

Nurturing the Love of Learning Transcript

Hannah Salzbrun (High School Senior – Attended Montessori since early childhood)

I know that I always had fun with the things that I was doing when we were doing things that had academic aspects to them but I never felt like I was just doing work because all the activities were so hands-on and you were building things and playing with things and manipulating materials, and so I knew that I was learning but I was having a good time doing it.

Trip Schulte (Twelve year old former early childhood Montessorian)

It's easier to do things with things that you can feel and you can see, than having to do everything in your head.

Elizabeth Rahner (High School Senior – Attended Montessori since early childhood)

As a preschooler, it's definitely choice-oriented. It was fun to be able to go and choose works off the shelf. You know, whether it's something to do with geometry, they had rectangular prisms to work with, or fine motor skills with the art shelf or everyday living where you could practice pouring. And you don't know necessarily that you're learning things. There were just lots of very engaging activities to take part in and it's fun.

Calen Settles (High School Senior – Attended Montessori since early childhood)

I think it just comes from the Montessori teaching of "follow the child" and the whole community aspect as like, we all obtain success together.

Simon Vaglianti (Twelve year old former early childhood Montessorian)

My mom and dad are always saying how they wish they had learned like I did. They really like the part where you can progress at your own pace, the hands-on learning. Because they said, what they got, they got a chalkboard and a piece of chalk.

(Fade to Narrator)

It doesn't take long to realize a Montessori classroom is different from most other classrooms. The children are actively engaged, working independently.

A closer look reveals each child is involved in working with hands-on materials that stimulate all of his or her senses. Materials that communicate complex concepts in a concrete way.

Montessori materials are carefully sequenced so that each activity has an orderly and logical process to follow. This allows children to organize their thinking and problem solving skills in a clear way, and to absorb this knowledge through their senses.

All the materials in a Montessori classroom are organized into one of five curriculum areas:

Practical Life
Sensorial
Language
Math and
Cultural

Practical Life

Hannah Salzbrun (High School Senior – Attended Montessori since early childhood)

I'd have a little rug on the floor and I'd go get my math assignment and bring it to the rug and when I was done, I'd clean it up and put it back. Or if I wanted to go eat snack, I'd go to the sink and wash my hands and get my snack, and then brush my teeth. It wasn't just sitting in a class learning, it was functioning and learning how to function as a grown-up person, not just a three year old.

Small children have many life skills that they need to learn to achieve independence. Respecting a child's desire to be independent is a cornerstone of Montessori philosophy.

Children develop a sense of pride when they are able to do things for themselves.

Part of becoming independent learners is taking responsibility for themselves and the classroom environment. Each child learns to take responsibility for their own belongings and to master the skills of taking care of him or herself.

Children also feel secure in the knowledge that they can find the materials they wish to work with neatly stored in a particular spot in the classroom. They are in turn responsible to put the materials back where they found them and to clean up after themselves.

If another child is using the materials a child is interested in, he or she learns to wait patiently, respecting the rights of others.

****The fade into sensorial cuts out the end of, "...rights of others."**

Sensorial

Trip Schulte (Twelve year old former early childhood Montessorian)

In Montessori, they have works that test your senses. Like there was this one that had a little dropper and one liquid was sour, one was sweet, one was bitter. I loved it.

Maria Montessori was one of the first educators to recognize that children learn best when they are engaged in hands-on activities. She believed that children need to move freely in their environment and to investigate whatever interests them. For these reasons, Montessori insisted that the classroom be beautiful.

Through this freedom, the child becomes more comfortable, taking the time to contemplate all aspects of an activity - the feel, the visual appearance, the sound of the materials, even the smell. This curiosity to explore the sensual world around them is part of what makes learning fun. The children enjoy the process over the product.

Children often take advantage of their freedom to self-correct by experimenting with all the different ways to do a single activity - satisfying their curiosity about what works and doesn't work and why.

