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Montessori- What Is It All About?

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Montessori- What Is It All About?

An Action Research Report
By Pauline Meert

Montessori- What Is It All About?

By Pauline Meert

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In fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree
St. Catherine University
St. Paul, MN

Advisor_____

Date_____

Abstract

This research analyzes parents' knowledge and perceptions of Montessori education in a dual track school. The school has three Montessori classrooms and nineteen traditional classrooms. Through surveys, the researcher gathered data on parents' current perceptions. She then implemented Montessori educational workshops on core Montessori principles. The researcher also conducted five interviews to learn more about the various perceptions in the school. Finally, through a final survey the researcher was able gather data to show if using parent workshops changed parents' perceptions on Montessori and offered more in-depth knowledge. The researcher found that a large majority of parents were on board with Montessori even though they had misunderstandings of different aspects of the method. Parents found the workshops helpful and were interested in going to more workshops. Based on the results gathered, the researcher found the need to do more parent education workshops in the next year.

Every school is unique. This uniqueness stems from many different areas such as population, location, staff, families, nationalities, and economics. Yet the core aspect that makes a school unique is the method of education it chooses to use. This method will influence the entire school culture- the curriculum, the students, the staff, and of course the parents. It becomes the driving core of the school. The staff and teachers will be highly knowledgeable in this education method. Their knowledge will then transfer to the curriculum and the students. It is incredibly important for this knowledge to be passed on to parents as well. Research shows the importance of parent involvement for student success and offers many recommendations on educating and involving parents. When parents are involved in the children's education, children tend to do better in school (NEA, n.d.).

At times one will find a school that incorporates multiple methods. The school where the research was conducted is such a place. Within its traditional set up, the school cherishes three Montessori classrooms. This school teaches children preschool through 8th grade with a total of twenty-one classrooms, making Montessori 14% of the school. Parents can request for their children to be in a Montessori or Traditional classroom. Due to the long waitlist of the school, parents who cannot have their children in a traditional classroom may choose to have them in a Montessori classroom, depending on spaces available. This creates an environment with mixed levels of knowledge on Montessori education. This information led the researcher to seek more information on the importance of parent education and involvement.

Parent involvement has shown to improve regular school attendance, produce higher grades, improve overall social behavior, and increase graduation rates (NEA, n.d.). Yet parents' involvement depends primarily on the school. There must be a system in place to give parents information, build relationships, and create a positive atmosphere for communication. Every

school connects with parents through different methods and the school where the research is taking place has found many ways to involve parents. Parents are invited to observe in classrooms, read to children, participate in community events and fundraisers, and to be a part of their children's education. Yet one area that is lacking is knowledge on what Montessori education is about and has to offer.

Montessori has many incredible benefits and supports a method of education that is logical and nurturing. It follows children's natural development. Through further education the researcher hopes to present parents with explanations on why children learn the way they do and how they can support their child in the home in order to create a stronger understanding of the Montessori method and better home and school connection. Montessori is far more than just an educational method. It is a philosophy of life with children at the center. Being different from what most people have experienced, Montessori schools should go above and beyond these expectations.

Maria Montessori illustrates her belief on the importance of harmony between the school and the home (1965). She reminds us that children need to learn in both places and finds many similarities between the two. Montessori's schools or Children's Houses were created specifically to bridge the gap between school and home and to create a safe environment where parents could trust their children to be cared for (Montessori, 1965). This remains a critical goal for Montessori schools around the world.

AMI USA (2012) reiterates the vital importance parent involvement plays in a child's future success in school. AMI USA highlights Montessori's foundation on universal human principles that not only relate to educational practices but also to ways of parenting (2012).

When the school environment and the home environment are in harmony, following the same philosophies, children are more likely to fulfill their unique potential. AMI USA strongly underlines the importance of parents and teachers working as a team to help each other in order to help each child (2012).

Murray (2012), surveys people's basic knowledge on what Montessori education is all about. In her findings, we see many important misconceptions and gaps of knowledge. Teachers in Montessori schools often find parents unaware of key Montessori concepts and believing in myths as seen in Murray's survey. Karna (2013) found that parents' knowledge is often based on misconceptions. This creates a barrier that does not match what most parents want for their child. Schools and parents need to collaborate in order to create two environments that are in harmony. The researcher has found that due to different people's knowledge on Montessori education there are some misconceptions present within the school.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (2011) clearly emphasizes the important role parents have in their children's education. "Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children. They bear witness to this responsibility first by creating a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule" (2011, p. 537). Schools must not only respect parents' roles but also be there to support them in educating their children. Educating parents on the Montessori method and a school's philosophy is one way this can be done.

Montessori schools have a responsibility to create a trusting and positive environment that offers parents information on the Montessori Method and builds a spirit of collaboration.

AMI USA (2012) proposes a large variety of ways to do this such as lecture, classroom observation, study groups, conferences, and open houses.

Seeing the value of Montessori education and the importance of parent education and involvement the researcher planned an intensive action research. This research implemented parent education workshops on three core principles of Montessori education and interviews of parents. The workshops were Montessori and the Child, Freedom and Discipline, and Reality Based. The researcher also interviewed five families. The goal of this study was to offer a deeper knowledge to parents on what Montessori education is all about, to discern how this affects the parents in the school, and finally, discover if it influences their interactions with their children.

Description of the Research Process

Before deciding upon the topic for this action research, I informally asked parents and teachers if they would find workshops on Montessori education to be an effective tool in building a stronger knowledge of Montessori and more support from the community. I received very positive feedback. Many teachers were interested in learning more and thought it would enhance the school community. Parents were also enthusiastic about further learning opportunities on the topic of Montessori education. Based on the feedback received, I chose to implement parent education workshops to offer parents a more in-depth knowledge of the method, analyze their current perspectives, and to strengthen the home and school connection.

In order to begin the research, I first sought permission from the school principal. This was done verbally and through email communications. The principal was very open and welcoming of the project. The research lasted nine weeks. The principal and I worked together in the planning process. After receiving the appropriate permissions, I emailed an informational letter giving an overview of the research to the parents of the school (see Appendix A). The letter

outlined the research question, the process, and the possible risks, which were minimal. Parents were offered an option to opt-out of receiving emails regarding the research. The opt-out form was attached to the informational email and parents were given eleven days to turn it in to me. Six families out of 283 chose to opt-out and they no longer received direct emails.

After eleven days and once the opt-out forms had been collected, 277 families were sent a beginning survey (see Appendix B). The survey was open for 10 days and 43 people completed it. The survey was also added to the weekly email sent to the whole school as well as part of teachers' weekly email. The survey included basic questions such as if their child was enrolled in Montessori, why, how familiar they were with the method, the times and days that would be most convenient for them to participate in workshops, their perceptions on Montessori education, and their availability to be interviewed. Thirty-one people agreed to be interviewed.

Due to the large number of volunteers, I sent an email thanking everyone for the generosity and willingness to participate. Only five people were chosen to be interviewed. The interviewees were picked based on the five different scenarios found in the school- new to Montessori, completing the three year cycle, children in both Montessori and traditional, children gone through Montessori, and non-Montessori. The goal of the interviews was to acquire a deeper understanding of parents' perceptions, their knowledge on Montessori, how Montessori education is part of the school, and its benefit to the school. The interviews were scheduled throughout the action research based on the interviewee's availability. I communicated one on one and through emails with each interviewee. One interview happened during the 4th week of research, three interviews during the 5th week, and the last interview took place during the 6th week of the research.

Each interview began with a consent form illustrating the process, confidentiality, and risks involved with being interviewed (see Appendix C). The interview was timed for thirty minutes and was recorded using my phone. The audio file was saved on my secure OneDrive. I had prepared a list of questions specific to each interview (see Appendix D). Each interview offered a different perspective on Montessori and its value in the school allowing me to have a more in-depth understanding of parents' perceptions of Montessori education and the role it plays in their lives.

Each interview covered basic questions such as basic information on enrollment, why they chose the school, what information was shared with them regarding the Montessori program, how long they have attended the school, their personal perspective on Montessori education, how and why they choose their child's current placement, and how the Montessori method matches their own parenting philosophy. Each interview also asked questions about their thoughts on the Montessori program within the school, if it is valuable, how it affects the community, and if there is enough information and awareness present. Each family interviewed had a few extra questions specific to their situation.

Based on parents' preferences as gathered in the beginning survey (see Appendix B) and availability from the school, the three workshops were planned for the month of March in the mornings from 8 am to 9 am. On March 6th, the first workshop, Montessori and the Child, took place. It covered Montessori's findings on children's learning and development. The second workshop on March 12th, Freedom and Discipline, explained Montessori's view on how freedom, independence, and discipline are interconnected. The last workshop on March 19th, Reality Based, discussed Montessori's view on the importance of grounding children in reality and using hands on materials. Parents were emailed the upcoming dates for the workshops.

Flyers were sent to the teachers in the school asking them to display them near their classrooms (see Appendix E). The dates were added to the school's weekly email for rest of the duration of the project.

In preparation for the workshops, I communicated with the school's technology department in order to reserve 30 tablets for parents to take surveys in the beginning and end of the workshops. Each workshop began with a pretest with questions specific to the topic (see Appendix F). A posttest was taken at the end of the workshop. This allowed me to analyze parents' previous knowledge and visualize the learning that happened because of the workshop. Parents were invited to ask questions at any time during the workshops. Each workshop was also recorded on my phone for future reference. The workshops included also included, a PowerPoint presentation and handouts for parents (see Appendix G). The pre and posttests helped me to gather data on parents' current knowledge on core Montessori principals through multiple choice questions and to analyze the effectiveness of my presentation.

The closing survey asked parents if they had attended any of the workshops, if the workshops had changed their perspective on Montessori, what was beneficial to them, and if they would be interested in more Montessori education workshops in the future. Thirteen parents took the closing survey. The effectiveness of the research was measured through the closing survey sent out to the whole school, the pretests and posttests from the workshops, and feedback from families who were interviewed. Upon completion of the research I sent out one final email thanking the parents and teachers for their help and participation. I concluded by letting parents know they could always contact her with more questions at any time by phone or email and were always welcome to come and observe in the classroom.

Data Analysis

The data collected throughout the research consisted of a beginning survey, five interviews, pretest and posttests for all three workshops, and a final survey. Based on the beginning survey I was able to gather information on current perspectives on Montessori and the demographics of families. The interviews helped me collect detailed information regarding parents' knowledge on Montessori. The pre and posttests illustrated the effectiveness of the workshops. Finally, the ending survey offered an insight on the results of the research as a whole.

The surveys, pretests, and posttest were created using google drive forms. While this format was helpful and easy to use, it allowed for possible data error. There was no way to know if a person filled the form more than once or if the participant answered all the questions. Some questions which required the participant to write answers were skipped. These allowed for a margin of error and possible inaccuracy. The pretests and posttest were also not challenging enough, making it difficult to fully analyze the effectiveness of my presentations.

Forty-three parents took the beginning survey. 56% had children enrolled in Montessori, 9% had children who had gone through Montessori but were then too old, and 35% had children in traditional classrooms. Out of the parents whose children attend Montessori, 65% had requested to be placed in Montessori because they were familiar with the method and 15% happened to have their children in Montessori due to there being a spot available. The remaining 21% were in a traditional classroom.

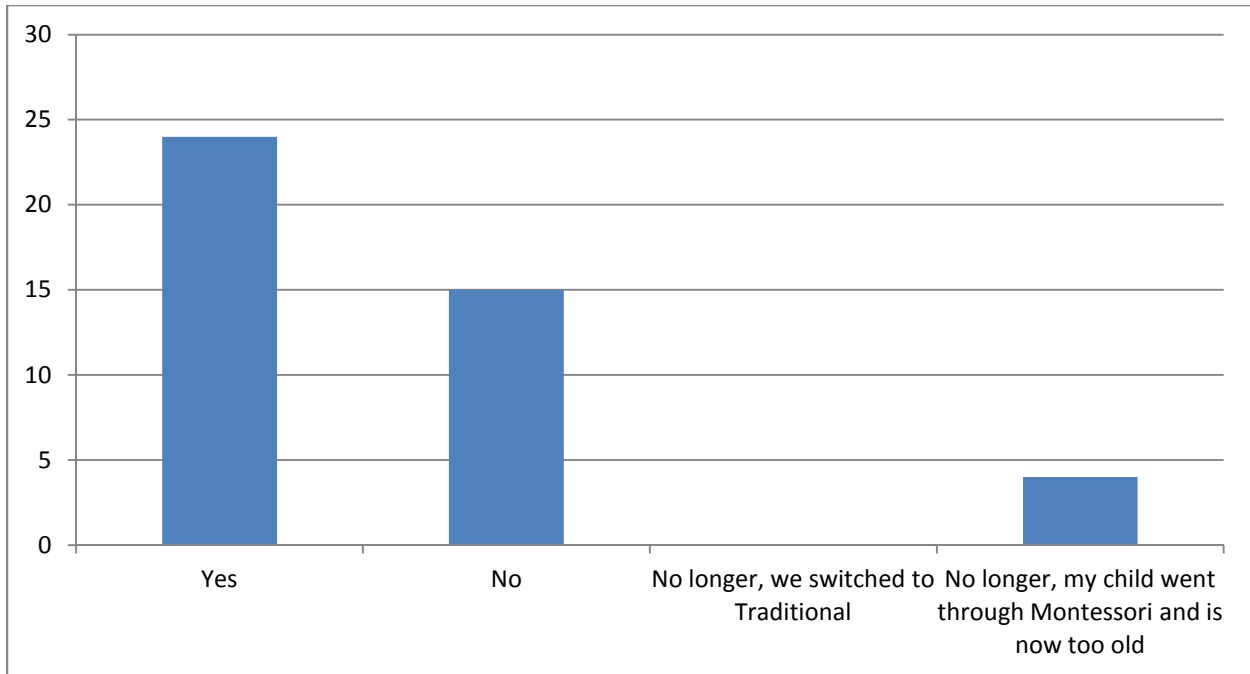


Figure 1. Enrollment.

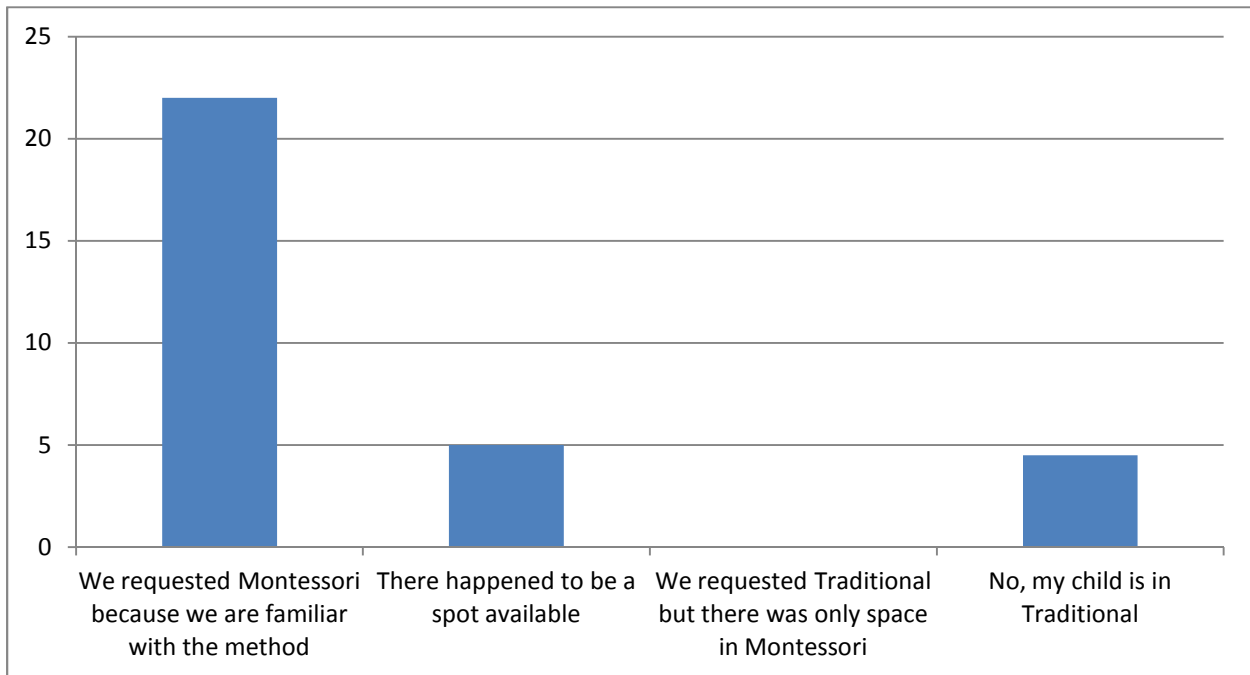


Figure 2. Reasons for Enrollment.

