

## MONTESSORI CLASSROOM ASSISTANT JOB DESCRIPTION

Montessori classrooms are deliberately set up to have multiple grades, one trained Montessori teacher, and one classroom assistant. The role of the assistant is a crucial one, with specific responsibilities and roles. Click [here](#) for General Montessori Information.

The Montessori assistant works cohesively with the classroom teacher in establishing and maintaining a harmonious classroom. Job duties can range from organizing materials and cleaning the workspace to facilitating the learning process; the teacher and the assistant should work together to make sure that the needs of the classroom and the students are being met. However, the teacher is ultimately responsible for the progress of the students and the assistant should follow the teacher's lead.

The following list of job responsibilities is a guide for teachers and assistants. These responsibilities may be expanded or adjusted depending on each person's particular skill set, the needs of the classroom, and the ever-changing needs of the students.

### **The assistant:**

- is responsible to the classroom teacher and assists in establishing and maintaining a harmonious classroom according to Montessori culture, paying particular attention to the needs of students.
- supports the development and implementation of Montessori standards-aligned curriculum.
- carefully observes and keeps records on each student's individual progression through the classroom, always being available to offer gentle guidance. The method of observation and record-keeping should be worked out with the classroom teacher.
- manages the room during instructional time such that the teacher can spend a reasonable amount of time giving undisturbed individual or small group lessons. Individual teachers will have their own systems and preferences that the assistant should follow.
- helps the students through work cycles, checks their work and may assist the student to rework the material if necessary.
- completes all work assignments in a timely manner with accuracy and looks for what needs to be done rather than waiting to be told.
- supports the teacher in implementation of a standards-based data tracking system and uses data to inform instructional development and delivery.
- administers and grades assignments when necessary.
- keeps student daily progress reports, attendance reports, completes paperwork, makes copies, laminates, and assembles students' daily homework folders and weekly work folders.
- prepares the classroom environment for Montessori instruction and keeps it clean, neat and orderly on a daily basis.
- shares all information from parents with the teacher.

- demonstrates professionalism at all times (i.e. - cell phone usage; tone of Voice; confidentiality).
- observes teacher lessons to learn the correct use of the materials.
- maintains a high level of job knowledge.
- actively listens to others and responds to ensure two-way communication and expresses self clearly.
- collaborates with other staff members and actively participates in professional development and learning activities.
- reports to school and the classroom on time daily and maintains good attendance.
- follows the daily schedule with fidelity, but is flexible when necessary.
- maintains an appropriate standard of dress.
- completes any other appropriate duties assigned.

**An Effective Assistant:**

- supports the lead teacher
- prepares and maintains the environment
- observes behaviors and takes notes
- models grace and courtesy
- preserves and protects teacher lessons
- assists in the development of independence

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## General Montessori Information

- The teacher's role in the Montessori classroom is to observe students and analytically create lessons and curriculum that responds to the students' needs. The teacher may do some whole class lessons, but most lessons occur one-on-one or in small groups. Even within the lesson, the teacher does not take an active role. They may model the activity or ask questions, but the child is given space to learn through experience.
- Montessori schools encourage children to be explorers and active learners. Students work at their own pace and instruction is individualized for their needs. The Montessori method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori based on her observations of how children naturally learn. Focus is placed on what is developmentally appropriate for children, understanding that they learn through play and respond to natural consequences.
- Students learn concepts from the concrete to the abstract, often moving from big ideas to smaller details. Dr. Montessori developed learning materials that allow children to manipulate objects so that they can absorb information from their surroundings. Montessori classrooms are carefully prepared environments: organized, child-friendly, and peaceful places that allow children to move freely and complete work as they choose.
- Research shows that Montessori works, and the closer you get to Maria Montessori's original philosophy, the better the outcomes.
- Montessori materials
  - are hands-on
  - are self-correcting
  - are sequential
  - guide students to move from concrete to abstract reasoning
  - support remediation and enrichment
  - provide for differentiation
  - are inherently aligned to Montessori pedagogy and philosophy (e.g. Five Great Lessons)
  - are embedded throughout all Montessori materials, activities, texts, and curricula
- The Montessori approach to student development is grounded in the idea of critical thinking. Content development occurs through the progression of meta-cognitive and perspective taking practices; Montessori lesson plans start from how the student understands the world and creates an environment where students can engage with the way others understand the world while both shaping their individual perspectives

as well as those around them. The practice of critical thinking, with regularity, increases individual awareness of our role in shaping the world around us.

- Montessori is structured in a way to not only be "anti-racist" but to erode systemic racism through the intentional focus on developing critical thinking dispositions. Montessori pedagogy and philosophy is at its core naturally anti-racist: Maria Montessori believed in treating children as individuals and with the deepest respect.
- Montessori is all about developing independent, confident, life long learners who have the social, emotional, practical, and cognitive skills required to care for themselves and look after their community.

