**THE PRIMARY PROGRAM AT MESANGES ECOLE BILINGUE MONTESSORI**

THE CHILD OF 6-12 YEARS OLD; A BEING IN A STATE OF METAMORPHOSIS

A baby tooth starts to wiggle…… and a new chapter begins.

This can happen anywhere, between 5 and 7 years old. It is a joyous moment for the child and his family to see him or her become “big”.

At the same time, parents and close ones realize that the tooth is not the only thing moving. The whole child moves; the body is changing, everything becomes of interest, he starts asking questions on every theme, wanting to understand how and why, he enjoys challenges, he becomes more preoccupied with the moral sense of justice and his own morality, he loves heroes and aspires to be like them, he enjoys being part of a group and wants to be integrated socially…. What a tornado!

Where has the absorbent and discovering child gone? Well, he has transformed from the absorbent child to the reasoning child.

This reasoning spirit creates a growing need for abstraction and intellectualization. He is not longer satisfied by the closed environment of the first plane of development (0-6 years old) and he needs to expand more and more his range of action to satisfy his mental development, his imagination as well as his social, psychological and moral development.

The child has the tools to continue to construct himself, but he cannot do it alone. Our role is to understand his needs, to welcome them and to support him so he can advance on a road towards an intelligent satisfaction of his needs and internal development, while respecting himself and others around him. Our role as a Montessori Primary educator is to orient the child, feed his curiosity and his natural development, so that he can research and make discoveries in various areas of interest.

**Organization of the classroom**

The child of this age is a social child. He loves working in pairs and compares himself frequently to the other(s). Their opinion counts much more than the adult at times. For that reason, the lessons will be less and less individually but more and more in groups or very small groups.

Working in groups will be encouraged and supported, all the while respecting the liberty of movement and interactions that occur in the classroom. This will develop exchanges around the experiments, sharing of knowledge and discoveries and will create a more dynamic atmosphere. At the same time, solidarity amongst the students and a feeling of belonging, important for this age group, will be favored.

In addition to the purely academic learning, encouraged by this type of environment, it will also allow the children to experience a mini-society with rules, liberties and limits while the educator provides a safe framework.

While the Montessori materials corresponding to the primary curriculum maintain its attractiveness, they will no longer be based primarily on the senses, like in the 3-6 classroom. The materials, however, will invite the child to increased abstraction and reasoning. Additionally, the classroom will include different sources of information that the children will be free to consult according to the themes they are working on.

The bilingual facet of the classroom will be organized by having 1 ½ days in English, 1 ½ days in French and 1 day with both French and English educators becoming available.

**Towards a captivating education**

The primary educator works from a different base with the 6-12 year olds, a concept Maria Montessori called Cosmic Education ( according to the greek conception of comos, an organized world opposite of chaos). Under this theme, Education is perceived as a global entity that will enable the child to understand he is part of his society and of the universe.

The child will be brought to not only understand order in the universe and to have the widest range of knowledge possible, but also to understand the interrelation and interdependence of all the elements in that entirety and the role of each element in this universe.

To accompany the child in his development, we will present everything; the universe, life, human beings, intellectual tools etc.. Cosmic Education is the starting block to open and explore EVERYTHING, before getting into details. It will be the nucleus that will inspire research through wonderment and the exploration of all the elements in the universe.

In other words, 2 bases are essential; everything in the universe is interconnected and it is therefore important to reduce the limits between the different subjects that are taught and to highlight the importance of the togetherness. For that same reason, we will first present the global view and then, enter in the details. This process differs from traditional education, which is based on compartmentalization and starts with the details to then, explain the whole.

The core of the Montessori primary education is seen in the “big lessons”. These lessons or stories introduce the children to our world and its different parts. Their role is to stimulate the child’s curiosity, to amaze him while presenting him the elements of nature under a fascinating angle anchored in reality.

The themes of the big lessons are the following: The story of the creation of our universe or Big Bang, the story of the appearance of life on earth, the story of appearance of man, the story of the alphabet, and the story of numbers.

