

## THE THREE PERIOD LESSON

The **three period lesson** is used to introduce new concepts and valuable lessons in the Montessori classroom. This method fosters the child's understanding and mastery of a skill. Additionally, it broadens a child's vocabulary and enriches their experiences with language.

During a three period lesson it is important to keep things simple and focused. The adult begins the lesson by presenting the child with three contrasting objects and isolating them one at a time on a table or mat. The **FIRST PERIOD** is the naming period. Here the adult says, "This is the/a \_\_\_." Be sure the child is following along. Be sure to use clear, slow speech.

The **SECOND PERIOD** allows for recognition and association. Here the adult rearranges the objects and says to the child, "Please show me the \_\_\_\_." or, "Can you place the \_\_\_\_ in my hand?" The objects can be rearranged several times, providing the child with increased kinesthetic memory and ample opportunity to recognize the items. Rearranging, covering and hiding the items turns the lesson into a fun game. Many children will remain in this period before moving on to the third.

The **THIRD PERIOD** demonstrates recall or memory. At this point, the objects in the lesson are placed in front of the child and the teacher points to the first one and asks, "What is this?" This is the testing period. The adult should only proceed to this stage if she is confident that the child will have success with recalling the information. If the adult finds that the child cannot recall the information, simply tell the child the name of the item(s) and revisit the lesson at a later time.

The three period lesson is an effective teaching strategy that maintains a developmentally appropriate approach. The uniqueness of the three period lesson is in its connection to scaffolding. Scaffolding is a process of providing and then removing external support. The original task is not changed; but rather the child's participation in the task is made easier with assistance. As children take more responsibility for pursuing an objective, assistance is gradually withdrawn. In early childhood education, we use scaffolding techniques on a consistent basis to challenge children in performing tasks slightly beyond what they can easily do on their own. A Montessori teacher is constantly observing her students in order to gauge the amount of support (and challenge) that is necessary for optimal learning. The three period is a wonderful teaching strategy that encourages *independence and freedom*--two key Montessori tenets.