Parents were able to vote on various options for the workshops. Mornings after drop off, 8am-9am received the most votes (22). The most convenient days were Wednesdays (20) and

Thursdays (19). This helped me plan to have the workshops first thing in the morning. The first workshop was on a Thursday and the next two on a Wednesday.

When asked their familiarity with the Montessori method 30% responded to being very familiar by having read books, researched the method in depth, observed in classrooms, and gone to lectures. 60% associated with being somewhat familiar by having gathered knowledge here and there and only 9% said they were not familiar at all. This information helped to see the level of familiarity of parents in the school. With only 9% not familiar with the method I was able to know that my workshops could touch on more in depth subjects. With 60% having a basic knowledge I was able to use the workshops as an opportunity to explain core aspects and debunk common misconceptions.

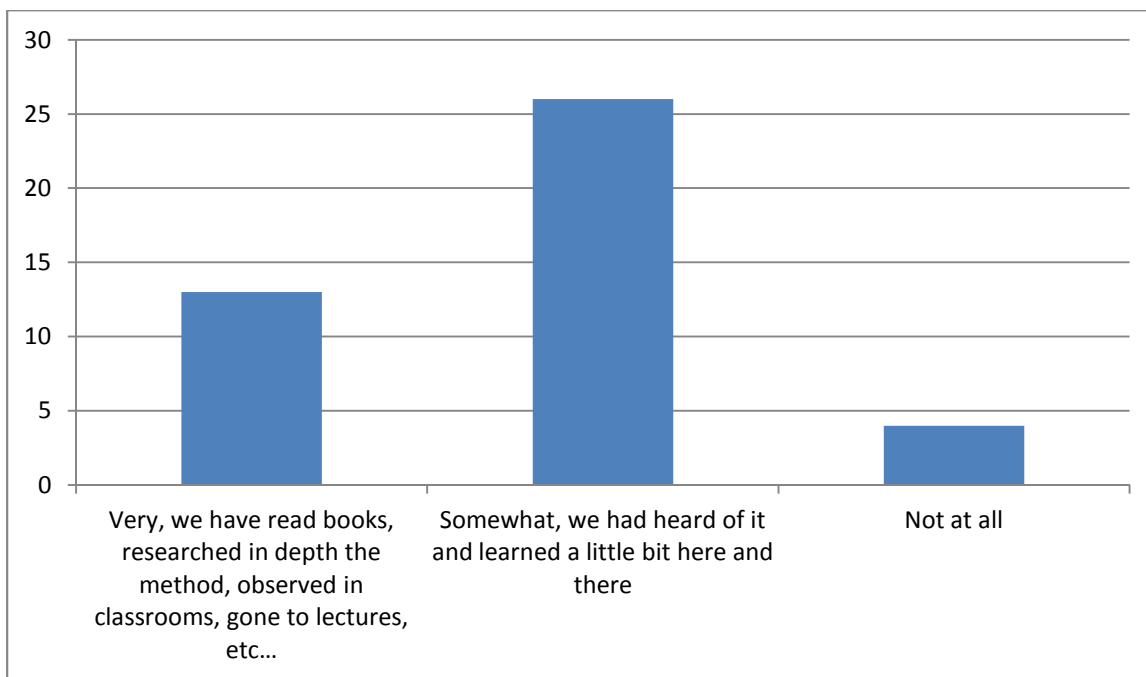


Figure 3. Familiarity with Montessori.

Through multiple-choice questions, parents were able to select their perceptions based on different common perceptions of Montessori education. 31% agreed that Montessori education is

for all children. 17% said it was only for certain children, 3% found it had no structure and 27% said it followed children and their needs. Overall, based on this question I was able to see that the majority of parents had a basic and accurate perception of Montessori. Parents were then offered an opportunity to add to their answer through an “other” option. Fourteen parents responded. Eight offered details on their perceptions. One parent found that it is a great method but the teacher must make sure the child is progressing. Another parent found that it is great as long as it is implemented completely and not combined with other methods or styles. One parent said that at times the method cannot meet special learning styles. Parents mentioned its strong focus on academics particularly in building strong reading and math skills. Other parents mentioned its focus on independence and how it works well for self-directed children. One parent mentioned that the flexibility can provide risks in delaying a child’s growth if the child does not have a strong teacher.

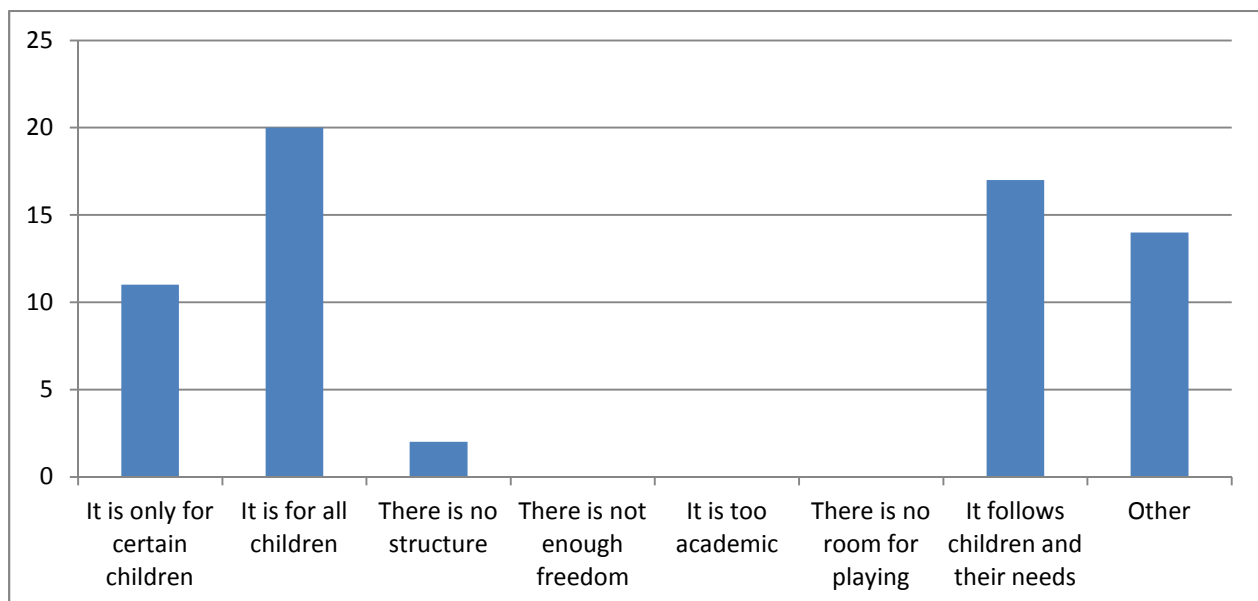


Figure 3. Parents Perceptions of Montessori Education.

These responses showed a basic awareness of Montessori as they recognized the focus on independence and strong academics. It was positive to see parents agreeing that Montessori education is for all children. Yet it also showed a few common misconceptions such as that it cannot meet special learning styles, that it is only for self-directed children, that it is only for certain children, and that it has no structure.

To gather more detailed information on parents' perspectives, I conducted five interviews. Family 1 was new to Montessori. They choose the school because of three reasons; first, some of their family attend the school; second because of the Montessori program, and finally because of the school's religious affiliation. The family had previous knowledge on the Montessori Method although it was not extensive. The fact that Montessori education is a hand-on method that follows children's development was a big part of their decision. Family 1 had a positive experience observing in a Montessori classroom when they first visited the school. What stood out the most to them was the quietness and concentration they saw in the children. Their home philosophy matched well with Montessori. They make sure to have purposeful toys and encourage real activities. Family 1 found the Montessori track to be valuable to the school. They found that there was enough information presented to them about the program and that weekly communication from the teacher helps offer more in-depth knowledge.

Family 2 was in their kindergarten year and had almost completed the Montessori three-year cycle. The father had attended Montessori school; this played a big part in their education preference. They chose the school because of its religious affiliation and because of its Montessori program. Their first experience visiting the school was one of awe. They were "blown away" by the different things going on and quiet atmosphere. The Montessori method matched their parenting style very well. They even set up their own home to allow their children

more independence. They created different areas such as one for music and one for arts and crafts, began using accessible shelves, and prepared the kitchen to offer their children easy access to tools and snacks. Family 2 found that while they had knowledge on Montessori, other parents did not. They expressed a need for more information prior to enrollment. They found the three-year cycle to be of huge benefits to their daughters even though one of them had a different teacher every year. I asked about their thoughts on the Montessori program at the school and they said it was highly valuable but that at time there were cliques formed between Montessori and traditional parents. They also thought the school needed to have an “all-in” mentality when it comes to Montessori. They found Montessori to be a true asset to the school, offering extra choices to parents, and creating a unique culture. They fear the transition to traditional in third grade.

Family 3 was drawn to the school because of the community, the people, and the Montessori program. They had twins, one in the Montessori and one in the Traditional track. They chose to have one child in Montessori because of a negative experience in a traditional classroom the year before and because prior to attending the school the child had done well in a Montessori daycare setting. The other twin went in a traditional classroom because the parents felt she needed more direct instruction. Family 3 already had knowledge on Montessori as the father had been in a Montessori classroom as a child and the grandmother was a Montessori teacher. Their current knowledge on Montessori education involved independent learning, choice, the cycle of activity, and the use of materials. They found that traditional was less independent and was an environment where everyone was doing the same thing. They choose to have the twins in different tracks in order to split them up and because of their different personalities. The biggest differences they have noticed between the two methods are the

structure and freedom. They loved the Montessori program when they first visited and saw a big difference in the twin who is in Montessori once he was in the classroom. Family 3 thrives to implement Montessori in their home and find that it matches their home philosophy. While they feel that, the Montessori method was well explained to them they wish that more teachers would have an understanding of the method. When asked about the effects of the Montessori program they found that at times, parents in the Montessori program are less connected and involved.

Family 4's two oldest children had gone through the Montessori classrooms within the school and were now in older grades (non-Montessori). They chose to attend the school due to its Montessori track, location, and religious affiliation. Their children had previously been in a Montessori daycare and they had liked the method. Their oldest was in a Traditional classroom for two years due to the long waitlist and then was in Montessori from kindergarten to 4th grade. Their second oldest was in Montessori from preschool to 4th grade and their youngest is still in Montessori. When they visited, they found the Montessori classrooms to be peaceful, independent, and happy. When they enrolled, ten years previously, they found that there was very little information shared about Montessori, that many parents were clueless and confused, and that there was tension between the two methods. Information nights were implemented and helped remedy the situation. Family four had a good knowledge of Montessori and was aware of children going at their own pace, work time, independence and choices, and the overall peacefulness. They found the method to match their home philosophy well and that it helped build up their children ability to research information and be independent. They found that the children had a smooth and seamless transition into the traditional classrooms. They find Montessori to be very important to the school as it offers a unique opportunity to parents. They

are sad that the upper grades (3rd and 4th grade) are no longer Montessori. Finally, Family 4 believes there could always be more information available.

The last family interviewed had no children in Montessori. Family 5 had four children enrolled in the school. They choose this location because all of their children could attend and because of its religious affiliation. They chose to be in traditional because one child had already been in traditional in a previous school and there were no spaces available in Montessori. From a non-Montessori point of view they found that it teaches children to think for themselves and think outside the box. They liked the teaching perspective. Family 5 found that many families outside of Montessori have the impression that it is a free for all and that it is not academic enough. They thought some families were scared off because they did not understand it. Family 5 said they had a little knowledge on Montessori education. They found it to be developmentally friendly, following children's pace, not curriculum based, and self-directed. They believe it is a highly valuable program in the school as it offers a unique option to parents. This allows for monetary gains. Family 5 was also disappointed that the 3rd and 4th grade Montessori classrooms had closed and felt they had lost confidence in the administration because of it. They find that now that the program only goes up to 2nd grade is less appealing to families as it creates more transitions. They also found it to not be true to Montessori. They shared that while Montessori is valuable it at times divides the school creating camps that do not mingle very much. Family 5 found that there needed to be more awareness and information offered as many people are uneducated on Montessori. They hoped more workshops would be offered to prospective parents.

Based on the interviews I was able to see that Montessori education is highly valued and parents are interested in learning more. The five families interviewed showed positive outlooks

on Montessori education. Four out of five families mentioned the fact that it had a Montessori program as a deciding factor and four out of five mentioned its religious affiliation. Another common determining factor was the school's community. Each family said they believe the Montessori program to be valuable to the school. When asked their thoughts on how it affects the school community some said it was positive, others mentioned divisions and cliques. The families were asked if enough information was shared regarding Montessori education two said no, one said yes, and two said there could always be more. Four out of the five families said the Montessori method matched their home philosophy.

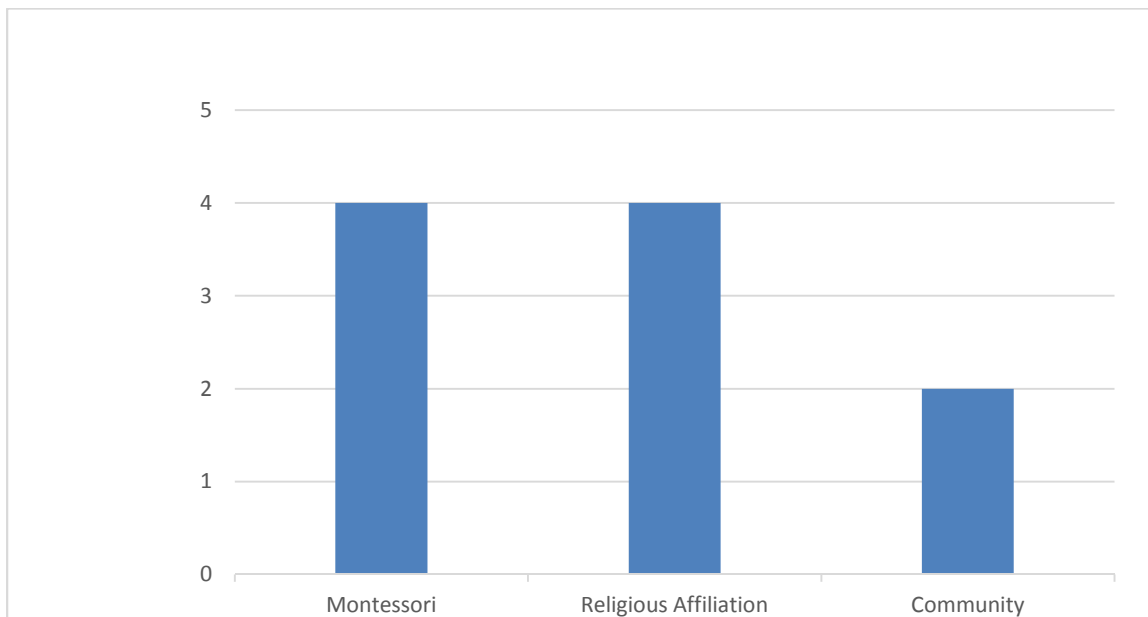


Figure 4. Attraction to the school.

