Montessori Parent Education: An Action Research Report

Sarah C. Irving
St. Catherine University, scirving@stkate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed

Part of the Elementary Education Commons

Recommended Citation

This Action Research Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Education at SOPHIA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters of Arts in Education Action Research Papers by an authorized administrator of SOPHIA. For more information, please contact amshaw@stkate.edu.
Montessori Parent Education: An Action Research Report

Sarah Ann C. Irving

St. Catherine University
Montessori Parent Education: An Action Research Report

Submitted on May 6, 2017

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

Sarah Ann Irving

St. Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota
Abstract

This study sought to improve parent knowledge about the Montessori curriculum at a public Montessori school in British Columbia, Canada. Nineteen parents from a grade 1/2/3 class participated. Prior to six weeks of interventions, a parent question log was kept, and baseline data was collected from students and their parents. The teacher hosted one parent evening, three in-class observations for parents, started a Montessori magazine library, and featured a section on Montessori in the home and material use on the class blog. Data collection tools were used throughout the research to gain feedback from parents. Research concluded that parent knowledge improved, standard Montessori practices at home increased, and participants began asking deeper questions about Montessori philosophy. Parents chose the evening event and the blog as tools they would use in the future. Further research could be done over a longer period to see if participation could be improved by spreading out the events.

Keywords: parent education, Montessori, parent participation, parent events, home-school partnership, parent involvement, public Montessori school
At the end of a busy day teaching my class of Montessori grade one, two, and three students (ages 6-9), it is not uncommon for a parent to stop by, exchange pleasantries, and then ask about how their child is doing. Often, during our conversations, questions or statements crop up that caused me to wonder what the parents of my students know about the Montessori curriculum and philosophy. Questions about what level a student is at, what work can be assigned for homework, what tutoring company is best for math, what children of the same grade are doing, and should their child be working on it too, etcetera, led me to wonder if the Montessori philosophy was truly understood by parents. Montessori education focuses on the child’s intrinsic motivation to learn. It believes that once a child’s interest has been sparked, the child will seek out information and be attracted to the carefully designed manipulative materials that foster independence as children learn. Rewards such as stickers, candy, and prizes are not usually given in Montessori classes. External benefits have the ability to erode a child’s intrinsic motivation, leaving the child only motivated to achieve something if there is a bigger and better prize. Comments from students saying that they would be given prizes, toys, or money if they completed their work, did well at school, or did well on a test from their tutor, led me to wonder how much parents knew about Montessori philosophy and whether they welcomed it into their homes.

Teaching a primary Montessori class in a dual track public school in an urban area of British Columbia, Canada, comes with its challenges. The school I teach at is dual track because it has Neighbourhood (traditional) elementary classes as well as Montessori elementary classes. All classes have recess at 10:30am as well as a lunch break at noon, attend weekly assemblies, performances, theme days, and sports day together. The
difference between the two tracks is the structure of the classes and the educational philosophies used by the teachers. Parents enter a lottery system in order to get their child into the Montessori track. Having Montessori preschool experience is preferred, but not a requirement to enter in Kindergarten, or during any other grade. I noticed that I end up answering a lot of questions from parents that a person with a basic knowledge of Montessori would not have asked. It led me to wonder what would happen if I put my time and energy into parent education, rather than spending time with individual families after school answering their questions about Montessori education. For my research, I needed to find out what knowledge base parents had about the Montessori philosophy, what events would attract parents to the school, and what could be offered for working parents too busy to attend any events. Basically, I was hoping to find the most popular type of parent education that would yield the highest results, benefitting the parents, the children, and the classroom teacher in turn.

I have twenty two students in my primary class with an even mix of boys and girls. There are seven in grade one, six in grade two, and nine in grade three. My research focussed on the parents of these students and out of twenty two families, nineteen parents from different families decided to take part. Of the nineteen participating parents, thirteen moms and six dads ranging in age from early thirties to late forties made up my participant base. All of the grade one students had a parent participate, and all but one of the grade two students had a parent participate. Two grade three students’ parents declined to take part in my research.

Parent education at my school has traditionally been minimalistic. Parents interested in entering the lottery to have their preschool aged child enter the Montessori
track at the age of five for Kindergarten, are invited to attend a two hour session with the principal explaining the application process, followed by a tour of the Kindergarten room, a primary room (grades 1-3), and an intermediate room (grades 4-6), all with classes in session. As it is a dual track school, all students go outside for recess, and during that twenty minute break, the Montessori teachers join the parents for a question and answer period. This brief introduction is the only regularly held formal Montessori education event held at my school, and it is provided to families whose children are not yet old enough to attend the school. I wondered if I spent some time focusing on group parent education, it might free up some of the time I spend at my door explaining basic elements of Montessori education to individual parents on any given day.

**Literature Review**

Montessori school teachers face the challenge of having parents enroll their children in Montessori programs while having limited knowledge about what Montessori education is. This leads to confusion in regards to why students are doing what they are doing, inconsistent practices between the home and school, disappointment when a student does not progress at the same rate as others, and a lack of faith in the program when immediate results are not produced. Without proper parent education, Montessori teachers must repetitively meet with different families to explain the benefits of Montessori education and what the philosophy looks like at home and school.

In *The Montessori Controversy*, Chattin-McNichols (1998) drew attention to conflicting perceptions that Montessori education is either too rigid with prescribed presentations that limit children’s creativity or that it is an unstructured free for all
without any academic standards. To investigate the general public’s knowledge of Montessori education, researchers gave an online survey to:

A demographically representative sample of 1,520 U.S. adult panel members . . .

Two-thirds of survey participants said that they had ‘heard the term Montessori education’ . . . [and] those who had heard of [it] were significantly older, with higher levels of education and income than those who had never heard of it.

(Murray, 2012, p. 18)

Lillard (2005) and Rambusch and Stoops (1992) demonstrated that of the two-thirds of people that had heard of Montessori, several had misconceptions about what the method of education involved. “Less than 10% understood Montessori educators’ avoidance of extrinsic rewards in order to develop children’s internal motivation” (Murray, 2012, p.18). Many misinformed people thought pretend play was encouraged over practical life skills such as sweeping, and that teachers would often interrupt students and have them change their activities in order to focus the students’ attention. “Eight in ten also erroneously believed that Montessori teachers see their role as transferring knowledge to children” (Murray, 2012, p.18). This study showed that more education is needed for adults, especially when one considers that classroom teachers hear of Montessori parents rewarding their children with stickers, treats, or money if they do well on their work, behave, or do chores. This practice goes against the Montessori philosophy and sabotages the intrinsic motivation that Montessori education strives toward. Educators have practiced a few different strategies to increase parent knowledge of the program, including home visits, mandatory parent education events, and stressing the importance
of a home and school partnership with multiple parent education events throughout the year.

**Home Visits**

Brock and Edmonds point out the importance of parent involvement stating “by the time a child enters school at age four, the home has already had an enormous influence on a child’s education. Therefore, neither the school nor the home can operate separately” (2010, p. 3). Some Montessori schools have implemented home visits to educate parents. To those who say they do not have time for home visits, Patton, a Montessori teacher at a private school in Colorado, points out “the reality is that the time invested up front in conducting home visits will save significant time down the road” (2015, p. 44). An urban magnet school “was moving toward racial integration as well as implementation of a Montessori education program” (Rule & Kyle, 2008) and they had the school counsellor visit every home before the start of the school year, which helped the transition go smoothly. Home visits can help ease the transition from home to school with children, especially when expectations between the two places remain consistent. “Helping parents create a child-friendly environment in the home is a beginning; however, we can go much deeper. We can [help parents to] implement Montessori principles and practices in the home (McFarland & McFarland, 2013).

