



Commonly Asked Questions About the Seacoast Center For Education Montessori Elementary Program

Answered by Gary Davidson, Course Director

These are a few of the questions we receive most often about our program. I hope the answers are helpful. If any of them seem familiar indeed, it might be because they are all more or less direct quotations from real people. Given that answers often lead to more questions, I hope you will contact me at admin@seacoastcenter.com with yours.

1. I am changing careers. I didn't start out as a teacher. Will I fit in as a Seacoast student?

For most people who join us Montessori education is a second or third career choice. Many have discovered Montessori education for their own children and are impressed by the growth they see. Others have been drawn by references to Montessori in other course work. A quick look at our student files shows that the majority of our students were not education majors at the undergraduate level.

2. I haven't been back to school for a long time. Can I handle Montessori training?

The odds are you'll not only handle it, but love it. A typical Seacoast class has students ranging in age from recent college graduates to "mature" adults. No single type of person characterizes a good Montessori teacher. We make training a humane and pleasant experience, given the experience and personalities of our faculty members and the peaceful setting at Cornerstone School. There is a lot of information covered. But there are thousands of eager survivors of Montessori training and hundreds of them trained at Seacoast.

3. I have elementary-aged children. Is child-care available?

We can refer you to a private day-camp program very near the school if you're interested in care from 8:30-5:30. It makes a very long day for most children, though. We'd first urge you to find child-care options with people your children already know, in a setting that feels familiar. In perspective, Elementary I boils down to twenty pretty long days in July (two summers), Elementary II to twenty-five days in late June and July. Most children can cope with that if parents help them anticipate some amount of separation and know that the period of intense work is finite. Of course, adults appreciate that knowledge, too. We've designed our program to be thorough and efficient in a reasonable amount of time knowing that parents may love Montessori education but they love their children more.

There are many housing options in the area if you're considering bringing the family. Search the Internet for "Seacoast newspaper classifieds" for a broader range.

4. I have very young children. I do love what I know about Montessori but don't know if I should take training now or wait.

Very young children are very young for only a short and precious time. We plan to be here. We'll be happy to welcome you later on when you're ready.

5. I would like to start my training this summer but can't spend a month or more away from home. Is it possible to take the course over a longer time period?

We can work with you on this if you like. We do require students to be fully accepted and enrolled in the program before creating individual extended completion plans. The down side for students is losing the bonding that goes on within groups as they pass through training. The up side is there are always good people in every group of students who are there to help.

6. What does "affiliated with the American Montessori Society" mean?

There are several affiliating organizations for Montessori teacher education programs. The American Montessori Society has the largest membership and graduates of its programs teach in schools worldwide. AMS affiliates teacher education programs after a lengthy and thorough process. We have chosen to affiliate with AMS.

7. What does "MACTE-accredited" mean?

MACTE is the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education. MACTE is the only Montessori accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education.

The term "Montessori" is in the public domain, however, and may be used by groups or individuals whether or not they affiliate with a recognized Montessori professional organization or in fact have any particular connection to the Montessori profession. We recommend students fully explore the accreditation status of each program and not simply the affiliation of a program before committing time and resources.

8. What is the difference between AMS, AMI, and the other groups that offer Montessori training?

Most teacher education programs cover the same basic information, a core methodology and curriculum developed by Dr. Maria Montessori and her immediate collaborators. The differences lie in the particular philosophies of Montessori organizations related to how teachers should be prepared, how the methodology should be implemented, and how schools that associate themselves with each particular organization function on behalf of children. Programs are also affected naturally by the personalities and experience of those who give them. It is human nature to think the group you've aligned to emotionally or experienced is the best (or worst, depending on your experience). We haven't met any children who care very much.

Dr. Montessori died in 1952. In her absence, there has never been a shortage of people willing to tell other people how to do or not to do the Montessori Method. We believe good educators are working in the best interests of children in all of the Montessori organizations. Espousing a philosophy of education is not a great challenge. Living the philosophy in the classroom with children is the real challenge. We try to avoid the organizational political dialogue and get on with the work.

9. Does Seacoast offer pure Montessori?

We offer what is called the traditional Montessori elementary curriculum. Traditional does not mean outdated or locked in time. We choose to put our energy into making the Montessori method and materials as appealing as possible to adults and children, our presentations as clear as we can, and to offer good professional models for our students.

We offer a very strong base for teachers to build on in their own experience with children and further professional development, one that Dr. Montessori would recognize. Our aim is not to have the climate of a large Montessori university but that of a wonderful small college. We want you to have a satisfying, instructive, and positive experience with great tools to take into your real work with children. We would shudder to think you'd leave feeling you've heard the last word in Montessori elementary before you've even begun your career in it.

10. I live in another part of the U.S./world and have heard good things about your program. Is it possible to do my practicum in my home state/country?

Seacoast isn't limited by geography in either vision or visits. Our faculty and friends are located worldwide. Please contact us with specifics of your situation if you have questions about your school or country.

11. Do I have to take the practicum between the two summers?

A fair number of our students do elect to delay the practicum until after they complete both summers of the course work. Some wait longer. The statutory limit is 2 years after completion of the academic phase.

