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Montessori Family Education

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Abstract

Montessori family education is a stepping stone in forming a bridge between school and home. This action research is focused on increasing familial attendance in Montessori education classes. Using quantitative and qualitative research methods are important tools in discovering the needs of the school community. Attendance, Likert scales and feedback questionnaires were useful tools in reaching out to the familial community. Implementing the changes based on the research results showed a drastic increase in attendance. With families leading busy lives, the school meeting them half way showed positive quantitative and qualitative results. This study had a maximum of 28 families participating. Data was collected pre-and post-Montessori education classes. A total of three family education classes were used for this action research. The second and third family education classes were formed using the results of the Likert scales and feedback questionnaire. The initial family education class was in the format originally used at the school. With each progressing family education class, attendance increased as did familial participation. Families felt at ease and comfortable participating in the discussion

Keywords: family education, education, children, Montessori, surveys, feedback

Parenting or caregiving is the one job in the world where one is not required to have any experience nor expected to prove they are capable. The first instinct in caring for children is survival. The first few years of a child's life are often associated with survival and meeting the child's basic needs with love and a growing bond between adult and child. The child eventually starts exploring the world around them separating from their caregiver in the process. Before children enter the elementary years, school is often considered a form of childcare instead of a formal education. Montessori education is a method of formal education starting from birth, understanding and knowledge of this method is required for an adult to implement this in their life for their child. Maria Montessori (2017) states, 'Unfortunately, there are untrained nannies just as there are well-meaning parents without a real knowledge of children' (p.48). Without formal knowledge and experience (which the adult can remember), how is a caregiver able to meet the needs of the child? One solution to this problem is family education.

In the city of Vancouver, where child care is expensive, families often opt to have one adult stay at home instead of working to pay for child care. This often leaves a single adult at home caring for the children singlehandedly. The cost of hiring a babysitter and finding a babysitter to suit one's schedule and needs is often difficult, leaving families with no choice but unable to commit to events outside the home. Our school is located in a beautiful community on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. This community has many young families who live near their extended families. The families within the school are supportive and caring of each other and they often organize social events amongst themselves. The children enjoy a beautiful playground overlooking a fishing harbor and inlet where large cargo ships pass by. The children enjoy watching the eagles, crows and seagulls in the trees surrounding their

outdoor play area. What stands out about this school community is that the tight-knit community is what makes the school thrive.

At the beginning of the school year, all families are given a school calendar with all dates and holidays marked for their convenience. The main purpose of this calendar is to help families plan ahead and increase their participation for school events, including Montessori family education. While this did work for some families, for others it was also an option to weigh out what they could prioritize with child care and days off from work. Families try to make an effort to organize child care amongst themselves but with few options within the community, this too can prove challenging. For each family education class, staff would post a sign-up sheet one week prior to the event, with each child's name for them to sign. The idea behind putting each child's name on the list was to hold each caregiver accountable for their attendance in a discreet way. This did not influence the caregivers and for every 'parent evening' (as it was previously titled), two days prior, school staff would be calling and requesting caregivers to sign up.

Would offering the school calendar before the end of the school year for the following year have an impact? Would providing child care within the school help support families?

Research has shown familial involvement increases a child's desire to attend school. Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011) state, 'repeated evidence has confirmed that the most accurate predictor of student achievement is the extent to which the family is involved in the child's education' (p.1205). While families in our school are involved in the family community, there lacked an involvement in the academic community of the school. What motivates families to attend Montessori education evenings with ease? What is interesting to families? Do they want to hear about Montessori philosophy? Are they interested in learning

about the materials? How can we modify the current model? Can we increase attendance for Montessori family education classes using quantitative and qualitative measures?

Literature Review

The importance of family influence on a child's life starts in utero. Familial influence begins with the newborn observing every action of the caregiver in the home. Caregiver influence is related to the family's knowledge of a child's development, the more a family is aware of the child's needs during each period of development, the more positive and productive influence the family will have on the child. However, in most cases, the knowledge families have of child development is limited to the knowledge of a caregiver's personal experience from childhood, books or from their experience within a family. Herein, lies the importance of family education. Family education serves as a refresher and, in many cases, an introduction to child development. Often times, families with children attending Montessori schools enter the school with little to no knowledge about Montessori and what kind of education and philosophy their child is adopting. Montessori schools are located worldwide and each school is dealing with a different challenge in reaching out to their local community for family education. Analyzing, observing and collecting quantitative and qualitative data gives each school an adequate starting point in how to best meet the needs of families within Montessori school communities.

