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## The Peculiarities Of Montessori Classroom Management

When people hear of children going to a Montessori school, they wonder if the children are given too much freedom in their own education. They speculate that if the child gets to make their own decisions about their day, rather than choosing to learn, they'd choose to engage in non-academic activities. They would also assume, that with all the freedom that the children have, chaos reigns in the classroom because too much freedom is never a good thing. So outsiders wonder, "Just how do the Montessori teachers manage the classroom when the children are given the freedom to choose?" This paper will talk about the various elements that go into classroom management in a Montessori school.

If a Montessori classroom was only about giving the children the freedom to make their own decisions, then indeed chaos would erupt, and learning would be abandoned. However, what people who are not familiar with the Montessori method don't know, is that there is a limit to the children's freedom. The limits on the children's freedom is determined by the children's abilities. Responsibility is also greatly stressed in the classroom. These limits, along with the responsibilities, enable the classroom to be a good learning environment.

Dr. Montessori realized that for children to develop themselves and their identities, they need to be given freedom-with responsibility. The children are young, so they are still learning and gaining an understanding of what that freedom and responsibility is all about. The children have the freedom to make good choices as well as bad choices. Therefore, it falls on the teacher's shoulders to help the children understand the importance of being responsible. Children who are not yet making responsible decisions will have more limited freedom, until they are able to make good decisions about their learning.

As it was stated earlier, children in a Montessori classroom have the freedom to choose what they do, but that freedom comes with limitations. So, what are those limitations and how do those limitations help the teacher with classroom management? Part of the limitations of the children's freedom is the expectations that come with it, namely that they must be involved in productive work. The children must also meet the expectations of the teacher in the amount of work they accomplish so that they don't fall behind what is taught in a traditional school.

What Dr. Montessori found, was that when children have the freedom, there is an automatic decorum in the classroom. This is the case, because when children have the freedom to choose what they want to learn about, they are completely absorbed and engaged in what they are doing- they are happy and at peace. When the children are happy and interested in what they are learning, they feel no need to make bad decisions and test the limits and boundaries of the classroom. If the teacher forces the work upon the children, the children won't be satisfied with their learning and the activities. Therefore, if there was ever a time the teacher stepped out of the classroom or not observing the children closely, chaos would break out in the classroom.

Now it would be ridiculous to say that all children who enter a Montessori classroom will come in with a good work ethic and understanding of the responsibility of having freedom within their work cycle. Some children won't be able to make good choices during their work cycle and won't engage in constructive work. If this is the case for some of the children, the teacher is

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responsible for providing exciting lessons and activities to entice the children to learn. The children then have the limited responsibility of choosing from a couple of choices on how they want to follow-up on those topics. If giving the children any form of choice is too much for them to handle, the teacher will make the choices for them until they are able to do it by themselves. It should be the teacher's goal to enable the children to be able to make good choices and be able to work on their own. The reason for this is, when the children can complete constructive work without the help of the teacher, the children will recognize this success and it'll raise their self-esteem. This will motivate the children to involve themselves in more work.

Children don't just have the freedom to choose their own work, they also have the freedom to work in groups on group activities. With the freedom to work in groups, comes the freedom to talk to each other. This allows them to discuss, debate, and create. Working in groups is beneficial for the children because it teaches them how to compromise, how to co-operate and how to collaborate. It also teaches them how to communicate effectively and to express themselves. However, there is also a limit to the freedom to work in groups. The children need to understand that they still have a responsibility when it comes to the freedoms of working in groups. Those responsibilities include the conversation that is occurring is related and constructive to the work at hand and that their work is productive. If the children fail to take these responsibilities seriously, where they are not working productively and their conversation veers from the project at hand, chaos will ensue. If this is the case, the teacher should interrupt and break up the group, because group work does not entitle the children to waste time and be disruptive.

Part of classroom management is the teacher being forthright with her expectations of the children in her classroom. At the start of the year, the teacher needs to go through her expectations and set the foundation for the rest of the year. In the beginning, the teacher will have to be very strict with her expectations and it may be difficult. However, if she stands her ground in the beginning, it'll be easier to manage the classroom in the long run. Children should know what the appropriate behaviour that is expected in the classroom. If there are any children who are not behaving inappropriately and not in the expected ways needs to be stopped. Freedom in the classroom doesn't mean the freedom to behave inappropriately with their fellow classmates, teachers, and materials in the classroom.

It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure the classroom guidelines, expectations, and consequences are known to the children. The children must have their freedoms explained to them and the limits and responsibilities that come along with those freedoms. Once the children understand all of this, it gives them the opportunity to decide what is the right or wrong behaviour according to the classroom rules. Some children may not be developmentally ready to follow all the classroom guidelines, and they may fail to behave appropriately in the classroom. During the times of the children's misconduct, the teacher must intervene for the benefit of those children and the rest of the class.

Part of classroom management is for the teacher to create the structure of the classroom so that the rules are fair and respected by all. For the teacher to have a good learning environment, they must be consistent with making sure the structure of the classroom is in place. When the teacher is inconsistent, the children will test their limits every day to see how far their behaviour can go on before the teacher intervenes. When the structure of the class doesn't waver, the children feel confident and secure about how they should be behaving in the classroom.

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When the children do ultimately test the boundaries, the teacher should firmly, but fairly make sure they adhere to the structure. When there is a need for a consequence to be administered, the teacher should make sure she gives encouragement to these children, encouraging them for success in the future. The teacher should make sure the children understand that they are doing this for their own good. Soon they'll see the teacher and the structure in the classroom is there to show them the importance of cooperating and working successfully in the community at large.

The structure of the classroom is what keeps the children behaving appropriately. It is such an important factor in classroom management, and therefore the teacher should never fail to make sure the structure is in place, no matter how discouraged she may be feeling. If the teacher at any point fails to deal with children who have ignored the rules and behaved inappropriately, the children will think the teacher agrees with their infraction. The children will think it's permissible to act however they desire. The teacher doesn't need to worry about using the word "no". sometimes that makes a bigger impact on children when it is in the negative form and is more powerful.

Another element that helps the teacher manage the classroom is when the children are happy and interested in what they are learning. As was mentioned earlier, children who have difficulty making good choices during their work cycle and who aren't able to work independently, the teacher should give exciting lessons and have the children choose from a couple of follow-ups. This strategy really applies to the whole classroom. If the teacher is constantly giving exciting, engaging and interesting lessons, this will lead to spontaneous discipline in the classroom, as all the children will be occupied and happy while working.

To sum up this essay, there are many different elements that a Montessori teacher uses in their classroom management. Setting a structure for the class and enforcing it, with consequences if necessary is one element. Another is exciting and varied lessons by the teacher will keep the children engaged and working which automatically leads to decorum in the classroom. Giving the children freedom, along with its limits and the responsibilities that come with that freedom, is another factor in classroom management. When children have the freedom to choose what they learn, they are more interested and motivated to engage in work.