12. Do you offer online or correspondence courses?

There are no MACTE-accredited distance learning programs, either online or by correspondence. In the USA our policy is to offer only MACTE-accredited programs that are affiliated with AMS.

13. Is it possible to visit the facility and to meet faculty?

We are happy to greet prospective students by appointment and to offer a tour of the facilities at The Cornerstone School as the school calendar allows. Please understand that The Cornerstone School is a space leased by Seacoast Center for Education during times it is not in session, and that the two entities are not otherwise connected. We cannot make arrangements for individuals to observe at the school. Nor does the school do so for us. Several faculty members of Cornerstone are in fact members of the Seacoast faculty, and will be happy to discuss the program at times that do not conflict with their school duties. Other faculty members live outside the region and may not be as easy to contact personally, but to whom we can gladly forward any questions.

14. What's the best preparation I can make for the training? What books should I read?

That's actually a harder question to answer than it may seem. Dr. Montessori's books are engaging and important background for any Montessori professional, but can be somewhat challenging to place into the modern vernacular. The key works for all teachers include *The Montessori Method*, *The Absorbent Mind*, and *The Discovery of the Child*. In our program we use four we find extremely useful from the Elementary perspective: *The Child in the Family*, *To Educate the Human Potential*, *From Childhood to Adolescence*, and *The Formation of Man*. Any of her works appropriately fits on the recommended list. If you are at the beginning of your personal reading list, we recommend Rita Kramer's readable biography *Maria Montessori*. Many of Dr. Montessori's texts are difficult to find. We make use of the Montessori-Pierson publications available from NAMTA at <http://www.montessori-namta.org/Namta/PubVidSubpages/MontSeries.html>
A list of appropriate reading beyond Dr. Montessori's own works could include thousands of relevant texts. We do make specific recommendations for curriculum support during the program.

15. Does Seacoast Center offer graduate credit or have a university connection?

Seacoast students may participate in our partnership with Plymouth State University for an M.ED and for CAGS credit.

16. I am interested in teaching only at the upper elementary level. Is it possible to take only the Elementary II level from Seacoast?

For certification purposes, Seacoast offers Elementary I or I-II credentials.

It is possible to find a few AMS Elementary II-only programs, though MACTE does not accredit this credential. Students who enroll in the Elementary I-II program and are sponsored by client schools may complete portions of the Elementary II level if they are working at that level and receive support from their school administration.

17. If I take the Elementary I program and am in an Elementary II classroom, is it still possible to do a practicum?

We would prefer you contact about us before signing up so we can help you make an informed decision no matter what you choose.

18. How much work is there?

Aside from course hours, which are concentrated into the summer months, students complete assignments related to classroom practice through the practicum year. These are due during the second summer of the program or after the practicum. We've tried to remove as much mindless coloring as possible by supplying color materials masters and limiting teaching album assignments. We also look annually at our assignments and assessments in order to make them useful and as efficient as possible.

No matter what anyone does to relieve stress, the first year of teaching is really like no other. We try to tell people to allow themselves five years to assimilate the experience of training and becoming a good Montessori teacher. We say that because there are parts of it, much like childhood, that simply take time and are well worth the time taken. It's a message few people want to hear at the beginning and that most seem to agree with five years later.

19. You're somewhere in New Hampshire. Can I get there from here?

Stratham is part of the greater Portsmouth area, a little over an hour from Boston. We have a number of great transportation resources, Manchester, Boston, and Portland airports are all within reach. Bus service to Boston and Logan Airport is minutes from our door. I-95 and I-495 are within minutes of the school. Students routinely commute from throughout New England and join us around the country and the world. This is rural suburban New England; the same greenery and water that makes it so beautiful makes a car an asset.

20. Is it possible to bring my pet with me?

This is actually a frequent question. We are friends of all animals but cannot welcome them at Cornerstone, either inside the buildings or in parked cars. Neither are we able to welcome other members of the animal kingdom save those who are accepted for admission.

21. Montessori training is pretty expensive. Do you have financial aid?

Training is a professional experience. Once you make the initial time commitment and build a basic portfolio of materials, there are currently no re-certification requirements and the materials last for years. Our prices are competitive with similar programs. We don't offer a scholarship program or financial aid. Many schools help with training expenses through loans or grants in return for a teaching commitment. These are private arrangements we can't become involved in. AMS has limited financial aid. Information regarding this is at www.amshq.org.

22. I'm already Montessori-certified. A teacher at our school took your training and her materials are gorgeous. Is it possible to buy them?

Many of the materials we offer and several other interesting classroom items are available to anyone through The Azoka Company at www.azokacompany.com. Owing to copyright agreements with a couple of individual artists, some materials are only part of the materials portfolio. Azoka Company and Seacoast Center for Education are separate entities. Please check the azoka web site and shopping cart for more information.

23. When should I apply for the coming summer? Do I have to have everything together at once to apply?

We're accepting applications now for both the New Hampshire and Celebration FL sites. It's not necessary for us to receive everything at once but we can't actually admit you until your file is complete. We do limit class sizes. If you're applying in mid-May or later, please contact us for

availability before you send the application fee, as it's non-refundable. [We won't accept the application or fee if we know we're full.]

Again, knowing answers lead often to new questions, we hope these have been helpful and look forward to yours.

Contact us at:

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