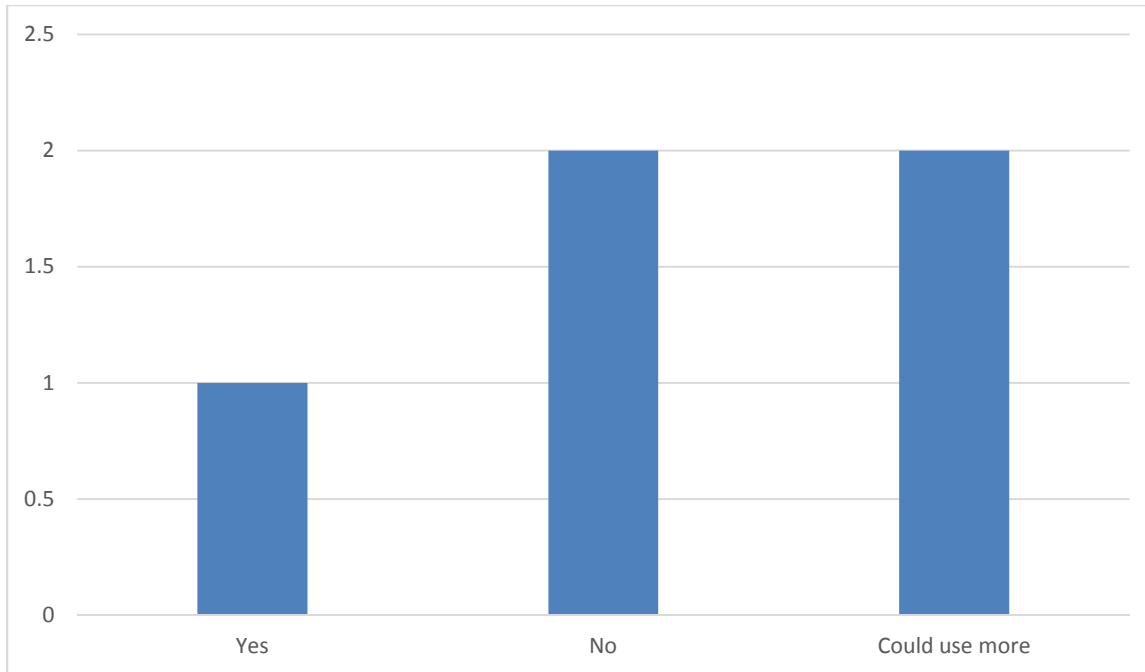


Figure 5. Is there enough information/awareness?

Family 1 and 2 attended all three workshops, Family 3 did not attend, Family 4 attended the second workshop, and Family 5 attend the first two. Family 5 also shared that the workshops were educational and insightful and while their children were older and not in the Montessori track they were still able to receive new information. Nine moms attended the first workshop, Montessori and the Child. Twelve moms attended the second workshop, Freedom and Discipline. Eight moms attended the third workshop, Reality Based.

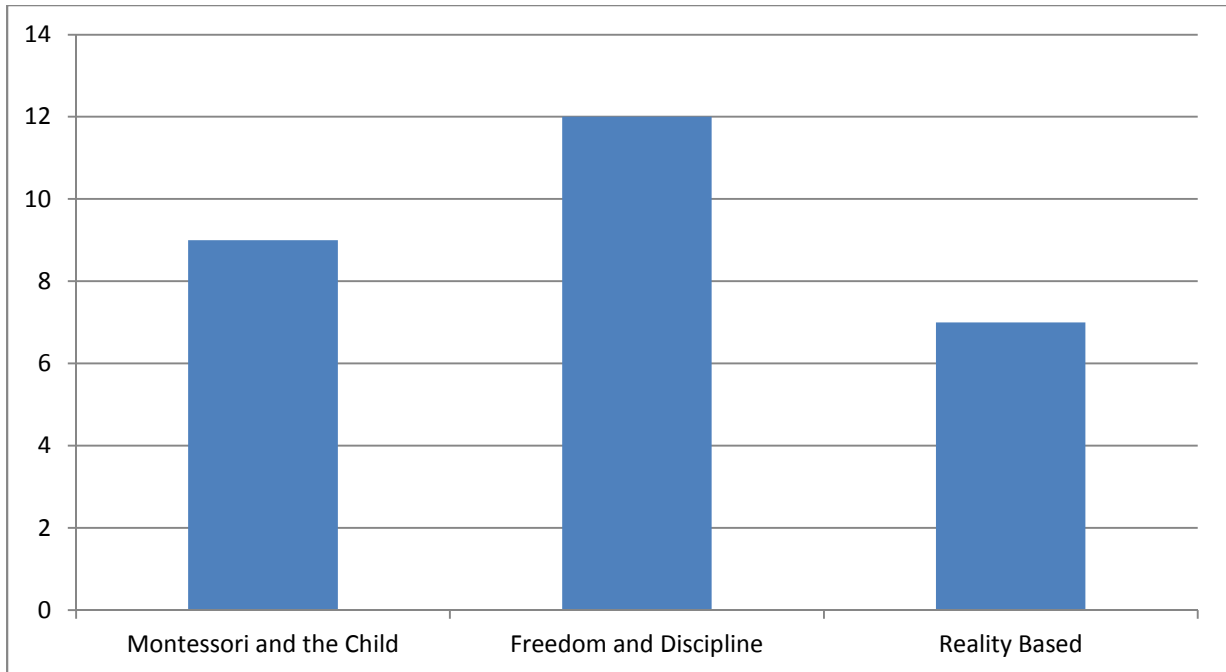


Figure 6. Workshop attendance.

For the first workshop (see Appendix F), attended by nine moms, each participant took both the pre and post test. The test asked parents what the Montessori method was based on and every participant answered through observations of children’s development. In the pretest one mom answered that there were three planes of development and eight replied that there were four. In the post test everyone answered four. When asked about the absorbent mind eight out of nine answered correctly, that it is “the process in which a child learns from his environment from age 0-6”. Five parents answered correctly for the sensitive periods and four answered incorrectly in the pre-test. In the post-test, seven answered correctly and only two choose the wrong answer. When asked about the best scenario for getting ready to go shopping every one answered correctly. While some of the questions may have been too easy or obvious, overall though, the post test showed an increase in correct answers. From the feedback, eight moms said they highly agreed that they learned something and one said they agreed. The difference could be based on

having previous knowledge on Montessori and already being aware of Montessori's view of the child. Eight out of nine moms strongly agreed that the workshop was relevant to their children and one agreed.

The Freedom and Discipline workshop was the most attended with twelve moms. Due to technical difficulties the tests were done on paper. This led to not everyone answering all the questions. The pretest asked parents the definition of freedom. Seven out of eleven defined it as "the ability to make conscious choices within set boundaries" and four as "the ability for a child to make his own choices based on his sensitive period". In the post-test everyone answered correctly. Ten moms defined independence as "the ability to carry out tasks and learn from the environment" and one as "the ability to separate one's self from oppression". In the post-test everyone answered correctly. Six moms defined discipline as connected to rules and obeying and five moms defined it as "the ability to regulate own conduct and follow rules of life". Through the post-test everyone defined it as "the ability to regulate own conduct and follow rules of life". Eight moms acknowledged the goal of Montessori education as leading children to their full potential, two as creating a strong academic foundation, and one as offering freedom to the children. In the post-test everyone picked "to lead children towards normalization and their full potential" as the goal of Montessori education. When asked about the best ways to support children through deviations one response said to use a rewards and incentive tool. After the post-test all participants offered Montessori ways of supporting a child going through deviations.

Due to using paper, not all participants saw the questions on the back of the post-test. This caused for only a few participants to answer the feedback section of the test. Three strongly agreed that it was helpful and two agreed. Three strongly agree that they learned a lot through the workshop and two agreed. Two strongly agreed that it was relevant to them and their children

and three agreed. The results of the post-test showed changes and improvements in the answers chosen. This showed me that there were some misconceptions on what Montessori's beliefs on freedom, independence, and discipline are and that the workshop was effective.

The third workshop, Reality Based, was attended by seven moms. When asked about reality five moms said it is learned through play, one said it is too difficult for the child in the first plane of development to grasp, and one said it is the food of the absorbent mind. In the post-test, five moms agreed that it is the food of the absorbent mind and two said it is learned through play. When discussing what Montessori education encourages, all seven chose learning centers. After the workshop two chose learning centers and five chose non-fiction books. All moms agreed that Montessori found that children tired of toys because they lacked reality. When asked about Montessori's perspective on fairy tales, two said they teach valuable truths, two said they should never be a part of a child's life, and three said they are wonderful when introduced after age 6. Through the post-test all seven moms answered that they are wonderful when introduced after age 6. All seven moms chose realistic activities as ways to nurture their child's imagination. Six of the moms strongly agreed that the workshop was helpful, that they learned, and that it was relevant. One agreed. At the end of the test, the participants were also asked if they would be interested in similar workshops in the future and all seven answered yes.

Thirteen people took the closing survey (see Appendix H). This created a large difference from the introduction survey that was taken by forty-three people. Three people who took the survey had been able to attend all three workshops. Five participants did not attend any of the workshops. The remaining five had attended one or two workshops. When asked if the research changed their view on Montessori, all participants responded positively, saying it either helped them understand the method more, understand their child better, gave them tools to incorporate

into their daily lives, or they were already on board. When asked to elaborate how the research changed their perspectives, participants said that it validated their decision to educate their children using the Montessori method, and that it offered more understanding and information. It also increased their appreciation of Montessori, offered a clearer perception of motivation in the classroom, helped change their parenting style, and made them wish there was more Montessori in the school. Nine parents said they would be interested in more workshop opportunities in the future, two said it would depend on the topics, and two said they were not interested. When offered different topic ideas, parents responded that they would be most interested in learning more about faith and Montessori, implementing it in the home, and rewards and punishments.

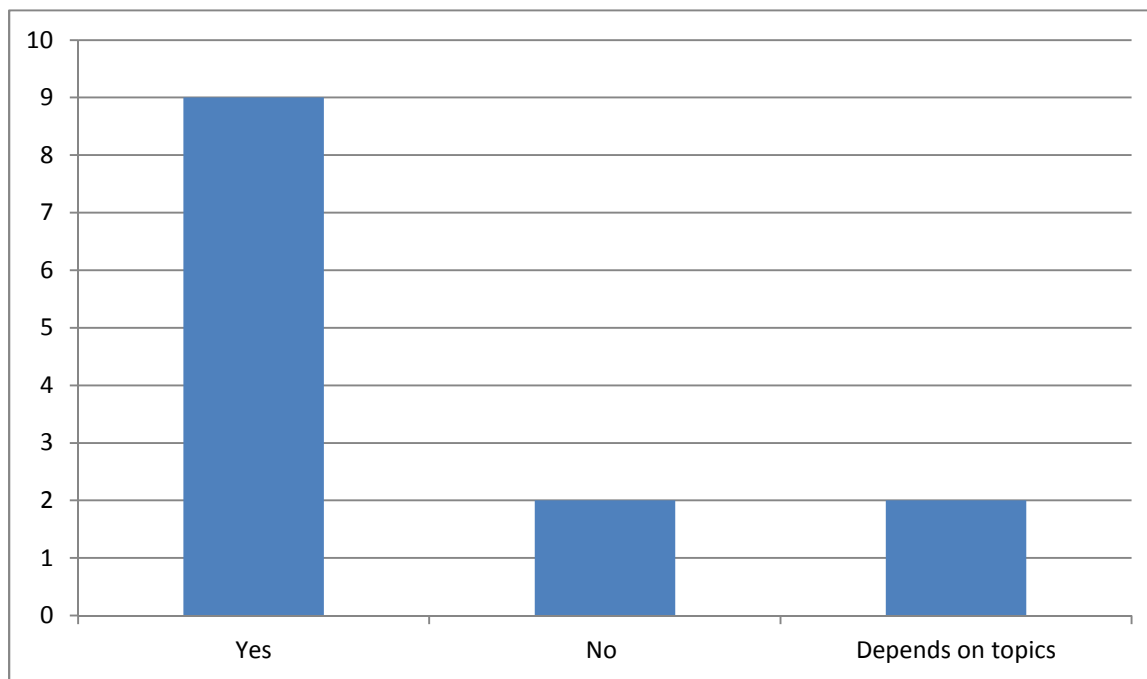


Figure 7. Interest in future workshops.

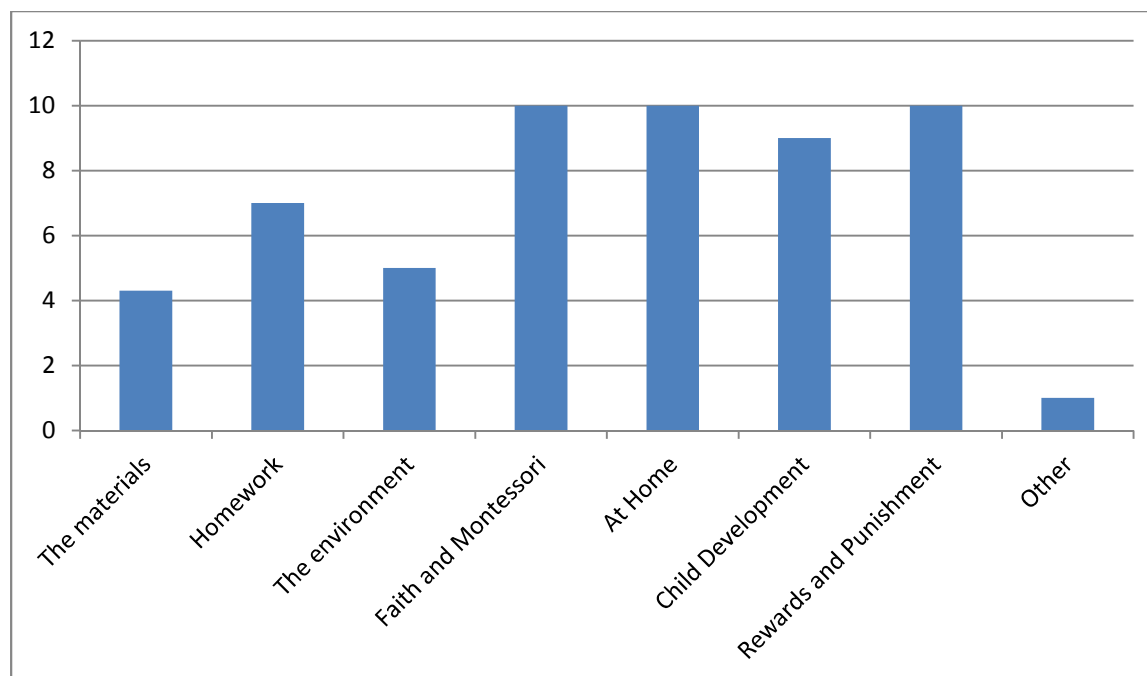


Figure 8. Topics for future workshops.

