# A SUPERIOR BIRTH TO THREE ENVIRONMENT

When parents are getting ready for the first child, they will be overwhelmed by ads on what they "need" for that child. It seems that these ads are aimed at selling things far more than providing what is really good for the child. Many items are not only over stimulating for the young child (too many objects, uncomfortably bright colors) but they hamper the natural development of important abilities such as language (pacifiers) and movement (cribs, swings, and high chairs) and even sometimes can

be dangerous (walkers and off-gasses from plastic). The simple, natural, and gentle environment, that encourages feelings of safety, and encourages the child to communicate with others and to move—that is the superior environment for the child from birth to three.

The best time to prepare the environment is before birth. The parents should crawl around the child's room to see what the child can reach or will be attracted to. Listen to the sounds: can you hear the wind in the trees, or are the sounds of nature overwhelmed by the sound of a TV or radio? The child, unable to filter out the unnecessary or the disturbing as the adult can, will hear and

be affected by every sound and sight.

It is important for the child's sense of order, his security, to keep the environment the same for the first year. Planning and preparing the environment ahead of time makes this possible.

### SAFETY

A child will develop more fully—mentally, emotionally, and physically—when she is free to move and explore an ever-enlarging environment. But in order to give the child this wonderful freedom, we must explore the home or day care environment with a fine-tooth comb. When a child is free to leave his floor bed and to move about his room, and

# THE MONTESSORI SUPERIOR ENVIRONMENT: FIRST FURNITURE

See the *European Bed Frame* on page 18; the *Mirror with the Bar* on page 14; the *First Table* and *First Chair* on page 21; the *European Independence Chair* (high chair) on page 22.

Furniture that is not part of the superior environment includes: crib, playpen, walker, swing, pacifier, other items that restrict the child's movement and prevent optimum development at the proper time for each child.



### UNFRAMED MIRRORS

The newborn or young child will entertain himself for hours in front of a mirror next to a floor mattress or play mat; and in the process learn about movement and her own body. In these acrylic, safe plexiglass mirrors, children can see a virtually distortion-free image of themselves. The *unframed mirrors* come in two sizes: The small mirror is 2' x 2'. The larger one is 4' x 2'.

BA500 Small Mirror \$88.00 BA510 Large Mirror \$146.00



#### MICHAEL OLAF FRAME

We have this beautiful hardwood frame made to hold our sets of art pictures. The frame holds a set of 10 for easy rotation to draw the child's attention to the art instead of always having the same picture on display. It is open to the front, with a solid wood back. The dimensions are 13.2" x 13.2". Made in the USA. **NOTE**: See complete list of picture sets on page 46.

00 \* \$



### ADAPTABLE FRAMED MIRROR

A moveable wooden-framed mirror for the child from birth to age seven or eight years. It stands on its own in a horizontal position for use with infants, and in a vertical position for growing children for washing one's face, blowing one's nose, dressing, checking to see if clothes are on properly and clean, and so forth. The reflective surface is acrylic plexiglass, safe and shatterproof, mounted in a hard maple frame. It can

be hung on the wall as well as freestanding. It is 14" x 48" and weighs 13 pounds. It is shipped separately from the rest of your order.

BA36 \$145.00

### WOOD & ACRYLIC FRAME

This ingenious frame makes it possible to safely display photos and art at the child's eye level—family photos, pictures of the Michael Olaf sets in this catalogue, prints from art museums or last year's beautiful calendars, all safe to see and touch. For ease in changing pictures, the acrylic panel is simply lifted from the wooden frame, which is made of lovely birch plywood frame, 50.5" x 15." For the Montessori Infant Community or the home. Made in the USA.

PE090 \$112.00



later the other rooms—careful attention must be paid to covering plugs, taping wires to the wall or floor, removing poisonous plants and chemicals, and removing any objects that could harm the child. As the child begins to crawl quickly and to walk, the adults must continue to childproof the

house.

### GENERAL ENVIRONMENT **PRINCIPLES**

Here are some things to keep in mind when organizing a child's environment.