**Mandatory Parent Education Events**

The Children’s House at the Infinity Children’s School (ICS) in Hong Kong noticed that both parents worked in many families, so grandparents or hired workers were looking after the children. The ICS decided to educate parents about Montessori philosophy. It is mandatory for parents to attend eight hours of parent education classes.
before enrolling their children in Montessori Class at ICS. Furthermore, the school stresses the importance that parents and other care givers attend classes together. “[A] successful parent education program offers a balance of theory and practice, giving inquisitive parents the tools to apply what they learn in class to their parent-child relationship in the home environment” (Lau & Yau, 2015, p.37). In addition to the initial eight hours of training, parents who enroll their child in the short trial program must attend half of the classes to observe the teacher interacting with the children, so they can learn to model this at home. Finally, parents are expected to attend parent education classes for at least a year afterward.

The American Montessori Society stated that parent education programs should “promote understanding of Montessori principles and curriculum” (AMS, 1990, pp.1/Recruitment/Parent Education) and that schools “seek the necessary commitment [from parents] to the program” (AMS, 1990, pp.1/Recruitment/Parent Education). AMS does not explicitly say that parent education must be mandatory, but it does stress its importance to help with the recruitment and retention of students. Haakmat, Head of School at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School (BHMS), has developed an extensive parent education program. Although parent attendance is not mandatory, she stated that “we need parents to lead with their own curiosity and to commit to attending as many of our parent education offerings as possible” (2015, p. 30).

Home and School Partnership with Multiple Parent Education Events

The importance of a home-school partnership can be demonstrated by events at Cobb Elementary in San Francisco. It tried to expand its Montessori preschool program into a
free public Montessori school that went up to the fifth grade. Parents did not understand the benefits of the program or the Montessori philosophy.

There may not have been enough groundwork in the beginning, or continuing communication throughout the community after the school opened. With a wait list of 133 for eight spots, it would seem that the school would not have to be out in the community recruiting, but as a result the community was unaware of the school and how it operated. (Benham, 2010, p. 26)

The parent community protested and Jones, a grandparent of a traditional student at Cobb Montessori, exclaimed:

They’re like cancer. You have cancer, it spreads throughout your whole body, and you die. You disappear . . . Our kids need structure. We cannot be with this free flow [Montessori], do what you want to do kind of thing. (KQED Radio, 2009, 20:10)

This extreme example demonstrates the importance of parent education for Montessori programs. These programs are often sought after and welcomed into communities. However, without sufficient information parents may see the program as Jones saw it, an unstructured “free flow” (KQED Radio, 2009, 20:10). Teachers must take time to explain the program and the concept of freedom within expectations. It is very rare that a Montessori program is protested in the way that Cobb Elementary experienced.

In order to set up a strong Montessori program with parent support, Haakmat has helped set up seven parent education events that take place throughout the school year at BHMS. These events include: 1. Back-to-school night where community goals are outlined and a focus on parent-school partnership is explained. 2. Curricular open house
where parents of upper elementary students can hear from teachers from the middle school. 3. A spring journey meeting for parents to meet with the next program’s teacher and find out what will be expected. 4. Potluck dinners shared with teachers and parents. 5. Curriculum overview meetings held twice a year where a representative explains the flow of the curriculum. 6. Parent conferences where a parent and student receive individualized attention. 7. Workshops introducing Montessori philosophy and materials first offered to new staff, then to new families, and finally to anyone wishing to refresh their knowledge (2015, pp.30-33). Haakmat’s program, although not mandatory, comes with strong encouragement that parents are expected to attend. BHMS has enjoyed much success from all the effort the staff put into the parent education events held throughout the year.

Through a study of 42 schools, Brock and Edmonds discovered that as parent involvement increased, children’s grades increased as well (2010). Parental involvement, parent participation, parent education, and home-school partnerships can mean many things such as fundraising, participating on the school advisory council, volunteering in the classroom, helping with field trips, or attending school events. Brock and Edmonds revealed that “educator’s efforts to increase involvement have usually centred on . . . increasing communication between the home and school . . . and encouraging parents to pursue behaviours at home that encourage learning” (2010, p.48). The examples of parent involvement listed are important for children and families, but parent education about the program is a necessary component for a successful Montessori school.
Other types of parent education that have been implemented are “parent teacher conferences, work folders, report cards pick up days, memos, notices, phone calls, newsletters. . . classroom websites, voice calling systems, email, and parent portals” (Hlavarty, 2015, p.6). Harrison did a study to measure the effects of a book club on Montessori and parent education (2014). Inviting parents to borrow resources such as books and magazines from a resource library has been implemented in some schools. Other schools have invited parents into the class to observe students using the Montessori materials. Rule and Kyle stated that:

On several afternoons spaced a couple of months apart, we invited parents to visit us during a 1 hour work period that was part of our regular school day. Each child was assigned to work with a partner on several different sets of Montessori materials at this time and to explain to any visiting parents how the materials worked. (2009, p. 295).

Chattin-McNichols conducted a survey to see what types of parent education Montessori schools were using, and with what frequency. His results indicated that:

Parent education night seems to be offered two to three times per year. Half-day or day long events were infrequent: five schools reported never, and four reported once a year. Newsletters appeared to be one of the most common and frequent parent education tool, and were offered either monthly or more than once a month. (2016, pp. 2-3)

**Indications from Current Research**

Current research on visiting families in their homes revealed that it puts children at ease, strengthens the home-school partnership, encourages open communication, and
saves time for the teacher over the long run. “Home visits (for Infant & Toddler, Early Childhood, and perhaps Lower Elementary levels) are a great way for teachers to create an initial connection with a child and his family” (Patton, 2015, p. 42). Some schools have expanded this practice and see benefits for families with children aged six to nine.

In the public sector, low attendance to parent events is reported. “It’s the same old story; the parents who do not need to be here, are, and the parents who most need to be here, aren’t! Ever!” (Brock and Edmonds, 2010, p. 3). Harrison’s Montessori parent book club invited 280 parents to take part. Ten parents volunteered, and due to scheduling conflicts, seven parents ended up taking part. Having only 2.5% of families join the book club echoed the apathetic parent community of Brock and Edmonds. Nevertheless, “once concluded, the book club participants were so enthused about connecting with each other and what they had learned it was collectively decided to continue a new session and a new book” (Harrison, 2014, p. 24).

After reviewing the literature, it is apparent that Montessori teachers must be mindful when setting up parent education events. With so many widely held misconceptions about Montessori, it is important to have a solid parent education program. It is beneficial to create fun events with relevant material that parents can use at home with their children. Research indicated it is advisable to develop a way for parents to receive parent education without physically attending an event. The internet, class blogs, and Montessori resource libraries are valuable platforms for educating parents who are unable to attend in person. Putting in the initial effort to create a parent education program has proven to be well worth the time for ensuring parent understanding, cooperation, and appreciation of the Montessori program.
After researching parent education and discovering that some schools had experienced positive results, I decided to do my action research on the same topic at my school. I wondered, would implementing a series of parent education events at a dual track Montessori school increase parent understanding of the program, thus allowing the Montessori teacher to spend less time with parents in informal meetings? I hoped to discover what would bring public school parents out to parent education events, and if they were unable to attend, what alternate format could they be reached with?