In conclusion, I was able to see that parents saw the value of the Montessori program, felt that at times it created divisions, and that there could be more information available. Parents either strongly agreed or agreed that the workshops were beneficial to them and influenced their interactions with their children as well as offered more information on Montessori education. Parent interviews offered a wider image of the perceptions of Montessori education in the school. At the end of the research, parents showed an overall interest in more workshops. The research was effective in gathering information on the school community's perception of Montessori, offering more information to parents, and in influencing parents.

Action Plan

Through this action research, I was able to see that 30% of parents who answered the first survey felt they were very familiar with the method and 60% were somewhat familiar. Through

interviews, I found that four out of the five families chose the school because of the Montessori program. Four out of five families said Montessori matched their home parenting philosophy.

Yet I also found a few common misconceptions such as that it cannot meet special learning styles, that it is only for self-directed children, that it is only for certain children, and that it has no structure. This shows a need to offer more information and educational opportunities to parents in order to offer a full view of the depth of the Montessori method. 100% of participants in the closing survey responded positively to the research saying it changed their perception.

Based on the results I will discuss my findings with the principal in order to build up Montessori awareness and possibly implement more information on Montessori for new or prospective families. The results showed the benefits of educational workshops. Adding two to three of these workshops a year would be helpful and welcomed by parents as based on the results. The research did not affect student learning directly but having parents more aware of what is going on at school, how a Montessori classroom works, the philosophy behind the method, and the stages of development children go through will help parents support their children at home. It will also help parents understand Montessori better in order to adapt it in their homes as well. It would be interesting to adapt this research to the staff of the school in order to learn the level of Montessori awareness the traditional teachers and administration have. Many teachers were sad to miss the workshop.

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Appendix A

Introduction Letter email

Montessori- What is it all About?

Notification Form from Pauline Meert

Dear Parents,

As some of you may know, I am a St. Catherine University student pursuing a Masters of Education degree. An important part of my program is the Action Research project.

As one of the Montessori teachers of the school, I have chosen to focus on Montessori education. I will offer three workshops on Montessori principles in order to build up knowledge on what Montessori is all about and offer you new ways to work with your child/ren. This action research is open to the whole school, not only parents whose children are enrolled in Montessori. I am working with a faculty member at St. Kate's and an advisor to complete this particular project.

I will be writing about the results that I get from this research; however none of the writing that I do will include the name of this school, the names of any family, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular person. Other people will not know if you are in my study. All data will remain strictly confidential with only my advisor and I will have access. At the end of the research data containing names or identifiers will be deleted or shredded.

When I am done, my work will be electronically available online at the St. Kate's library in a system called Sophia, which holds published reports written by faculty and graduate students at St. Kate's. The goal of sharing my final research study report is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

This Action Research will include three workshops and surveys focusing on core Montessori principles. Through these workshops I hope to offer a clearer understanding on what Montessori education is all about and how parents can use these principles with their own child/ren. The workshops will happen during the month of March and be based on your preferences gathered from an upcoming survey. The topics will cover- Montessori's discoveries on how children learn, how freedom and discipline work in a Montessori classroom and how they can be implemented at home, and how Montessori is a reality based method.

If you decide you want to receive emails with surveys and upcoming events as well as for your data (survey results) to be in my study, you do not need to do anything at this point.

If you decide you do NOT want to receive emails or surveys, please note that on this form and return it to the office by Monday February 3rd. By choosing to opt out you will not receive surveys or emails concerning this research.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time, [Pauline.Meert@](mailto:Pauline.Meert@stkate.edu), (719) 651-6904. You can also direct questions to my advisor Amanda Perna, amperna@stkate.edu, who will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to

someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at [\(651\) 690-7739](tel:6516907739).

Thank you for your support as I take on this project.

Pauline Meert

Primary Montessori Teacher

Opt Out Form

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

I do NOT want to receive emails or surveys.

Please respond by February 3rd by returning this form to the office.

Name

Date

Signature

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B
Introduction Survey

Montessori- What is it all about? Introduction Survey

Dear Parents, I am currently working on my Masters in Montessori Education through St. Catherine University. I am conducting an action research on parents' knowledge of Montessori Education.

Research Question

How will a parent education program about Montessori principles affect parents' perceptions about Montessori education and their interactions with their own child/ren?

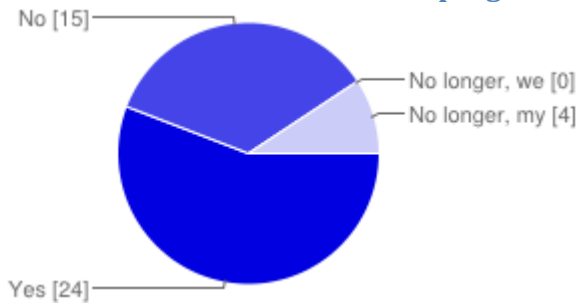
This research will run through February and March. It will include 2 surveys, 3 workshops (1 hour long with pre and post surveys), and some feedback from you.

Please complete this survey by Tuesday February 11th. The dates of the workshops will be based on your preferences and posted as soon as possible.

Thank you for your help!

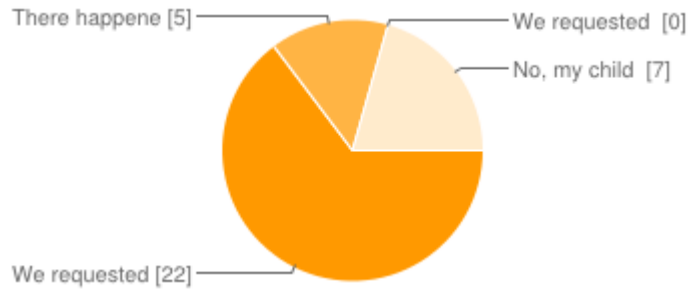
Summary

Is your child enrolled in the Montessori program?



Yes	24	56%
No	15	35%
No longer, we switched to Traditional	0	0%
No longer, my child went through Montessori and is now too old	4	9%

If yes, why?



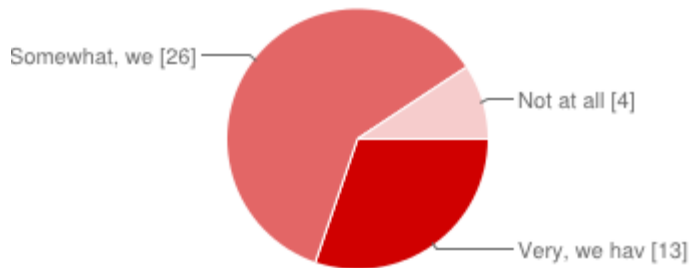
We requested Montessori because we are familiar with the method 22 65%

There happened to be a spot available in Montessori 5 15%

We requested Traditional but there was only space in Montessori 0 0%

No, my child is in Traditional 7 21%

How familiar are you with the Montessori Method?



Very, we have read books, researched in depth the method, observed in classrooms, gone to lectures, etc... 13 30%

Somewhat, we had heard of it and learned a little bit here and there 26 60%

Not at all 4 9%

What times would be most convenient for you to be able to attend the workshops?

Early Morning before school, 7-8am 6 10%

Mornings after drop off, 8-9am 22 37%

Afternoons after 3pm 5 8%

Evenings after 5pm 18 30%

Weekends 9 15%

Which days of the week would be most convenient?

Monday 18 22%

Tuesday 16 19%

Wednesday 20 24%

Thursday 19 23%

Weekends 10 12%

What are your perceptions on Montessori education?

It is only for certain children 11 17%

It is for all children 20 31%

There is no structure 2 3%

There is not enough freedom 0 0%

It is too academic 0 0%

There is no room for playing 0 0%

It follows children and their needs 17 27%

Other 14 22%

I am open to being interviewed about my perceptions of Montessori. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

31 responses

Appendix C

Interview Consent Form

MONTESSORI- WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Interview Information and Consent Form

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating the impact a parent education program on the Montessori Method can have for parents of this school. This study is being conducted by Pauline Meert, a graduate student at St. Catherine University under the supervision of Amanda Perna, a faculty member in the Department of Montessori education. Thank you for volunteering to be interviewed. Please read this form and ask questions before you agree to be in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to offer parents more insight into core Montessori principals to allow for a greater understanding of the Method and to empower them in the home. Approximately 5 people are expected to be interviewed as part of the research.

Procedures:

The interview will last approximately 30 minutes. The interview will consist of 5 to 7 questions regarding your perspective and understanding of the Montessori Method. I will record our discussion to help me take detailed notes. The information gathered from the interviews will be used in my research paper.

Risks and Benefits of being in the study:

The study has minimal risk as all information will be kept secured and confidential.

The benefits to participation include a deeper knowledge of core Montessori principles (child development, freedom and discipline, basis in reality), ideas on how to use Montessori in the home, and a stronger connection with the school.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained in connection with this research study that can be identified with you will be disclosed only with your permission; your results will be kept confidential. In any written reports or publications, no one will be identified or identifiable and only group data will be presented.

I will keep the research results in a locked file cabinet in the classroom and only I and my advisor will have access to the records while I work on this project. I will finish analyzing the data by mid May 2014. I will then destroy all original reports and identifying information that can be linked back to you. All digital files will be password protected and only accessible to me and my advisor. Upon completion of the research, all digital files will be deleted.

Voluntary nature of the study:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with Good Shepherd, St. Catherine University, or myself in any way. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time without affecting these relationships.

Contacts and questions:

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, (719) 651-6904. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, the faculty advisor, (Amanda Perna, amperna@stkate.edu), will be happy to answer them. If you have other questions or concerns regarding the study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you may also contact Dr. John Schmitt, Chair of the St. Catherine University Institutional Review Board, at (651) 690-7739.

You may keep a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read this information and your questions have been answered. Even after signing this form, please know that you may withdraw from the study at any time.

I consent to participate in the study. I agree to be audio recorded during the interview.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix D

Interview Questions

Montessori- what is it all about?

Interviews

Basic Questions

Family Info

Number of Children-

Enrolled in Montessori-

How long have you been at the school-

Questions

What drew you to the school?

Why/how did you choose for your child to be in Montessori?

What was your impression of Montessori when you first visited the school?

What information was shared with you about Montessori?

What did you know about Montessori?

Have you noticed a difference in your home or with your children since they started Montessori?

Does the Montessori philosophy match with your home philosophy?

Do you feel that the Montessori philosophy has been explained/presented in depth?

If not, what would you like to see more of?

What are your thoughts on Montessori here?

Is it valuable?

How does it affect the community?

Is there enough information/awareness?

Do you think the workshop can be helpful to you?

New

Have you noticed a difference in your home or with your children since they started Montessori?

Do you feel that the Montessori philosophy has been explained/presented in depth?

Kindergarten Year

How has the three-year cycle made a difference for your children?

Has Montessori followed your children's stages of growth and development?

Past Montessori

How has your children's time in Montessori affected their learning skills and habits?

Did Montessori follow your children's stages of growth and development?

How was the transition for you children from Montessori to Traditional?

Dual Track

How did you choose which child to have in Montessori and which child to have in traditional?

Do you notice difference between Montessori and traditional? What are they?

Traditional

How did you choose which track to have your children in?

What is your impression of Montessori from a Non-Montessori point of view?

Appendix E

Flyer

Montessori

What is it all About?

March **6th**- Montessori and the Child

Is this a phase? Do all children do this?

March **12th**- Freedom and Discipline

How can I help my child be disciplined?

March **19th**- Reality Based

What can I offer my child to further his learning?

Each workshop will happen in the **PFC**
from 8 to 9 am

Contact Information Pauline.Meert@
(719)651-6904

Come learn more about the method and three core principles of Maria Montessori's child centered educational approach.



"We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being."

Maria Montessori

Appendix F
Workshop Tests

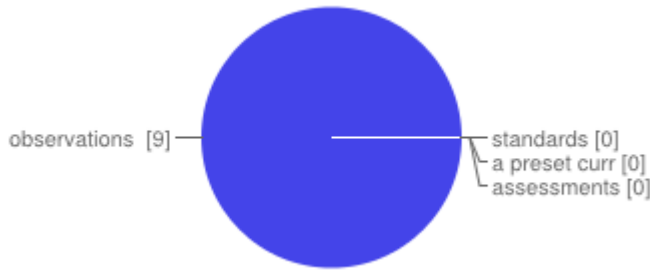
Montessori and the Child Pre Test

Please pick your best guess. This will help me to analyze the effectiveness of my presentation and share my results in my study. These surveys are completely anonymous. We will have a second quick survey at the end.

9 responses

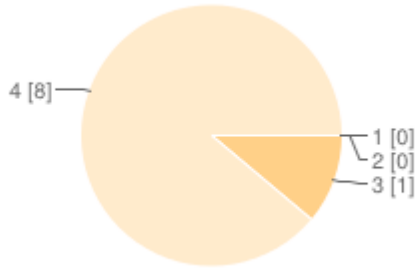
Summary

Montessori Method is based on...



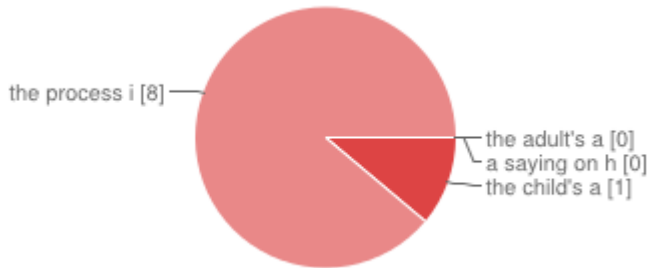
standards	0	0%
observations of children's development	9	100%
a preset curriculum	0	0%
assessments	0	0%

How many planes of development did Montessori find children go through?



1	0%
2	0%
3	11%
4	89%

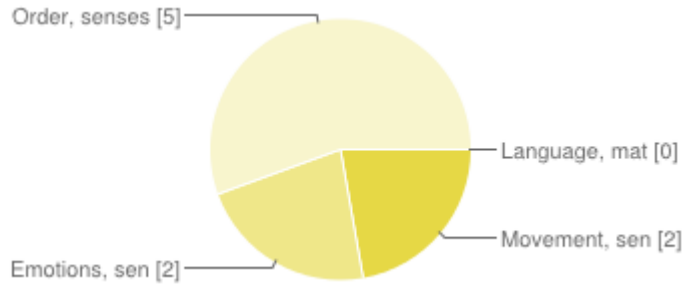
The Absorbent Mind is



the adult's ability to learn and teach language	0	0%
---	---	----

the child's ability to learn from age 6-12	1 11%
the process in which a child learns from his environment from age 0-6	8 89%
a saying on how children learn easily	0 0%

The sensitive periods children go through include...



Language, math, science, culture, movement	0 0%
Movement, sense, writing, reading, numbers, fine motor skills	2 22%
Emotions, senses, language, friendship, numbers, motor skills, routines	2 22%
Order, senses, language, movement, small objects, socialization	5 56%

It is time to go grocery shopping, what would be the best scenario according to Montessori?



Help your child with her coat and boots to be out the door just in time for smooth driving	0 0%
Start getting ready early to allow your child time to get dressed independently	9 100%
Put your child's coat on for her as she has not yet mastered doing so quickly	0 0%
Don't go grocery shopping	0 0%

Montessori and the Child Post Test

Thank you for participating on this workshop.

9 responses

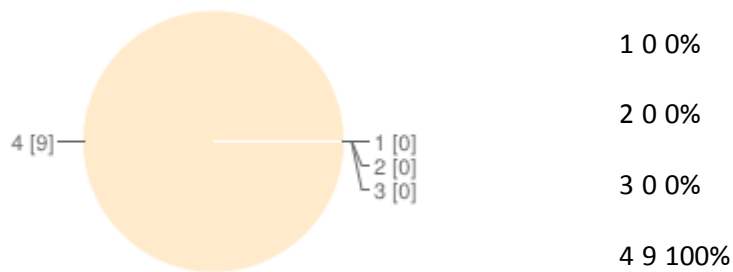
Summary

Montessori Method is based on...

