



MMI CONNECT

Feel the Connection!

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WRITING PRECEDES READING IN MONTESSORI

“Writing develops easily and spontaneously in a little child in the same way as speech, which is also a motor translation of sounds that have been heard. Reading on the other hand, forms a part of an abstract intellectual culture. It interprets ideas acquired by graphic symbols and is acquired only later.”
(Montessori, 1967)



The ability to write and read is unarguably critical to children’s success in school and later in life.

In 1907, at the first *Casa Dei Bambini* (Children’s House), Maria Montessori discovered that children as young as three and a half years old were writing. Yes! They were writing before they could read - before they could ever read what they have written!

According to Montessori, writing skills just as every other acquirement of knowledge and skills should be learned in isolation. Hence, it should be learned separately from reading

This discovery contradicts the assumption many parents traditionally uphold which is children learn to read first before they learn to write.

Montessori advocates that learning to

write as all other learnings is governed by the Law of Natural Development.

“The child’s explosion into writing is closely connected with his special sensitivity to language, and this was operative at the time when he began to speak. By the age of five and a half or six, this sensitivity has ceased to exist; so it is clear that writing can be learned with joy and enthusiasm only before that age. Children older than this have lost the special opportunity which nature grants them of learning to write without making special and conscious efforts of application and will.”—Dr. Maria Montessori, (The Absorbent Mind, p. 173)

According to Montessori, children are sensitive to writing between three and a half and four and a half years old and consequently to reading between four and a half and five and a half years old. Hence, children are introduced to writing at its sensitive period, which makes learning seamless and effortless.

In Montessori, the prerequisite skills to writing are a refinement of motor skills and ability to recognise and sound the letters (symbols) of the alphabet.

Children undergo learning to write in three- stage process. Every child passes through the stages at varied phase and rate.

Stage 1. Phonemic Awareness:

Recognizing and sounding the letters of the alphabet by tracing the Sandpaper Letters Development of oral language through storytelling & etc.

Stage 2. Word building by working with the Large Movable Alphabets

Stage 3. Write to pen thoughts on paper

The Montessori principle of “indirect preparation” in writing is embedded in the materials and set the foundation for learning to write.

The Practical Life exercises, for instance, enhance the fine motor skills.



Spooning and Transferring activity

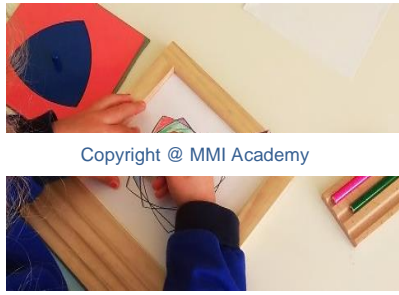
When children are engaged in pouring, spooning, buttoning, squeezing and transferring activities, they are strengthening their fingers and wrist muscles as well as reinforcing eye-hand coordination that, indirectly prepare them for reading and writing.

The Sensorial materials are filled with features that prepares children for reading and writing.





The thumb, index and middle fingers that grip the knobbed cylinders for example strengths the “dynamic tripod” grasp – the grasp used for holding a pencil.



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The Touch Board supports the development of muscular control through which children acquire ‘lightness of touch’ sensation; an important quality which prepares children to move writing instrument over a writing surface. The Touch Board enhances children’s capacity to lift fingers vertically and place onto a writing instrument, like a crayon, a pencil or a pen. It also enables children to acquire the capacity to move from left to right and leave spacing when writing.

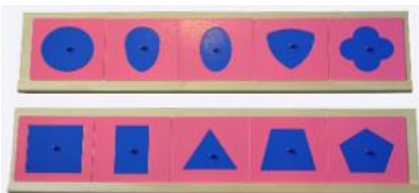


The tracing of the botany cabinet leaf shapes and the geometry cabinet with their little fingers provide all movement control crucial for writing.



At about three years of age, children in the Montessori classroom are directly prepared for writing. The metal insets are used to help children gain pencil control. They learn to trace the insets and frames to make various shapes and colour them with fine lines. Through repeated practice, they master the pencil control skill.

Insects for Design



Through these indirect and direct preparatory materials, the muscular mechanism for controlling the pencil is developed.

The indirect preparation for ideas and words, a prerequisite component of writing is presented to children through language activities such as storytelling, reading, reciting of poems and nursery rhymes, show and tell as well as conversations. Reading aloud to children help them explore new facts, ideas, acquire the right word pronunciation. Endowed with the absorbent mind, children absorb all the qualities needed for writing in a rich language environment.

By three and a half years old, Montessori children are introduced to the sounds of the letters (symbols) of the alphabet. The Sandpaper letters (alphabet) are used for this purpose. The children now learn to associate the symbols with its respective phonetic sound



This is done by allowing children to trace the sandpaper letters with their fingers while concurrently sounding each letter, learning in the process that the strokes are used eventually to write the letter on the paper.

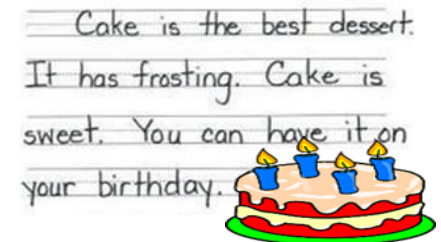
When children have internalized the sounds associated with each letter, they will be introduced to the Large Moveable Alphabet (LMA). The LMA is a tool a child use to begin “writing”—even before they develop the fine-motor skills. Children engage in ‘writing’, using the LMA through a word building exercise.

One of the first LMA activities introduced by a teacher is asking a group of children working with the LMA to guess the name of an animal that makes “Meow” sound, for example. Children would excitedly shout ‘Cat!’ When children have the idea of ‘Cat’, the teacher can encourage the children to sound out each phoneme and look for the matching symbols to form the word.



In using the LMA to write, children overcome the difficulty of controlling the fingers and hands in forming the letters.

Once children have discovered how to use the letter sounds to construct words, they progress towards joining words together into sentences of their own construction, and from there, they experience an explosion of writing ability and enthusiasm.



After mastering the skills associated with producing written letters and words, reading naturally occurs as the next step.

Children discover that they are now able to see printed words on a piece of paper and decode their meaning. They will suddenly show a new, heightened interest in the written word.



Writing is the organic process of a seamless transformation of reading. It is obvious that reading is inherent in most writing, which is a putting down on paper of one’s own thoughts and reflections of others.



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For any enquiries, kindly contact us
MMI Academy
@ adminacademy@modern-montessori.com