**Description of Research Process**

I used six data collection tools during my research. I kept a Parent Log of Questions (Appendix A) for six weeks prior to starting my action research and continued to use it during my data collection to see if my parent education interventions would have any effect on parents asking questions during impromptu meetings before and after school. In order to gather baseline data I e-mailed participants Parent Knowledge of Montessori Education (Appendix B). In order to have parents feel comfortable to reply honestly, I made the forms anonymous. As the information gathered with this tool would provide data for comparison of Montessori knowledge at the end of the research, I had parents use an anonymous identifier on all of the data collection tools, so I could compare their earlier responses to their later responses and gauge if there had been any changes in their knowledge and perceptions about Montessori education. The first version of this data tool contained an extra question about parent interest in attending a parent evening. It had the option of two different dates with two different start times per date. This question was included so that I could maximize attendance at my first event.
I had my class fill out an Attitude Scale entitled Viewpoints from a Montessori Student (Appendix C). We did this in class together. I read questions to the class and they answered them on their paper forms. Students used anonymous identifiers just like the parents had done, so I could compare their baseline data to their data at the end of my research. As my grade one, two, and three students did not have e-mail accounts, I input the students’ responses using Google Forms at in order to clearly see their data and be able to analyze it. The purpose of this tool was to see how much students perceived that parents used Montessori principles at home. I planned to analyze parent and student responses to see if they correlated.

In the second week of my research I hosted a Montessori Parent Education Evening. This was done in an effort to reach working parents who would not be able to attend any of the events held during class time. I had students write reminders to parents in their planners to let them know that the event was happening and I placed a sign outside my door inviting all families from my class to attend whether or not they were taking part in my research. I planned this event to be just one hour long from 6:15pm to 7:15pm in hopes that more parents would attend if it did not take up too much of their evening. At the event I introduced my Montessori Magazine Lending Library; a collection of magazines consisting of Montessori Life M. Folios, and Tomorrow’s Child. I placed one dozen Montessori magazines on a table and encouraged parents to sign one out for a week and send it back to school with their child. I created a form for my lending library to keep track of who had which magazine, when they borrowed it, and when it was returned (Appendix D). As parents arrived I welcomed them and directed them to the buffet table and the nearby table of magazines, where they quickly began
mingling with other parents. After ten minutes or so, I gave a Power Point presentation (Appendix E) about the benefits of Montessori education and what some of the key aspects were. Afterwards, I showed a slide show of pictures taken that day during work choice in my class. Montessori classes strive for a long period (up to three hours) of time where students make their own choices on what to work on. This work choice period allows the students to follow their interests and enjoy freedom while havening expectations and structure. The slide show was presented to give the parents a better understanding of what a fully functioning Montessori class looks like during work choice, how materials from all subjects are used at the same time as opposed to students only choosing materials from one subject area such as math, that students made their own choices, and that they could sit, stand, or lay down to work wherever they were comfortable. After the presentation, I had a question and answer period. This was followed by a demonstration of a language material (a pink box) and a math material (the addition snake game). Once I had returned home, I e-mailed the parents who attended via Google Forms with a Semi Structured Discussion feedback tool about the evening (Appendix F).

During the third week of my research I intended to update my class blog with a section on Montessori philosophy and ways it could be incorporated into the home, however due to unforeseen circumstances, I fell behind in my plans and my blog was not updated. On the fourth week, I updated my blog with the Montessori philosophy section (Appendix G) and e-mailed the parents to invite them to come into class during one of our work choice periods. I e-mailed parents with three dates that they could come in to observe their children for forty five minutes to an hour. The dates coincided with two
days of student led conferences where school got out one hour early to accommodate the meetings that would go into the evening. I hoped that more parents would have the opportunity to attend, as they would be at school for student conferences as well.

Options for observations included a Wednesday from 1:00pm – 1:45pm, Thursday from 1:00pm – 1:45pm, and the following week on a regular dismissal Thursday from 9:15am to 10:15am and at the end of the day from 1:30pm to 2:30pm with dismissal at 3:00pm. I decided on a limit of six parents per time slot due to class space and to be mindful of students who could possibly get nervous if several adults were in the room observing them.

During the fifth week, parents came in for the Work Choice Observation Open House. I encouraged parents to borrow more Montessori magazines that were displayed on a counter with a sign out sheet and a pen. I invited the parents to either sit and observe the class as a whole, or walk around the classroom and observe individual students working with the materials. Parents were invited to ask students questions about the material they were using and what they were learning. During the observation I continued presenting to small groups and one to one as if the parents were not in the room. In the evening I e-mailed the parents via Google Forms with a parent feedback tool, the Work Choice Observation (Appendix H), to find out if they had learned anything or had any questions regarding the observation.

During the sixth week, I hosted another Work Choice Open House session in order to accommodate parents who could not attend the week before. I offered a morning session for parents who had time while dropping their children off, and an afternoon session for parents who had more time while picking their children up. Due to falling
behind during the third week, I extended my research into a seventh week in order to post my second blog installment with a feature on Montessori materials (Appendix I). At the end of the week I gave my students the same Attitude Scale (Appendix C) that I had given them at the beginning of the research. I did this during class with pencil and paper again, and input their information into Google Forms. To conclude my research, I e-mailed the parents via Google Forms with a similar data collection tool to the first week, Parent Knowledge of Montessori Education (Appendix J), in order to see if there had been any change after the interventions that had been done during my research.

**Analysis of Data**

After gaining approval from the Institutional Review Board, my school district, and my school’s principal, I was able to begin my action research. I sent assent (Appendix K) and active consent (Appendix L) forms home with my grade one, two, and three students. Nineteen parents from twenty two different families agreed to take part in my research. I began my research by giving my students a student attitude scale about what they felt their parents knew about Montessori education. I was able to use the data from twenty of my twenty two students, due to two parents opting not to have their children participate. Next, I sent participating parents a similar data collection tool through Google Forms to gain baseline data on what they knew about Montessori education. Eighteen of the participating parents returned my data collection tool. By analyzing these two data collection tools, I was able to see if students and parents agreed with each other’s views. My purpose was to find out how much parents understood Montessori philosophy and how often they encouraged it in their homes. I was hoping to find out if the students agreed with their parents, and whether or not the students
perceived and experienced key points of Montessori philosophy at home. Interestingly, student and parent views did not always match up.

Children and parents had different perceptions on whether students were expected to do household chores or not. Nine parents indicated that their children were not expected to help with chores, while four students said that they did not do chores. I was surprised at this data, as half of my Montessori students were not expected to help at home, yet all of them had class jobs at school that included sweeping, recycling, table care, plant care, dusting, etc. Practical life skills, or chores, are very important to the Montessori curriculum. I wondered why parents were not including practical life skills at home with their children. The low occurrence of practical life skills continued with the question about whether or not children poured their own drinks at home. One quarter of the students responded that they never poured their own drinks. Students felt that eighty percent of them had been taught and given the opportunity to help out by peeling carrots and potatoes. Parents responded that sixty-six percent had been taught this skill, yet admitted that only six percent of children were given the opportunity to help on a regular basis. Children disagreed, stating that thirty percent of them helped peel vegetables often. Students felt that half of them never helped out at home by writing the grocery list, while parents felt that only thirty-three percent of children had never helped in this way (See figure 1).
The Montessori philosophy does not promote the use of extrinsic rewards such as candy, stickers, toys, or money. Students are encouraged to learn, work hard, and help because they are pleased with the knowledge they gain, enjoy the experience, and feel good about what they have done. Montessori education works on the principle of intrinsic motivation. When asked a question about who gets rewards at home, eleven percent of parents admitted to giving rewards often, while thirty percent of students felt that they received rewards often. There was not a spot on the form for parents to say what rewards they gave. However, from conversations with my students I am aware that some of the parents give their children candy, toys, money, and screen time as rewards for doing well at school, good behaviour at home, and completing their home reading.

