Agenda

9:00-9:30   Registration

9:30-9:45   Introductions

9:45- 10:45   The Prepared Environment

10:45-11:00 Break

11:00-11:30 Group Work

11:30-12:15 Group Discussion

12:15-12:30 Questions and closing

Order
Order is something that pervades a Montessori environment. For the small child in the Children's House the physical order of the prepared environment is obvious but order also underlies all of the less tangible aspects of the environment e.g. the consistency of the adults and their approach, the order of presentation etc. The order of the classroom is also reflective of the child's time, space and culture.

Indirect preparation
Although activities are prepared with their own developmental aim in mind they also prepare for something that will come later in the child's development. Sometimes this preparation is for something that will occur soon but it also refers to something that may occur much later in the child's life e.g. reading and writing.

Movement
The environment must allow the child's free movement so that he can exercise his freedom to bring himself into contact with the things and people in his environment that he needs for his development.

Freedom
Essential to the prepared environment is the child's freedom – to choose, to work for as long as he wants to, to not work, to work without being interrupted by other children or by the constraints of a timetable etc. – as long as his activity does not interfere with other children's right and freedom to do the same.

Choice

The environment must give the child the opportunity to choose what he does from a range of activities that are suitable to his developmental needs.

Materials

The materials that we choose for the environment must act as keys to the child's development and we need to prepare the environment with this in mind. The keys we choose will be directed by the child's essential developmental needs at each age range.

Control of Error

The environment and in particular the materials should be prepared in a way that allows the child to become aware of his mistakes and to correct them for himself so that he understands that it is all right to be wrong and that we can learn from our mistakes.

Mixed Age Range

Another non negotiable part of the environment is the formation of a community with at least a three year age range, This allows for children to learn from each other in a non competitive atmosphere and directly prepares the child for living in society.

Independence

The environment must be prepared to enable the child to become physically independent of the adult. Because he is able to do things for himself he starts to be able to choose and decide things for himself. The environment must allow for this both in the way that the materials are prepared and in the approach of the adults.

Role of the Adult

The adult is also part of the Montessori environment. The role of this adult is not like the teacher in a traditional environment, however – whose role is to teach the children. The role of the adult in a Montessori environment is to facilitate the child to teach himself by following his own internal urges that will lead him to take what he needs from the things and people around him.

A Montessori Environment........

- Displays materials that are interesting, complete, and in working order
- Stimulates the interest of children, giving them a place to do things for themselves
- Accommodates the physical, social, and cognitive needs of children of mixed ages
- Appeals to all five senses (taste, smell, touch, sight, and hearing)
- Allows children to correct themselves through their own experience
- Provides natural and real-life materials and activities as often as possible
- Encourages children to learn to the best of their abilities
- Gives children room to move and explore without disturbing others
- Helps children gain confidence and independence by encouraging them to choose their own activities

Above all, order, cleanliness, and beauty

- Place for children to store personal items, such as coats and indoor shoes
- Place for children to store projects, both in-progress and completed works
- Plenty of open space to move around easily and comfortably
- Adequate open space to sit together during circle time
- Low shelves which form a variety of activity areas without closing off space or visibility
- Neutral-colored walls

- A few interesting, real-life pictures placed at the children's eye level
- A hard floor surface that is easily cleaned
- Child sized tables and chairs which can be moved easily
- A few beautiful objects that break easily
- Variety in texture and color of furnishings
- Living plants