

## Observation in the Montessori Elementary

Observation is a skill that takes significant practice to develop. This is one reason that 90 hours of observation are one of the requirements of the AMI diploma. But as with any skill, it must be practiced regularly for the skill level to be maintained. This is daily work of the Montessori elementary teacher. It is only with daily observation that the boredom that can emerge when observing will fade, and the adult can truly see what the children are revealing. This will occur when the adult is disciplined in observation and has different areas of focus which will help to keep attention focused. As an adult in a Montessori environment, observation must happen for ten minutes each day. In the first two minutes, simply record what each child is doing. For the rest of the time, choose an area of focus:

### Areas of Focus

- Initiation of work – How is work chosen? Does the child choose? Does the adult choose? Is the child invited by another child? How long does the child work with the material?
- How does the child enter the classroom? Is there enthusiasm or reluctance?
- Are the children working in groups or individually? Why?
- Do you see the human tendencies in operation?
- Look at the prepared environment. Does it provide opportunities for the human tendencies to operate? Does it facilitate and foster independence? Are the materials all in good repair and complete?
- What is the nature of follow-up work? Does it arise spontaneously or is it assigned? Is there diversity in this work? For example, is it mostly written work, or do you see work with materials, drama, art projects, etc?
- How is the environment cared for? Are the systems in place working?
- How does the child check her work? Does the environment provide the means for checking the work? Must the adult check the child's work?
- Observe one group of children working together. Is there collaboration? Does a leader of the group emerge? Are the needs of all children in the group being met? Does the group need support from the adult to be successful in their work? How best can that support be provided?
- Observe an individual child. Does the child perform the chosen activity with understanding, or is the work mechanical? How does this child handle mistakes? What work is really causing the child to concentrate? What characteristics of a child in the second plane is this child displaying? What other presentations can you offer to support this characteristic?