Montessori classes allow students to choose what they would like to work on within set expectations. Sometimes parents get worried when their child focuses on math more than writing, or vice versa. Sometimes parents worry when their child cannot recite
many facts, such as times tables, and in an effort to help, they hire their child a tutor. Children learn at varying rates and Montessori classes are set up in three year age groupings. This allows a child in grade one who excels at math to be able to work on grade two or three math. This same child could have difficulty reading and be working at a delayed grade one level. The child works at his own pace and moves on when he is ready. The Montessori materials provide students with a concrete experience to the different subjects. Students do not spend time memorizing addition and multiplication facts; rather they manipulate materials and discover the answers for themselves. Most importantly, through exploration they discover why answers are what they are instead of merely memorizing and recalling facts without understanding the reasoning behind them.

For these reasons, extra tutoring outside of the Montessori classroom is not recommended. Parents and children were asked how many students are tutored or given extra homework at home, and how many of the parents understand what their child is talking about when he or she tells them that they have completed a Pink Language Box at school (See figure 2).

Figure 2. Parent and Student Views on how Montessori is Experienced at Home
The first data collection tool that I sent the parents had an extra question asking them if they would be likely to attend a parent education evening, and if so, it gave two different dates with an earlier and a later start time. I used that data to plan an event for the day and time that I could get the highest attendance. The parent education evening consisted of a PowerPoint presentation on key points of Montessori philosophy and what to expect in a Montessori class, a slide show of students working earlier in the day during work choice, a demonstration of the pink language boxes and the addition snake game, and a question and answer period. I provided wraps, vegetables with dip, California rolls, and an assortment of desserts and beverages for the parents. I also had a table with twelve Montessori themed magazines and explained to the parents that I was starting a lending library of Montessori resources. Nine parents out of the nineteen that chose to participate were able to attend, with others sending their regrets due to family commitments, children’s lessons, and work commitments. Our school principal is not trained in Montessori education, so she attended as well, but as she is not one of the participants, I did not include her in data collection. I sent an open ended data collection tool entitled Parent thoughts about Montessori education to the nine parents who attended the evening event. Seven of the small sample of eight respondents chose to answer whether they felt the school provided enough information about the Montessori program. Four parents answered no, and three answered yes. It is possible the parents who answered no did so because other than the information session prior to children entering kindergarten, there are no regularly held parent education events at my school (See figure 3).
I asked parents why they chose to enroll their child in Montessori school to ascertain their motivation and what they understood from the Montessori philosophy. The largest group (31%) chose Montessori because it was self paced and would give their children more choice in their learning. The second and third largest groups were tied with 19% of respondents stating that they had chosen Montessori school because they either had a naturally curious child, or their child had attended a Montessori preschool (See figure 4).

**Figure 3.** Parent Views on Whether or not the School Provides Enough Montessori Information
Parents who attended the parent evening indicated through their feedback form that they most appreciated seeing the Montessori materials demonstration. I explained the language materials and modelled how to do a Pink Language Box. I also showed parents how to set up the Addition Snake Game, add eight addends together with the materials, and then use the materials to check my answer. 29% of parents found this to be the most informative part of the evening event. 23% of parents also appreciated the slide show of their own children taken that day during work choice. They were able to see that students sit, stand, and lay freely around the classroom. Some students choose to work on their own, and others choose to work in pairs or groups. A child working on math could be working beside a child who is working on language. Parents saw that students move around a lot in order to get the materials they need, especially if they are working with the Golden Beads to do addition. Parents were also able to see that when a work choice was completed, students would choose another work choice and sometimes a new place to work. Only twelve percent of parents appreciated the new Montessori
lending library of magazines. I must note here that only two of the nine parents borrowed a magazine at the evening parent event, and that both of those parents were very impressed and chose this as one of their choices for the two most informative parts of the parent evening (See figure 5).

Figure 5. Parent Viewpoint: The Most Informative Part of the Parent Evening

I invited parents to four different Montessori Work Choice Observation sessions in which they could observe the class during work choice. Ten parents signed up however, due to illness, only eight parents attended over three different sessions. I sent an open ended data collection tool to the eight parents who attended (Appendix H). Of those eight parents, four responded to the six question data tool. When asked if they learned anything during the observation, responses were that every day must feel like a free choice day for the students to look forward to, one respondent learned how to use the Golden Beads and found them very interesting, and another commented that they learned students are given the choice of what they wish to do. Parents commented that the
children were very eager to show how to use materials, they liked the calmness of the classroom, children freely helped each other, and that students worked where they were physically comfortable. One parent noted that seeing children working in a Montessori environment had been very helpful and felt it was the best way for a parent to understand the Montessori philosophy.

I kept a Parent Question Log (Appendix A) because I found that parents from multiple families were asking repetitive questions that I felt they would not need to ask if they knew more about Montessori education. I kept the log for six weeks prior to starting my research and continued keeping track throughout my research. This data was quite interesting because prior to my research, parents were most often asking how their child was doing academically. Once I started the interventions, parents stopped asking about their children’s academics. Instead, they began asking more questions of a better quality, such as questions about borrowing magazines, what their children could do at home to help, letting me know that a particular magazine article was helping them with interacting with their children better, asking me if I had a book that they could borrow because they had read about it in one of the Montessori magazines, etc. Parents began to show interest and want to implement the Montessori philosophy in their homes (See figure 6).
Figure 6. Types of Questions Parents Asked the Teacher from Six Weeks Prior to the Research Beginning Until the End of Research

During the research I tried to reach more parents by using something they were already familiar with. I have a class blog that parents use, and I thought it could be a good way to get information out to working and busy parents. A blog can be accessed at any time, so I hoped that parents would take the time to do so. The way my blog is set up, I cannot tell who is accessing it, but I can tell how many people have viewed it on a particular day and what pages they looked at. I created two posts specifically addressing different parts of the Montessori curriculum, as opposed to the usual update of what the class has been working on and a few photos of the students with their work. The first post discussed ways parents could incorporate Montessori values into the home. This post had 20 visitors who viewed 86 pages in total that week. The second post briefly discussed the Land and Water Forms materials and then had an in depth explanation of what the Golden Beads and Stamp Game were and how they were used. This post had 41 visitors who viewed 82 pages in total over the week (See figure 7). This showed a marked increase in both visitors and pages viewed, as on typical weeks where no
information has been added, the blog has approximately 5 visitors and less than 10 pages are viewed.

![Class Blog](image)