**All assistants are expected to support the Montessori teaching method. Specifically, they must help guide the child through self-directed activities, allowing the child to develop at his or her own pace. They are expected to foster, along with the classroom teachers, a nurturing and stimulating non-competitive environment.**

*It is easy to say that every childish reaction is a whim, but a whim is something more. It is a problem to be solved, a riddle to be answered. It may at times, be difficult to find the answer, but the search can be extremely interesting. And if an adult would find the answer to these riddles, he must adopt a new attitude toward the child and deepen his sense of responsibility toward him. He must become a student rather than a thoughtless ruler or tyrannical judge as he only too often is with respect to a child.*

*--Maria Montessori, The Secret of Childhood, p 68.*

# Tools and Resources for Teachers and Assistants

## Examples of Classroom Assistant Duties (not exhaustive):

### Protect teacher lessons

- Redirect children who are off-task and disruptive, destructive or dangerous
- Respectfully offer work choices to off-task students
- Intercept children who are interrupting the teacher to ask questions
- Anticipate potential disruptive situations by being intensely aware of the whole class
- Help students who are having minor behavior issues

### Check student work

- Some student work is self-correcting and therefore you may only need to check for completion
- Discuss with your lead how to correct student work that is incomplete or incorrect

### Provide lessons

- Provide some review lessons to individual students as needed
- Provide some small group lessons as directed by your lead (once your classroom is well established and normalized)
- Assist the teacher with RTI requirements: giving lessons and tracking information

### Assist children

- When assisting children, position yourself in a manner to stay aware of entire classroom
- Do not unnecessarily interfere working students
- Reinforce grace and courtesy (how to interrupt, observe, ask for help, push in chairs, respect the materials, respect each other)
- Provide support to students who are working out conflict at peace table (only as needed)

### Observation

- Learn to become a keen observer of student work choices, behavior patterns, group dynamics
- Take detailed notes and regularly communicate with your lead

### Environment

- Help children prepare snack
- Help with lunch setup and cleanup
- Remind students to complete an activity before putting it away
- Help prepare and organize materials
- Guide children in the restoring of the environment
- Replenish materials and supplies at the end of the day

### Recess, transitions, specials

- Provide supervision and assistance as needed during recess, transitions and specials

## Creating Alignment about Ground Rules & Procedures

Discuss these questions with your teammate so that you will both be clear about how you want things handled in your classroom. If you think through your procedures and have a clear rationale, it will help you provide consistency and enable you to better judge when it is ok to be flexible. Most of these questions apply to all Montessori Environments to some degree unless otherwise indicated.

1. Where can work be done? (On a rug, table, inside, outside, a special area.)
2. What work needs an apron? Is the apron required or suggested?
3. What lessons require hand washing? (Are hands to be washed at the sink or at the hand-washing lesson?)
4. What are the snack procedures? Adult/child, independent/group?
5. What lessons can be used together? (example – the tower of cubes and broad stair can – the pouring and spooning cannot)
6. What do you do when a child chooses work before he has had a lesson on it?
7. How long can a child stay in the reading corner? How many children can be in the reading corner at a time?
8. Can a child stay with a lesson indefinitely if working appropriately?
9. What work is a one-person work and which work can be done by two children?
10. What are your procedures for children watching, touching, or taking, another's work?
11. What is your approach toward wandering children?
12. How do you handle children who do work at the shelf?
13. What do you do about a child who hasn't put his work away? What if the child is already doing other work? What if someone else wants to use it? Who puts it away?
14. When is it appropriate to interrupt a working child?
15. Who can ring the bell?
16. How are transitions handled?
17. What is the procedure for children giving lessons?
18. Who cleans up the children's spills and breaks?
19. What are the procedures for lunch? What are children expected to do in regard to cleaning up their lunch?
20. Is it ok to share food at lunch?
22. What are the procedures for children to help clean up the classroom?
23. How do children get your attention?
24. What if a child doesn't want to come to line/ circle time?
25. How do we handle disruptive behavior at circle time?
26. How is inappropriate behavior redirected? When, where, and how is this carried out?
27. What if a child needs to be removed from the classroom?
28. What is the procedure for helping children resolve conflicts and make peace?
29. Can children move furniture?
30. Who discusses problems with parents?
31. Who greets the children and how do we handle separation issues?
32. What is your policy toward parents and other volunteers?
33. What are your field trip policies?
34. What are your outdoor play rules?
36. What are the procedures for preparing the assistant teacher to give lessons? (which lesson, which children, how does she give feedback to the teacher?)
35. How will we establish a one up/one down system (when can the assistant be down giving lessons?)
37. (Toddler) Will we use primary care giving? (toileting/diapering, and basic needs)
38. (Toddler) What do we do about children who are crying?
39. (Toddler) What do we do about toddlers who bite?

