



# Greene Towne Montessori School

## Hints for Observing

We have found it helpful to offer a guide to observing and interpreting the dynamics of the Montessori classroom. Many visitors, upon first observing the environment when it is abuzz with children, feel overwhelmed by the diverse activities that are going on. The suggestions below are intended to be focus points for your attention.

### ➤ **Looking at the Whole**

There is more to the Montessori classroom than the activities of your particular child. Naturally, the first tendency of visitors/parents is to focus on and follow a specific/their child's activities. Try to observe in context. Alternate between a wide-range view of the entire classroom and the focus on the specific/your child. This way there will be less self-consciousness and you will have true context.

### ➤ **The Sounds of Learning**

Listen to the noise level as it rises and falls and try to see which groups or individual children are generating sound. You will hear the normal hubbub of children being together and the special pitch of the children excited about learning. At times there will be a special peak of the excitement of discovery. See if you can differentiate.

### ➤ **Learning**

Notice that children learn in different ways. With some types of materials, you will see groups of children working cooperatively, and with others, you will find an individual child working intensely. Still, other children are walking through the classroom seemingly not engaged in any materials in the classroom through observation. It will help if you alternate your focus on these learning patterns. Note also the ease and joy with which the children work. You will see intense self-gratification that the learning process affords the child.

### ➤ **Child-Child Interaction**

Listen to the way (the style and context) in which children talk to each other. Try to hear the level of respect as well as the normal pushes and pulls of childhood. Very often observers new to Montessori are surprised that a child will jealously guard his or her work and tell another classmate that they are disturbing this work. A result of this verbal communication is that the other child will leave. Other new observers are bemused by the politeness with which one child will ask another if he or she would "care for a piece of an apple" and the other will respond "yes, please, thank you."

### ➤ **Teacher-Child Interaction**

Watch the way teachers interact with children and compare it with the traditional classroom model by which you were probably educated. Notice the way in which a teacher corrects a child and look at the instances in which she does not. Listen to the teacher's tone of voice with the child. Many parents have asked how a teacher can "handle" a large group of children. The answer lies with this interaction process.