**Figure 7.** Class Blog: Number of Visitors and How Many Pages Viewed

At the end of my research I gave the students the same data collection tool that they filled out at the beginning of my research (Appendix C). I gave the parents a similar tool to the Parent Knowledge of Education (Appendix B) that they filled out during the
start of the research. This was to gauge if there were any changes in their knowledge or perceptions as a result of the parent education events and tools that I put in place. This tool had a few differences: I removed the questions about students doing class jobs daily and if parents believed in following the child and letting their interests guide them, as parents initially answered 100% in favour, which is in line with Montessori philosophy. I removed the question about whether or not parents felt that the school provided enough parent education prior to this study, as I did not want the research interventions to influence their answers, and the question had already been answered on the first form. I removed the question that offered dates for a parent evening, as I had already hosted the evening. In addition, I added three questions: what events would parents most likely attend in the future, what had been the most helpful, and what form of parent education would parents be most likely to use in the future. From the data students submitted, I discovered that since the parent education began, there had been some positive changes. Fewer parents were assigning homework to their children, children were helping with chores more often and the number of those not expected to help had decreased. More children were pouring their own drinks and sometimes helped with peeling vegetables. The amount of children sometimes helping to write the grocery list increased and parents gave extrinsic rewards less often to their children. The amount of students who often spoke to their parents about school increased, while the number of those who never spoke about school decreased (See figure 8).
Parent viewpoints also changed over the course of the parent education events. Based on final survey answers, parent confidence in their knowledge about the Montessori philosophy increased, and the amount of parents who began to respect the child’s ability to make positive decisions increased. Parents tried to bring Montessori values into the home more often and fewer families said that they never did so. Parents gave their children more chances to learn to do things for themselves by allowing them to help peel vegetables, pour their own drinks, do chores, and write the grocery list. This was a positive result of the parent education provided. I was surprised to see that although parents were letting their children do more, they also increased the children’s extrinsic motivation by offering more rewards for helping at home (See figure 9).
Figure 9. Parent Viewpoints from the Beginning of the Research Compared to the End
At the beginning of the research children spoke with their parents less regularly about what they did at school. Students write a work reflection in their planners daily. This reflection is usually one sentence that tells parents one of the materials that their child chose to work on. Parents can then use this information as a conversation starter to find out more from their children. Only 45% of students at the beginning felt that their parent would know what they were talking about if they told them they had completed a Pink Language Box at school. When parents were asked at the beginning if they understood what a Pink Box and the Snake Game were, only 44% felt that they did. The student’s assessment of their parent’s knowledge at the beginning was surprisingly accurate. After the parent education events, parent knowledge of Pink Boxes and the Snake Game rose from 44% to 89%.

I was initially pleased that nineteen parents out of twenty two different families decided to take part in my research. However, due to dwindling participation, I feel it is important to include a graph on how many parents actually took part during various stages of research. A pattern developed of having a large sample of participants who wanted to attend or participate, a smaller sample that actually did, and an even smaller sample that would complete and return my data collection tools. This proved true for collecting baseline and final data, the parent evening, and the work choice observations (See figure 11). It is important to keep in mind, when looking at this data, that although 19 parents agreed to participate, I had varying degrees of participation throughout the study. The data would have been more accurate had all participants taken part at every step of the research by attending events and returning data collection tools. Overall, parents who participated learned about the Montessori curriculum and expressed an
interest for the events to continue. As shown in the data above, participating parents made positive gains to understanding the Montessori philosophy and bringing it into their homes more often instead of leaving it at the classroom door.

![Parent Participation](image)

*Figure 11. Parent Participation throughout the Research*
**Action Plan**

The results of the data collected during this research will help guide my future practice with parent education. Traditionally, my school has not provided Montessori parent education for families with students enrolled in the school. Parents who took part in my parent education events shared their appreciation with me for setting up the events and making an effort to bridge home and school learning. The data showed that the parents displayed differing levels of Montessori knowledge. Due to this, I believe there is a need as well as a demand for parent education to continue at my school.

Parent participation was a struggle. Many parents wanted to participate, however, due to scheduling conflicts some were unable to do so. Participants found the in-class work choice observation to be helpful to understand the Montessori environment and expectations. They also found it to be informative, as students proudly demonstrated how to use the Montessori materials. I believe hosting two of these sessions at different times of the year could benefit parents. Spreading the sessions out throughout the year could increase participation. Students would also benefit from these sessions, as their confidence would grow with teaching what they have learned.

To accommodate working parents at least one evening session should be held each year. Including a slide show of photographs of students working in the class would help to give these parents a better understanding of a fully functioning classroom, as they are often unable to attend the work choice observation during school hours.

The class blog seemed to be the best way to reach a large amount of parents, as they could access it at their leisure. Posting upcoming important dates with some pictures of students and their work had success in ensuring that parents would check the
blog to see if their child had been featured, and that they were aware of upcoming events. Posting an alternating feature on Montessori materials or philosophy at the same time as the class update was popular with the parents. The teacher could make these posts in advance and have them preset to post on specific dates. This would eliminate the potential of the teacher to fall behind with blog posts during busy times.

This research could benefit students by helping the school and home environments become more aligned. Parents began to let students take on more responsibility to contribute to the family through helping to prepare snacks, dinner, and cleaning up. More parents allowed their children to practice practical life skills by pouring their own drinks. This in turn builds student confidence while increasing their skills. Some parents, who prior to the parent education events, often anxiously asked how their children were progressing, stopped doing so. This could take some pressure off the children, better allowing them to enjoy learning and school. Students also began to talk more to their parents about what they were doing at school, and this increased communication had added benefits for both parents and students. With an increase in communication through parent education, and an increase in Montessori understanding, parents could become more satisfied with the program and keep their children enrolled longer.

Potential future action research would be to see if parent participation would increase if the events were spread throughout the year. Due to time commitments, some parents were unable to take part in all events that took place over the seven weeks. One parent suggested forming a book club that read Montessori books. This would require further investigation to see if there would be enough parent interest and commitment.
The six parents who borrowed magazines from the lending library gave positive feedback and most of them asked to borrow another magazine. Perhaps future action research could focus on after school social parent teas with a discussion focus of a magazine article. This would require less commitment than a book club and parents could drop in to sessions instead of having to commit to every session. Having the article posted outside of the classroom for parents to read in the hallway while they waited to pick up their child could increase the likelihood of parents finding time to read the article. This might boost participation over the long run, strengthen bonds between parents, increase social ties with students who may get more play dates once their parents have met, increase Montessori parent knowledge, and strengthen the partnership between the teacher and parents.

For my class needs, I will continue to reach out to parents by writing blog posts that teach about Montessori philosophy and materials. I will also invite parents in to observe the class during work choice. Having only these two events continue would give a teacher a way to reach all parents whether they were working, or otherwise unable to attend. Due to its simplicity, I will continue to lend Montessori magazines to parents, and plan to expand the collection to include books as well. In addition, I plan on holding a parent evening once a year, as parents found it informative and expressed their appreciation. If one is short on time, I recommend inviting parents in to observe during work choice, and hosting one parent evening as the least time consuming events that will result in immediate parent education. Setting up a class blog will help to reach a greater amount of parents, but it involves a larger time commitment to set up and maintain. In short, any parent education that a teacher can provide will contribute to greater parent
understanding and satisfaction with the Montessori program. A small amount of effort in
the area of parent education can yield great rewards to the parents, students, and teachers.
References


## Appendix A
### Parent Question Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Question, Comment, or Concern</th>
<th>Montessori Parent Education could have prevented this question</th>
<th>Question not related to Montessori Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B
Baseline – Parent Knowledge of Montessori Education

1. Choose the box most appropriate for your situation:
   □ I would like to continue, but prefer not to have my responses included in the study.
   □ I would like to continue, and I allow my responses to be included anonymously in the study.

