

SUPPORTING THE CASA DEI BAMBINI CHILD IN THE IMS MONTESSORI ENVIRONMENT AND AT HOME

"Help me do it by myself"

Since you are your child's first and most important teacher, you might be wondering about the kinds of activities you could be doing at home to help your child get off to a great start in the Montessori Casa dei Bambini programme. This information has been prepared as a source of suggestions and ideas, which we will be working on at school as well. Make your time exploring these activities fun and engaging. Happy learning!

Here are some general suggestions and guidelines which we follow at school, which you can also try at home:

- Give your child as much time as he/she needs to discover, as well as to complete a task.
- Be a keen observer - take the time to stand back and observe your child as s/he grows and changes. Note what s/ he can do today that s/he couldn't yesterday!
- Dr. Montessori urges adults not to be the child's servant: let your child do the work. We know you can do it, let the child do it. Give your child real opportunities to choose work that can contribute in the home.
- Post a sign in your kitchen to remind you and caregivers to "Help me to do it myself!"
- Give your child the opportunity to do the tasks that interest him/her.
- Smile and make positive eye contact with your child often as you explore the world together.
- If you have more than one language in your home, mother should use her native language and father should use his. Children at this age associate the language with the speaker, so try not to mix languages with a child, especially in one sentence. Obviously, your family needs a common language to communicate with each other, try to make a conscious switch to make the new language obvious to the child.
- Read, read, read in your native language! Enjoy a reading ritual with your child from birth. Children at this stage of development are learning about the world as it is. And so, books with photographs, realistic illustrations and stories based on real life activities are best. Books with elements of fantasy and anthropomorphisation are best left to children of 6 years of age and older.

- Remember that language is not only talking. Touch and facial expressions are also important ways of communicating with children.
- In the Montessori approach, setting up the activity and putting it away is as important as the activity itself. You can model this pattern at home.
- For the optimum quality time with your child, try switching off your mobile for a time.

SOCIAL SKILLS

1. Practice turn taking while playing games.
2. Help your child learn to initiate a conversation. Example: May I play with you? Can we share the blocks? Would you like a turn?
3. Role-play peaceful solutions to conflicts that could arise. Examples: talking it over, sharing, taking turns.
4. Make sure your child has contact with other children his/her age.
5. Encourage and practice cleaning up after play.

INDEPENDENCE

1. Be sure your child has had time away from you.
2. Help your child learn to dress him/herself:
 - putting on sweaters and jackets
 - fastening or tying boots
 - changing from boots to sneakers and back
 - zipping jackets
 - independent toileting
 - zipping and unzipping a backpack

ATTENDING SKILLS, LISTENING SKILLS AND FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

1. Read to your child every day.
2. Listen to a variety of age-appropriate music, talk about instruments you hear, the type of music it is and sing along.
3. Help your child follow simple two-step directions. Example: Please go to your room and get your pyjamas.
4. Limit screen time (eg. TV, phones, tablets and video games.)

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

1. Encourage your child to ask questions.
2. Talk about everyday experiences.

3. Use descriptive words. Example: This pear is juicy. Find your purple shirt with the white stripes.
4. Help your child classify objects into categories. Example: a doll or train set is a toy, a giraffe and an elephant is an animal, etc.
5. Help your child learn his/her full name, address, and telephone number.

MOTOR SKILLS: FINE AND GROSS

FINE MOTOR:

1. Use a variety of art materials. Example: crayons, markers, scissors, play dough, paints, etc.
2. Do puzzles.
3. String beads on laces.
4. Practice using a glue stick.

GROSS MOTOR:

1. Practice going up and down a slide safely.
2. Teach your child to pump his/her legs while swinging.
3. Practice throwing, catching, and kicking a ball.
4. Jump rope to jump rope rhymes.

READING AND WRITING READINESS

Many children now begin the Montessori Casa dei Bambini Programme with some letter/phonics knowledge. Here is how you can help your child.

1. Read to your child every day. Encourage your child to chime in. Ask questions such as, "What do you think will happen next?" and "Why do you think he did that?"
2. Play sound games by looking for objects that begin or end with a particular sound.
3. Recite nursery rhymes and sing rhyming songs.
4. Enable your child to experiment with writing. Have a writing area set aside – or put together a small case. Include markers, pencils, stamps, stencils, and special paper.
5. Put a wipe-off message board on your child's door and write messages to him/her each day. Put one on your door as well and encourage your child to write back.
6. Put magnetic letters on the refrigerator and let your child experiment with making words.
7. Make collages of words and letters cut from magazines.

8. Encourage children to write letters or send email to relatives.
9. Help your child write his/her name correctly: first letters capitalised and the rest in lower case letters.
10. Help your child locate print and characters in the environment (Stop signs, familiar buildings, store and restaurant signs, etc.)
11. Help by volunteering to read in the library or in your child's class.

MATHS READINESS

1. Whenever you use maths, talk about it. Example: I am cutting the apple in half. We need to buy six oranges – can you help me count them? I see three horses.
2. Read nursery rhymes and storybooks that incorporate numbers.
3. Count whenever you can, anything you can!
4. Practice one-to-one correspondence by letting your child set the table or hand out snacks.
5. Play games that incorporate maths such as "Chutes and Ladders" and other board games. Playing cards are also great for matching games and for ordering numbers.
6. Set the timer for an activity to give your child a sense of how long it lasts.
7. Give your child a snack that's easy to count. Have him/her count the pieces and subtract them as they are eaten.
8. Whenever you check your child's height to see how much he/she has grown, talk about measurement.
9. Start a dollar jar. Use this for counting and estimating. Example: We have 10 dollars in the jar-- is that enough to buy a piece of candy that costs five dollars?
10. Have your child sort toys by size, colour and/or shape.
11. Point out shapes around the house and when doing errands.
12. Let your child help with the measuring when cooking or baking.
13. Put a large wipe-off calendar on the refrigerator and mark down special events. Countdown the days to each of these occasions. Recite the days of the week, and stop when you get to the day you are on.