**MONTESSORI EDUCATION**

**Montessori education** is an [educational](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education) approach developed by Italian physician and educator [Maria Montessori](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Montessori). Montessori developed many of her ideas while working with mentally challenged children. Her first school, *La casa dei bambini*, was opened to working class children in the slum neighborhood of San Lorenzo in [Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome). Her approach was characterized by an emphasis on independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural [psychological](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychology), physical, and social development.

Maria Montessori began to develop her philosophy and methods in 1897, attending courses in [pedagogy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedagogy) at the [University of Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sapienza_University_of_Rome) and reading the educational theory of the previous two hundred years. In 1907, she opened her first classroom, the Casa dei Bambini, or Children's House, in a tenement building in Rome. From the beginning, Montessori based her work on her observations of children and experimentation with the environment, materials, and lessons available to them. She frequently referred to her work as ["scientific pedagogy"](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Montessori#Scientific_pedagogy). In 1901, Maria Montessori met Alice and Leopold (Baron & Baroness) Franchetti of Città di Castello. They found many matching points between their work. Maria Montessori was invited to hold her first course for teachers and to set up a "Casa dei Bambini" at Villa Montesca, the home of the Franchetti's in Città di Castello. Maria Montessori decided to move to Città di Castello where she lived for 2 years and where she refined her methodology together with Alice Franchetti. In that period, she published her book in Città di Castello, as mentioned before. The Franchetti Barons financed the publication of the book and the methodology had the name "Method Franchetti-Montessori", until the fascists ordered the cancellation of the baroness’ name from the Method because she was Jewish. Alice Franchetti died in 1911 at 37.

Montessori education spread to the United States in 1931 and became widely known in educational and popular publications. However, conflict between Montessori and the American educational establishment, and especially the publication in 1914 of a critical booklet, *The Montessori System Examined* by influential education teacher [William Heard Kilpatrick](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Heard_Kilpatrick), limited the spread of her ideas, and they languished after 1914. Montessori education returned to the United States in 1960 and has since spread to thousands of schools there. Montessori continued to extend her work during her lifetime, developing a comprehensive model of psychological development from birth to age 24, as well as educational approaches for children ages 0 to 3, 3 to 6, and 6 to 12. She wrote and lectured about ages 12 to 18 and beyond, but these programs were not developed during her lifetime.

Montessori education also spread to [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) when Maria Montessori [spent time there during World War II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori_in_India).

**MONTESSORI EDUCATION THEORY**

Montessori education is fundamentally a model of [human development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Developmental_psychology), and an educational approach based on that model. The model has two basic principles. First, children and developing adults engage in psychological self-construction by means of interaction with their environments. Second, children, especially under the age of six, have an innate path of psychological development. Based on her observations, Montessori believed that children who are at liberty to choose and act freely within an environment prepared according to her model would act spontaneously for optimal development.

Montessori saw universal, innate characteristics in human psychology which her son and collaborator Mario Montessori identified as "human tendencies" in 1957.

In the Montessori approach, these human tendencies are seen as driving behavior in every stage of development, and education should respond to and facilitate their expression.

Montessori's education method called for free activity within a "prepared environment", meaning an educational environment tailored to basic human characteristics, to the specific characteristics of children at different ages, and to the individual personalities of each child. The function of the environment is to help and allow the child to develop independence in all areas according to his or her inner psychological directives. In addition to offering access to the Montessori materials appropriate to the age of the children, the environment should exhibit the following characteristics:

* An arrangement that facilitates movement and activity
* Beauty and harmony, cleanliness of environment
* Construction in proportion to the child and her/his needs
* Limitation of materials, so that only material that supports the child's development is included
* Order
* Nature in the classroom and outside of the classroom