2. I feel confident in my understanding of Montessori education and philosophy.
   □ Agree
   □ Neutral
   □ Disagree

3. Students have a seating plan and are expected to work at their own desks.
   □ Yes
   □ No

4. Students are encouraged to share materials such as pencil crayons and erasers.
   □ Yes
   □ No

5. The teacher ensures that students of the same grade work on the same material at the same time.
   □ Yes
   □ No

6. Lower elementary classes usually consist of three grades and the students stay with the same teacher for these years.
   □ Yes
   □ No

7. Students often make their own choice of what to work on, with the expectation that a variety of subject areas will be covered within a set amount of time such as one week.
   □ Yes
   □ No

8. Classrooms have multiple sets of most Montessori materials so that students do not have to wait for a turn.
   □ Yes
   □ No

9. Students are given a long period of uninterrupted time to do their work choices.
   □ Yes
   □ No

10. Students get prizes and rewards for completing their work and behaving well.
    □ Yes
    □ No

11. Students do their class jobs daily to keep the room clean and tidy.
    □ Yes
    □ No

12. I know what my child is talking about when he says that he played the snake game or finished a pink box at school.
    □ Yes
    □ No

13. I worry when my child is at a lower level or works slower than other students of the same grade.
    □ Sometimes
    □ Often
    □ Never

14. I believe in following the child by letting my child's interest guide his/her work choice at home and at school.
    □ Yes
    □ No

15. I bring the Montessori philosophy into our home as much as possible.
    □ Sometimes
    □ Often
    □ Never
16. My child attended Montessori preschool for at least one year.
   - Yes
   - No

17. My child's school offers parents enough information about the Montessori program prior to registration.
   - Agree
   - Neutral
   - Disagree

18. I believe children should be respected just as adults are, and allowed to make their own decisions providing they are safe.
   - Yes
   - Neutral
   - No

19. I have had the opportunity to visit a working Montessori classroom.
   - Yes
   - No

20. I give my child extra homework by providing math work sheets, writing practice, hiring a tutor, or taking my child to Kumon for extra lessons.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

21. I expect my child to help with family work such as washing dishes, feeding a pet, making lunches, folding laundry, or setting the table.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

22. I give my child stickers, candy, money, screen time, or other rewards for behaving, helping out, or doing well at school.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

23. I allow my child to pour his/her own drinks from the fridge.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

24. My child helps out at home by peeling carrots or potatoes.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

25. My child helps out at home and practices writing by making the grocery list.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never
Appendix C
Student Attitude Scale

Viewpoints from a Montessori Student

1. I talk with my parent about what I did at school.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

2. My parent understands what the Pink Language Boxes are and how they are used.
   - Yes
   - No

3. I am expected to do chores at home such as wash dishes, sweep the floor, fold clothes, or set the table.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

4. I pour my own drinks from the fridge.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

5. I help at home by peeling carrots and potatoes.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

6. My parent gives me extra math work to do at home.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

7. I have a tutor or go to a math class such as Kumon.
   - Yes
   - No

8. My parent has me write the grocery list at home.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never

9. My parent gives me stickers, candy, money, screen time, or other rewards for helping out at home or doing well on my report card.
   - Sometimes
   - Often
   - Never


## Appendix D

Mrs. Irving’s Montessori Lending Library Sign-Out Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Borrower</th>
<th>Date Out</th>
<th>Date In</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tomorrow’s Child September 2011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tomorrow’s Child January 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tomorrow’s Child November 2012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tomorrow’s Child April 2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Montessori Life Summer 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Montessori Life Summer 2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Montessori Life Fall 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Montessori Life Winter 2015 - 2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Montessori Life Spring 2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tomorrow’s Child April 2012 – copy1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tomorrow’s Child April 2012 – copy 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M: the folios Being a Montessori Parent Number 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Dii

Montessori Magazine Lending Library
Appendix E

Parent Evening Power Point Slides

How Montessori Improves Student Learning
April Malley, Sarah Irving, and Neysa Matt
EDUC 6210: Analysis of Contemporary Issues in Education and Montessori
July 10, 2016

Introduction
Is current student learning in our community a flame being stoked or smothered?

Meeting the Needs of All Students
• Montessori education is ideal for at risk students such as English Language Learners, those with dyslexia, ADHD, and other language disorders.
• The didactic materials aid children in understanding concepts before they are able to move on to abstraction, hold children's interest, and improve fine motor skills.
• "The environment promotes encouragement to try with a de-emphasis on failure" (Pickering & Barnett, 2010).
• Montessori education maintains the joy of learning and lowers anxiety for children with learning difficulties.

Student Assessment
• Observation:
  • "The Montessori teacher watches each child carefully and uses a level of structure... that he will that the child is ready for and adjust it as the child changes" (Santayana, 2005, p.252).
• Performance Assessments:
  • Determination of knowledge, "show us what you know" method, meaningful structure of learning
• Portfolio:
  • Students keep a notebook at the end of the year:
  • Demonstrates improvement in rate and mastery of activities (Robbe, 2000)

3 Year Age Groupings
• Educational and social benefits: all being in the same class for multiple years.
• Children take on roles as leaders and masters as they move through the classroom.
• "allows each child to find his or her own pace without feeling overwhelmed or rushed in order to progress" (Michael Cade Montessori Company, 2013).
• Students focus on cooperation instead of competition.

References

How Montessori Improves Student Learning
April Malley, Sarah Irving, and Neysa Matt
EDUC 6210: Analysis of Contemporary Issues in Education and Montessori
July 10, 2016

Introduction
Is current student learning in our community a flame being stoked or smothered?

Meeting the Needs of All Students
• Montessori education is ideal for at risk students such as English Language Learners, those with dyslexia, ADHD, and other language disorders.
• The didactic materials aid children in understanding concepts before they are able to move on to abstraction, hold children's interest, and improve fine motor skills.
• "The environment promotes encouragement to try with a de-emphasis on failure" (Pickering & Barnett, 2010).
• Montessori education maintains the joy of learning and lowers anxiety for children with learning difficulties.

Student Assessment
• Observation:
  • "The Montessori teacher watches each child carefully and uses a level of structure... that he will that the child is ready for and adjust it as the child changes" (Santayana, 2005, p.252).
• Performance Assessments:
  • Determination of knowledge, "show us what you know" method, meaningful structure of learning
• Portfolio:
  • Students keep a notebook at the end of the year:
  • Demonstrates improvement in rate and mastery of activities (Robbe, 2000)

3 Year Age Groupings
• Educational and social benefits: all being in the same class for multiple years.
• Children take on roles as leaders and masters as they move through the classroom.
• "allows each child to find his or her own pace without feeling overwhelmed or rushed in order to progress" (Michael Cade Montessori Company, 2013).
• Students focus on cooperation instead of competition.

References
Appendix F

Semi Structured Discussion

Parent Thoughts About Montessori Education

Completion of this form is voluntary and anonymous.

IMPORTANT: To maintain anonymity, I need a way to match your surveys without knowing who filled them out. Please type in the first 3 letters of your mother's first name and the year of her birth. For example, if your mother's name is Evelyn and she was born in 1945, you would type EVE45 below.

1. Please state if you freely choose to participate by answering the following questions.
   - Yes
   - No

2. In your opinion, what are three of the most important elements that would indicate that you were in a Montessori class and not a Neighbourhood or Traditional Class?
   - Montessori materials on shelves in the room
   - Children sitting, standing, or lying where they would like (not sitting at assigned desks)
   - Children being expected to take an active role in problem solving with each other
   - Students having class jobs that help them practice practical life skills
   - Students being given long periods of time when they choose what to work on
   - Shared materials, including pencils, scissors, and colouring materials
   - Encourage short movement breaks

3. What are some of the things you do at home to support your child's academic and social growth?

4. What are two reasons that influenced you to choose a Montessori Elementary school for your child? Please choose the two that were most important to your decision.
   - I liked that my child would use Montessori materials to learn instead of text books or work books.
   - My friend or family member had a child in Montessori school and she recommended it to me.
   - My child was in Montessori preschool and it was a good fit for his/her learning style.
   - I like the Great Stories and the Montessori Curriculum.
   - My child has a lot of energy and I thought Montessori would be a better fit since she would be able to move around.
   - My child is very curious and driven to find answers, so I thought Montessori would be a good fit.
   - It was the closest elementary school to my home.
   - I wanted me child to be able to have more choice in how he/she spent the day and be able to work at his/her own pace.

5. Does the school provide enough information to you about the Montessori program? (If not, what would you like to know more about?)
   
