



# How To Prepare Your Montessori Elementary Classroom Environment

**Bonus: A set of documentary photos of the Elementary classroom teacher training space at Montessori Institute Prague for your inspiration!**

by Mirka



# CONTENT LIST

<b>A WORD OF WELCOME AND WHY READ THIS?</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>GUIDING QUOTE FROM MARIA MONTESSORI</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>HELLO, MEET ME. I AM THE SECOND PLANE CHILD!</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>MIND MAP OF THE NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 2ND PLANE CHILD</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>ASPECTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN PREPARING THE ELEMENTARY</b>	
<b>CLASSROOM</b> .....	<b>7</b>
PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT .....	7
Subject areas with their corresponding materials .....	7
Source of water .....	7
Stationary cabinet or supply shelf .....	7
TEMPORAL ASPECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT .....	9
Uninterrupted work period .....	9
Transition periods .....	9
Tools and skills to manage time .....	9
Group work and group process .....	9
Problem solving and reasoning .....	9
BIG WORK .....	9
COMMUNAL ASPECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT .....	10
The environment “must” .....	10
The questions you can ask yourself .....	10
PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT .....	10
The environment “must” .....	10
GOING OUTS, AN ESSENTIAL PART OF COSMIC EDUCATION .....	11
Why is it so important? .....	11
How can we do so? .....	11
Going outs build essential skills .....	11
Practical aspects of going out .....	12
The preparation of the inside environment .....	12
The preparation of the children .....	13
OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT .....	14
What do children like? .....	14
Outdoors everyone pitches in, same as indoor! .....	14
TIPS FOR OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER! .....	15
TRIPLE ADVANTAGE OF STUDYING WITH US! .....	16
We have our own AMI school! .....	16
We have our own Montessori adolescent farm program! .....	16
We truly care about you! .....	16

# A WORD OF WELCOME AND WHY READ THIS?

Hello Montessori Guides and Classroom Assistants!

Welcome to this free resource on **how to set up your Montessori elementary classrooms!**

We are excited and grateful that we can help you do this important work!

You are well aware that the success of your Montessori classrooms has a lot to do with how you prepare your environment.

When you do this important work, you need to take time!

You need to think really well about how to arrange our classrooms so that you facilitate independent movement and work, freedom of choice, intellectual stimulation, structure and order, nature and reality, beauty, and very importantly, opportunities for social interaction, communication, collaboration and overall development.

This guidebook can in no way substitute for an in depth Montessori guide and assistant training. Our goal is to provide you with a structured “reminder” and to help you focus on the most important aspects of this work.

If you are thinking about becoming a fully trained Montessori Elementary Guide and / or a Certified Elementary Classroom Assistant, we invite you to visit our website at [www.amiprague.cz](http://www.amiprague.cz) and check out our upcoming courses. An [AMI 6-12 Elementary Diploma Course](#) with Carla Foster and Kyla Morenz is coming up in April, 2024. Also, an [AMI 6-12 Orientation Certificate Course](#) is starting on March 4, 2024, in fully online format. Each of these courses is certainly worth taking and would help you in your everyday practice.

Enjoy this resource and if you feel that your next step is to get a certificate or a diploma, we cannot wait to welcome you to our Montessori Institute Prague (MIP) community! With much love and care.

Mirka, on behalf of the whole MIP team



## GUIDING QUOTE FROM MARIA MONTESSORI



“It is necessary to create surroundings for the child that answers his needs not only from the point of view of his physical health but also from the point of view of his spiritual needs. The child must be able to act freely in such an environment. There he must find motives for constructive activity that corresponds to his developmental needs.”

Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace*, p.91



# HELLO, MEET ME. I AM THE SECOND PLANE CHILD!

The children around the age of 6 will change completely when they enter in the second plane of development. We will look and observe these children and sometimes ask ourselves: Who are they?

