**Cultural Studies**

The Montessori Cultural Studies curriculum provides children with an opportunity to explore the larger world. As part of a rich exploration of the different cultures of the world, students learn about the people, terrain and animals of each continent as they study them in the course of the three-year cycle.

Cultural Studies also introduces children to the physical world that surrounds them, providing them with the opportunity to explore real things, and learn the scientific names for plants and animals. Areas studied include geography, zoology, botany, physics, earth science and social studies.

**The Land & Water Globe and the Continent Globe**

These two special globes are used to introduce physical geography. The first is used to teach the idea of how land areas and water are represented on a Globe. Land is shown as rough brown area; water is smooth blue surface areas. The second introduces the seven continents. Each is shown in a distinct color. Children learn the names and location of each continent. The color code used on the Continent Globe is carried on with the Puzzle Map of the World and in early work in continent studies.

**Puzzle Maps**

The large wooden puzzle maps are among the most popular activities in the classroom. The child can put each puzzle piece into place by means of a little knob on its flat, shiny surface. The introductory map of the world has a separate puzzle piece for each continent. After working with the world map, the child can do one of six puzzle maps of continents in which each country is represented by a separate puzzle piece. Finally, there is a map of the United States with a separate piece for each state.

As they manipulate these puzzles, students learn about the different countries located on each continent. An extension of this initial introduction invites the child to create his or her own continent map on paper. The child pin-punches each country out of different colored construction paper, and assembles these into the whole continent using the puzzle maps as a guide. A further refinement of this work for older children involves using the puzzle pieces to trace each country onto a blank piece of paper, thereby re-creating a given continent. The countries are then individually colored in and labeled.

**Botany**

Botany is introduced using beautiful sets of nature cards which illustrate in color such information as the parts of a tree, the parts of a leaf or the parts of a flower. The children match these illustrations with the corresponding names. Working with these cards helps the youngsters to become more observant of the characteristics of things which grow in their own environments. They frequently have plants, flowers, or vegetables growing in the classroom; or they bring in samples which they can coordinate with the illustrations on the cards.

An extension of this matching work for the older student is the opportunity to create a “book.” The book is made up of one page describing each part of the tree, flower or plant. Using the matching cards as a guide, the student colors and labels the specific part of the plant on each page in turn, and then staples these together to form their own book.

**Biology**

Students are introduced to the concept of living vs. nonliving early in the 3-year cycle. They are then introduced to the five vertebrate classes: mammal, amphibian, reptile, fish and bird. Throughout the three-year curriculum, there are opportunities to learn more about the animals that belong to each of these classes. In addition, students learn about the human skeleton using a life size model, and also study invertebrates. Whenever possible, teachers will produce a live exhibit to illustrate teaching in zoology.

**Earth Science & Physics**

Dr. Montessori’s rich science curriculum begins with hands-on experiences in the Primary classroom. There are items from nature displayed throughout the classroom, and students are invited to explore different kinds of rocks, shells, and other specimens. In addition, students may conduct small experiments to help them explore such concepts as “sink and float”, “living and nonliving” or “magnetic and nonmagnetic.” A constantly rotating curriculum also provides the opportunity for students to explore such areas as the solar system, volcanoes and the weather.