In this manner, all of the subject matters will be presented (geography, history, science, math and language arts) bouncing off the central idea, which is the history of our universe.

These big lessons are presented simultaneously with experiments (for example, the particles that attract and push off each other, layers of the earth etc, volcanoes.) Not only does this captures the children but also gives them a base in chemistry.

The teachers step back to allow the children’s curiosity to germinate so that they want to go further. And little by little, they will get into the details by taking specific important lessons for each subject matter or by redoing certain experiments. These doors stay open for exploration and the sense of wonderment and stimulation of curiosity remains the basis.

**Outings**

Several outings will be organized throughout the year, some planned at the beginning of the year and others will be added throughout the year. In the beginning, these outings will be organized by the adults. However, the goal is for the children to be able to propose themselves the outings they would like to do.

The teachers will implicate the children progressively in the planning and organization of these outings, in order to develop the necessary skills to be able to do it themselves. One objective, in the Montessori approach, is that children organize themselves these outings, in small groups, from the initial conception to the final feedback. This will be more or less in the second half of the primary in link with the competencies the children will develop at that point.

Through this autonomous process, the children develop the will, the capacity to choose, freedom, perseverance, conflict resolution, respect of the rules, the capacity to negotiate, self confidence, self esteem, autonomy, independence, sense of responsibility, self discipline, social development, how to work in groups and of course, the base of knowledge linked to the subject for which the outing was organized.

**Our attitude towards the child**

The adults in the classroom will be the role models for the type of behavior that they would like for the children to develop; To look out for one another, empathy, appreciation of effort, politeness, self respect and respect of others, curiosity, enthusiasm, listening without judgment, welcome own emotions and those of others.

The liberty of action and choice given to children in a Montessori classroom is based on these concepts and can only function if this way of acting and being are carried out. Little by little, the children will be able to integrate the basic rules of society and the respect of others, all the while maintaining his individuality and personal development. This freedom and independence is what will permit the development of creativity, to become responsible and to progressively move towards adulthood.

Each child is unique and our role is to see him like a wonder, a flower that needs to bloom without labeling and to see him each day with new eyes.

**MONTESSORI PRIMARY EDUCATION; SUBJECT BY SUBJECT**

THE PROGRAM AND THE CURRICULUM OF THE FRENCH DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WILL BE FOLLOWED WHILE RESPECTING THE MONTESSORI PEDAGOGY.

**Language**

The Big Story of the history of the alphabet constitutes a foundation for the child of the importance of language and will stir interest in the comprehension of how it functions.

Regardless whether a child comes from a Montessori background or not, the starting block may be different. However, we are aiming for the same goal.

The children will become familiar with the French and English syntax, encouraged to improve his writing and to progress with reading. This will allow him to little by little, be able to construct more and more complex phrases, to better organize his train of thought, write more structure texts and also to develop a sensitivity that will bring him to appreciate reading more and more. We will introduce him different ways to utilize language, the different styles: a story, correspondence, literature, theater, poetry, debate, a presentation etc.

**Mathematics/Geometry**

And what if, we, the adults, put aside our memories of math from childhood? Whether they are positive or negative, they all have this hereditary belief that “math is difficult”! This has led to a misconception that someone good in math is “smart” and someone poor in math is, well, more letters oriented.

Well, not only are human beings mathematically inclined in their thought process but additionally, children find mathematics, a subject that is comforting and reassuring because it is logical. While following cosmic education, it is part of our universe.

This idea will be suggested during the Big Story of the history of numbers and other stories linked to math and geometry. These stories bring life to the subject and will provide children with an overall view on how it’s utilized in their everyday life and how math is present in nature.

Here too, the teacher will interlink work so that the 3 faces of this discipline (geometry, algebra and arithmetic) are presented together.

And of course, let’s not forget the importance of the timing which is when the child is ready, which will stimulate even more his cooperation and enthusiasm. To accomplish this goal, as an extension of the 3-6 classroom, we will present a specific material, which the child will manipulate and will bring him progressively to abstraction. This material will enable the children to explore all of the operations, from the most simple to the most complex.