The following characteristics last our whole lives, but have their first great blossoming in the 6-12 years old child:

Physical strength and stability, it can lead to daring

Need for an environment that includes the wider world of nature and society

The herd instinct, the desire to work together

The imagination: the ability to travel in time and space

Hero workshop

The Reasoning Mind asking "Is it true?" and inspiring the child to finding out the why and the how of the society

Fascination with the extraordinary leading to the desire to do big work

Moral sensitivity: justice, fairness, right and wrong, compassion, judgement and mercy.

In order to be able to prepare an environment which will support this child in his/ her journey of unfolding the maximum potential, we have to take into account **the child in front of us**. This is **a new child**, with different needs, different characteristics, different understanding of life, different manifestations of human tendencies, different sensitivities.



# MIND MAP OF THE NEEDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 2ND PLANE CHILD



# ASPECTS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT WHEN PREPARING THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

## PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### Subject areas with their corresponding materials

mathematics  
geometry  
language  
art and handwork  
music  
geography  
biology  
history  
religion  
going outs



The subject areas have to be clearly defined. The materials on the shelves should call the children: come, come and pick me up! When you walk into a 6-12 environment, you feel invited to work, to explore, to question, to be curious. Have not too many and not too few materials on your shelves! We want children to go out and find their answers outside the classroom, but we want them to find interest in the classroom. We give them keys to open new doors!

### Source of water

Some of the subject areas need more water such as art and geography where many experiments happen. Choose the location of these areas in respect of where you have your source of water.

### Stationary cabinet or supply shelf

This is the place where children will come often during the working cycle for pencils, rubbers, scissors, paper, etc. This stationery cabinet or shelf or an island should be easily accessible to everyone, from every corner of the environment.

## **Cleaning Supplies**

These supplies for cleaning the floor, the tables or other areas have to be accessible and in a perfect order, almost the same order as in the 3-6 environment.

## **Routines**

Routines are also part of the physical environment. Some of the things that this area should have: a calendar or several ones where activities are marked, a place where students can hand things in, a place for notes which will go out at the end of the day to caregivers, attendance routines, fire and/or emergency routines, a message board where children can place messages from parents for example, schedule of the presentations.

## **Storage of children's work**

The children must have a clearly defined area where they can store their work. Children have to be exposed and learn different strategies to keep this area in order and they should also clean it properly on a regular basis.

## **Storage of children's personal belongings (clothes, shoes, backpacks, etc)**

This area should be considered as a workspace, not a space where we just throw things, close the door and all is good. Caring about your personal belongings, keeping order are very important.



## **Care of the environment**

When children are responsible for their own environment, the relationship with this goes stronger. They will learn to love it, to care for it just because they are doing the work to keep it clean, tidy, and nice. When you see the time and effort that you invest in caring for your environment, you will look at it with other eyes, you will appreciate the work done and be grateful for what you have.

Children can be encouraged to write down tips on doing a certain job for the classroom.



## TEMPORAL ASPECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### Uninterrupted work period

Three hour work periods for free choice work are the cornerstone of a functioning Elementary Classroom! But here it should be a balance between individual choice and new presentations.

### Transition periods

How do we move from one part of the day to another? From one space into another? Discuss this with children, they often come up with great ideas to make transitions smooth and seamless.

### Tools and skills to manage time

A simple idea is a checklist. See the Work Diary for print at the end of this resource.

### Group work and group process

How much time does the group need to split the work, to discuss, to agree on the process and the outcome, to accomplish the work?

### Problem solving and reasoning

Does the environment provide enough time for problem solving and reasoning? Children have the time to reflect on their work, finding ways to improve?

### BIG WORK

Is there enough time to start big work and accomplish it? Is the work cycle too scheduled or it gives opportunities for big work?



## COMMUNAL ASPECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### The environment “must”

foster a sense of community

be inclusive and welcoming to everyone

encourage collaboration, communication and collaboration.

### The questions you can ask yourself

Do I have tables where more than 2 children can sit?

Can tables and chairs be easily moved?

Is there enough room on the floor for big work and collaboration in groups?



## PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### The environment “must”

Nurture the emotional wellbeing of the child: it allows the child to naturally express their humanity into their development and their learning

Foster responsibility and independence: if you want children to experience responsibility, they have to be allowed to make choices; empower the child to be independent

Inspire non-violent communication: observe yourself - how do you react when something happens, you are part of the environment.

## GOING OUTS, AN ESSENTIAL PART OF COSMIC EDUCATION

### Why is it so important?

An essential aspect of the Elementary prepared environment are “going out’s”. It helps children to make themselves welcome in the world, discovering new things and bringing it back to their classmates to inspire them.

Classrooms or computers cannot provide the social experiences the 6-12 years old child needs, nor the moral development! We must make going out an intrinsic part of our work with children.

We plan a trip to meet the world outside the class. We discuss, plan, prepare and reflect together when we come back.

### How can we do so?

Trust that going outs are essential to the implementation of cosmic education

Trust the child to go in another classroom for borrowing materials

Going to the garden to get specimen of plants and leaves

Going out to explore flowers, trees, roots and stems, fruits and seeds, bark, insects, animal tracks and other signs of life, bird watching, tadpole watching

Dream big, start small and have trust that more complex going outs will follow

Going to the library because I cannot find all the answers here in school

We do not have enough paper, let’s go and buy some

Over time build a repertoire of going out opportunities

Observe in schools where going out works well

Send other adult out with children as a chaperone

### Going outs build essential skills

observation

exploration

social cooperation

independence

responsibility



### **Practical aspects of going out**

Preparation through understanding group work: collaboration and cooperation within the classroom first:

Care of the environment is good preparation for Going Out: this care of the environment can be expanded outside the classroom, in the garden, the yard, the cafeteria, etc.

Expanding the work of the class and learning about the world: when children come back from the Going Out they are sharing their experience, their learning.

Educating the children's adult chaperones, the person/ persons (assistant, parents, administrator, secretary, another teacher, board member) who goes with the children. The adults have to be trained to understand their role when accompanying the children in their Going Out.

### **The preparation of the inside environment**

have a shelf in the classroom with some items you might considered useful for your group this list is not exhaustive; observe add or take out items based on the children's needs):

- a wallet
- a phone for Going Out (can be used to be in touch with the outside world in setting up the details for the Going Out)
- a letter for an introduction
- a card with the school address and phone number
- templates to be fill out with date, time, destination, reason for going out, who is going, estimated time of return
- list of parents and their phone numbers who agreed they can support children as chaperone/ driver/ etc.
- maps
- schedules for busses/ trams/ other transportation
- a collection of brochures for possible places to visit, etc.





## The preparation of the children

engage the children in creating rules for Going Out regarding:

- the group size for Going Out (not less than 2, not more than 5)
- the routes designed together so that everyone knows where they are)
- crossing the streets (only at lights or crosswalks if possible)
- staying on the sidewalks
- respecting people's properties (homes, businesses)
- respecting people (being pleasant and respectful, grace and courtesy)
- staying together as a group
- always going straight to the destination and back providing the teacher with an estimated time of coming back

give grace and courtesy lessons on:

- the appropriate way of behaving in a store, in a museum, in a theatre (depending on the scope of Going Out)
- the appropriate way to get the attention of a clerk
- the appropriate way to wait one's turn
- the appropriate way to behave on the bus
- the appropriate way to speak on the phone
- the appropriate way to say when you make appointments
- the appropriate way to interview people
- the appropriate way to show appreciation
- the appropriate way to respect others.





## OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT

Children need to have contact with nature. It provides them with a freer and larger field of exploration, it is rich with sensorial expressions, it can be more physically challenging, it demands and develops self-motivation and there is less surveillance!

### What do children like?

- Open and unstructured areas
- Hiding places, climbing structures
- Ways to be in contact with elements - water, earth, air, fire
- Ways to challenge themselves physically

### Outdoors everyone pitches in, same as indoor!

- Cleaning up on the playground
- Weeding and planting
- Recycling
- Composting
- Building



“We should render the child a most doubtful service by keeping him in a perfectly harmless environment which, at the same time, is devoid of all challenge to his powers of perfecting himself and overcoming danger.”

