

Why Stay For Kindergarten?

The Montessori learning experience is cumulative: what a child learns in the kindergarten year builds on what was learned in previous Montessori years. The kindergarten year is the culmination of this learning when the child internalizes these early concrete experiences, building a strong educational foundation. The value of the first two years cannot be fully realized if the child does not continue working with the Montessori materials to complete the three-year cycle.

The time spent in a toddler program is not included in this cycle. It is referring to Primary or Preschool years.

The Kindergarten year in Primary Montessori is the final year of a three-year cycle. Your child has spent two years preparing to be the class leader. Kindergarteners thrive on helping the three and four year olds and being a role model. Mentoring helps them both socially and academically. As they share work they have mastered, they reinforce what they know and strengthen their social confidence.

Earlier lessons come together during the Kindergarten year and become part of how the child thinks and achieves. Montessori students use concrete materials and experience to learn academic subjects such as math and reading. In the final year, they continue work with core classroom materials, using them as a bridge into abstract thinking. Many Montessori parents are amazed when a four year old, who did not appear to be reading, "magically" explodes into reading and writing during the Kindergarten year. The hands-on math materials, such as the golden beads, become less necessary as the child progresses to more abstract pencil and paper math exercises. It does feel like magic, but it is really the culmination of the first two years in the Primary Montessori classroom.

Montessori Kindergarten children have spent two years in the same classroom where they were supported, treated with respect, and encouraged to behave responsibly. They know what to expect, have learned how to learn, and to value and care about the other children in their classroom community. Their teacher knows them well and stands ready to guide them through the Kindergarten year.

Most students enter traditional first grade at their neighborhood school. Students who complete the three-year cycle Primary Montessori and enter traditional first grade generally make the transition easily. These students are normally self-confident, enthusiastic, advanced learners, comfortable in a variety of environments. Primary Montessori students typically do well in traditional first grade classrooms.

When it comes time for you to decide your child's educational future, please talk to your child's teacher about the importance of the Kindergarten year in Montessori.

My three daughters began Montessori at age three and transitioned to public school in 1st grade. We kept all our children in Montessori for the Kindergarten year because we understood and valued that Primary Montessori is designed as a three year cycle. During the Kindergarten year, they mastered the skills they started at age three. I strongly felt that the math and reading skills they gained in Montessori kindergarten outweighed the benefit of starting public school in Kindergarten. Initially I believe that Montessori works best in three year cycles. The final year is when kids "put it all together" academically. My kids also enjoyed getting to be the expert and leader in the class, especially my younger two daughters who don't get that experience at home. It was also nice to have my five year olds in a class they were comfortable in - same teacher, same kids - they are still so small in K.

My daughters made friends quickly in their new 1st grade classrooms and enjoyed having friends in both schools. Our 6th grader is a very socially aware and confident child. She had an easy transition both socially and academically. Our 4th grader is a little shyer. The first week of 1st grade she talked about missing her old teacher and friends, but both her teacher and I observed that she had new friends right away and she quickly settled in. After learning those lessons, we were able to make the social transition even easier for our youngest child, now in 1st grade.

In my view, 1st grade is a natural transition point out of Montessori into any elementary program. I think some parents worry that their kids won't make friends if they don't go to the same school K-5th. Each year of elementary school they change to a new teacher and a new mix of kids anyway. My advice is to have confidence that your kids will thrive.

- A Happy Montessori Parent



The child above is getting ready to use the moveable alphabet, which is a Montessori material used to teach children to spell words without forcing them to write with a pencil. It's a set of formed letters, with 10 of each vowel, and five of each consonant. Vowels are always a different color than the consonants (in this case, red) to help point out their role in forming sounds.

The child below is writing number 1 to 100 using the Montessori Hundred Board which assists children in their counting.