## **The Tone Keeper and the Lesson Giver**

It is very important that teachers and assistants, or co- teachers work as a team to establish a plan so that at all times one will be the up person/ tone keeper, and the other will be the down person/ lesson giver. It is important that someone plays each of these roles at all times. If for instance, both teacher and assistant are down giving lessons and a group of children begin to be disruptive in a corner across the room, who will take care of it? It is possible that neither of the adults who are engaged in their lesson will notice the problem. Possibly one or both will notice, but who will leave their lesson? What message does it give the child you are working with, if you have to interrupt your concentration to jump up and put out a fire across the room? What message does it give the children who are being disruptive, if you ignore or don't notice their misbehavior?

If one wants an orderly, peaceful, working classroom, somebody has to mind the shop. Somebody has to stay alert and continually remind the children of the ground rules and the grace and courtesy lessons, which are the backbone of the Montessori program. The best way to accomplish this is to establish a policy and a plan for one adult to be "up" (observing, going where needed, redirecting children and keeping the tone), while the other is "down" (giving lessons). While the lead teacher will primarily be the lesson giver, switching roles gives the lead a chance to observe the class as a whole. This also gives the assistant an opportunity to enjoy working with the children on various activities.

As the school year progresses and the class settles in, it may be possible for both classroom adults to be in the lesson giving mode. At such a time, however, it is best to have designated one as the "tone-keeper," who will engage in small group games or simple work that one can easily leave when one's attention is needed elsewhere.

Both the Lesson Giver and the Tone Keeper roles are essential to establish and maintain a smoothly operating Montessori learning environment. One should understand that both roles require the classroom adults to be aware of the class as a whole and engage with individual children. Review the duties for both listed below and discuss them with your teaching partner. Teaching teams that have worked together for an extended time seem to be able to flow back and forth between these roles, sharing the responsibilities as appropriate for the experience of each adult and according to the particular needs of individual children and the class.

Lesson Giver	Tone Keeper
<p>Create lesson plans for each individual child based on children's needs and interests</p>	<p>Stand back and observe the class as a whole, watching to see when intervention is necessary.</p>
<p>Give lessons to individual and small groups of children. (Note the majority of lessons at this level are given to one child at a time)</p>	<p>Help children find work. Help those who are continually wandering or who are disruptive find work. Be aware that watching others work is also work, but when necessary respectfully guide children to work.</p>
<p>Model interest in the lessons, focused engagement, care of the materials, orderly process, slow graceful movements, while giving lessons.</p>	<p>Make eye contact with your teaching partner on a regular basis so that you both develop the habit of silent communication from across the room.</p>
<p>Observe the interest and attentiveness of the child to whom one is giving the lesson.</p>	<p>Provide follow-up reinforcement of Grace and Courtesy and procedural lessons, reminding children of expectations, practicing the appropriate behavior, and providing respectful and appropriate consequences when necessary.</p>



<p>Position oneself so that one has a view of as much of the class as possible.</p>	<p>Make observation notes of children's work choices, challenges and successes with work, behavior, and important social interactions.</p>
<p>Discretely observe the class as a whole while giving the lesson, making mental notes of important observations.</p>	<p>Watch for and prevent potential fires or disruptions, redirecting children to work before problems escalate.</p>
<p>Make eye contact with your teaching partner on a regular basis so that you both develop the habit of silent communication from across the room.</p>	<p>Make note of children's difficulties and mistakes in their work but do not intervene and correct. Allow the child to find and fix their own mistakes.</p>
<p>Take time between lessons to observe the class as a whole and make notes of work choices, interests, challenges, and successes. Write down the earlier observations committed to memory.</p>	<p>Only intervene if the behavior fits the 3 D's or 1 F. Only intervene if the child's activity is Dangerous, Destructive, Disruptive, or if the child is becoming overly Frustrated...</p> <p>Remember a little frustration is necessary in the learning process.</p>
<p>Look for who most needs attention and provide any redirection or guidance necessary before engaging in new lessons.</p>	<p>Help children with work when requested and appropriate but be careful not to get so involved as to lose track of the class as a whole.</p>

<p>Observe who is available for a new lesson and choose who from the available children are in most need of something new.</p>	<p>Give lessons to individual children or small groups as directed by the lead teacher. (Only give lessons when the class is settled, but continue to maintain awareness of whole class)</p>
<p>Give more lessons.</p>	<p>Promote a calm and positive class tone.</p>
<p>Only stop to intervene and redirect if your teaching partner is unavailable, or there is a dangerous situation occurring near by. Otherwise, signal your partner if necessary, but trust your partner to take care of it.</p>	<p>Always maintain constant whole class awareness, standing back and observing when your direct attention is not needed... moving to assist and redirect when and where the attention is most needed</p>
<p>Model a calm peaceful demeanor and be a living example of Grace and Courtesy – Kindness and Respect</p>	<p>Model a calm peaceful demeanor and be a living example of Grace and Courtesy – Kindness and Respect</p>