   Your answer

6. Please choose two elements from the Montessori Parent Education Evening that you found to be the most informative, interesting, or helpful to you.
   - The slide show presentation about Montessori Education
Appendix G

Blog Post on Montessori Philosophy

Bringing Montessori Philosophy into Your Home

FEBRUARY 2, 2017

At school, the students of division 17 are taught to care for their environment and help out by doing a class job that changes weekly. Some of the jobs include: watering the plants, sharpening pencils, returning marked work to students’ individual totes, sweeping the floor, hunting for erasers, straightening out the class library, dusting, and washing tables. These real world skills help students gain confidence and independence as they realize that they are valued contributing members of the class.

At home, you can support your Montessori child by taking the time to teach him/her how to do tasks that he/she has shown an interest in. Teaching your child how to safely and sanitarily wash and peel carrots will take an initial investment of time from you to demonstrate the proper method to do it.

Teaching your child to do a task should be done in a caring and calm manner. Children should not feel rushed, so don’t teach them to peel vegetables when you only have 45 minutes to finish preparing dinner, eat, and rush out to a piano lesson. Please don’t expect perfection. Children learn through trial and error. Mistakes help us learn even more so than doing something right by chance the first time. Praise your child’s efforts and encourage him / her to keep trying if needed.
Taking 10 or 15 minutes to demonstrate how to wash, prepare a work space, peel carrots, and clean up will be rewarding in many ways. Many children enjoy helping to make snacks or dinner, gain confidence in doing such an adult task, and have increased self-worth through being a contributing member of the family. Also, as an added side benefit, you will gain a wonderful helper in the kitchen while creating memories that your child will carry with him/her well into adulthood. Also, once you have a confident helper, it will make household chores go faster, leaving more time for you and your child to do even more fun activities together!

Tasks that grade 1, 2, and 3 students should be capable of doing at home (once being given instructions) are: folding laundry, loading and unloading the dish washer (provide a small stool so children can put the dishes away in higher cupboards), writing the grocery list, peeling vegetables, making sandwiches, setting the table, feeding pets, and watering plants. Give your child some options and let him/her choose which skill he/she would like to learn.
Appendix H

Work Choice Observation Parent Feedback Tool

Montessori Classroom Observation

Thank you for taking the time to observe us during Work Choice. Completion of this feedback form is completely voluntary and you may quit at any time.

Observation Date:

[Image of Montessori classroom observation scene]

1. Please choose the box most appropriate for your situation:
   - [ ] I would like to continue, but prefer not to have my responses included in the study.
   - [ ] I would like to continue, and allow my responses to be included anonymously in the study.

2. In your opinion, what are the three most important elements that would indicate that you were in a Montessori class and not a neighbourhood or traditional class?

3. What are some of the things you do at home to support your child's development while following Montessori philosophy?

4. Do you have any suggestions for ways the school could help parents become more familiar with Montessori philosophy?

5. Do you have any questions or comments in relation to today's observation?

[Google Forms link]
Appendix I

Blog Post on Montessori Materials

Golden Beads and the Stamp Game

FEBRUARY 19, 2017

Through parent responses during my research, some parents have asked for more information about Montessori materials. Two math materials that are used quite a bit are the Golden Beads and the Stamp Game.

The Golden Bead Material is used to give a hands-on, concrete introduction to the decimal system. Students learn place value by manipulating Unit beads (a single bead), Ten Bars (10 unit beads held together on a wire bar), Hundred Squares (100 units held together on wire bars), and Thousand Cubes (1,000 unit beads held together on wire bars, another form of this is a wooden cube corresponding to the size of 1,000 unit beads with circles painted to represent beads – it’s less costly than the bead version). In this way, students are given a concrete example of what 1, 10, 100, and 1,000 are. They can see the amount of units quickly growing as the place values change.
If your child says that he is playing the “Bring Me Game”, then the teacher is asking him to bring her a quantity of beads, such as 5,273. He will bring 5 Thousand Cubes, 2 Hundred Squares, 7 Ten Bars, and 3 units on a tray to the teacher, and read out the quantity that he has brought “five thousand, two hundred, seventy three” before returning the materials and bringing another quantity over.

Once the Bring Me Game has been mastered, your child will move on to addition with the Golden Beads with questions such as 3,271 + 4,125. Children are generally fascinated with big numbers and once they know place value, there is no need to restrict them to simple addition to twenty. For this reason, Montessori philosophy has young students adding to 9,999 at an early age. Students will set up the first addend (quantity to be added) with the beads, and then set up the second addend directly below it. Once everything is properly aligned (thousands above thousands, hand space, hundreds above hundreds, hand space, etc.) they will add the two addends together to find the sum. This material is also used for subtraction, multiplication, and division. After the Golden Bead Material has been mastered, another material that is used a lot is the Stamp Game. This game was originally used with postage stamps. Now, the material consists of colour coded wooden squares the size of postage stamps, small skittles that look like miniature bowling pins, and flat circles. The stamps represent the different place values and the circles, which are called ‘place holders’, represent zero. Students will use the Stamp Game for one concept, go off and use a different material, then return at a later date to the Stamp Game for a different concept. This is why your child might have used the Stamp Game in grade two and is still using it in grade three. It is used to teach all four operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

Both the Golden Beads and the Stamp Game are used to give the student a thorough understanding of place value. Students see concretely why it is that we need to ‘borrow’ during dynamic subtraction when one cannot take 9 away from 6. They see that in the case of 5436 - 3429, the tens can lend some to the units and then there will be enough beads or stamps to take 9 away from 6 (once it has become 16). Similarly the student will see why we ‘carry the one’
during dynamic addition with $3468+2747$. Eight plus seven equals fifteen, so five unit beads or stamps would remain in the unit column, while the extra ten would become one ten bar or one ten stamp in the tens column.

Multiplication is displayed in this visual manner as well allowing the student to truly understand which number is the multiplier and which is the multiplicand. Division is visually displayed with equal sharing to the people (wooden skittles) and any that are left over, or remaining, become the remainder in the quotient. It is important to note that students are taught the correct mathematical terms from the beginning. Answers are not called answers, but sums, differences, products, and quotients, depending on whether the child is adding, subtracting, multiplying, or dividing. This helps to build the child’s vocabulary, solidify their understanding, and makes problem solving much easier when they are asked to find the product of 7 and 4 in a future word problem, as they will know just what ‘product’ means and know that they are expected to multiply the two numbers together. Both of these materials take quite a bit of time to set up, but the time invested is well worth it for students to understand why it is that they do what they do with numbers when adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. Maria Montessori was much more concerned with the process of learning and understanding what had been taught, rather than coming to an answer without understanding or being able to explain how one had arrived at it.
# Appendix J

## Final Form – Parent Knowledge of Montessori Education

### Parent Knowledge of Montessori - Final Form

Most of these questions will be familiar to you. I will be matching your responses to our responses from the first form, before any parent education events had taken place, to see if there have been any changes.

*IMPORTANT* To maintain anonymity, I need a way to match this final survey to the first survey that you took at the beginning of my research. Please type in the first 3 letters of your mother's first name and the year of her birth. For example, if your mother's name is Evelyn and she was born in 1943, you would type EVE43 below.

**Your answer:**

1. Choose the box most appropriate for your situation:
   - [ ] I would like to continue, but prefer not to have my responses included in the study.
   - [ ] I would like to continue, and I allow my responses to be included anonymously in the study.