(1) Participation in Family Life: Even from the very first days invite the child into the life of the family. In each room—the bedroom, kitchen, dining room, living room, front hall,

and so forth have a mobile for the infant, or a basket or shelves for the young child, to store the few carefully chosen belongings, and a special mat or rug for him to "work" on developing abilities.

> (2) INDEPENDENCE: The child's message to us at any age is "Help me to do it myself." Supporting this need shows respect for and faith in the child. Think carefully about family activities in all areas of the home, and arrange each space to support independence. A twin mattress for the child's bed; clothing cubby, coat tree, or low clothing rod or hook



### THE FIRST SHELF

This is a design that has been tested for many years in homes and infant environments. At first it holds the materials and perhaps a beautiful plant next to an adult chair for the nursing mother. Soon it becomes the first toy shelf, for those first rattles and other toys—at just the right height, even for the child who is not yet walking but crawls to his toys. The first shelf is made here in Arcata of hardwood plywood. Measurements: length 48", height 12.5", depth 11." Made in the USA PE225 \$185.00

LOW BOOK DISPLAY



book display makes picking up and putting away books an easy task for the youngest child, at home and in the Infant Community. 15" high, 21" wide, and 14" deep.

(\*) PE130

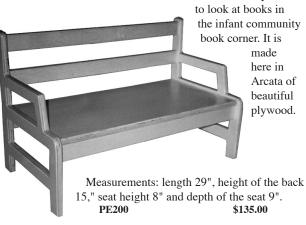
\$100.00

### THE CHILD'S BENCH

This special bench was designed for Montessori Infant Communities in Rome many years ago, adapted and perfected over years of use by children around the

It is sturdy yet light enough to be carried by two very young children—a favorite activity! In the home it is a lovely piece of furniture for the child's room, the front hall where the child takes off shoes or boots, or the living room.

It can be used for two children to sit side-by-side



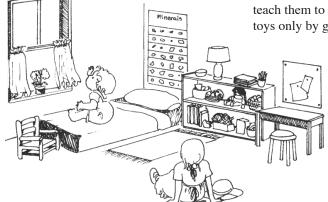


wherever the child dresses or undresses (front hall, bathroom, bedroom, etc.); a stool or bench for removing shoes and boots; inviting shelves for books, dishes, toys.

(4) Belongings: This brings up a very important point. It is too much for anyone to care for or enjoy belongings when there are too many out at one time. In preparing the home environment for a child, have a place to keep clothing, toys, and books that are not being used. Rotate these when you see the child tiring of what is out on the shelf, in the book display, or toy basket. Have just a few pieces of clothing available to the child to choose what to wear each

day, just a few toys that are enjoyed, and only a few favorite or new books.

(3) PUTTING AWAY & THE SENSE OF ORDER: "Discipline" comes from the



same word as "disciple" and our children become disciplined only by imitating us; just as we teach manners such as saying "thank you" by modeling this for our children instead of reminding, we can teach them to put away their books and toys only by gracefully and cheerfully

> doing it over and over in their presence.

People are always amazed at how neat and beautiful a good Montessori class appears. This is not because the teacher is imposing her own order on the child, but because she is

### "TOILET LEARNING" SEAT

This perfect toilet seat allows your child to sit safely and comfortably on the toilet. The soft rubber edge keeps it from sliding around or pinching the child. A unique feature of the Baby Bjorn Toilet Trainer is the curved and slanted splash guard, and it can easily be adjusted to fit any size toilet. Best of all, it can be put on the toilet by the child and carried by the handle to take along when the child leaves the house. The color of the toilet seat is white. Made in Sweden.

NOTE: See other "potty seat" on page 23, and the book Diaper Free before 3 on page 66.

### WATERPROOF STEP STOOL

FOR THE KITCHEN AND BATHROOM



For places where water is a consideration. such as the toilet or sink, this is the best. The rubber matting on the top provides a nonslip surface for your child to stand on safely, even with wet feet. The strong rubber feet prevent it from sliding on the floor; the step stool stands firmly and so does your child.

The color is apple red. It is 6" tall, and the base is 13" x 10". Made in Sweden.

