**6 Things for a Successful Transition to Montessori Elementary**

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After spending three years in a Montessori Primary classroom, your bright and curious six-seven-year old is preparing to move up to Montessori Elementary.

First of all – congratulations! An authentic Montessori Elementary education is truly a gift for your child. She will soon join a unique classroom community and have an educational experience that has been [proven to have better outcomes than conventional education](https://news.virginia.edu/content/montessori-education-provides-better-outcomes-traditional-methods-study-indicates): <https://news.virginia.edu/content/montessori-education-provides-better-outcomes-traditional-methods-study-indicates>

As with any transition for your child, however, it’s normal as a parent to be a bit nervous. And, unlike a transition to a conventional school, you won’t find much support from friends, family, and peers.

It’s not easy to be a Montessori parent. But, if you do these six things when your child moves up to Elementary, you will help your child’s transition to this new and exciting period of her life.

**Be an Informed Parent**

You already know that Montessori is different from conventional elementary schools. But do you really understand how it is different?

This knowledge is important to support your child’s transition. If you seem confused about her school or question why she is doing certain things in class, it can compromise her experience. You are the most important person in her life and it’s essential that you understand the basics of her day to day life at school!

Be sure to attend any and all parent education events at the school to be informed. Get to know your child’s teachers and ask questions. Read articles and books to get a primer on the basics of Montessori education, especially at the Elementary level.

A few hours of your time, along with a curious and open mind, will help.

**Recognize That the Montessori Elementary Classroom Looks Different than Primary**

Your six-year old child is moving into a new period of his life (Dr. Montessori called this a “plane of development”). In his Primary classroom, he was content to work independently, to practice concentration, to put everything back exactly where it belongs. And, the classroom is so quiet and peaceful!

You won’t see much of that in an Elementary classroom. Dr. Montessori observed that children at this age have a deep drive for social connections and are learning how they fit in and relate to the rest of the community. To support this universal desire, the classroom is set up for collaborative work and for group lessons. The classroom is noisier and busy. It’s not uncommon to see children disagree and attempt to problem solve in real time.

The guide is trained to step in only when necessary, to help children learn how to navigate this on their own. Yes, it would “look better” if adults stepped in to manage all of the social interactions… but then how would children learn to do this for themselves?

**Want to Help Academically? Focus on Reading.**

It’s normal to want your child to excel academically. We do, as well – but believe that academic progress occurs naturally in a child who is curious and engaged with the world around her.

Although it is counterintuitive, enrolling your child in outside tutoring, doing worksheets at home, or any other outside “academic” work will actually derail your child’s progress in Montessori Elementary.

We challenge your child to work at her highest level each day and to choose work that is meaningful and purposeful. Extra academic work outside of school sends a mixed message that may demotivate your child. Why should she choose activities and work hard in school if she will be told what to work on and learn at home?

If you really want to help your child excel in Montessori Elementary, focus on reading at home. So much of our work at this level involves child initiated research. Your child will receive many different lessons throughout the day and is invited to follow up on subjects of interest. The “follow up” could be using an encyclopedia, going to library to find books on the subject, or doing a research project with friends.

You can help this process by prioritizing reading at home. Set aside time each night to read as a family. Model a love for literature. Read aloud to your child before bed (she will love it!).

**Develop a Partnership with Your Child’s Teacher**

One of our main goals in a Montessori Elementary classroom is to create a community of children who care about each other. It isn’t easy and is never perfect – but the work is worth it when you see children develop empathic relationships with their peers.

That said, the Elementary classroom is an incredibly complex social environment. Although we try our best to address issues when they come up, some things may go unnoticed.

This is where you come in. Your bias should be to over communicate with the teacher about your child’s feelings and progress. Anything positive or negative that your child mentions about school is helpful for us. With that information, we can make adjustments in the classroom to best help your child.

In addition, be sure to tell your child’s teacher about important life events. Did a pet die? Is a parent out of town for an extended period? Are you moving into a new house? We often will observe that a child seems a bit “off” and without context about what is happening at home it’s hard for us to help.

The basis of a partnership is trust. Trust is built with communication. Always err on the side of over communication with your child’s teacher.

**Give your Child Time to Adjust**

Although it takes time for any child to adjust to a new classroom in a conventional school, recognize that it may take your child a bit longer to get into the groove of her Montessori Elementary classroom.

After being the oldest child for her final year in Primary, she will be joining a community of older children with a new social dynamic. She may not understand the ins and outs of the classroom at first. She will be tired at the end of the day from all of the new things to see, learn, and do.

We work hard, as a community, to help your child feel as comfortable and as welcome as possible. It’s normal, however, for your child to express discontent or to even verbalize, on occasion, a desire to go back to her Primary classroom!

You can help by listening, validating her feelings, and projecting positivity as she goes through this change. Know that after a month or two, almost all children acclimate to the new environment and will fall in love with school all over again. If you are still hearing complaints after a few months, schedule a meeting with your child’s teacher to discuss the concerns in detail.

**Trust the Process**

Montessori education has a 110 year track record of success. Every day, it seems, we find more evidence about the effectiveness of this unique educational experience.

[Research continues to validate the benefits that Montessori Elementary](http://www.montessori.nsw.edu.au/News/TabId/125/ArtMID/535/ArticleID/33/Science-Magazine--Evaluating-Montessori-Education.aspx) has for children versus their peers in conventional programs. http://www.montessori.nsw.edu.au/News/TabId/125/ArtMID/535/ArticleID/33/Science-Magazine--Evaluating-Montessori-Education.aspx

National media continues to report about the accomplishments of the [“Montessori Mafia”](https://blogs.wsj.com/ideas-market/2011/04/05/the-montessori-mafia/) – Montessori alumni who [credit their professional success from their experiences at school](https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/08/02/is-montessori-the-origin-of-google-amazon/#177a2103467a). https://blogs.wsj.com/ideas-market/2011/04/05/the-montessori-mafia/. https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/08/02/is-montessori-the-origin-of-google-amazon/#7b3f90a1467a

Although it’s hard, at times, to be a Montessori Elementary parent, remember that you are giving your child an incredible gift: an educational experience that allows her to explore her interests without limits and develop into a well-adjusted, independent, and resilient adult.