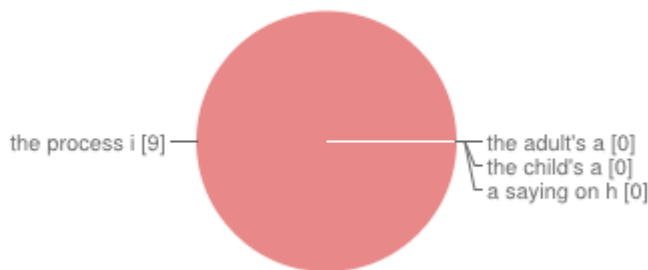


Standards	0	0%
observations of children's development	9	100%
a preset curriculum	0	0%
Assessments	0	0%

How many planes of development did Montessori find children go through?

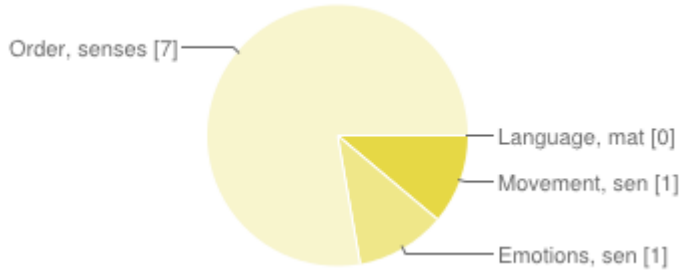


The Absorbent Mind is



the adult's ability to learn and teach language	0 0%
the child's ability to learn from age 6-12	0 0%
the process in which a child learns from his environment from age 0-6	9 100%
a saying on how children learn easily	0 0%

The sensitive periods children go through include...



Language, math, science, culture, movement	0 0%
Movement, sense, writing, reading, numbers, fine motor skills	1 11%
Emotions, senses, language, friendship, numbers, motor skills, routines	1 11%
Order, senses, language, movement, small objects, socialization	7 78%

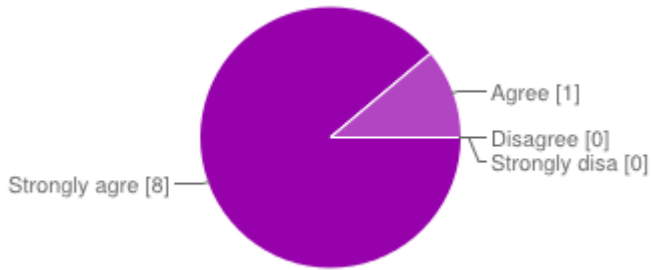
It is time to go grocery shopping, what would be the best scenario according to Montessori?



Help your child with her coat and boots to be out the door just in time for smooth driving	0 0%
Start getting ready early to allow your child time to get dressed independently	9 100%
Put your child's coat on for her as she has not yet mastered doing so quickly	0 0%
Don't go grocery shopping	0 0%

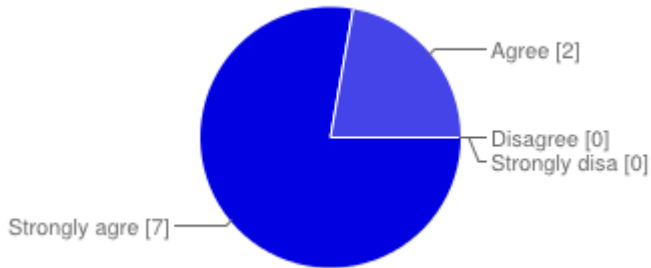
Strongly agree 8 89%

This workshop was helpful



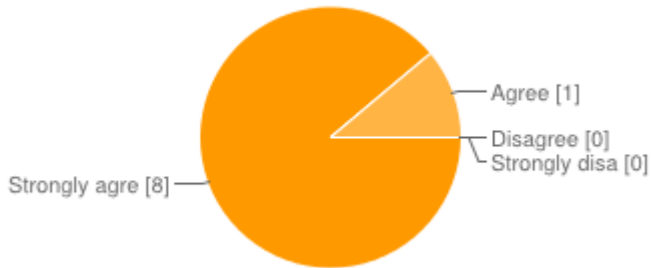
Agree	1 11%
Disagree	0 0%
Strongly disagree	0 0%

I learned a lot from this workshop



Strongly agree	7 78%
Agree	2 22%
Disagree	0 0%
Strongly disagree	0 0%

This workshop was relevant to me and my child/ren



Strongly agree	8 89%
Agree	1 11%
Disagree	0 0%
Strongly disagree	0 0%

Any other feedback?

thanks that was great despite not having Montessori kids this was still very relevant to my kids and their ages (8,10,13 and 16). I will try and remember the teens are the same as the 0-6 age kids..... helpful to get a richer discussion, question and answer going thank you!

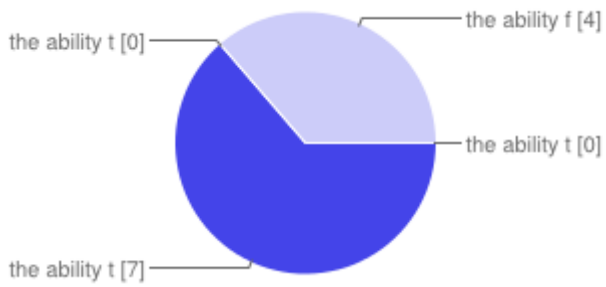
Freedom and Discipline Pre Test

Please pick your best guess. This will help me to analyze the effectiveness of my presentation and share my results in my study. These surveys are completely anonymous. We will have a second quick survey at the end.

11 responses

Summary

Freedom is....



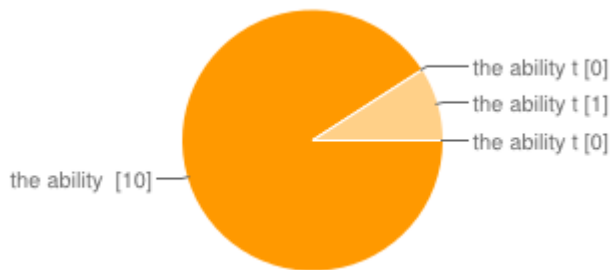
the ability to do what feels right and to make choices according to these feeling 0 0%

the ability to make conscious choices within set boundaries 7 64%

the ability to choose materials, activities, and lessons which a pleasing to the child 0 0%

the ability for a child to make his own choices based on his sensitive period 4 36%

Independence is...



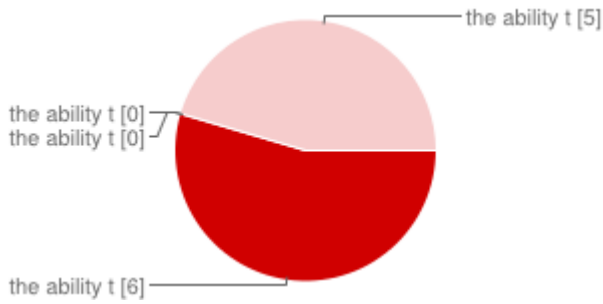
the ability to carry out tasks and learn from the environment 10 91%

the ability to learn from others choices 0 0%

the ability to separate one's self from oppression 1 9%

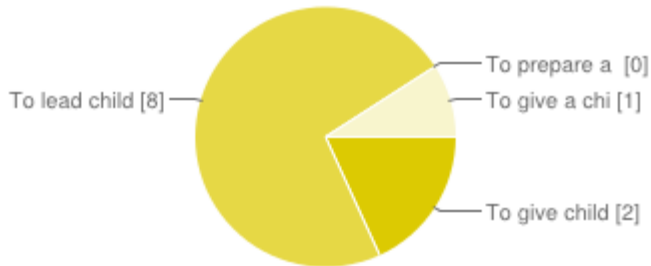
the ability to get a job and go to college 0 0%

Discipline is...



the ability to follow rules, obey directions, and follow a code of behavior	6 55%
the ability to obey an adult promptly	0 0%
the ability to train another to follow rules, using punishment to correct misbehavior	0 0%
the ability to regulate own conduct and follow rules of life	5 45%

What is the goal of Montessori education?



To give children a strong academic foundation	2 18%
To lead children towards normalization and their full potential	8 73%
To prepare a child for the next grade	0 0%
To give a child the opportunity to be free	1 9%

What are the best ways to help a child suffering from "deviations"?

reteaching ground rules and expectations	6 50%
using a reward and incentive system	1 8%
offering the child meaningful work	1 8%
observing the child to see the cause of the deviations	4 33%

implementing stricter discipline

0 0%

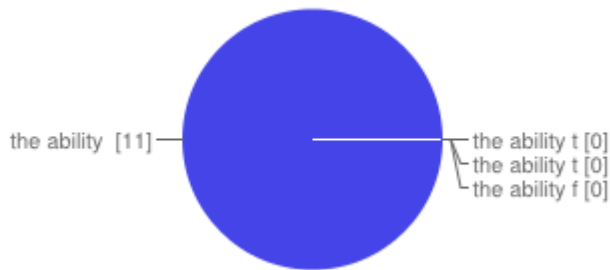
Freedom and Discipline Post Test

Thank you for participating in this workshop.

11 responses

Summary

Freedom is....



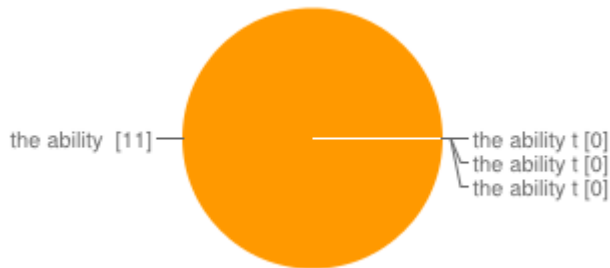
the ability to do what feels right and to make choices according to these feeling 0 0%

the ability to make conscious choices within set boundaries 11 100%

the ability to choose materials, activities, and lessons which a pleasing to the child 0 0%

the ability for a child to make his own choices based on his sensitive period 0 0%

Independence is...



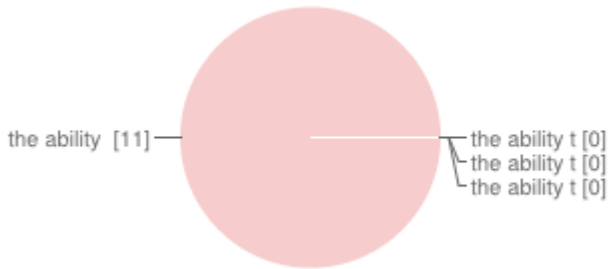
the ability to carry out tasks and learn from the environment 11 100%

the ability to learn from others choices 0 0%

the ability to separate one's self from oppression 0 0%

the ability to get a job and go to college 0 0%

Discipline is...



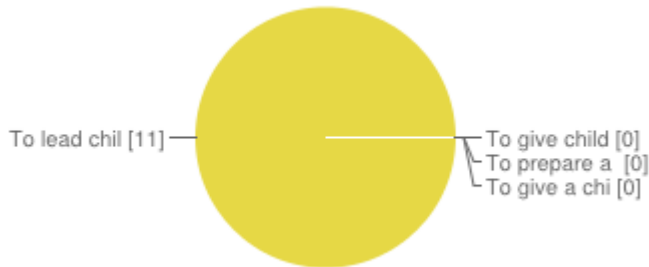
the ability to follow rules, obey directions, and follow a code of behavior 0 0%

the ability to obey an adult promptly 0 0%

the ability to train another to follow rules, using punishment to correct misbehavior 0 0%

the ability to regulate own conduct and follow rules of life 11 100%

What is the goal of Montessori education?



To give children a strong academic foundation 0 0%

To lead children towards normalization and their full potential 11 100%

To prepare a child for the next grade 0 0%

To give a child the opportunity to be free 0 0%

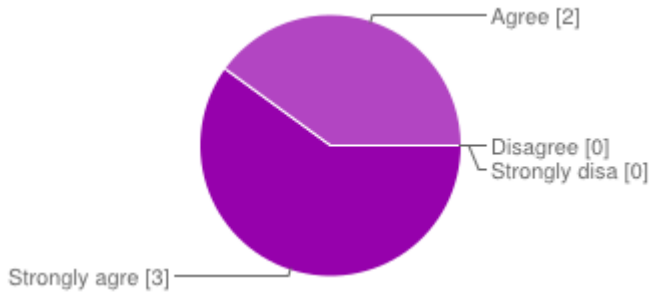
What are the best ways to help a child suffering from "deviations"?

reteaching ground rules and expectations 10 63%

using a reward and incentive system 0 0%

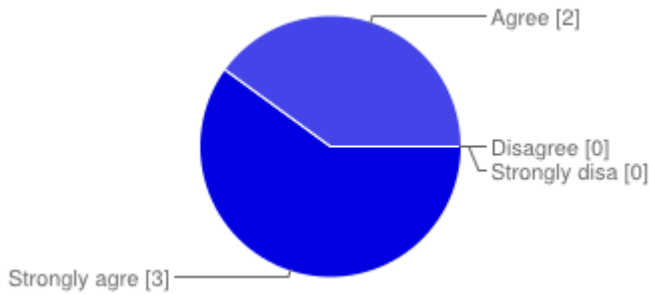
offering the child meaningful work	2	13%
observing the child to see the cause of the deviations	4	25%
implementing stricter discipline	0	0%

This workshop was helpful



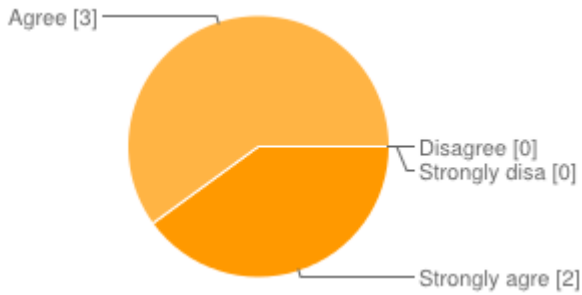
Strongly agree	3	60%
Agree	2	40%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

I learned a lot from this workshop



Strongly agree	3	60%
Agree	2	40%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

This workshop was relevant to me and my child/ren



Strongly agree	2	40%
Agree	3	60%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%

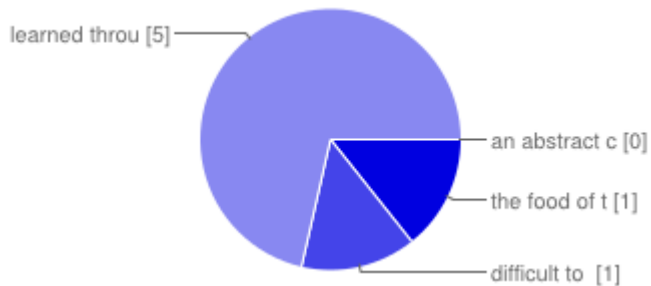
Reality Based Pre Test

Please pick your best guess. This will help me to analyze the effectiveness of my presentation and share my results in my study. These surveys are completely anonymous. We will have a second quick survey at the end.