PE270 \$22.00

#### TALL INDEPENDENCE STEPS

"Help me do it myself." This stool can be used in the classroom and in the home to enable the child to reach a sink or a working counter while carrying things—the whole idea!

The *tall independence steps* here is in front of the kitchen sink in our own home. It is made of fine Baltic birch plywood, with nonskid strips on the steps, and cutout handles for the child to hold on to while ascending or descending the steps in order to work. The height is 32", width 18", depth 16". The bottom step is 6.5" high and the top one 13". The weight is 35 pounds. NOTE: This item is shipped directly from the manufacturer and may take up to a month to receive.

(\*) PE353

\$190.00



### SEVEN HOOKS

This was produced as a coat rack, but it has many uses in the Montessori environment: hanging mops and brooms, little bags for keeping inside shoes, every day clothing in the bedroom, as well as coats and jackets.

The natural finish plywood is 48" long by 3.75," and there are seven hooks. It is wall mounted and comes with the mounting hardware.

(\*) PE150 \$52.00



the school, for putting on or removing shoes. In the bathroom for taking off or putting on underpants, in the bedroom for getting dressed. It adds a bit of elegance to the important stage of development. (I use one for my tea table when sitting on the floor)

Made especially for us, solid hardwood plywood, hand cut, 6" tall, 12" x 12" seat.



satisfying the strong sense of order of the child.



A book stand makes life easier for me. (and easier on my books!)

#### FURNITURE

Furniture does not have to be expensive: it can be as simple, or as elegant, as any other furniture in the home. The important thing is that it is of a size and quality to be of use to the child.

Solid wood tables and stools, which allow the child to sit up straight with the feet flat on the floor for drawing, playing, fixing and eating snacks during the day, are very important.

Not only will good posture be developed, but she will be better able to concentrate and focus in a correct seated position.

### THE ENVIRONMENT & THE ABSORBENT MIND

During the first three years the child will absorb, like a sponge, whatever is in the environment, ugliness or beauty, coarse behavior or gentleness, good or bad language. As parents we are the first models of what it means to be human. If our children are in a childcare setting or an infant community we must exact the same high standards.

Quality and beauty of the environment and of books and materials are very important in attracting, satisfying, and keeping the attention of the child. If the child is exposed to beautiful mobiles, posters, rattles and



### SHORT INDEPENDENCE STEP STOOL

This stool is for the slightly larger child than the tall independence steps. The height of the bottom step is 13", the width 14.5" and the depth 14". The steps are 6" and 12" high. It is made of fine Baltic birch plywood and has a convenient carrying handle cut just below the top step so it can be moved by the child. The weight is 10 pounds. Just like the tall independence stool, it is pictured here at the kitchen sink in our own home.

> (\*) PE440 \$55.00



### ROUND STOOL

For the child who has attained balance in sitting upright, stools provide the best support for developing balance and posture, and they are very important to use in the home and the

classroom. With it a child can easily place feet flat on the ground, get on and off, and slide it to and from the table while seated. Our round stool is 8" tall, the seat 10" in diameter. Shipped directly from the builder.

**CR46** \$39.00

### THE MICHAEL OLAF SLATTED CHAIR

This chair was designed years ago, has been tested all over the world, and is custom made for Montessori infant communities and homes. Or version is

created directly from the Italian model. The seat gently curves to fit the body of the young child and the slats extend beyond the frame so that the child can move or adjust the chair to the correct distance from the table, while in a seated position. All edges are rounded and the seat slopes

upward toward the front for proper fit, good

circulation, comfortable legs, and feet placed solidly on the floor. This secure position allows the child to perform at his best while sitting at a table to eat, work, or play. The slatted chair is made of hardwood plywood, light enough for the child to carry—in other words perfect.

The seat height is 7" to 7.25," the height of the back is 14.5." The chair is made here to our exacting specifications. We can usually fill orders for individual chairs right away but need infant community orders in advance.

