

## Public versus Montessori Kindergarten

Kindergarten is seen in public education as the first year of 'real' school. In traditional preschool, children begin to learn basics like colors, letters, and numbers. However, many children come to kindergarten without attending preschool, so kindergarten begins by introducing these concepts to all children. Like Montessori schools, public schools also identify development milestones or benchmarks, students are expected to reach before finishing the program. The differences between these are given below.

Intellectual/Academic Development:

	<b>Public Kindergarten</b>	<b>Montessori Kindergarten (3<sup>rd</sup> year)</b>
<b>English / Language Arts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ ask and answer questions about stories</li> <li>⤴ compare/contrast character experiences</li> <li>⤴ recognize and produce rhyming words</li> <li>⤴ segment syllables</li> <li>⤴ long and short vowel sounds</li> <li>⤴ consonant sounds</li> <li>⤴ print lowercase and uppercase</li> <li>⤴ understand punctuation</li> <li>⤴ understand and use question words</li> <li>⤴ blend (read) 2 and 3 letter words</li> <li>⤴ learn early sight words (I, see, the, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ write creative stories, poems, and songs, as well as non-fiction reports using complete sentences, correct grammar, and punctuation with increasing attention to spelling</li> <li>⤴ write in cursive, read both print and cursive writing</li> <li>⤴ read sight words (puzzle words) and phonetic words of any length</li> <li>⤴ know consonant (sh, ch) and vowel digraphs (ai, ea), as well as r-controlled vowel sounds (ar, er, or)</li> <li>⤴ know common alternate spellings for sounds (f/ph/gh, ite/ight)</li> </ul>
<b>Math</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ know number names, compare numbers or numbers of objects</li> <li>⤴ understand concept of addition and subtraction</li> <li>⤴ count to tell number of objects</li> <li>⤴ counting to 100 by 1s and 10s</li> <li>⤴ identify, compare, and create shapes</li> <li>⤴ write 0-20</li> <li>⤴ count from a random number</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ success with linear (1, 2, 3) and skip (3, 6, 9) counting for numbers from 1-9,999,999</li> <li>⤴ understand concept of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division</li> <li>⤴ ability to complete these functions with large numbers, writing and recording problems</li> <li>⤴ know shape names and use them to create designs and patterns</li> <li>⤴</li> </ul>
<b>Social Studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ days, weeks, months</li> <li>⤴ familiarity with common occupations, signals (stop signs, traffic lights, etc) and state and national flags</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ Rather than presenting these concepts as units children are tested on, we use the child's natural curiosity to teach them about days, weeks, months, seasons, continents, countries, flags, and the world around them</li> </ul>
<b>Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ Name some healthy foods, benefits of physical activity, the importance of breakfast</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ children in Montessori classrooms participate in growing and preparing food, as well as learning about the importance</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⤴ name of body parts and functions, the five senses</li> <li>⤴ name emotions, know language to express them, and common manners</li> <li>⤴ understand dangers of tobacco, household products, improper medication use, appropriate vs inappropriate touching</li> <li>⤴ how to ask for help and call 911</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of healthy foods</li> <li>⤴ materials in Montessori teach children through their senses, as they learn the related terminology</li> <li>⤴ emotions, manners, and self-expression are an important aspect of social development, and is discussed further below</li> </ul>
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

More information on public curriculum through 12<sup>th</sup> grade: [www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/index.asp)

As you can see, children in Montessori classrooms are prepared for public first grade, well beyond the academic content standards. Unfortunately, as I'm sure you've likely seen at home or on long car trips, children who are bored and disengaged are not always on their best behavior. Children transitioning from a Montessori school may have difficulty adjusting to sitting still in a chair and listening to someone else talk for extended periods of time. Through practicing self-control (walking rather than running, waiting for a turn, pouring a certain amount liquid, etc) children develop greater control of their bodies as they mature. For some children, the extra year in a Montessori class allows them that extra time to further develop their self-control and focus, as well as allowing them an opportunity to gain a better understanding of social relationships and expectations. A child who is intellectually prepared, and has developed a love of learning, an understanding of appropriate behavior, and the ability to control his/her own body will be well-prepared for the academic and behavioral expectations of a traditional classroom. In traditional classrooms, opportunities for independent work and adaptations for advanced children generally increase as children age, so first graders usually have relatively more opportunities to be intellectually challenged than kindergarteners.

Social/Emotional Development:

In the Montessori primary classroom, the three-year cycle is designed to provide children the opportunity to experience evolving social relationships. The third year in the classroom is when the child grows into the role of a leader-becoming the most experienced child in the room, helping to guide newer and younger children and learning leadership skills. They teach younger children through modeling and through lessons they now have the experience and understanding to give. This reinforces their own knowledge and provides a sense of satisfaction and altruism gained from helping another. Kindergarten children also enforce the moral codes of our classrooms, taking a lead in conflict resolution between other children and reminding others of our rules. Many conflicts that arise are dealt with by the children themselves, with the leaders guiding others through conversations about feelings and creating solutions to problems as they arise. These rules come from an understanding of social cohesion and the needs of the community to have a safe place to work and learn, where each individual is respected. Developing these leadership skills at an early age, when personality and life-long habits are formed, allows children the opportunity to be a leader, even those who are used to being 'the baby' of the family. In traditional elementary schools, children will not have this same opportunity until fifth or sixth grade, depending on the highest grade in the school, after much of the personality has been formed.

In traditional classrooms, children are all approximately the same age, though they may be at very different places in their social and emotional development. Leaders do arise within these classrooms and children are instructed in appropriate behavior. However, behavior is often controlled through punishment/reward systems that implicitly ask children to be good for the sake of pleasing an authority figure, which can inadvertently teach children that it is only important to behave well when someone is there to see and reward it. This can lead to inconsistent and confused understandings of right and wrong at the very age when the sense of morality and understanding of the world are solidifying in the child's mind.