7 responses

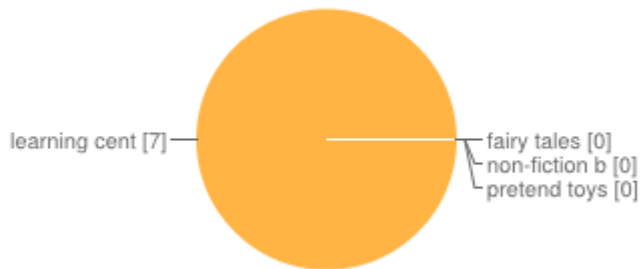
Summary

Reality is...



the food of the absorbent mind	1	14%
difficult to grasp for the child in the first plane of development	1	14%
learned through play	5	71%
an abstract concept	0	0%

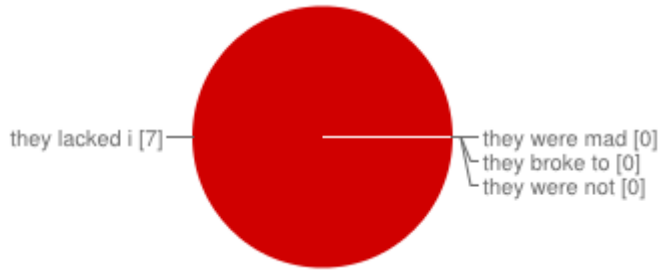
Montessori classrooms encourage...



fairy tales	0	0%
learning centers	7	100%
non-fiction books	0	0%
pretend toys	0	0%

Montessori found children tired of toys because....

they lacked in reality	7	100%
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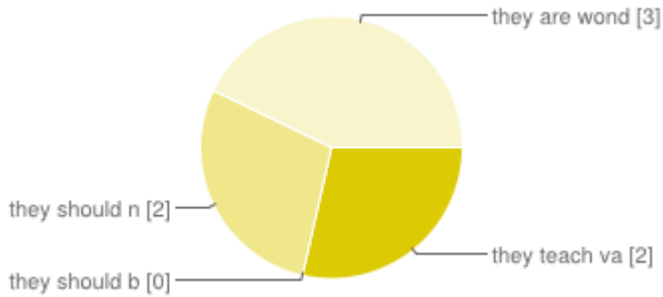


they were made of plastic 0 0%

they broke too easily 0 0%

they were not open-ended 0 0%

What is Montessori's perspectives on fairy tales?



they teach valuable truths 2 29%

they should be introduced early on 0 0%

they should never be a part of a child's life 2 29%

they are wonderful when introduced after age 6 3 43%

How can I nurture my child's imagination?



santa, the tooth fairy, elf on the shelf, leprechauns 0 0%

going to the zoo, cooking, visiting a construction site 7 100%

reading fairy tales, introducing Disney princesses 0 0%

providing beautiful toys, playing with my child 0 0%

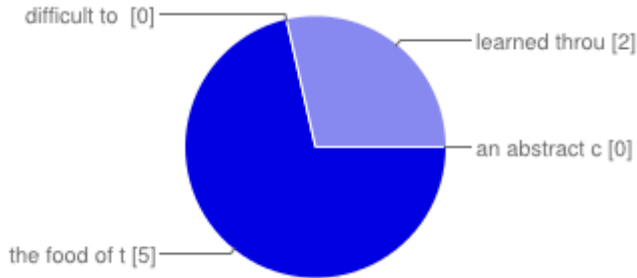
Reality Based Post Test

Thank you for participating in this workshop.

7 responses

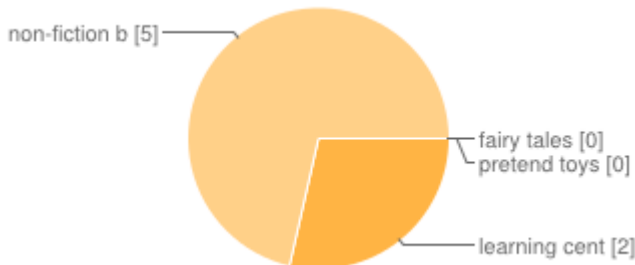
Summary

Reality is...



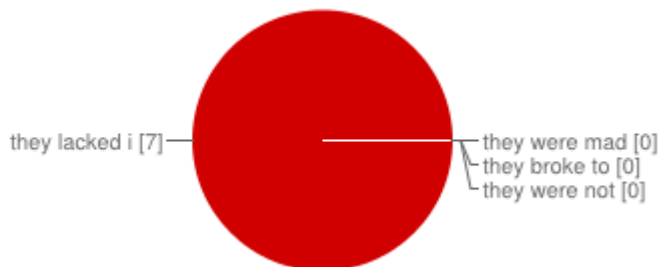
the food of the absorbent mind	5	71%
difficult to grasp for the child in the first plane of development	0	0%
learned through play	2	29%
an abstract concept	0	0%

Montessori classrooms encourage...



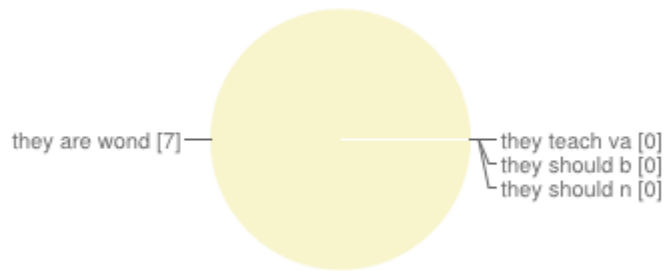
fairy tales	0	0%
learning centers	2	29%
non-fiction books	5	71%
pretend toys	0	0%

Montessori found children tired of toys because...



they lacked in reality	7	100%
they were made of plastic	0	0%
they broke too easily	0	0%
they were not open-ended	0	0%

What is Montessori's perspectives on fairy tales?



- they teach valuable truths 0 0%
- they should be introduced early on 0 0%
- they should never be a part of a child's life 0 0%
- they are wonderful when introduced after age 6 7 100%

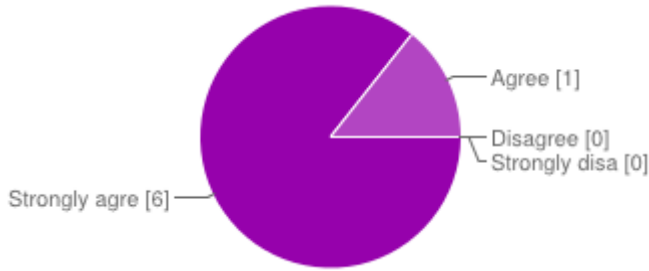
How can I nurture my child's imagination?



- santa, the tooth fairy, elf on the shelf, leprechauns 0 0%
- going to the zoo, cooking, visiting a construction site 7 100%
- reading fairy tales, introducing Disney princesses 0 0%
- providing beautiful toys, playing with my child 0 0%

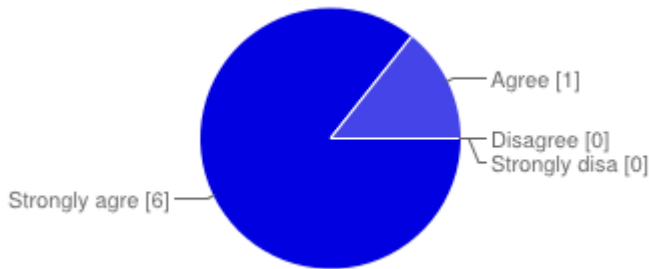
This workshop was helpful

Strongly agree 6 86%



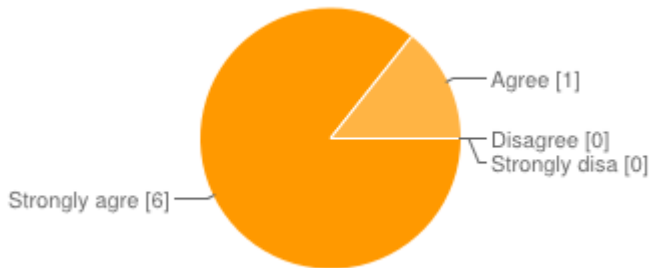
Agree	1 14%
Disagree	0 0%
Strongly disagree	0 0%

I learned a lot from this workshop



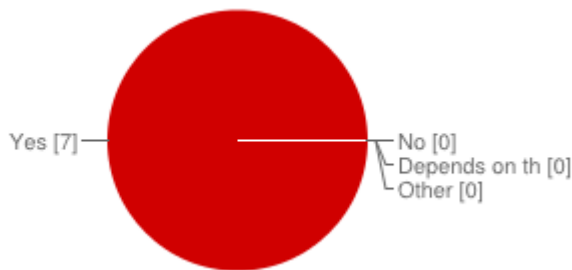
Strongly agree	6 86%
Agree	1 14%
Disagree	0 0%
Strongly disagree	0 0%

This workshop was relevant to me and my child/ren



Strongly agree	6 86%
Agree	1 14%
Disagree	0 0%
Strongly disagree	0 0%

I would like to see more of these kinds of workshops in the future.



Yes	7 100%
No	0 0%
Depends on the topic	0 0%
Other	0 0%

Any other feedback?

thanks so much Thanks for your time! I loved attending these. Thank you pauline! Good reminders and interesting new info for me.

Appendix G

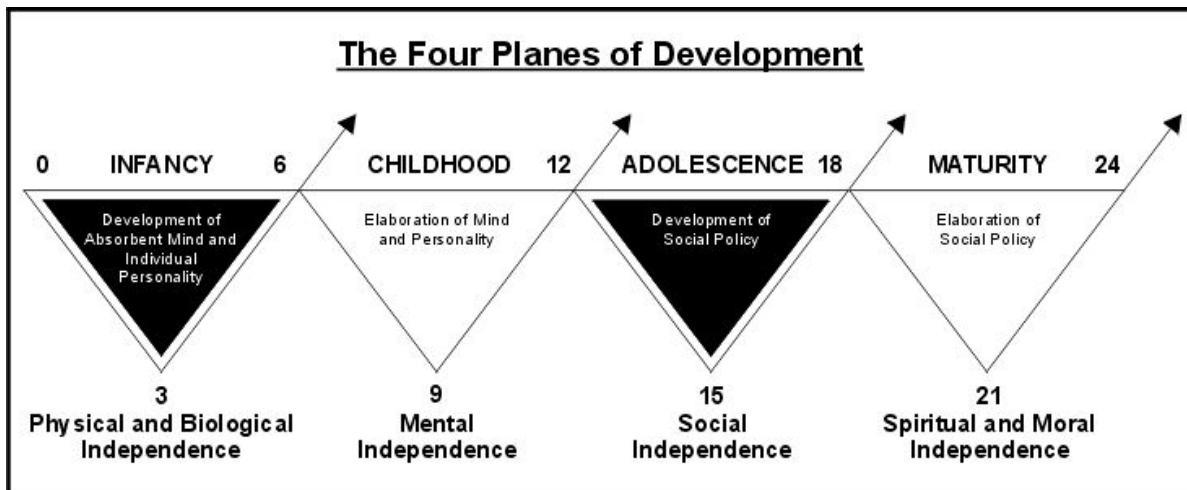
Workshop Outlines and Handouts

Montessori- What is it all about?

Montessori and the Child March 6th 2014 Handouts

By Pauline Meert

Planes of Development



	Focus	At Home
0-6	Learning through interaction with the environment	Encourage independence, have clear ground rules and expectations, need for boundaries, watch for sensitive periods
6-12	Learning with peers and about the world	Encourage social learning activities, offer opportunities for more abstract thinking, the child is thirsty for knowledge about the world and people
12-18	Learning about the self and place in the world	Encourage productive work, offer opportunities for moral and social growth, be patient and empathetic
18-24	Putting into practice things previously learned	Allow for independence, offer moral and spiritual support, entrance into the real world

Four Planes of Development

<http://www.mediachildrenshouse.com/about-us/the-montessori-method/four-planes-of-development>

Dr. Montessori defined 4 stages of development and labeled them as the 4 planes of development, noting that within these stages, the development is intense at the beginning, consolidates and then tapers to the next. The 1st and 3rd planes are periods of intense creation, while the 2nd and 4th planes are the calm periods of consolidation. Key to all the planes of development is the individual's need for independence. This is expressed differently throughout the planes.

Each plane is approximately 6 years and has its own special characteristics as follows:

First Plane – Age 0 - 6 – Early Childhood (Individual Creation Of The Person)

- Characterized by the "Absorbent Mind" in which the child's mind is like a sponge, absorbing all that is in the environment.
- At age 0-3 this is unconscious
- At age 3-6 this is conscious
- Characterized by "Sensitive Periods"
- Characterized by concrete thinking
- Construction of the physical person
- Fundamental formation of the character
- Physical independence – "I can do it myself!"
- The child wants to be free to work independently within a structured environment doing real activities with an intelligent purpose.

Second Plane – Age 6 – 12 – Childhood (Construction Of The Intelligence)

- Characterized by reasoning with imagination and logic.
- Intense thirst for knowledge which is so great that if allowed, the child will seek exposure to many things that have been left to high school and college in the past.
- "Cosmic Education" – the child wants to know about the whole and his/her place within it and can appreciate the interconnectedness of all things and people.
- The "bridge" to abstraction – or the transition from concrete to abstract thinking
- Interested in learning about the universe – what is outside of the prepared environment.
- Intellectual independence – "I can "think it" myself".

Third Plane – Ages 12 – 18 Adolescence (Construction Of Social Self)

- Characterized by self concern and self assessment.
- Critical thinking and re-evaluation.
- Transition period both physically and mentally.
- Beginning to try to find place in this world.
- Characterized by construction of social and moral values.
- "Erd Kinder" or "Children of the Land" – Dr. Montessori envisioned the child practicing for life in society by working together in a sort of hostel.
- Cultural development which has been ongoing is solidified in this plane.
- Emotional Independence – "I can stand on my own".

Fourth Plane – Ages 18 – 24 And Beyond – Adulthood (Construction Of Self Understanding)

- Characterized by construction of the spiritual.
- Conscious discernment of right and wrong.
- Seeking to know one's own place within the world.
- Financial Independence – "I can get it myself".

The Sensitive Periods- Birth to 6: The foundation of self

(MontessoriMom Sensitive Period listing)

Birth to 3 years

The absorbent mind: the mind soaks up information like a sponge. Sensory learning and experiences: the child uses all five senses - touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing - to understand and absorb information about his or her environment.

1 ½ to 3 years

Language explosion: a child builds his or her future foundation for language.

1 ½ to 4 years

Development and coordination of fine and large muscle skills, advanced developing grasp and release skill spawns an interest in any small object.

2 to 4 years

Very mobile with greater coordination and refinement of movement, increased interest in language and communication (they enjoy telling stories), aware of spatial relationships, matching, sequence and order of objects.

2 ½ to 6 years

Works well incorporating all five senses for learning and adapting to environment.

3 to 6 years

Interest in and admiration of the adult world: they want to copy and mimic adults, such as parents and teachers.

4 to 5 years

Using one's hands and fingers in cutting, writing and art. Their tactile senses are very developed and acute.

4 ½ to 6 years

Reading and math readiness, and, eventually, reading and math skills.

Language- 0-6

During this period the child is extremely sensitive to vocal sounds and to movements of the vocal apparatus. Deprivation of language stimuli during this period can lead to severe language defects. Without stimulation, the synapses of Broca's area and related language-processing areas of the brain will literally waste away.

Order- 0-3

In this period, the child is organizing a mental schema for the world. In order for firm conclusions to be drawn about the world, the child must be able to impose an order on it in a way that makes sense to the child and is consistent with the observed world of the child. If this need is not met, the child's ability to reason and learn will be precarious, since she may not be able to consider her conclusions reliable.

Sensory Refinement- 0-4

A child takes in information about the world through his senses. As the brain develops, it becomes able to discriminate between relevant and irrelevant sensory stimuli. The most efficient way to accomplish this is for the brain to pay attention to all sensory stimuli. The most repetitive (and therefore most important) of these will strengthen neural pathways, while the less common, although initially detected, will not provide enough brain activity to develop sensitivity to them. By age 4 or so, the brain has finished its "decision-making" about which stimuli are relevant, and worth attending to. Other stimuli will be ignored. This period, then, is important for helping the child attend to differences in sensory stimuli, which in turn can lead to a greater ability to impose a mental order on his environment.

