

Classroom Observations (Visiting the Classroom)

Villa del Monte proudly has an “Open Door” Policy for parents. When you come for an observation, you will observe for 30 min up to 1 hour and one adult at a time. Parents are asked to refrain from visiting the classroom for the first 6 weeks of school, so that the class can build its sense of community. After that, parents are encouraged to visit as often as they like. Spending time at school is a wonderful way for you to understand what your child is experiencing.

You are welcome to take notes during your observation. Write down any questions, comments, or situations you would like to discuss. We will be glad to schedule a time to talk to you.

Before you visit, please take a moment to read through the observation guidelines below.

OBSERVATION GUIDELINES

Observing in a Montessori classroom is a bit like watching animals in their natural habitat—the less intrusive your presence, the more you will see of the children’s natural activity in the environment. Again, for the best experience, we ask that you follow our guidelines to ensure a smooth operation of the classroom for all the children...

- **Please turn off your cell phone and put it away.** *If need be, leave the classroom to talk on your cell phone.*
- **To protect the children’s privacy, please do not take pictures.**
- Remember to use an inside voice.
- Parents who are coming to observe the classroom and/or work with their child may not bring their other child/ren.
- You will be given an initial seating location during your visit. Feel free to move your chair from place to place away from the children. You are also welcome to sit on the floor while your child does work on a rug. (We don’t sit on the tables or shelves!)
- Please do not initiate conversation with the children. If a child greets you, respond appropriately of course, but do not seek to prolong the conversation. If they continue to speak to you, you can say, “I’m here to observe the children.” Remember, you are a fly on the wall for the other children.
- The teacher may not be able to engage or answer questions, as she is working with children. You will have time for questions after school hours.
- Let your child lead. He/she will show you the things that are important to him/her. (Frequent visits will give you a good overview.)
- Avoid correcting your child’s mistakes. Many of Dr. Montessori’s materials are self-correcting, which means that a direct correction from an adult is not needed. When you

see an error, you are observing what your child is in the process of learning. If you wonder how the Montessori approach would address a particular mistake, discreetly show the teacher what you are seeing and watch how she handles it. **Never correct another person's child; it's best to avoid interactions with other children.

- The time you spend in the classroom is a special time for your child to show you the work he/she enjoys. The other children will be told that this is private time for you and your child. This allows you to focus on your child and keeps your visit from disrupting all the other children's day.
- Lastly, as adorable as the fellow students in the class are, do not pick anyone else's child up or hold them in your lap.

SOME THINGS YOU MIGHT LOOK FOR DURING YOUR OBSERVATION

Settle into the observer's chair and take a moment to get oriented. Notice how the classroom is organized – the practical life, sensorial, language, math, science, geography areas, the snack/water table and so on.

- Look at the children to see if they are engaged both as individuals and as members of the classroom community. Are you observing collaboration and social interaction? (Collaborative play is a type of play that involves taking turns, sharing, following rules, negotiating, and compromising. Children who engage in collaborative play work together on projects to reach a common goal and normally are 4+ years old. Children ages 0 months to 36 months are in the solitary, onlooker and parallel play phases.)
- Watch for children's sense of order in how they do their work. Does s/he get out a rug, and then fetch the material to put on the rug? Work with the material in a purposeful way? Return the material to its place on the shelf? (The physical order of the work is helping the children build mental order.)
- Look for ways the children are working toward independence: choosing their own tasks, working at their own pace, and repeating tasks as often and for as long as they wish.
- Notice some examples of respect children and adults show both for others and for the materials, walk around work rugs instead of over them, clean up spills, put away materials, so they are ready for the next person, and so on.
- Look for concentration. If a student's concentration is interrupted, it is interesting to note whether s/he gets permanently sidetracked or eventually returns to the work.
- Notice which academic skills the children are building.
- Look for joy in learning. It may be manifested loudly with "I did it!" or quietly with a sigh or a relaxed demeanor.

You are in for a treat; we hope you enjoy your visit! See you soon!

We look forward to sharing more of Villa del Monte Montessori with you.