Maria Montessori

## TIPS FOR OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER!

Clear your clutter!

Constantly emphasise community, let the children see each other and their choices.

Make sure you have space for big work!

Things have places. People must move.

Rugs and furniture need not to be uniform.

Communal supplies in a central location.

Science and art need water and extreme orderliness.

Use your walls wisely!

Think about the tops of your shelves.

Exploring the nature of language should be beautiful.

Thematic organisation of your non-linear curriculum.

The whole of the classroom is a reading laboratory.

Colour coding can kill!

Vary your packaging, entice!

A place to think thoughts!

Music is a fundamental need.

Work with what you have! Your classroom is a labour of love!

These are few ideas for you and things to take into account when preparing the environment for the second plane child, but for sure **observation** will be the key for a successful environment, the dual environment which will engage the elementary child to fulfil his/ her cosmic task, to fulfil his/her greatest potential.





# TRIPLE ADVANTAGE OF STUDYING WITH US!

**Taking your diploma or certificate course with us at Montessori Institute Prague has one huge benefit!**

## ***We have our own AMI school!***

All of our school staff is fully AMI trained on all levels, this means the head of school, all administrators, all guides and all assistants!

When you do your course with us, **we automatically book an observation and practice teaching slot in our school for you!** And you know that it is really hard to find schools which will allow you to do that these days! And all the more schools which have fully AMI trained staff under continual supervision of AMI trainers!

And, there is one more incredible opportunity for you!

## ***We have our own Montessori adolescent farm program!***

If you train with us, you can also visit our adolescents and see them and join them at work!

At Montessori Institute Prague we provide a holistic approach to supporting and guiding our diploma and certificate students.

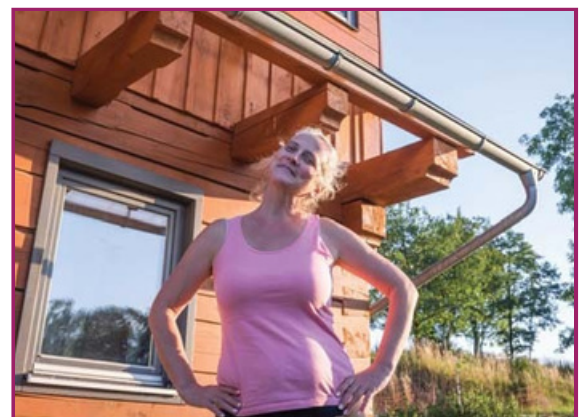
## ***We truly care about you!***

Nowhere else in the world you will receive individualised support and care like with us. Because for us, your success is our mission! Together with you we bring Montessori education to the whole world!

Join our MIP family!

I cannot wait to get to know you.