PE120

### SMALL WOODEN TABLES

WITH SOLID WOOD OR WOOD LAMINATE TOPS, SQUARE AND RECTANGULAR These two tables, either square or rectangular, are made to the height that is perfect to help the very young child develop good posture and

concentration while sitting. They are heavy enough to be steady but still light enough for two children to carry.

having one in the kitchen or dining area for cooking and meals, and another in the living room or bedroom for looking at books, for

In the home we recommend art, or for playing with toys and puzzles. Because of many requests from

customers we now carry two different tops The solid wood top table is the most beautiful, with 3/4" solid hard maple top, legs, and aprons, with lovely wood grain visible. It has several layers of varnish to protect it. A special touch in any classroom, or home. The wood laminate top is almost as lovely. It is a .75" high-pressure wood grained laminate with solid maple legs with glides, and solid maple aprons. The height of both tables is 14". The square table top is 24" x 24"; The rectangular table top is  $22" \times 30"$ . For ages 6 months -3 years.

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(*) CR962 Square Solid Wood Table	\$180.00
(*) CR964 Rectangular Solid Wood Table	\$240.00
(*) CR968 Square Wood Laminate Table	\$155.00
(*) CR969 Rect. Wood Laminate Table	\$167.00

toys, made of wood and other natural products, as an adult she will help create a world with the same high standards.

Toys, rattles, puzzles, tables, and chairs—made of wood—develop an appreciation for nature and quality and protect the child from unsafe chemicals that are found in many synthetic materials.

Pictures on the wall, hung at the eye-level of the child, can be beautiful, framed art prints, or simple posters. All of us have been influenced by our first environment, and nothing helps create beauty in the world as much as giving beauty to the very young.

#### STORAGE

Rather than tossing toys into large toy boxes, it is more satisfying to the child to keep them neatly on shelves, hung on hooks, kept ready to work with on wooden trays or small baskets. This also makes putting away much more logical and enjoyable. The Chinese art of placement, Feng Shui, teaches that clutter, even hidden under a bed or piled on the top of bookcases, can cause stress.

### THE OUTSIDE ENVIRONMENT

Sometimes we forget that daily life was first carried out in the outdoors, people coming into their homes for shelter from the elements. This is still

the instinct of the child. In the first days of life, just a breath of fresh air and a look at the tree branches moving in the wind each day is sufficient; soon a daily walk in the baby carrier or stroller; and before you know it, walks led by the child, where each new thing—cracks in the sidewalk, parades of ants, puddles, brick walls, weeds and thistles—many details which we as adults previously overlooked, will enchant the child and make a short walk into a long drawn out discovery. Sometimes a "walk to the park" can take an hour, and one may not even get past the front sidewalk.

One day a new teacher told Dr. Montessori that there was just nothing



# SMALL WHITE TOPPED WOODEN TABLES

Souare and Rectangular

These are constructed of sturdy hardwood (birch and maple) with a durable, scrubable, white pressboard and formica top. The *small square table* top is 24" x 24." The *small rectangular table* top is 22" x 30". The height of both is 14." For age 6 months—3 years. NOTE: Shipped separately from the rest of your order.

CR45 White Square Table \$155.00 CR676 White Rectangular Table \$167.00

### TRANSITION TABLE LEGS

It is very important in the first years that children have chairs and tables that allow for good balance and the developing of habits of good posture. These legs can replace the legs that come with tables on page 62 and this page to accommodate the child's growth. They will raise the height of the table tops on these two pages from 14" to 18", perfect for use with the solid maple chair on this page. You will receive a set of 4 legs that are easy to attach and will allow the growing family, and the variety necessary in the class with two heights of tables over the years.

(\*) CR682 \$48.00

### SOLID MAPLE CHAIR

This is an all-time favorite traditional chair for the home or classroom. The height of the seat is 10." The back legs are slightly curved to prevent tipping backwards. They are strong enough for an adult to join the child at the table. These beautiful chairs are made to withstand many years of use. For ages 2 to 6 years. NOTE: shipped separately from the rest of your order.

CR760 \$79.00



## COAT TREE

There is nothing like this little piece of furniture to help a child develop good habits and fulfill the need for order! Young children love the name *coat tree* and they appreciate having a place where they can hang up clothing (or brooms or mops) without help.

There are four sets of double metal hooks on a hard maple pole which is 30" tall. For pajamas, bathrobe, coat, for costumes, apron, towels, backpack, brooms and mops, anything the child uses often and needs a place to put it by himself. For the home and the infant community.

