

Toddler Newsletter

The following article was taken from a Montessori Teacher Training blog:

The Importance of Precise Language in the Montessori Environment

One should not aim at being possible to understand, but at being impossible to misunderstand.

~ Quintillion, Roman Rhetorician, the first century C.E.

The main purpose of language is to let others know what we are thinking by communicating our thoughts, ideas and feelings, analyzing previous experiences, and generating new ideas. The ability to order our world and communicate our cultural ideas separates us from the rest of the animal kingdom. Montessori believed that language is an innate ability and that the sensitive period for language begins in utero and lasts until the age of six. During this sensitive period, the child absorbs language through listening to the sound of her environment. Through every conversation, every book read aloud, every song that is sung, and every new word that is taught, the child is learning language. It is, therefore, crucial that adults are mindful of the precision of language they use. Just as the environment is carefully prepared for the child, our words must be precisely thought out as well. During the first three years of life, patterns of speech are formed which will be the basis of speech for the rest of a child's life. Montessori cautioned parents and caretakers of infants and toddlers to refrain from using baby talk as it inhibits language development. Dr. Montessori emphasized speaking slowly and clearly with correct pronunciation and enunciation so that children develop proper language patterns.

In the Montessori environment, adults continue with modeling correct and precise language. Activities are often presented with few words so as to draw attention and give importance to the words that are spoken. Using too many words in an explanation tends to drown out the intent of the message. In the Montessori environment, speech is slow and deliberate, giving the child every opportunity to comprehend the exact meaning.

Precision of language can best be seen by the early lessons of Grace and Courtesy in the Montessori environment. Montessori teachers use precise, positive language to direct and redirect student behavior. Here are some examples of how this is used in the Montessori environment. Note how clearly the meaning is imparted by the specific word choice.

* Please walk.

* Please walk around the mat.

* Please go back and walk around the mat

* Please go back to the snack table and walk.

* Please push in your chair.

* Please carry materials with two hands.

* Please keep all your materials on the mat.

* Please return your materials to the shelf.

Through precise language, children learn to develop control over their own words. Precise language holds their interest; there is value in the words they hear. There is little chance to misunderstand because thoughts and expectations are clearly stated.

Celebrations of Life:

John - 3/5

Noah - 3/14

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