

The Sequence & Order of Language Materials

in the Children's House (Ages 3 to 6)

Usually when a Montessori consultant comes to visit a school, the first thing s/he says is: "If it isn't in your albums, take it off your shelves." I think there is great wisdom in that. It is easy for our focus to shift away from the core essentials and onto things that have wandered into our space. And of course there is so much language work that is not on the shelves:

- Our natural conversations with the children and each other in front of the children
- Our gracious & courteous speech
- Poems & rhymes
- Songs
- Stories (from books and from our lives)
- Command games (following through on a specific request *that the child is internally motivated to complete*)
- Vocabulary lessons

Here is a list from my albums of what is physically meant to be on our language shelves. I have added in the chalkboards as I understand they are once again part of the basic 3-6 training (they went out of fashion for a time). You may find some variations from your training. Go with what is in your albums unless you doubt their clarity. But if you stray from your training, you must prepare yourself to use all of the materials and present them *in the order* you have them arranged on the shelves. The children absorb this external order. They will come to expect to receive presentations according to this order. It is critical to their full development.

Remember that the order always goes from left to right, top to bottom. Begin on the top left of the shelf and proceed accordingly.

Sequence of Language Materials

Quiet Reading Area

You need to create a quiet reading area, cozy and calm. Set this up in a serene area that is somehow linked with the language shelves. Include the following:

- Books (just a few in a lovely basket or displayed on a shelf are fine; not too many as to overwhelm; stories that are relevant to the children, inspirational, with gorgeous illustrations)
- A comfortable, soft chair
- A lovely rug with a pillow
- A small table with a lamp

Standing Chalkboard Easel

- Ideally, this has a chalkboard on one side and an easel for painting on the other.
- Be sure to have a chalkboard washing activity just below or adjacent to the easel. The children will not be drawn to use a dirty chalkboard.
- The Painting Easel
 - Include a painting easel washing activity just below or adjacent to the easel. Include the cleaning of the easel as part of the painting lesson. It is essential that the children are freed to keep the easel clean...they are driven to do this and will be distracted by dried paint if it is not kept clean.
 - Use small pots to hold small amounts of paint. In September, have only one color out. Proceed in order through the materials listed below. Dab the paint brush in the water, blot it on the sponge, dip it in the paint, apply it to the paper, and then go back to the water and repeat for each replenishment of paint. This will prevent the inadvertent mixing of paints in the pots once you introduce additional colors. Here are the materials you need in this order:
 - o Small jar to contain three paint brushes of different bristle size (upside-down and upright)
 - o Small pot of water
 - o Small square of damp sponge
 - o Small pot of paint

Shelf Unit #1

- Shelf 1
 - Picture of a child (to remind you to give 3-period vocabulary lessons on the parts of the body)
 - Picture of your classroom (to remind you to give 3-period vocabulary lessons on the names of everything in the environment)
 - Two or three sets of Vocabulary cards (that isolate their subject and include NO letters/words): from different categories to use for 3-period lessons and sorting*
 - Pink & Blue Sandpaper Letters (ideally these are displayed all together in one area, such as on molding on a wall; see LORD Equipment Company for the custom molding I helped design)
 - Green Sandpaper Letters
- Shelf 2
 - Empty I Spy basket (teach the children how to gather objects from the environment to use for I Spy games)
 - One set of Matching Cards*
 - Movable Alphabets (one small, one large)

- Shelf 3
 - Chalkboards (all of the below in one area)
 - o Board with No lines
 - o Board with wide lines
 - o Board with narrow lines
 - Chalk supply
 - Three chalkboard cleaning activities (they won't use them if they're dusty; You can use this instead of erasers; present it with elegance: draw, wipe left to right with the sponge, dry left to right with the cloth, repeat ☺)
 - o Small tray
 - o Small damp sponge
 - o Small cloth

Metal Insets

- Ten Metal Insets & Frames (on slanted stands)
- Three Metal Inset Trays each with a pencil holder
- Metal inset paper supply
- Two pencil sharpeners

Shelf Unit #2

- Shelf 1
 - A container of writing pencils (many different sizes/shapes but NO erasers)
 - Two Pencil Sharpening activities
 - Paper Supply
 - o 8.5" x 11" blank paper (for first paper writing; fold it like a fan to make "lines" that match the approximate size of the child's script)
 - o 4" x 2" blank paper (for writing individual words)
 - o 6" x 2" blank paper (for writing short phrases)
 - o 8" x 2" blank paper (for writing longer phrases)
 - o 8.5" x 11" paper with widely-ruled solid lines
 - o 8.5" x 11" paper with narrower-ruled solid lines
 - A container of three child-sized scissors (for cutting paper to the size the child needs)
 - Writing Tray
 - o An empty tray you use to give Writing and Function of Words lessons; you will fill this tray with a pencil and the paper of the right size for the lesson at the start of your lesson
 - Small boards to write upon (if working at a rug; clipboards are not preferred)

- Shelf 2
 - Labeling the Classroom Activity (Sticky Notes cut to a size for labeling the classroom on a tray with a writing pencil)
 - Prepared slips for labeling the classroom
 - Keepsakes Tray (for turning all that writing into treasures)
 - o One pair of scissors
 - o One container of colored pencils (special colors beyond those provided for the metal insets), markers, or pastels (along with a sharpener if necessary)
 - o One glue stick
 - o Tape in desk-style tape dispenser
 - o One small stapler
 - o One hole punch
 - o Booklet rings or yarn/ribbon
- Shelf 3
 - Phonetic Object Box*
 - 3-Part Phonetic Reading Cards*
 - Phonogram Object Box*
 - 3-Part Phonogram Reading Cards*
 - Puzzle/Sight Words*
 - Phonogram Folders (Reading Scheme for English)
 - 3-Part Cards (non-phonetic)*

Shelf Unit #3

- Shelf 1
 - Function of Words (If the Function of words activities are maintained in cloth pouches, they can be housed in a divided display rack and thus take up minimal shelf space; if they are housed in individual containers, you will need more shelf space)
 - o The Article
 - o The Adjective
 - o Logical Adjective
 - o Detective Adjective
 - o Conjunction
 - o Verb Introduction
 - o Verb Box 1 (Charades)
 - o Adverb Box 1
 - o Adverb Box 2
 - o Verb Box 2 (Transitive & Intransitive)
 - o Verb Box 3 (Mental Activity)
 - o Verb Box 4 (Syntax)
 - o Commands Box 1 (Two Actions)
 - o Commands Box 2 (Two Actions/One Object)

- Commands Box 3 (Two Actions/Two Objects)
- Commands Box 4 (Two Actions/Two Objects with pronouns)
- Symbols Box
- Shelf 2
 - Further Definition Cards*
 - Reading Analysis:
 - Simple Sentences 1st Stage (basket of red circles and black arrows; prepared sentence tickets from the best authors)*
 - Simple Sentences 2nd Stage (basket of arrows and circles with descriptive words; prepared sentence tickets from the best authors)*
 - Simple Sentences Extensions & Appositions (orange and black arrows with questions, black/red/orange circles, black/blue triangles; prepared sentence tickets from the best authors)*
- Shelf 3
 - Reading Analysis:
 - Charts/Boards

*Rotate these items regularly. You should have a large variety of these items that you keep out of sight (in storage). Change the items on the shelves every week or two to help keep the shelves alive and magical. When you change something on the shelves, draw the children's attention to it. When you greet them you might say something like, "There is something new in our language area...I wonder if you will find it." How wonderful!