2. I feel confident in my understanding of Montessori education and philosophy:
   - [ ] Agree
   - [ ] Neutral
   - [ ] Disagree

3. Students have a seating plan and are expected to work at their own desks.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

4. Students are encouraged to share materials such as pencil crayons and erasers.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

5. The teacher ensures that students of the same grade work on the same material at the same time.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

6. Lower elementary classes usually consist of three grades and students stay with the same teacher for three years.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

7. Students often make their own choice of what to work on, with the expectation that a variety of subject areas will be covered within a set amount of time such as one week.
   - [ ] Yes

8. Classrooms have multiple sets of most Montessori materials so that students do not have to wait for a turn.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

9. Students are given a long period of uninterrupted time to do their work choices.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

10. Students get prizes and rewards for completing their work and behaving well.
    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] No

11. I know what my child is talking about when he says that he played the Snake Game or finished a Pink Box at school.
    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] No

12. I worry when my child is at a lower level or works slower than other students of the same grade
    - [ ] Sometimes
    - [ ] Often

13. I bring the Montessori philosophy into our home as much as possible.
    - [ ] Never
    - [ ] Occasionally
    - [ ] Regularly

14. I believe children should be respected just as adults are, and allowed to make their own decisions providing they are safe.
    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] Neutral
    - [ ] No

15. I have had the opportunity to visit a working Montessori classroom.
    - [ ] Yes
    - [ ] No

16. I give my child extra homework by providing math work sheets, writing practice, hiring a tutor, or taking my child to Kumon for extra lessons.
    - [ ] Sometimes

---
17. I expect my child to help with family work such as washing dishes, feeding a pet, making lunches, folding laundry, or setting the table.
- Often
- Sometimes
- Never

18. I give my child stickers, candy, money, screen time, or other rewards for behaving, helping out, or doing well at school.
- Sometimes
- Often
- Never

19. I allow my child to pour his/her own drinks from the fridge.
- Sometimes
- Often
- Never

20. My child helps out at home by peeling carrots or potatoes.
- Sometimes
- Often
- Never

21. My child helps out at home and practices writing by making the grocery list.
- Sometimes
- Often
- Never

22. In future, I would be most likely to attend an evening parent education event rather than an event that took place during school hours.
- Agree
- Disagree

23. What two forms of parent education did you find the most helpful?
- Parent Education Evening (slide show, Montessori material presentation, Question and Answer Period)
- Work choice observation during school hours
- Class blog with a focus on Montessori philosophy
- Class blog with a focus on Montessori materials
- Montessori lending library with books and magazines that you can borrow

24. What three forms of parent education would you be most likely to use in future if they were offered?
- Parent Education Evening (slide show, Montessori material presentation, Question and Answer Period)

25. Do you have any comments or suggestions about your experience with any of the Parent Education events or tools that have been in place since January?

Your answer

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

This form was created inside of St. Catherine University. Report Abuse - Terms of Service - Additional Terms
Appendix K

Assent Form

December 13, 2016

Dear Parents,

In addition to being your child’s grade one, two, or three Montessori teacher; I am a St. Catherine University student pursuing a Masters of Education. As a capstone to my program, I need to complete an Action Research project. I am going to study Montessori Parent Education in order to find out the most beneficial ways to share information about Montessori education and philosophy with parents. As we are all busy with our daily lives, I am hoping to discover which format of education can be respectful of time, practical, and helpful to all involved.

In the coming weeks, I will be giving the students two feedback forms to let me know in what ways (if any) the Montessori philosophy is used at home. Students will answer the form once at the beginning of my research, and again six weeks later at the end of my research. This will be a regular part of my Cultural Studies lessons. All students will participate as members of the class. In order to understand the outcomes, I plan to analyze the results of this activity to determine if my parent education events are having any impact on increasing parent awareness of Montessori philosophy. The purpose of this letter is to notify you of this research and to allow you the opportunity to exclude your child’s data from my study.

If you decide you want your child’s data to be in my study, you don’t need to do anything at this point.

If you decide you do NOT want your child’s data included in my study, please note that on this form below and return it by Friday, December 16, 2016. Note that your child will still participate in the activity but his/her data will not be included in my analysis.

In order to help you make an informed decision, please note the following:

- I am working with a faculty member at St. Kate’s and an advisor to complete this particular project.
- It is hoped that through your participation, researchers will learn more about how they can improve Montessori parent education at Renfrew Elementary and many other schools. Students may benefit by gaining their family’s understanding of how they are learning at school. Participants are not expected to experience
significant personal benefits from participating, other than feeling good about having their voices heard, and contributing to this research which could lead to their families being more knowledgeable about Montessori education.

- Risks are minimal for involvement in this study. However, students may feel unsure when asked to answer some questions about Montessori philosophy. Students should feel free to make their best guess or skip questions that they are uncomfortable answering.

- 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 students, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular student. Other people will not know if your child is in my study.

- The final report of my study will be electronically available online at the St. Catherine University library. The goal of sharing my research study is to help other teachers who are also trying to improve their teaching.

- There is no penalty for not having your child’s data involved in this study, and I will simply delete his or her responses from my data set.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me in person or through e-mail at sirving@vsb.bc.ca. You may ask questions now, or if you have any questions later, you can ask me, or my advisor Amanda Perna, amperna@stkate.edu, who will be happy to answer them. If you have 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.

_______________________________                           ____________________________
Sarah Irving                              Date

OPT OUT: Parents, in order to exclude your child’s data from the study, please sign and return by Friday, December 16, 2016.

I do NOT want my child’s data to be included in this study.

_______________________________                           ____________________________
Signature of Parent                              Date
Appendix L

Active Consent Form

Dear Families of Division 17,

As 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 a grade 1/2/3 Montessori teacher of students at Renfrew Elementary, I have chosen to learn about Montessori Parent Education because I believe that improving parent understanding about Montessori philosophy will be beneficial to parents and students. I am working with a faculty member at St. Catherine University 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 parents or students, or any references that would make it possible to identify outcomes connected to a particular family. All data collected will be anonymous. 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. Catherine University. 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.

Risks are minimal for involvement in this study. However, you may feel unsure when asked to answer some questions about Montessori philosophy. You should feel free to make your best guess or skip questions that you are uncomfortable answering. It is hoped that through your participation, researchers will learn more about how they can improve Montessori parent education at Renfrew Elementary and many other schools. Students may benefit by gaining their families understanding of how they are learning at school. Participants are not expected to experience significant personal benefits from participating, other than feeling good about having their voices heard, gaining knowledge about Montessori philosophy, and contributing to this research.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete a form on Parent Knowledge of Montessori Education at the beginning of the research and six weeks later at the end of the research to ascertain if any knowledge has been gained. The questions will be answered anonymously either on-line or on paper and will take approximately five minutes to answer. All parents, regardless of participation, will be invited to book an observation time during work choice (only a few parents at a time). The observation is...
estimated to last 45 – 60 minutes and parents will be given a feedback form at the end which they may voluntarily fill out. Giving feedback will take approximately five minutes.

**This study is voluntary. If you decide you do want to be a participant and/or have your data (Parent Knowledge of Education, and Montessori Classroom Observation) included in my study, you need to check the appropriate boxes, sign this form, and return it by Friday, December 16, 2016.** If at any time you decide you do not want to continue participation and/or allow your data to be included in the study, you can notify me and I will remove included data to the best of my ability. If you decide you do not want to participate and/or have your data included in my study, you do not need to do anything. There is no penalty for not participating or having your data involved in the study.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me in person or through e-mail sirving@vsb.bc.ca. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, you can ask me or 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, 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.

**Opt In**

Please check *all* that apply. I DO want to:

☐ participate in this study.
☐ have my data included in this study.

__________________________  ______________________  __________
Signature of Participant in Research  Printed Name  Date

__________________________  ______________________  __________
Signature of Researcher  Printed Name  Date

Please respond by Friday, December 16, 2016.