Refinement of Motor Skills- 18 months- 4

By the beginning of this period, the child's gross motor skills are generally rather well developed. At this point, the continuing development of the cerebellum and motor cortex allow the child to increase her fine motor skills. Activity on the part of the child which focuses on fine muscle control (writing with a pencil, picking up and setting down small objects, and so on) will allow the child's muscular skills to develop to a quite advanced level. After this period, neural control of the muscles is relatively fixed, and improvement in fine motor skills comes only with considerable effort.

Sensitivity To Small Objects- 18-30 months

This period be viewed as a consequence of the overlapping of the previous two. As a consequence of the child's attention to sensory stimuli, combined with an interest in activities requiring fine motor coordination, the child takes an interest in observing and manipulating very small objects, which present a greater challenge to the senses and coordination than large ones.

Social Behavior- 2 ½ -6

From about 2½ through 6 years, the child, having become relatively stable in his physical and emotional environment, begins to attend to the social environment. During this time, in an attempt to order this aspect of her surroundings, the child attends closely to the observed and expected behavior of individuals in a group. This attention and ordering will allow her to move through the social environment in a safe and acceptable way. Children who are, for whatever reason, largely or entirely deprived of social interaction during this period will be less socially confident and perhaps more uncomfortable around others, a feeling which may take substantial effort to overcome.

Resources

- *Montessori Today*, Paula Polk Lillard, 1997, Shocken Books
- *Montessori A Modern Approach*, Paula Polk Lillard, 1988, Shocken Books
- *Montessori In the Classroom*, Paula Polk Lillard, 1997, Shocken Books

- *Teaching Montessori in the Home: Pre-School Years*, Elizabeth G. Hainstock, 1997, Plume
- *Montessori Insights for Parents of Young Children*, Aline D. Wolf, 2005, Parent Child Press, Inc.
- *Montessori, The Science Behind the Genius*, Angeline Stoll Lillard, 2005, Oxford University Press
- *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work*, E. M. Standing, 1998, Plume
- *The Montessori Method*, Maria Montessori, 1909
- *Peace and Education*, Maria Montessori, 1932
- *The Child in the Family*, Maria Montessori, 1936
- *The Discovery of the Child*, Maria Montessori, 1948
- *The Absorbent Mind*, Maria Montessori, 1949
- *Montessori FAQs*: <http://www.montessori.edu/FAQ.html>
- *What is Montessori? Series*: <http://carrotsareorange.com/category/montessori-defined-series/#>
- *Montessori in the Home Article*:
http://www.sunrisemontessori.com/montessori_in_the_home.htm
- *Association Montessori International*: <http://www.amiusa.org/>
- *Montessori Nuggets*: <http://montessorinuggets.blogspot.com/p/by-topic.html>
- *Videos*:
 - o *Montessori Guide*- <http://montessoriguide.org/>
 - o *Introduction to Montessori*-
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7a3Br6kPbU>
 - o *Montessori Madness*-
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcgN0IEh5IA>

Montessori and the Child PowerPoint Presentation Outline

Welcome-

- Thank you for taking the time to come learn more about Montessori.
- Thank you for helping me with my action research.
- I hope this will be a helpful presentation for you in order to better understand your child's development.
- A little about me- French, fell in love with Montessori at 18, still loving it!
- VIDEO (5mins)
- Overview Slide- schedule
- During the presentation feel free to ask questions at any time.
- This is a conversation. We will also have a time for more Q & As at the end.
- If you need the bathroom is that way.
- First we will take a short survey using the tablets.
- This will help me to analyze the effectiveness of my presentation and share my results in my study. These surveys are completely anonymous. We will have a second quick survey at the end.

- Directions, etc...

Maria Montessori

“It is not true, that I invented what is called the Montessori Method. I have studied the child, I have taken what the child has given me and expressed it, and that is what is called the Montessori Method.”

- First Italian female doctor
- Placed to work with special needs children
- Saw their thirst for stimulus, playing with crumbs
- Taught the children through hands on materials
- Observed them scientifically
- The students accomplished just as well as others in assessments
- Wanted to see how her discoveries would work with regular children
- Opened a school in the slums of Rome in 1906
- Through observations, Montessori found children’s deep intrinsic desire to learn and how this desire manifested itself in different ways- planes of development, sensitive periods

(What stands out most from your own childhood? Ex- making flowers with a compass, sewing a button)

Today Focus on Montessori’s discoveries on the stages of development a learning a child goes through.

Have you ever wondered what was going on with your child? Where he or she got the idea that picking up every single bit of gravel was a good idea?

Planes of Development

As many others (Piaget, Freud) Montessori organized the stages of growth a child goes through into four different planes.

Each plane has a specific purpose, specific goal. Knowing these allows us as adults to better understand why a child acts a certain way and how we ourselves developed.

Montessori’s planes of development have sub stages, some planes are more stable than others and others are “peak” stages involving a lot of change and growth.

Montessori classrooms are organized by different age groups based on the planes of development. In each plane of development children are learning in a similar way.

The first year then becomes the foundation, the second year is the exploration, and the third year is the application.

Plane 1- 0-6

Construction of the self- this happens both unconsciously (0-3) and consciously (3-6). This is the time of the absorbent mind. It is when a child learns about himself, his environment, and independence.

An infant begins life being completely dependent upon others.

They have no conscious reason for what they do.

Everything stems from the “horme” the impulse to act.

Goal- seeking independence from the adult

“Let me do it myself”- teaching how to put on clothing and giving the time to do it, in classroom- lessons on dressing (zipper), practical life

As a child nears three we can see their actions becoming more purposeful and thought out.

This begins the conscious stage of life.

Testing boundaries, pushing limits, interacting with the environment. These actions are their way of understanding the world as they consciously see that they can make an impact and are “active players”.

“Trust me to do it”- cooking, helping in the house, practical life, putting knowledge into practice no limits on level of lessons, giving lessons

The Absorbent Mind

This is the time when a child’s brain is like a sponge. They absorb everything in their environment by being active explorers. “Impressions do not merely enter the mind; they form it”

This is a time of adaptive-ness to one’s culture and environment. It comes in two stages- unconscious and conscious

It is crucial to offer a safe, stimulating, loving environment where exploration is possible within boundaries. Routines are very important.

Sensitive Periods

The absorbent mind manifests itself through sensitive periods. Not set in stone, based on observation, scientific but unique, not reliant on one’s culture

"A child's different inner sensibilities enable him to choose from his complex environment what is suitable and necessary for his growth. They make the child sensitive to some things, but leave him indifferent to others. When a particular sensitiveness is aroused in a child, it is like a light that shines on some objects but not others, making of them his whole world."

Every child has own pace, not all set in stone

- Order- 0-2- order in the environment helps the child make sense of his world, not just physical but also seen in the child’s need for routine. Need for a stable environment to allow for normal development. His foundation for life comes from the environment, young child doesn’t realize he is separate from his environment, repetition
- Senses- 0-5- learning happens through the senses, touching, tasting, smelling everything, a time of exploration, working to better understand the world
- Language- 0-6- foundation, comes easily, absorbing speech, huge, vocabulary, reading, language construction

- Walking and Movement-0-4- part of learning (physical and mental), At first- for independence, then for refinement, balance beam, choice of work space, walking on the line
- Small Objects- 1-3- build up understanding, relation to actions and speech, attention to detail, building up of concentration
- Socialization- 2-6- learning how to interact with others, be active participates in the environment,

Plane 2- 6-12

This stage is more about becoming a social being. Now that they have a foundation on “who” they are children begin to interact more with others and learn from each other.

In the primary classroom, we will often see children work parallel to each other. In the elementary classroom children tend to work more in groups.

This is one way we can meet their need of socialization and becoming a part of a social group. The child is very curious and his imagination grows.

This is when children can think more abstractly.

- Group projects, care of environment and community

Plane 3- 12-18

As a child grows and learns more about himself, his whole world widens and grows.

This is a period of critical thinking, self-awareness, emotional and physical development. It is parallel to the first plan of development.

It is a time of social and moral development as the child finds his place in society.

Parallel to 0-6- offer clear boundaries, space for independence, order

- Real tasks, service projects

Plane 4- 18-24

This is the age of maturity when the child’s foundation is applied to the life of the adult.

This is a time of moral and spiritual growth, and of finding one’s place in the world.

The Role of the Adult

1st- learn about planes of development and how children learn, we cannot make the child’s growth and development match out time tables- Montessori- teachers are trained to observe and base lessons on child’s pace, not curriculum/standards/assessments

Must be aware of the planes of development and sensitive periods in order to understand the child and meet her needs. Taking the time to observe and offer the child freedom.

Role model, **observer**

Patience, humility

At Home

The child's development does not depend on us, put aside pride, believe/acknowledge power of absorbent mind

Offer a stable environment that encourages independence and exploration.

Allow for repetition, through repetition children refine and master skills, achieve their full potential through their sensitive periods, and learn about the environment

Environment- ordered, beautiful, nature, concrete, real and hands on activities, part of the life of the home (active participant), art

Dishes, cooking, cleaning, folding, sorting, reading, language games,

Follow the child's needs and interests- but within boundaries- Details on that in next workshop!

Questions, Survey

Thanks and come again!

Montessori- What is it all about?

Freedom, Independence, and Discipline March 12th 2014 Handouts

By Pauline Meert

Definitions

Freedom- Ability to make conscious choices within set boundaries

Independence- Ability to carry out tasks and learn from environment

Discipline- Ability to regulate own conduct and follow rules of life

Building Independence

"We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself."

Maria Montessori

Teaching life skills

Getting Dressed- Putting on clothing, shoes, jacket

Serving own food- Using a spoon, pouring, cleaning the table

Self-care- Brushing teeth, washing hands, brushing hair

Participation at home- Cleaning, cooking, laundry

Teach and allow for repetition and practice

Liberty

“A child’s liberty should have as its limit the interest of the group to which he belongs. . . . We should therefore prevent a child from doing anything which may offend or hurt others . . . But everything else, every act that can be useful in any way whatever, may be expressed.”

Maria Montessori

Discipline

“If the child is not yet master of his actions, if he cannot obey even his own will, so much the less can he obey the will of someone else.”

“. . . when people have fully developed their own powers of volition and then freely chosen to follow another person’s orders . . . This kind of obedience is a kind of homage, a recognition of superiority. . . .”

Maria Montessori

Learning right and wrong, clear rules

Normalization

- Love of work
- Love of order
- Profound spontaneous concentration
- Attachment to reality
- Love of silence and working alone
- Sublimation of possessive instinct
- Power to act from real choice and not from curiosity
- Obedience
- Independence and initiative
- Spontaneous self-discipline
- Joy

Resources

- *PET*- <http://www.gordontraining.com/parent-programs/parent-effectiveness-training-p-e-t/>
- *Love and Logic*- <http://www.loveandlogic.com/>
- *Positive Discipline*- <http://www.positivediscipline.com/>
- *Alfie Kohn*- <http://www.alfiekohn.org/index.php>
- Montessori for Everyone- Bringing Montessori Discipline into the Home- <http://www.blog.montessoriforeveryone.com/bringing-montessori-discipline-into-the-home.html>
- At Home with Montessori- Discipline- a Montessori Perspective- <http://montessorihomes.blogspot.com/2011/04/discipline-montessori-perspective.html>
- NAMC- Parenting for Independence the Montessori Way: Fostering Self Discipline and Confidence <http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2009/06/parenting-for-independence-montessori.html#.Ux5NUoWmXew>
- Living Montessori- What does the term "normalization" mean? <http://livingmontessorinow.com/2013/04/23/what-does-the-montessori-term-normalization-mean/>
- *Maria Montessori.org Glossary*- http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?page_id=414
- *Teaching Montessori in the Home: Pre-School Years*, Elizabeth G. Hainstock, 1997, Plume
- *Montessori Insights for Parents of Young Children*, Aline D. Wolf, 2005, Parent Child Press, Inc.
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Freedom and Discipline PowerPoint Presentation Outline

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- I hope this will be a helpful presentation for you in order to better understand your child's development.

- A little about me- French (occasional language slip), fell in love with Montessori at 18, still loving it!
- During the presentation feel free to ask questions at any time.
- This is a conversation. We will also have a time for more Q & As at the end.
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- This will help me to analyze the effectiveness of my presentation and share my results in my study. These surveys are completely anonymous. We will have a second quick survey at the end.
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- First Italian female doctor
- Placed to work with special needs children
- Saw their thirst for stimulus, playing with crumbs
- Taught the children through hands on materials
- Observed them scientifically
- The students accomplished just as well as others in assessments
- Wanted to see how her discoveries would work with regular children
- Opened a school in the slums of Rome in 1906
- Through observations, Montessori found children’s need for independence. She found that allowing freedom in the classroom led to discipline (sensitive period for order and socialization)

Last week- focus on planes of development and sensitive periods, foundation of Montessori education is the child. Her focus became the whole child, as the builder of man. Montessori education is for life, not for the next grade.

Questions Slide

Today we will focus on Montessori’s principles on freedom and discipline. This is a huge topic and very much core to Montessori’s method of education. There are many aspects to it.

Very often Montessori classrooms are labeled as a-free-for-all or as too structured. This comes from a wide misunderstanding of what freedom really means.

Today we will work on better understanding freedom and how it relates to independence and discipline. We will see how this is seen in the Montessori classroom and how this can be implemented at home.

Introduction

Quote

Independence, freedom, and discipline interconnected

Diagram and definitions

Freedom- Ability to make conscious choices within set boundaries

Independence- Ability to carry out tasks and learn from environment

Discipline- Ability to regulate own conduct and follow rules of life

Notes

Development of the will, no longer out of impulse, making real choices. Freedom within boundaries- grace and courtesy lesson, ground rules, allows for independence and discipline.

We will look at how when these elements are missing how it creates “deviations”, how we can remedy these and how these three elements are seen in the Montessori classroom and how they can be implemented in the home.

Freedom

- Freedom to choose, work, talk, socialize, move (what does that look like)
- Based on collective good
 - o Grace and Courtesy Lessons
- Teaching and demonstrating appropriate behavior
- Redirecting, re-teaching
- Always based on observation- what does my child need, is this appropriate, within the limits

“To let the child do as he likes when he has not yet developed any powers of control, is to betray the idea of freedom.”

Choice and Movement

- Making choices leads to the development of the will- purpose full and conscious actions
- Need for movement- based on sensitive period of movement
 - The Montessori classroom/environment is set up for this to be possible- child sized, space for movement, materials for movement, one of each material for choice, variety- chairs, desks, rugs, stand/sit,

Grace and Courtesy

Teach, practice, reteach, redirect

Children have a great need for grace and courtesy as they want to be active participants

When presenting G&C- always quiet, huge difference in how they work

At home- also teach these things!

Independence

“We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself.”

Maria Montessori

Plane of Development of the construction of self

Discipline

Quote- first must be in control of self, discipline is about real choices, choosing what is good and what is right (for self and community)

“Before the child is three he cannot obey unless the order he receives corresponds with one of his vital urges.”

- Only possible for the conscious child- Part of planes of development- before three everything comes from the hormone- impulse
- Cannot happen without independence and freedom
- The will must be developed

“If the child is not yet master of his actions, if he cannot obey even his own will, so much the less can he obey the will of someone else.”