PE115 \$65.00

### 24" TODDLER TOY SHELVES

These are used in the home and the classroom, often 10 or more in the Montessori Infant Community depending on the number of children and the age span. In the home they keep order, enabling the child to find what she wants to use, and learn to put things away. The *end/corner shelf* makes use of the corners of a small room like a front hall or bathroom, or can be used to extend the *basic toy cabinet*.

The *basic toy cabinet* is 24" high, 48" wide, and 15" deep. The *end/corner shelf* is 24" high, 15" deep. NOTE: Shipped separately from the rest of your order.

(\*) PE320 Basic Toddler Cabinet

\$265.00

(\*) PE325 End/Corner shelf

\$140.00

worth exploring in the outside environment of their city school. So Dr. Montessori led the children outside to the front of the building. An hour later they hadn't gone any further than a small weed patch a few feet away. It was full of tiny details of life and absolutely fascinating to the children.

When we say to give the world to the child, this does not mean the inside of buildings, but weed patches, glorious sunrises and sunsets, the strong cleansing winds of fall, the sounds of birds in the trees, the stars and clouds, the infinite variety of leaves and flowers, the beautiful world of nature.



My favorite place to explore and learn! (The Outside Environment)

It is very good for us adults to slow down, forget our plan, and follow the child as he discovers, smells, sees, hears, and touches the outside world.

Welcome the child to your outside work—washing the car, working in the garden, whatever you can do outside instead of inside—there is always some little part of the real work that a child can do.

Try to create an outside area where the child can not only do outside activities such as playing in a sandbox, but activities he would be doing inside, such as washing his hands or the dishes, looking at books, doing a puzzle.

### 30" TOY SHELF

This 30" toy shelf is also used in the Montessori Infant Community. The rule at this age is that the child can use any of the materials in the class. It being unreasonable to expect a child to NOT touch what she sees. So anything not-to-be-touched is kept out of reach, on top of this 30" shelf. It comes either *open*, without a back (often used as a room divider approachable from both sides), or with

a wooden back. The *30*" toy shelf is 30" high, 48" wide, and 15" deep. The 30" end/corner shelf makes use of the corners of the classroom, or can be used to extend the basic toy shelf. It is 30" high, 15" deep. NOTE: Shipped separately from the rest of your order.

(*) PE321	30" Toy Shelf, with back	\$245.00
(*) PE340	30" Toy Shelf, open	\$225.00
(*) PE342	30" End/Corner shelf	\$170.00

### CHILD-SIZE CUPBOARDS

These special pieces of furniture are essential to keep the most important objects in the child's life within easy reach, in the home or classroom. They are of excellent quality and children are

delighted with the size as it is clearly obvious that this is real furniture for important work. Either can be used to keep books, toys, clothing, dishes, glasses, cups and silverware, towels, cooking equipment, even clothing, "A place for everything and everything in its place."

The cupboards are made of durable Baltic birch plywood with a fine, washable finish, and a masonite back.



The 3-shelf cupboard is 20" wide, 15" deep, 23.5 tall." The 4-shelf cupboard is 20" wide, 15" deep, 28.5" tall.

PE260 3-Shelf Cupboard (left) \$175.00 PE265 4-shelf Cupboard (right) \$175.00

### SMALL BOOK DISPLAY

From the very beginning good books should be displayed to entice the child to the world of literature. When the child can walk, this display, enables a young child to practice holding and carrying a book carefully with both hands, and putting it away without damaging it.



Keep the selection of books to a minimum, changing them, but keeping out the favorites. There are three vertical display shelves 1.5" deep, and one horizontal shelf at the bottom. Made of birch plywood with Masonite back: 24" wide, 9" deep, and 25" high. Shipped separately from the rest of your order.