Montessori education is, even today, considered a 'radical' form of education. Lillard (2017) states,

'so radical were Montessori's educational discoveries about children and their ability to form their own selves that misconceptions about these schools established in her name abounded. Even to this day, s regularly have a mistaken perception that Montessori

schools are places where children are left to their own devices; free to do whatever they like, unable to develop self-control and discipline.’ (pg.xiv)

Maria Montessori’s observations on child development were radical in thought but were true to the child. Maria Montessori (2017) stated, “I am talking revolution! But then I have been working with children for many years and they have taught me to revolt against the misguided obsolete ideas that many families still believe in’ (p.39). Montessori family education is vital, within a Montessori school, in changing obsolete ideas so families are better able to understand and follow their children on their path in life. Montessori education may work for every child, however logistics for family education do not work for every family. Discovering the needs of the school community enables the school to reach out to the majority of the families. This review of the literature will begin with the public knowledge of Montessori education, the importance of attending family education classes, the importance of effective communication, and strategies to encourage caregivers to attend family education classes.

The Public Knowledge of Montessori Education

According to the North American Montessori Teacher Association, ‘it is estimated there are 4,500 Montessori schools in the United States and 20,000 schools worldwide’ (n.d.). Many families have heard positive feedback about Montessori education, but few have researched the Montessori philosophy or method in depth. Murray (2012) discusses the public knowledge of Montessori education: “two-thirds of survey participants (1,520 participants) said that they had ‘heard the term Montessori education” (p. 2). Murray (2012) continues, “this study supports the contention and provides strong evidence for the need to educate the public regarding several aspects of Montessori education. This is particularly true for those aspects of Montessori education that are uniquely relative to other educational approaches” (p. 21). Given the

opportunity, caregivers attending Montessori family education would be exposing themselves to a wealth of knowledge regarding child development and educational philosophy.

The Importance of Attending Family Education Classes

Montessori education, previously considered an alternative method of teaching, is becoming more mainstream. Understanding Montessori education and philosophy helps the family understand what the child is doing at school and helps the caregiver implement Montessori principles in their home. Epstein and Sheldon (2002), agree with Lillard and Else-Quest (2006) stating, “families are now being recognized as an important influence” (p. 309). Lillard and Else-Quest (2006) stated, “normally parental influence (both genetic and environmental) dominates over influences such as current or past school and day-care environments” (p. 1894). Family education is the key factor in connecting families to their child’s Montessori school environment. Khajehpour and Ghazvini (2011) stated, “repeated evidence has confirmed that the most accurate predictor of student achievement is the extent to which the family is involved in the child’s education” (p. 1205). Galindo and Sheldon (2012) state, “not only does each context uniquely influence child development and learning, but the nature and quality of interactions among parents, teachers, and children have consequences for a variety of outcomes” (p. 90). Caregivers educated in the importance of understanding child development have a greater impact on their child’s life. The child reaps the greatest benefit from familial involvement within a school. Thus, the teacher can leave a positive impact on the child and receptive families. Caregiver and teacher involvement is an important connection from early childhood for the child. Families merely choosing to send their children to Montessori schools is not enough to show long-term outcomes. Caregivers who choose Montessori education need to focus on instilling Montessori methods in the home, so the strides made at school are not

nullified. Montessori family education classes form a bridge between the school and home communities within a school.

The Importance of Effective Communication

Families and schools are linked through various forms of communication.

Communication is key in increasing familial involvement within a school (Biscaglia, 2014, Graham- Clay, n.d., Harisson, 2014, Hlavaty, 2015, Irving, 2017, Seril, 2015, & Walton 2016). In order to create a binding relationship between school and home, effective communication is essential. The school relies on receptive families to create a school community. Graham- Clay (n.d.), states “teachers strive to establish partnerships with parents to support student learning. Strong communication is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of community between home and school. In these changing times, teachers must continue to develop and expand their skills to maximize effective communication with parents” (p. 117). The teacher is the vital link to increasing the personal experience between school and home (Biscaglia, 2014, Graham-Clay, n.d., Irving, 2017, Isabelo, 2016, Seril, 2015, & Walton, 2016). Both Seril (2015) and Graham-Clay (n.d.) discuss the use of various forms of communication between school and families. Graham-Clary (n.d.) elaborates,

One-way communication occurs when teachers seek to inform parents about events, activities, or student progress through a variety of sources, such as an introductory letter at the beginning of the school year, classroom or school newsletters, report cards, communication books, radio announcements school websites, and so on. Two-way communication involves interactive dialogue between teachers and parents.

