

Top 5 Tips to

the MONTESSORI INSPIRED WAY OF DECORATING



There's no better time to start thinking about creating the optimal learning environment for your students than in this present moment, and so I'm here to help you do just that.

The educational guru, Dr. Maria Montessori shared her scientifically, ingenious ways to make classrooms the most successful learning environments in the world ever since her book, *The Montessori Method*, was published in 1909 and sold out in 4 days. Since then, the educational pioneer has changed the way teachers see themselves, children and the classroom environment.

Hi there teacher friend! I'm Maryam Isabella. I have been practicing the Montessori Method as a certified Montessori teacher for almost 2 decades now, and that has inspired me to share what I have learned over the years- with a cozy, modern twist through ***THE MONTESSORI INSPIRED WAY OF DECORATING.***

These simple ideas will help you get going in a better direction with your classroom design and decor. And remember, you don't have to be a Montessori expert, just Montessori Inspired!



So... What exactly is **The Montessori Inspired Way of Decorating**?

- ***The Montessori Inspired Way of Decorating*** is a methodical and cozy approach to decorating a classroom: by 'rooms' like in a home, rather than just one large space to fill. In this way, learning is happening ALL THE TIME, and not just during designated learning times. In Montessori we designate these areas by Language, Mathematics, Practical Life, Cultural and Sensorial.
- But with children spending more of their time at school, it is **imperative** that we start to look at the classroom through a *better* lens, one that sees the classroom as an extension of the home- a place that not only teaches, but nurtures as well.

That is why in **The Montessori Inspired Way of Decorating**, we still use areas, but we are adding many element of coziness, like we would in a home. So our "rooms" will also have materials that are warm and inviting, tactile and please all the senses.

Part of ***The Montessori Inspired Way of Decorating*** is to also only keep items that "inspire learning". Those that don't, should be donated, recycled or used in some other productive way.



STEP 1: DESIGN BY 'ROOMS'

Contrary to how most schools design their classrooms, I advise to work through your classroom in order of 'rooms' or learning spaces rather than tackling the whole classroom.

While it may seem to make more sense to put in all the tables and chairs in the middle of the room and place all the learning materials against the walls for example, I believe that it's hard for kids to maximize their active learning and movement this way.

When we design and decorate as a 'whole classroom', we tend to replace active learning with wall charts and posters because we are looking at decorating through the eyes of the adult, not the child. Therefore we use themes, hang materials up too high, materials with words they cannot read and posters that mean nothing to them. It actually becomes VISUAL NOISE. So even though we may have set up a beautiful classroom, we have forgotten about the way the "whole child" learns best.

To level up from this traditional method, design by learning spaces, not by classroom. For example, if you chose to design a language 'room' or space - you'll have a better understanding of what your students actually need and therefore you will decorate more purposefully and efficiently.

As for which 'room space' to take on first, I personally love starting with the art space or reading nook, it fills me with inspiration for the more difficult spaces. But where you start, is entirely up to you! And remember, designing and decorating means having to move and rearrange many, many times. So don't get caught up in perfection. So tough as a teacher, I KNOW!

Once you have finished your "rooms" then you can arrange them to have a nice flow and cohesive look!



STEP 2: DECORATE WITH PURPOSE

I used to say design with intention, but that's what all teachers do, design with the best of intentions. So now I say, **DESIGN WITH PURPOSE**. Ask yourself, "what is the purpose of..."? Does it truly "**INSPIRE LEARNING**"? Is it at the child's height? Can they touch the decor, play or experiment with it? Is it homelike and cozy?

The act of designing with purpose is more than just arranging desks and putting up wall charts, I believe it's **a creative appreciation for the way kids learn**. It's not as quick as the traditional methods of design and decor, but it's a proven method in the Montessori Inspired Way of Decorating.

Once you begin decorating with purpose, you'll actually need fewer than items than you think.





STEP 3: ASK YOUR STUDENTS

Perhaps this is a concept you haven't thought of before, but I believe that one of the best ways to design and decorate is with your students input.

As a teacher, being "in charge" of every little thing almost goes with the territory, right? I know, I am very much *GUILTY AS CHARGED*. Letting go of that control is so difficult. I'm still a student, a freshman student, when it comes to that department.

It wasn't until my daughter would redo her homeschool classroom almost every single time after I thought it was perfect, that I began to realize that she saw her environment in ways that I couldn't. She was teaching me the valuable lesson of the Montessori philosophy time and time again, to "see the world through the eyes of the child."

So now I remind myself to ask for her input and follow up with questions like, "why do you think you like this decor better and why do you think it should go here instead of there?" I am always floored by her responses, they are *GOLD*.

This may be one of the simplest, yet most difficult of the tips, but actually very effective. Try it out and let me know how it goes!





STEP 4: BRING NATURE IN

The easiest ways to bring nature in are through plants and a natural, earthy color palette. Use natural materials like wood, handwoven baskets and handmade items. Light is one of nature's greatest gifts! Try to have as much natural light as possible, otherwise see if you can replace LED and fluorescent lighting with incandescents (and color-correct halogens like Chromalux) because those will be the healthiest light choices for your eyes.

Just imagine how much more beautiful and soothing a classroom environment looks and feels when you have natural colors and materials. Plants have been proven to increase attention span and focus, while also easing anxiety. Colors have a big impact on moods, for example too much red is overstimulating and invokes anger. The psychology of colors is fascinating, so pick wisely!

Try and replace plastic items with handwoven baskets or at least with clear plastic instead of bright reds and blues.





STEP 5: THINK SOFT

Here is where we really bring in that element of cozy that makes *The Montessori Inspired Way of Decorating* so unique. I do this step at the very end of my designs. I go to every “room” and see how I can make it softer. Is it though softer colors, adding a warm throw in the library “room”, perhaps cozy rugs or pillows, twinkle lights, maybe soft tactile materials like pampas grass, or even wicker baskets with cozy cuddle toys.

These small cozy elements make a big difference with all children, but especially the ones who are spending long hours at school. By designing with an extension of the home as a blueprint, you are giving your students a much needed sense of security, warmth and love. Plus it’s also a beautiful work environment for you as well!





DESIGNING & DECORATING IS A LIVING BREATHING THING

Therefore, it's always changing and evolving. And it's not about perfection. It's about growing with your students, and that occurs seasonally in my opinion. So I rearrange, add or subtract materials every 3 months.

No class is the same either, so traditional classrooms **cannot** support *optimal learning* with the exact same arrangement, decor and materials. Maybe one year you have more boys than girls or vice versa. Another year you may have students with learning disabilities. Perhaps one year you will have a foreign exchange student and would like to include some art from their culture.

So be creative and open to new possibilities and ideas! These 5 tips are just to get you going...

As you can see the classroom environment is one of the most **POWERFUL** influences on a child's future success- Academically, Emotionally, Socially and Spiritually.

I started ***The Montessori Inspired Way of Decorating*** with a simple mission- to help teachers like **YOU** harness the power of Montessori to *maximize* your efforts through a cozy and strategic classroom environment!