Mirka, The Chief Enthusiasm Officer at MIP







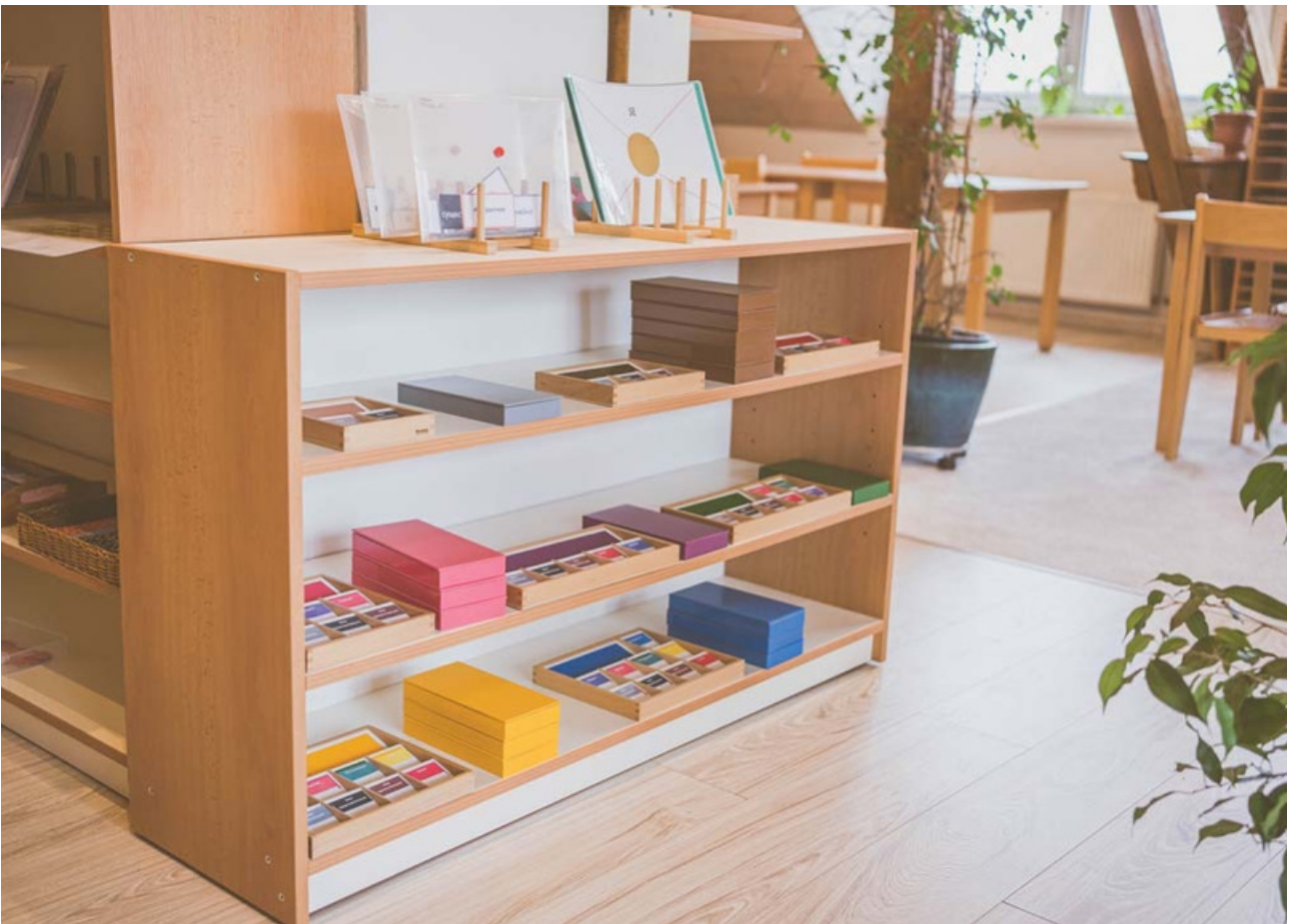














# WORK DIARY

Name:
Week:

## OVERVIEW

SUBJECT	PRESENTATIONS	INDEPENDENT WORK
Reading		
My own writing		
Other language work		
Other languages		
Mathematics: the four operations		
Other math		
Geometry		
Biology and Geography: Heaven and Earth Living and non-living things		
History and the fundamental needs of people		
My projects and going out		
Art and handicrafts		
Music		
Other subjects		
Service: for the class, school, others, the world		

To do list for this week:





Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Activity	Sig?

### **How has my day been?**

Have I created and maintained order?	
Have I cooperated with others?	
Have I used the work period to work?	
Have I listened actively to people?	
Have I challenged myself?	



How has my week been?

This week I have been particularly  
satisfied  
with:

I know I need to work more  
on:

From the  
teacher:

# Ready to take your Montessori journey to the next level?

Join Kyla Morenz on her upcoming AMI 6-12 Orientation Certificate Course, starting on March 4, 2024! Click the picture below to learn more about the course!

**MM** MONTESSORI  
**WI** INSTITUTE  
PRAGUE

**AMI** 6-12 Orientation  
CERTIFICATE COURSE

Kyla Morenz, AMI TRAINER  
 Registration open until March 4, 2024  
 FULLY ONLINE



Photos with children are taken at Montessori Schools  
Andílek running under the auspices of MIP.



[www.amiprague.cz](http://www.amiprague.cz)