The math curriculum is quite vast. The difference with the Montessori approach is that the children will not memorize but rather understand and integrating while experimenting.

**Natural Sciences**

Once again, the Montessori approach will differ from a traditional approach by accompanying the children first in observing, then their analysis and description before eventually coming to conclusions. These conclusions will again be verified and experimented with before arriving at a truth or law. To summarize, the role of the teacher is not to present the rules and laws and bring the children to observe afterwards, like in a traditional setting. He does not transmit the “truth”, where children must believe him and then go observe in a passive manner. On the contrary, the children will be in charge of their own questioning and the research that will stem from it. The teacher’s role will be the guide to stimulate the curiosity of the children and then, accompany them and motivate them to observe more to research more.

Actually, we are bringing the children to undertake a true scientific method or experimental method, the same as all researchers and scientist carry out their work.

For a discipline such as biology, this process makes all the sense. What discipline better than biology to transmit the idea of cosmic education since it encompasses biology, botany, zoology, microbiology, ecology, genetics. Here, the interconnection and interdependence is evident. In this domain, the children are brought to have access to nature on a regular bases. Children now have a logical reasoning in place and he is naturally inclined to want to order, classify, establish similarities and differences, to understand how things function and the why and what of things. Our role is to give them the right support at the right time so that he can enter into the fascinating world of biology. We will help him develop his curiosity, interest in nature, to develop observational skills, to understand the classification systems but also to be amazed in front of nature, and to be appreciative.

In the Montessori cosmic education, geography implies the studies of the non-living world. This includes: physics, geology, meterology, mineralology, astronomy and chemistry.

Like with all other disciplines, we will systematically go from the whole to the parts, to eventually return to the whole afterwards.

This Montessori process is not based on fantasy but on the observations made by Maria Montessori. The result of her observations, based upon many many years, clearly demonstrated that children are fascinated by the gigantic, the enormous. The same applies for the laws of the earth and of the world, in which they live.

Our adult point of view is going to impose on the child to base the discovery from his house, to his street, to his neighborhood, to his city and so on. In fact, the children in this age group of fascinated by the whole universe! So, from this perspective, the fact we start with the history of the universe/Big Bang is significant and marks the interest of a child in primary years. From here, he will establish the roadmap towards the questions of the laws that surround the sciences of the earth and the non living.

And here again, the role of the educator is to awaken the curiosity of the child, to let loose his imagination, to ensure his enthusiasm does not wean but rather, encourage, support and develop his sense of observation, to support his logical reasoning and his need to classify, organize, compare, know how and why, to know the reasons and cause and effect. The goal is not to invade the child with our knowledge but to allow him to have the experience of wondering and amazement linked to the experiences and discovery himself. And this is how he will have the most pleasure to discover and learn.

**History**

History is linked to everything and everything is linked to history. Again, it’s interdependence and interrelation that governs here.

The big lessons, the numerous other small stories and their posters will permt the child to make the links between the disciplines that he is in the process of learning (biology, physics, language, chemistry\_ and history, particularly that linked to human beings and discoveries and inventions made since his appearance on the earth.

Our work is then not to relate the facts only to children for them to memorize and reproduce by heart. Our role is to allow them to understand the importance of the work that mankind made before us, from nature to have created a supra natural world.

To give them the ability to be conscious of the importance of the work created by our predecessor for their own well being but also for the well being of others. This can incite them to imagine their own role in the world in which he lives and the place he takes amongst the men and the women. Our children have their own cosmic task to do. Let’s help them discover and develop them.

**Language arts**

**English**

The continuity will be maintained from the immersion in the 3-6 classroom. The English educator will facilitate the learning and integration of this language to the non English speakers through various projects. The work and materials will also be presented in English. The class will be held purely in English 2 days per week.

**German**

An introduction to German will be done in order to ensure the integration in the Swiss system for children moving on into that system after his Montessory years.

**Physical education**

We will propose diverse sport and artistic activities. This will mainly occur in the afternoons to respect the 3 hour work cycle in the morning. A mini yoga class will be given each morning prior to the start of the day and sometimes, in the afternoon if re-centering is needed.