your child will also prosper in his or her own subtle, creative way. Your child is coming to our school because you sense that it is the right time. Perhaps the toys at home no longer seem interesting. Perhaps your child is bored and needs new friends and new experiences. When your child is ready for an experience apart from you, he or she will benefit and grow in the Montessori environment.

How large are Montessori classes?

The ideal size of a Montessori class is approximately 30 students. It is important that there no be too few pupils in a class; the teacher's job is not to "teach" in the usual sense, but to encourage the child to "learn how to learn."

At what age should a child enter a Montessori class?

Many girls and some boys are ready at about 2 ½ to enter the pre-primary class.

What is the absorbent mind?

Montessori was so impressed with the learning ability of the young child that she called the mind of the child “the absorbent mind” (One of her books is titled The Absorbent Mind)

What are the “sensitive periods” and some examples?

The “sensitive periods” is a Montessori’s name for age periods when the child shows unusual capabilities in acquiring particular skills. A modern name for this phenomenon might be “periods of specific maturational aptness.” For example, the sensitive period for language acquisition is birth to 18 months; writing is between 3 ½ and 4 ½ years; words leading to reading and numbers 4 and 5 years; precise movement and coordination 2 ½ to 4 years; and social graces 3 to 6 years.

What is Montessori concept of freedom?

Freedom is a goal, not a starting point. A free child (or adult) is one who has developed his potential and prefers to work out problems themselves, but is capable of asking for and receiving direction when necessary. An undisciplined and unskilled child (or adult) is not free, but is a slave to his immediate desires and is excessively dependent on others (whether parent or teacher or wife or husband). The free child of course, grows into the free adult.

What is the Montessori concept of discipline?

The Montessori discipline is an “inner discipline” or control, which the child develops over his/her own behavior through his/her interests in the prepared environment. Montessori noted that many so called undisciplined children were really frustrated by lack of proper stimulation, and would become happier and self-controlled after a period of time in a Montessori class.

I’ve heard that Montessori is very structured. What about creativity?

Creativity is one of the most important tools a human being can develop. Each day our students expand their creative ability in a variety of disciplines. Whether they are creating something in clay during an art lesson, coming up with a new idea for a research project or improving their sketching is a particular wildflower to show its parts, the students use their imagination and creativity to build their knowledge. As teachers, we offer support and encouragement as the students try out their ideas. We supply an extensive set of materials and activities so that the students can discover their own unique ability to create.

What about academic discipline?

A common concern about the Montessori Method centers on academic discipline. “If my child is allowed to pursue their interest in learning, I’m afraid they will do nothing but play with dinosaurs all day. I doubt if my child will learn to read or decide to study math.” At Montessori we encourage each child to study dinosaurs! But instead of repeating what the child already knows about them, we’ll develop a curriculum around those dinosaurs. While the child is listening to stories about how long ago they were discovered and how life developed to produce something as large as a dinosaur, your child will be learning math, science, physics, geography, history, and developing their vocabulary and artistic talent. You name it, we can make a curriculum around it, because all we need is a starting point to introduce the child to the excitement of seeing and understanding what there is to learn. The child’s imagination and joy takes it from there!

What type of social atmosphere exists in the classroom?

One of the wonderful things about Montessori is the community of trust and support we develop in the classroom. We develop this atmosphere by teaching a respect for self and, of equal importance, a respect for others. The students learn that respecting someone’s work can mean a variety of things. Sometimes it means helping another student with a challenging word problem. Sometimes it means being careful not to interrupt their progress. And sometimes it means we all choose to stop and gather together to discuss a new discovery. In this type of environment, our students become adept at working out differences with the other students as well as being accepting, understanding and supportive of each other.

How do Montessori students adjust to a more traditional school structure?

The key to success to an adjustment or change is self-confidence. Our classrooms are set up with beautifully crafted materials, each one designed specifically to build a child’s confidence. Instead of memorizing the formula for the Pythagorean Theorem, our materials allow students to explore the relationship of the sides of right-angled triangles and actually discover the relationship for themselves. Because the students discover this knowledge on their own, the student gains a tremendous amount of confidence in his own abilities. Word problems become clearer. Other formulas are easier to understand. Mathematics is fun! Strengthened with this confidence in their own abilities, our students adjust well to any type of school structure.

THE ABSORBENT MIND

A child is fundamentally different from an adult in the way they learn. Children have what Dr. Maria Montessori called an *absorbent mind*, one that unconsciously soaks up information from the environment, learning about it at a rapid rate. This capacity to learn in this way is unique to the young child and lasts for the first six years of life, more or less. During this time, the impressions made on the child's mind actually shape and form it, and therefore have an impact in his future development. It follows, therefore, that each and every early experience is of vital importance; this is especially so in the first phase of the *absorbent mind*- birth to three- where conscious learning has not yet emerged.

Take, for example, the way a child learns language. Parents do not teach their child language- language is acquired without effort, and literally sinks in. Less obviously, he acquires the social and cultural norms of his group this way too. Babies born in China, America, Africa, or Europe will be more or less the same at birth aside from phenotypic variations. In the first few years, and certainly by the age of six, they will all have learned to speak their mother tongue and they will all show different types of behavior conforming to their own particular social and cultural group.

THE CONSCIOUS MIND

In the second phase – three to six- the child's mind is still *absorbent*, but now consciousness begins to appear. This comes partly with knowledge and partly with language. Also at this time his or her will begins to appear. With the ability to control his actions – and, of course, the ability to say “no” – the child now appears to know what they want and the child will have no hesitation in trying to get his own way. As this is also the case when new skills are rapidly and easily acquired, you will be asked endless questions of “why” and “how” variety; his mind is still *absorbent*, but now shows a conscious thirst for knowledge.

Do not assume from what I have already said that a child of this age has a mind like a blank sheet of paper or an empty vessel that will be gradually filled up absorbing indiscriminately from the outside world. The process of learning during this period is *active*, rather than passive. Your child has inborn drives and energies that have a say in what happens – rather like a blueprint. It follows that you should try to give him as much freedom as possible at this time to follow what interests the child most. Only with this freedom can the child develop to their full potential.

This is all very well in the controlled environment of the Montessori school, but many parents find this idea very difficult to come to terms with in the home. Birth to six is also the period when children are most vulnerable and when they are in the greatest need of protection. It is much easier for you to say “no,” “don't touch” or “don't do that” and so on until you feel that your child is old enough to know what is safe, and what is right or wrong. Maria Montessori discovered, however that with careful guidance a child can be taught by experience about safety at quite an early age.