- to be successful cannot be imposed, radically different from traditional method of the past, it is not about “breaking children”

“ . . . when people have fully developed their own powers of volition and then freely chosen to follow another person’s orders . . . This kind of obedience is a kind of homage, a recognition of superiority. . . ”

Ground Rules

Similar to Grace and Courtesy but based on “Rules of Life”

right and wrong, good and evil

Teach, role play, practice

Safety, care of environment, care for others

Work after a lesson, Walking, quiet voices, safety, rules- no throwing, material use (reteach, try another time), one of each material, waiting turn, returning work to correct place and ready for others, respect for others’ concentration

When a ground rule is broken

Redirect and Re-teach

Diagram

Story of child who could not listen to directions or invitations to work for many month- needed to first have freedom of choice and build up her independence in order to have be able to trust the teacher and take in her suggestions. Needed to be able to freely choose to follow teacher’s orders

Deviations

Children do whatever it takes to fill their needs

If needs not met- we see deviations or detours or defences (misbehaviour, difficult choices, tantrums, etc...)

These are part of everyday life- cannot be fixed through punishment

When mental and physical “energy” are out of sync

Observation- “Rather than try to correct the visible signs of a deviation from normal development, the adult needs only to offer, in an interesting form, a means for the intelligent development of the norm.”

Remedy through work- “Man builds himself through working. Nothing can take the place of work, neither physical well-being nor affection, and, on the other hand, deviations cannot be corrected by either punishment or example.”

Need for patience, understanding, reviewing rules, re-teaching

Calm, little emotion language

Firm, calm, loving, consistent

Examples- classroom- misbehavior routine- at line (1, 2, 3) do it yourself, help you

Normalization

Harmony and balance- Freedom, Independence, Discipline

Towards full potential

Clear signs- observable

When the children freely choose their work, concentrate, and are working blissfully on their own as members of a respectful, peaceful community.

- Love of work
- Love of order
- Profound spontaneous concentration
- Attachment to reality
- Love of silence and working alone
- Sublimation of possessive instinct
- Power to act from real choice and not from curiosity
- Obedience

- Independence and initiative
- Spontaneous self-discipline
- Joy

Key Notes

Consistency, through testing boundaries that they learn about the world, choices must be good, and you must agree to them, allow for independence (through independence and freedom children develop their will)

Not rewards and punishments, discipline is intrinsic praise internal

Using rewards and punishments defeats freedom and independence and does not allow for discipline. No stickers and no time out (time away, quiet down, remember, re-teach)

Instead- "praise" is relationship, "punishment" is solutions, natural/logical consequences

Already taught- clear expectation

"He who is served instead of being helped is in a certain sense deprived of his independence. Everyone knows that it requires much more time and patience to teach a child how to eat, wash and clothe himself than it does to feed, bathe and dress him by oneself. The one who does the former is an educator, the latter a servant."

Conclusion

G.K. Chesterton, when discussing Catholicism, gave this illustration of freedom

"We might fancy some children playing on the flat grassy top of some tall island in the sea. So long as there was a wall round the cliff's edge they could fling themselves into every frantic game and make the place the noisiest of nurseries. But the walls were knocked down, leaving the naked peril of the precipice. They did not fall over; but when their friends returned to them they were all huddled in terror in the center of the island; and their song had ceased."

We need freedom within boundaries or we are not free. Let's keep this image in our mind as we move on. With Montessori the boundaries are seen through grace and courtesy and ground rules.

Montessori- What is it all about?

Reality Based March 19th 2014 Handouts

By Pauline Meert

Reality

"Impressions do not merely enter the mind; they form it." Maria Montessori

- Reality is the food of the absorbent mind
- Learning through the hands
- A key aspect of normalization

Montessori, through her observations, made yet another startling discovery- children were deeply attracted to reality.

Imitation

“A child cannot become a pianist by mere imitation, but must prepare his hands to gain the necessary agility”

Maria Montessori

Need for Work

"Only practical work and experience lead the young to maturity." Maria Montessori

"Though the school contained some really wonderful toys, the children never chose them. This surprised me so much that I myself intervened, to show them how to use such toys, teaching them how to handle the doll's crockery, lighting the fire in the tiny doll's kitchen, setting a pretty doll beside it. The children showed interest for a time, but then went away, and they never made such toys the objects of their spontaneous choice. And so I understood that in a child's life play is perhaps something inferior, to which he has recourse for want of something better..." Maria Montessori

Toys

“The toys one could buy were generally beautiful and ingenious but not sufficiently adapted to the child’s developmental needs. Toy manufacturers were inspired mainly by the “child that is in the man”. In other words, the creation of toys was determined by the adult’s reaction to them rather than by their suitability for the child in his play activity.” Mario Montessori (son)

Play is good but work is better

"The work both of the child and of the adult has a definite relationship to the environment. We may say that the adult works to perfect his environment, whereas the child works to perfect himself, using the environment as the means.“

M. Montessori

Imagination

“The true basis of the imagination is reality” Maria Montessori

“How is it possible for the child’s imagination to be developed by that which is in truth the fruit of the adult’s imagination? We alone imagine, not they; they merely believe.” Maria Montessori

“Reality is studied in detail, then the whole is imagined. The detail is able to grow in the imagination, and so total knowledge is attained.” Maria Montessori

"All people are human beings with imaginations. Imagination is something great which reflects the light and asks for enlargement.” Maria Montessori

“When we are very young, we do not need fairy tales. Mere life is interesting enough.” G.K. Chesterton

Resources

- *Maria Montessori.org- Keeping it Real-* <http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?p=1396>
- *NAMTA- Montessori and Imagination: The First Plane of Development-* <http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2010/10/montessori-and-imagination-first-plane.html#.UyXTXIV183J>
- *Montessori on the Double-* <http://montessorionthedouble.com/>
- *Maria Montessori.org- The 5 Characteristics of Play and Montessori Work-* <http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?p=2374>
- *NAMC- Play and Work in Montessori Education-* <http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2009/05/play-and-work-in-montessori-education.html#.UyXa24V183I>
- *Maria Montessori.org Glossary-* http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?page_id=414
- *Montessori Fantasy and Reality-* <http://blog.montessorimom.com/?p=368>
- *How to Raise an Amazing Child the Montessori Way, Tim Seldin, 2006, DK Publishing*
- *Teaching Montessori in the Home: Pre-School Years, Elizabeth G. Hainstock, 1997, Plume*
- *Montessori Insights for Parents of Young Children, Aline D. Wolf, 2005, Parent Child Press, Inc.*
- *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, E. M. Standing, 1998, Plume*
- *The Montessori Method, Maria Montessori, 1909*
- *Peace and Education, Maria Montessori, 1932*
- *The Child in the Family, Maria Montessori, 1936*
- *Montessori FAQs:* <http://www.montessori.edu/FAQ.html>
- *Montessori in the Home Article:* http://www.sunrisemontessori.com/montessori_in_the_home.htm
- *Videos:*
 - o *Montessori Guide-* <http://montessoriguide.org/>
 - o *Introduction to Montessori-* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7a3Br6kPbU>
 - o *Montessori Madness-* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcgN0IEh5IA>

Reality Based PowerPoint Presentation Outline

Welcome-

- Thank you for taking the time to come learn more about Montessori.
- Thank you for helping me with my action research.
- I hope this will be a helpful presentation for you in order to better understand your child's development.
- A little about me- French, fell in love with Montessori at 18, still loving it!

- VIDEO (5mins)
- Overview Slide- schedule
- During the presentation feel free to ask questions at any time.
- This is a conversation. We will also have a time for more Q & As at the end.
- If you need the bathroom is that way.
- First we will take a short survey using the tablets.
- This will help me to analyze the effectiveness of my presentation and share my results in my study. These surveys are completely anonymous. We will have a second quick survey at the end.
- Directions, etc...

Maria Montessori

“It is not true, that I invented what is called the Montessori Method. I have studied the child, I have taken what the child has given me and expressed it, and that is what is called the Montessori Method.”

- First Italian female doctor
- Placed to work with special needs children
- Saw their thirst for stimulus, playing with crumbs
- Taught the children through hands on materials
- Observed them scientifically
- The students accomplished just as well as others in assessments
- Wanted to see how her discoveries would work with regular children
- Opened a school in the slums of Rome in 1906
- Through observations, Montessori found children’s deep intrinsic desire to learn and how this desire manifested itself in different ways- planes of development, sensitive periods, need for freedom, independence, and discipline, children’s attraction and need for reality

Review

First week- planes of development- specific needs, age groups, and sensitive periods

Second week- Freedom, Independence, Discipline are inseparable, goal is normalization through work and meeting children’s needs (deviations)

Today learn about Montessori’s focus on reality, particularly within the first plane of development

Reality

Montessori, through her observations, made yet another startling discovery- children were deeply attracted to reality, reality is the food of the absorbent mind- “Impressions do not merely enter the mind; they form it”

One aspect of Normalization is to be attached to reality

Today we’re going to look at how reality plays a role in the Montessori classroom through the children’s need for work, the materials, the books, the method of education

Imitation

One way a child learns about reality is through imitation

Imitation- children learn by interacting with the environment- imitation is learned- preparation for later tasks

Becoming active participants, conscious (1st plane)

“A child cannot become a pianist by mere imitation, but must prepare his hands to gain the necessary agility”

This leads us to work, the need for work

Need for Work

In Montessori's time, children were very separate from social life, seen and not heard, given toys to play with to keep busy and away from adults. Montessori found this to be a “mockery” of their needs/ability

In her first Casa, she had toys as well as the materials she had created. Materials were in a closet, children would go to the closet to get the materials and left the dolls and puzzles.

"Though the school contained some really wonderful toys, the children never chose them. This surprised me so much that I myself intervened, to show them how to use such toys, teaching them how to handle the doll's crockery, lighting the fire in the tiny doll's kitchen, setting a pretty doll beside it. The children showed interest for a time, but then went away, and they never made such toys the objects of their spontaneous choice. And so I understood that in a child's life play is perhaps something inferior, to which he has recourse for want of something better..."

Play is good but work is better, Play- important but not enough, work has more to offer the child

Found children tired of their toys quickly because: “there is no reality in them” grounds child in reality

Through their thirst for independence children look for real things to do- Montessori- child sized

Through work children become normalized- it meets their needs

In the Classroom

Real Work (careful preparation)

For children work is play and play is work. Work does not have to be “bad” **Adult perception**

Preparation for later skills

Demonstrate- Glass, sweeping, button frame, pouring/spoon- preparation for serving self, food preparation, care of plants, gardening, cooking (Extension of the home)

At Home

Adult- product centered, child- process centered (art, folding)

Video

Real tasks for independence- as discussed last week, part of the life of the home (chores/jobs)

Play- important, mirrors adults' lives, another way to understand the world

Small kitchenette or baby doll, allow child to mimic adult, but the real thing is still better

“The toys one could buy were generally beautiful and ingenious but not sufficiently adapted to the child’s developmental needs. Toy manufacturers were inspired mainly by the “child that is in the man” (das Kind in Manne). In other words, the creation of toys was determined by the adult’s reaction to them rather than by their suitability for the child in his play activity.” Mario Montessori (son)

Think of babies/children- more interested in the wrapping than the toy

Toys that are open-ended, allow for learning, imagination, creativity, beautiful, REAL (wood, glass, nature) (babies- more interested in the wrapping/boxes than the expensive toys)

Play- structure and rules set up by the “player”, free to start/stop, focus is on the process

Imagination

Imagination is based in reality. Watching children play- based on what they know and see and touch.

Our role as adults is to feed their imagination with reality during the first plane of development. In the second plan of development- abstraction- can take in more, distinguish between real and not real

Yet we put many road blocks along the way- we think imagination means fantasy and fairy tales

“Reality is studied in detail, then the whole is imagined. The detail is able to grow in the imagination, and so total knowledge is attained.”

What is better for a child to “play star wars games” or to play games imagining what could be happening in the stars?

Fantasy and Fairy Tales

Now that we have seen children’s need for reality and how imagination is based on reality we can look at fantasy and fairy tales (movies/tv)

Seeing children’s disregard for toys and their need for reality and work, Montessori also found that fairy tales and what we call fantasy was not appropriate or appreciated by the child in the first plane of development. They would walk away.

This aspect of Montessori philosophy is counter cultural and was very hard for me at first, until I put it all together.

Within a Montessori classroom- there is no pretend play area, dress up toys, **no fairy tales**

When I first heard this in my training- I was very upset, but when putting it in context of the child in the first plane of development, it made sense.

Examples- can’t tell dream from reality (me and flying), absorbent mind

Think back to planes of development- abstraction part of second plane of development, 2nd plane- social and moral- fairy tales

Adult Perceptions- we try to escape reality, we know work is hard, children though, need reality

Example- when I was little, a lot of fairy tales, as a teenager- continued “escaping” reality by watching movies, had missed the step of being grounded in reality first, when studying Montessori, I was able to recognize that I wanted to escape reality because that had been my form of “entertainment”

Lack of foundation in reality will create deviations! (night terrors, anxiety, boredom, dependence)

Quote- think back to toys- the child within the adult, not the child’s needs

In the Classroom

Books on reality

Also books with talking animals etc... children now a days are more immersed in fantasy

Fantasy books- discuss what is real and what is not- balance (giraffe story)

“Santa Clause, leprechauns, tooth fairy” not encouraged (this is up to the parents)

At Home

Quote- feed the imagination- this is done through reality for the 1st plane, 2nd- fairy tales become appropriate

TV, Movies – age appropriate? TV/Movies- even harder to tell difference between reality and fiction as images look and seem just as real as something else

Minimize screen time- recommended 20mins

Credulity- believe what we tell them, becomes part of the absorbent mind

Elf on the shelf, tooth fairy, santa, leprechauns, star wars- what we think is cute, not always age appropriate

Play- evolution, as children get older, becomes more abstract, rules, more creative- nearing second plane of development, (snake example)

Conclusion

Chesterton- huge proponent of fairy tales!

Food analogy

We cannot feed a banquet feast to a new born, little at a time, steps according to the child’s development

First we crawl, then walk, then run

Questions, Survey

Appendix H

End Survey

Montessori- What is it all about? End Survey

Thank you to all for participating in my action research. I appreciate you taking the time to learn more about Montessori and for your help in this project.

Feel free to contact me if you have more questions or would like to learn more about Montessori.

13 responses

Summary

Which workshops were you able to attend?

Montessori and the Child 3 16%

Freedom and Discipline 5 26%

Based in Reality 3 16%

All Three 3 16%

Did Not Attend 5 26%

Has this Action Research changed your view on Montessori?

Yes, I understand its value more 8 33%

Yes, it has helped me better understand my child 4 17%

Yes, I will incorporate some of what I have learned into our daily life 7 29%

No, I was already on board and using Montessori 5 21%

No, I do not agree with the Montessori Method 0 0%

How did the workshops on Montessori principles change your perception of Montessori education?

It validated my decision to educate my children using Montessori's methods More understanding n/a
Clearer perception of motivation in the classroom and overall function more info It increased my appreciation for Montessori education. I continue to wish everything was more Montessori! The importance of allowing the child to lead their learning helps me change my parenting approach

Would you be interested in more workshops on Montessori education next year?



What topics would you be interested in?

The Materials	6	10%
Homework	7	12%
The Environment	5	9%
Catholicism and Montessori	10	17%
At Home	10	17%
Child Development	9	16%
Rewards and Punishment	10	17%
Other	1	2%

Other Feedback

I was very interested in these workshops but the time did not work with my schedule. Good luck! The quotes you used were very powerful. Sorry I wasn't able to attend your workshops. Our son is now in 5th grade, but we loved Montessori here and, before we moved here, at St. Catherine's in Houston. Good luck!