Language

Hannah Salzbrun (High School Senior – Attended Montessori since early childhood)

I remember learning the noun is the big black triangle, a noun is a person, place, or thing. The verb which is the big red ball, you go out and play with a big red ball so you know a verb is an action word. Obviously now when I'm saying like "oh, that's a verb" or "that's a noun", I don't need to think "that's a big red ball" but having those associations when I was younger helped me to be able to distinguish different parts of speech as I grew up, and now being able to write, you know, fluently.

Young children have a natural ability to learn language skills that diminishes as they grow older. Emphasis is placed on learning the sounds each letter makes rather than the alphabet. Throughout the curriculum, children are developing the small motor skills they will need to be a successful writer and the auditory and visual tracking skills necessary for learning to read.

Objects and images are used to begin the association between beginning sounds and names. The child learns that snake begins with a ssssss sound, that horse begins with a Hh sound or that dog begins with a Dh sound (that bird begins with a bh sound, or that girl begins with a gh sound) and so on. ?

Children develop a readiness to grasp abstract concepts at different ages. Montessori teachers follow the child's own sense of what they are ready to learn. In their primary role as observers of the child's progress, they present materials when the child is ready to take on new work.

Math

Simon Vaglianti (Twelve year old former early childhood Montessorian)

I think it helped me understand what a number means. We always knew each bead equals one, one number. So the beads of ten would consist of ten beads and they would be a very specific color. And those kind of helped you commit them to memory.

Most adults who were taught in traditional educational settings, are fascinated by the power of the Montessori math curriculum. As the child becomes more comfortable with each material, the concept of numbers becomes more and more abstract. Like the language curriculum, when the abstract symbols of numbers are introduced, the child has a deep understanding of what each symbol represents.

Any child who has learned math in a Montessori classroom knows the difference between 1000 and 100 because they have seen the difference and felt it in their hands many times.

Each material provides the child with the potential to correct his or her own work, making the process of learning an independent venture.

I really like Montessori's ideas that students want to work. That's what we're here for, we want to find meaning for ourselves in the world. We can translate that into the classroom and I really like that a lot.

As you become more familiar with Montessori materials, you begin to see the elegant philosophy behind how each activity works to build the child's understanding of the world around her. Matching and tracing activities continue to build the child's ability to identify and name individual states, countries within continents, and continents within a world map.

The Montessori cultural curriculum covers art, history, science, and music.

Multiage grouping is the norm in Montessori. Three-year age spans in each classroom provide each child the opportunity to grow within a cooperative community, becoming both a learner and a teacher.

Unlike most schools, children are allowed to continue with their work as long as they want to. Over a few days of observation, we may notice a child repeating the same activity many times. Children decide for themselves what activity interests them and naturally repeat that activity until they are ready to move on.

Unlike most educational environments, children are able to enjoy the learning process without competitive pressures. Each child begins at his or her own level and progresses at his or her own pace. Each member of the community is welcomed and shares in the responsibilities and pleasures of learning.

Parent Comments

It's an attitude that every child can be involved, no matter how small or what their talents are.

I love how they can choose their works and then they just have that confidence to choose what they want to do and know where they want to get in a given day.

At a Montessori, I think a very positive nurturing environment that teaches them how to be independent and at the same time how to help each other, even if they don't have a sibling, and learn how to be in a big brotherly, big sisterly environment. And you know they're going to be learning. You know it's something that every day, you're going to see something new and different that they're learning.

Everything that he needed was put out on a tray for him when he was ready to do the work. He took it, did the work, and he could go put it back. So it was perfect for him and he loved it.

The concept of the kids having the option to do what they liked to do, grow in their environment, having people follow their needs along, letting them explore naturally.

We came here and I realized that everything was individualized and the curriculum would be fit to her needs. And she was able to start soaring academically and I fell in love immediately.

I saw the value once our children were in the environment and started learning and started doing new things and just growing. I mean, their development was astonishing.