

Journey Through the Environment

at Valley Montessori School

An Overview

Journey Through the Environment is a workshop designed to give parents a chance to experience the classrooms as children do every day, to explore and to use the learning materials, and to discover how the Montessori method teaches the academic curriculum at Valley Montessori School (VMS).

It is modeled on Montessori's Three Period Lesson where first a concept is presented, then internalized through practice, and finally synthesized into full understanding and abstraction. This is how children learn at VMS – the Three Period Lesson applies to “works,” children's three-year stay in a class or nine-year tenure from Early Childhood through the elementary levels. It is what parents get a glimpse of these two days.

The Silent Journey

On the first evening, parents silently walk through a classroom in each of the levels, spending 15 minutes in each of the Toddler, Early Childhood, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary classrooms, and 10 minutes in the Middle School. Parents observe, absorb and mentally note similarities or differences of the materials and any questions they may have, but do not touch the “works” or talk with each other, in order to avoid intellectualizing and jumping to quick conclusions.

The Discovery

The next day, parents have a chance to discover and actively work with the classroom materials, alone or with another person – parents spend 30 minutes in each classroom “working,” asking questions and taking notes. Teachers and self-explanatory guides will be on-hand to help out. In the Middle School, parents receive a typical lesson.

Sharing

Both “The Silent Journey” and “The Discovery” culminate in a discussion and sharing period. Similar to how VMS students learn by mentoring other children or by participating in class presentations, parents also learn from sharing their personal insights.

Participants in the Journey come away with a deeper understanding of how VMS students learn at various levels -- from simple, concrete tools in the ECC, to more complex abstractions at the upper levels. Parents often have many Aha! moments in their travels through the three periods of the Journey.