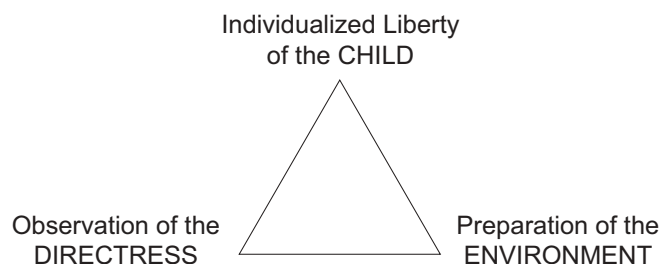


The Montessori Method facilitates learning by discovery rather than by mere instruction. With instruction, a child must react by listening to something that is spoken or by reading something that is written by someone other than himself. The result of instruction is information - the facts of what is being taught. Discovery promotes a deeper level of learning from the very beginning of the process. In discovery a child responds to what is natural. Learning is processed through the senses and the imagination. The senses perceive concrete concepts through materials that can be observed directly. The imagination helps the child to progress to levels of abstraction where concepts that cannot be observed must be constructed. The result of discovery is a self-directed process that leads to a new and deeper understanding of the concepts. More simply put, discovery is the process of learning something without being taught.

Maria Montessori believed in education, rather than the rote transfer of information. She believed we must seek to serve the whole child and to nurture the human potential of each individual. A child naturally learns to walk and talk, and Montessori found that within the child is the same type of ability to naturally acquire skills for reading, writing and mathematics. In the Montessori environment the materials are designed to be self-correcting thereby allowing the child to learn in an atmosphere of success and positive reinforcement. The child corrects his own errors as he works towards mastery of concepts, through repetition of manipulations with the learning materials. His motivation is not for external reward but for internal fulfillment.

The educational philosophy and methodology of Montessori is not just another educational theory. **It is the "scientific method" of education.** Montessori employed the scientific method in her observations of the child and applied her knowledge of medicine to create a new model of the human stages of development. She found a progression of four Planes of Development in which there are Sensitive Periods where development occurs most naturally and more quickly.

To "follow the child" and to meet his needs is the basic philosophy of Montessori and this is achieved by means of the pyramid of Montessori principles:



To take one or two of her principles - as many persons have done - and attempt to put them into practice without regarding their relationship to the whole, is bound to result in something bizarre and lopsided. Such fragmentary applications of Montessori's ideas exemplify the old motto: 'Corruptio optimi pessima.'

To remain on the level of practice, without a grasp of her principles, is to be in constant danger of floundering from one error to another.

(E.M. Standing, from Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work)

As E.M. Standing expressed further, it is difficult to know where to begin when giving an account of the Montessori system of education. The principle of Montessori needs to be understood as interrelated parts of a whole, each as essential organs to the living system. It takes at least a year of studying Montessori principles before one can reach a fundamental level of understanding.