

# Family Connection

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“A child who becomes a master of his acts through... repeated exercises [of grace and courtesy], and who has been encouraged by the pleasant and interesting activities in which he has been engaged, is a child filled with health and joy and remarkable for his calmness and discipline”

—Maria Montessori, 2007. *The Discovery of the Child*.



## ESTABLISHING PEACE IS THE WORK OF EDUCATION

BY HEATHER WHITE

Educating for Peace is a cornerstone of the Montessori Method. It allows children to recognize and appreciate the interconnectedness of the entire universe and to accept their rights and responsibilities as global citizens.

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that “establishing peace is the work of education” (Montessori 2019, 24). For this reason, peace education is interwoven into all areas of the classroom, presented as a way of being instead of as an isolated curricular area.

In a well-prepared Montessori environment, conditions are created to facilitate concentration, freedom within limits, conflict resolution, and collaboration. These are the building blocks of peace education. Montessori guides assist students in solving conflicts amicably, modeling ways to communicate, offering positive choices, and encouraging self-reflection. An inherent benefit of the mixed age groupings in Montessori classrooms, older students also serve as role models for younger children, setting the example for becoming peaceful classroom citizens.

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## Grace and Courtesy

The Montessori Grace and Courtesy curriculum goes hand-in-hand with peace education. These explicit lessons that help children understand how to respect one another, themselves, and their environment lay the foundation for becoming peaceful community members.

Basic rules mold and adapt as children age. The same words and principles used to help young children understand self-discipline apply for a lifetime. What formerly helped a preschool-aged child learn how to use their words rather than their hands or clean up after eating a snack can now offer adolescents and young adults with skills to make their local communities a better place. Respecting oneself encourages students to do work that brings good to the world. Respecting others empowers adolescents to stand up for the rights of oppressed groups. Respect for the environment might inspire students to lead recycling programs or do their part to reverse climate change.

## Respectful Collaboration

Montessori students are empowered to effectively communicate their needs, learning how to collaborate with one another to solve problems. Teachers model and coach young children with words they can use.

After being shown how to engage in conflict resolution for many years, it is not unusual for elementary and secondary

students to do so independently. They may practice role playing in small groups to solve problems and often even hold student-led meetings to discuss, brainstorm, and resolve conflicts.

## Personal Desires for Peace and Social Justice

As students continue to mature, they gain the ability to consider more complex topics of peace as they learn about the issues facing their local and global communities. They begin brainstorming ways to address these concerns and explore how to express their own personal desires.

Students learn about the cultures, history, and challenges of other countries, and may even come up with solutions to challenges surrounding social justice, racial inequity, and poverty. Montessori elementary and secondary students also regularly

participate in community outreach initiatives, doing their part to make the world a better place.

## A Promise for The Future

By creating inclusive, accepting environments where diversity is honored and celebrated, children learn how to become peaceful, positive members of a thriving society, creating a promise to make the world a better place for generations to come.

References: Montessori, Maria. 2019. *Education and Peace*. Netherlands: Montessori-Pierson Publishing Company.



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# The Montessori Knobbed Cylinders:

## Introducing the Young Child to Changes in Dimension

By Cynthia Brunold-Conesa

Excerpted from the  
Montessori Life Blog.

Scan or click to read  
the full article.



The Montessori sensorial materials are a central component of the Early Childhood (EC) classroom, and are designed to help the child develop and refine their sense of sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. The materials for visual discrimination are varied—some focus on color, some on shape, and others on dimension. Those in the latter category include the Pink Tower, the Brown Stair, and the Red Rods. The Knobbed Cylinders are the first materials presented to the child in this sequence, the ones that set in motion thinking about changes in dimension. As a sensorial material, the Knobbed Cylinders engage both the child's sense of vision and touch.

### Physical Properties of the Knobbed Cylinders

The material consists of four sets of ten wooden cylinders. Each set includes a block of wood with a hole for each cylinder. The cylinders are topped with a small knob, which facilitates the removal and replacement of the cylinders within their corresponding holes.

**There are 4 different blocks, including:**

**BLOCK 1:** Cylinders increase in height and diameter

**BLOCK 2 :** Cylinders increase in diameter as height remains constant

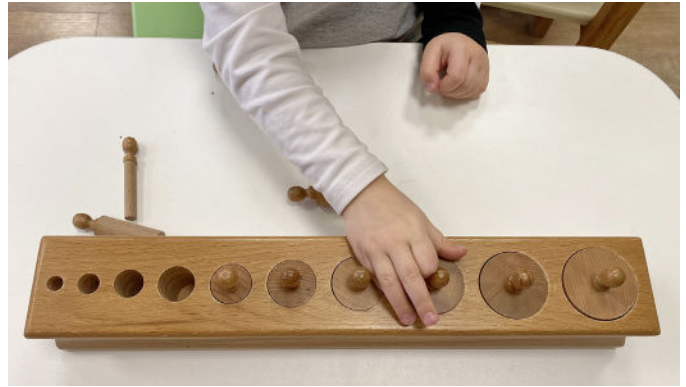
**BLOCK 3:** Cylinders increase in diameter as they decrease in height

**BLOCK 4:** Cylinders increase in height, diameter remains constant

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### Trial, Error, Retrial, Success, and Repetition

Once the child has been presented with the steps for removing and replacing the cylinders in sequence, the teacher places the pieces randomly on the table. This way, the child has to more actively apply their skills of visual discrimination, together with their sense of touch, in order to find the correct placement for each cylinder. This occurs, initially, through trial and error. Montessori's own words from her 1914 handbook describe the process. While the passage is lengthy, it give us a glimpse into the child's experience as observed by Montessori (31-32):

*But how is the child to find the right place for each of the little cylinders which lie mixed upon the table? He first makes trials; it often happens that he places a cylinder which is too large for the empty hole over which he puts it. Then, changing its place, he tries others until the cylinder goes in. Again, the contrary may happen; that is to say, the cylinder may slip too easily into a hole too big for it. In that case it has taken a place that does not belong to it at all, but to a larger cylinder. In this way one cylinder at the end will be left out without a place, and it will not be possible to find one that fits. Here the child cannot help seeing his mistake in concrete form. He is perplexed, his little mind is faced with a problem which interests him intensely. Before, all the cylinders fitted, now there is one that will not fit. The little one stops, frowning, deep in thought. He begins to feel the little buttons and finds that some cylinders have too much room. He thinks that perhaps they are out of their right place and tries to place them correctly. He repeats the process again and again, and finally he succeeds. Then it is that he breaks into a smile of triumph. The exercise arouses the intelligence of the child; he wants to repeat it right from the beginning and, having learned by experience, he makes another attempt. Little children from three to three and a half years old have repeated the exercise up to forty times without losing their interest in it [emphasis added].*

As the second, third, and fourth sets are presented, Montessori writes that “the change of shape strikes the child and reawakens his interest.” As the child gains mastery of each set, the challenge can be increased by mixing the pieces of two, three, or all four sets. Finally, the child can try the exercises while blindfolded, fully engaging their haptic perception (how we see with our hands).



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