PE100 \$110.00

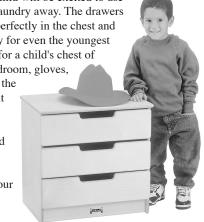
### CHEST-OF-DRAWERS

This fine child-sized piece of furniture is very useful—even the youngest child will be excited to use it and to put her own clean laundry away. The drawers are very sturdy, yet they fit perfectly in the chest and slide out smoothly and easily for even the youngest child. There are many uses for a child's chest of drawers—clothing in the bedroom, gloves, jackets, scarves, and bags in the front hall; use it for the adult and children's towels in the

bathroom. Constructed of durable Baltic birch plywood with a washable finish. 20" wide, 14" deep, 28.5" tall.

Shipped separately from the rest of your order.

PE250 \$230.00





A little corner in each room of the house welcomes the infant to the daily life of the family.

It is often the case in this country that "intellectual" activities are done inside, and "large muscle" activities done outside. So the only thing one finds outside is playground equipment. This separates the work of the mind and the body and splits the naturally integrated life of the young child. The most important work is done with the mind and body working together to create.

It is ideal, but not always possible, to create a free-flow inside-outside for the child. An alternative is a protected porch or other safe outside space, no matter how small, which he can be in at will. Of course this must be open only when the adult can be available to see what the young child is doing.

### CONCLUSION

Learning how to prepare the environment before birth frees parents to devote time to be with and enjoy their child after birth.

A beautiful, organized, and uncluttered environment can help in many ways: dressing and undressing is simplified; the favorite book and toy is always within reach; the child can participate in the life of the family and feel needed; challenging work that focuses the child's attention and fulfills her needs is always available; a more fun, creative, and peaceful life comes into being for the whole family.

#### **APRONS**

The use of aprons is very important at this age. Putting on an apron marks the beginning of the work cycle and helps a child focus on the process to come. Taking off the apron marks the end. Look for aprons that can be put on by the child, and fastened by the child, so it contributes to the practice of a child being able to initiate a project (sweeping, painting, dusting, etc.) without needing the help of an adult.

For the Michael Olaf aprons see pages 24 and 49.



#### MICHAEL OLAF 2-PART LANGUAGE TRAY

Used for language: two sets of matching pictures, or one set of picture to match to small objects. Usually

several of these are found on the language shelves in the infant community.

The handle provides a firm grasp and each tray is hand made and finished to our highest standards. 11.75" x 7". **PE07** \$36.00







### SHALLOW 2-HANDLE BASKETS

Two-hand baskets are used in the infant community for setting the table, making a satisfying ritual of placing the dish, cup, glass, bowl, in basket, carrying it securely to the table to be set, returning for the next one. The child loves the repetition at this age, and this system is much better than the adult desire for speed and efficiency!

There are many other uses in the home for these tight weave baskets, including a container for the first selection of rattles for the infant, a childsize laundry basket, and so on. They are very safe and easy for even the smallest child to use, finished with a protective coating, the handles reinforced. The large basket is 12" in diameter across the top (4" high without the handles), and the smaller one 9.5" (3" high).

PE760 Large Basket \$8.00 PE762 Small Basket \$7.00

### SMALL WORK RUG

This is used in Montessori birth-three communities; you will find several in the environment, in constant use. This tradition helps a child define his work/play space, and stay focused on one project at a time. The weaving ridges make it easy for the young child to roll up the mat and put it away when finished with a project. 100% cotton, medium blue color, 13.5" x 19.5"

PE462 \$6.00



NOTE: See "bags" on page 44. They can be used, on each child coat hook to keep indoor shoes, or for an opening and closing exercise, to keep language objects, at an alternative to wasting paper for giftwrapping for containing a gift, and in many other creative ways.

### MICHAEL OLAF WOODEN TRAYS

Unable to find the quality of wooden tray that meets our standards, we have them made here in California. They are beautiful and will last far longer than any others we have seen. They are perfect for organizing and displaying all of the many activities for the child. The light wood tones draw the child's eye to the objects displayed on

\$23.00

\$27.00

them and there is a handle at each end for a firm hand grasp.

Each piece is handmade and finished with a clear finish that gives the child a good look at the lovely grain of the wood. The Michael Olaf Small Tray is 8.5" x 5." The Michael Olaf Large Trav is 11.75" x 7."

PE05 Michael Olaf Tray, Small PE03 Michael Olaf Tray, Large