

Dr. Maria Montessori's Planes of Development

First Plane of Development- Age 0 - 6 - Early Childhood (Individual Creation of the Person)

- Characterized by the “Absorbent Mind” in which the child’s mind is like a sponge, absorbing all that is in the environment.
- At age 0-3 this is unconscious
- At age 3-6 this is conscious
- Characterized by “Sensitive Periods” which include the intense need for: Order, Language, Refinement of the senses and Movement
- Characterized by concrete thinking
- Construction of the physical person
- Fundamental formation of the character
- Physical independence - “I can do it myself!”
- The child wants to be free to work independently within a structured environment doing real activities with an intelligent purpose.

Second Plane of Development - Age 6 - 12 - Childhood (Construction of the Intelligence)

- Characterized by reasoning with imagination and logic.
- Intense thirst for knowledge which is so great that if allowed, the child will seek exposure to many things that have been left to high school and college in the past.
- “Cosmic Education” - the child wants to know about the whole and his/her place within it and can appreciate the interconnectedness of all things and people.
- The “bridge” to abstraction - or the transition from concrete to abstract thinking
- Interested in learning about the universe - what is outside of the prepared environment.
- Intellectual independence - “I can ‘think it’ myself”

Third Plane - Ages 12 - 18 Adolescence (Construction of Social Self)

- Characterized by self concern and self assessment.
- Critical thinking and re-evaluation.
- Transition period both physically and mentally.
- Beginning to try to find place in this world.
- Characterized by construction of social and moral values.
- “Erd Kinder” or “Children of the Land” - Dr. Montessori envisioned the child practicing for life in society by working together in a sort of hostel.
- Cultural development which has been ongoing is solidified in this plane.
- Financial Independence - “I can get it myself”.

Fourth Plane - Ages 18 - 24 and Beyond - Adulthood

(Construction of Self Understanding)

- Characterized by construction of the spiritual. Conscious discernment of right and wrong.
- Seeking to know one’s own place within the world.
- Emotional Independence “I can stand on my own”.