

Sensorial Work and Executive Function Ages 3-12

Updated 2017

One of the most unique areas of the Montessori curriculum begins in the primary years (ages 3-6) with the Sensorial Work. This work includes Montessori educational materials specifically designed to isolate the skills of differentiation and sequencing within one area of the senses. Maria Montessori said that sensorial training "makes a man an observer." Neuroscientist Dee Coulter (2007) asserts that what makes a person brilliant is his or her ability to pay attention to details that others have missed or failed to see in the proper light. Refinement of the senses is crucial to the development of the mind, but its usefulness does not stop there. The sensorial works play an important part in preparing children for all academic areas of the classroom as well. They include precursor skills related to quantity, relationships, sequencing, and concepts of print that ready children for studies in the areas of math and language.

Sensorial Work						
Dimension	Color	Form	Auditory	Tactile	Olfactory	Gustatory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cylinder blocks • pink tower • brown stair • red rods • knobless cylinders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Color Tablets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • geometric cabinet • geometric solids • Constructive Triangles • monomial cube • binomial cube • trinomial cube 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sound cylinders • bells • practicing silence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rough and smooth boards • touch tablets • fabric matching • mystery bag • stereognostic sorting • baric tablets • thermic tablets • thermic bottles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smelling bottles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tasting bottles

With the concrete foundation of skills established through Sensorial Work such as classification, sequencing, and discrimination, the child has built a basis on which to refine his or her executive function and critical thinking abilities. At the elementary levels, this is strengthened through further work in sequencing, time management, organization, classification, categorization, problem solving, strategy and reasoning focuses, and more. These concepts are woven into the curriculum itself, such as in the areas of botany and zoology (Tree of Life classification), hands-on experimentation with the scientific method and engineering cycle, compare-and-contrast exercises, hands-on algebraic work and application, Socratic debate, and work with breath, movement, mindfulness, and silence.