



# ST. FRANCIS MONTESSORI

MONTESSORI EDUCATION FOR AGES THREE TO TWELVE

## The Montessori Cycle Primary to Elementary

A Montessori environment thrives from its stability. Children are intended to enter around age three for their **first year** in the **Primary Casa** where they are invited to explore the nurturing environment for just a short time away from their mothers each day. In this exploratory year, the children interact with the environment, especially in practical life and sensorial exercises, absorb order, gain independence, understand how to act responsibly within a community, and build confidence within the Casa. Moreover, the foundation of oral language and numbers is laid, including the first lessons with phonetic sounds and number symbols. After the child's first year in Montessori, children are ready for deeper growth and development within the environment during their second year.

In the **second year**, usually when the child is four turning five, the child is invited to work more with the math and reading material, while simultaneously engaging in the whole-person learning offered through the other materials in the environment. The Montessori environment prepares the child for life-long learning, also known as self-education; we hope all children will be life-long learners. The **third year**, when children are five to six, the Casa offers mastery of the academic skills along with greater refinement of the senses and cultural awareness in the other areas, as well as graceful and courteous social interaction. The older children begin to teach and assist the younger children in their love for their second home, the Children's House, and the young rely on the experience of the older. It is a small community of independence and interdependence.

The three-year cycle has been compared to a three-stage plan of building a house: the first year, the foundation is laid; the second year, visible signs of growth are seen—the walls, the roof, the interior workings are constructed; the third year, the house is complete in its beautiful form, with both the external and internal construction in harmony as it is intended to be. In the Children's House, we are focused on allowing for the growth and development of the children, respecting their own personal pace as they encounter the first education outside of their home.

This three-year cycle depends upon the parents' understanding of the stability offered to the child at this young age. Rather than changing classes each year as in traditional education, the child remains with one class for the entire three years so that he/she can enter more deeply into the work of the environment with security and peace. When children feel secure, they thrive. We hope to offer each and every child a secure environment where s/he may thrive.

Therefore, it is with this end in view, that St. Francis Montessori asks the parents to consider their child's education within this three-year cycle, both for the good of their own children and for the good of the other children at St. Francis Montessori. Moreover, the Montessori material is so rich that children who are six can return for a fourth year in Primary in which they can continue to learn using the beautiful and well-made materials if parents and guides feel it is best for their development.

Montessori education is based on developmental stages. At some point in the third year, the *primary* child develops into an *elementary* child. Not only do the physical characteristics change (losing teeth, the elongation of limbs, etc), but the developmental aspects of the child are changing. The child develops a strong sense of justice during this time of moral sensitivity; the child has a great need for his or her peers and collaborates more during work time; the focus of the child's work turns from the process of how to do something to the mastery of the product; the child looks for people or things to inspire him. The Guides help discern when the child is ready for the **Elementary Casa**.

The Elementary Casa operates on the principle of Cosmic Education. Every facet of culture is presented to the child so the child may enter into an understanding of the development of the world, from geography and history, art and music, math and language, from science to our Faith, and how human beings have developed these subjects throughout time to the present. Moreover, the elementary child begins to see how s/he is involved in this great work of God in the world.