Conversations may occur during telephone calls, home visits, parent-teacher conferences,

open houses, and various school-based community activities. Teachers should actively incorporate both strategies to maximize sharing information with parents (p. 118).

The Community

Motivational theory has shown that people are motivated when driven to satisfy their primary needs (Schunk, 2012). Using drive theory as a motivator, providing food during a family education class will fulfil a primary need. Humans are social beings longing to be part of a community. This community is what drives them to satisfy their needs. The family, caregivers, child and school together form a community. The Aspen Institute (2006) states, 'Community schools that address the needs of community residents and use school facilities for a wide range of purposes will not only prepare children for adulthood but also increase civic participation and improve community life' (p. 331).

John Atkinson's expectancy-value theory depends on the individual's expectation of obtaining a valuable outcome. If the outcome isn't valued or isn't obtainable, the individual will not be motivated (Schunk, 2012).

The basic idea of this (motivational theory) and other expectancy-value theories is that behavior depends on one's expectancy of attaining a particular outcome (e.g., goal, reinforcer) as a result of performing given behaviours and on how much one values that outcome. People judge the likelihood of attaining various outcomes. They are not motivated to attempt the impossible, so they do not pursue outcomes perceived as unattainable. Even a positive outcome expectation does not produce action if the outcome is not valued. An attractive outcome, coupled with the belief that it is attainable, motivates people to act. Atkinson postulated that achievement behaviours represent a conflict (p. 359).

The valuable outcome of attending a family education class is the caregiver will be better able to understand their child and will feel more integrated into their child's life and learning process. This understanding from the caregiver will give the child more consistency and stability in their life. Conflicting expectations between school and home create confusion in a child's life.

Reasons Why Caregivers Do Not Attend Family Education Classes.

When caregivers and families are not a part of the community, this sense of community falls apart leaving the child and school separate with lesser influence on the child. Holmes (2014) describes family education classes rely on participation to be effective. Holmes (2014) elaborates, analyzing cultural demographics is vital to forming a culturally comfortable setting. In a school with non-native English speakers or non-English speakers, providing a translator is essential to give caregivers the tools to understand the content. Language barriers cause a disconnect between and within communities. Building a sense of community is a challenge to teachers in our increasingly diverse schools. Classrooms are not only becoming more culturally and racially varied, but in the absence of teacher intervention, students show a marked preference for same ethnicity peers (Bellmore, A., Nishina, A., Witkow, M., Graham, S., & Juvonen, J. (2007).

In cultures where caregivers are single-handedly raising children without any outside child care, providing child care during a family education class proves necessary (Holmes, 2014). Families who work during the day look forward to spending time with their families in the evenings. Education classes offered in the evenings infringe on family dinners and quality time. Diverse setting requires community building (Holmes, 2014).

Increasing caregiver attendance at family education evenings

Rule and Kyle (2008) describe their experience with community building,

We found that incorporating community-building strategies that emphasized creating a welcoming school and classroom climate; that fostered helpful faculty connections; that encouraged positive classroom interaction; and that promoted on-going and open teacher/communication resulted in a school that worked together to meet the needs of each student. (p. 295)

Strategies for increasing attendance can be gathered with a variety of information gathering tools. Questionnaires inclusive of all languages within the school community help families feel welcome into a school community (Epstein, 2002). These questionnaires can be used to gather information on familial knowledge of Montessori education. The questionnaire would ask caregivers to circle from a set of choices on what topics would be of interest to them. Involving caregivers in the decision making of the format of the family education classes would possibly increase attendance. (Epstein, 2002). According to authors Biscaglia (2014), Ellis (2017), Graham-Clay (n.d.), Harrison (2014), Hvalaty (2015), Irving (2017), Murray (2012), Seril (2015), and Walton (2016), a questionnaire is a very important tool to identify problems and provide important information for interventions.

Montessori family education is important to a school community to create a stable bridge between the school and home environment. In a multi-cultural community, it is important to give caregivers platforms and a voice to communicate their feedback to a school. In a multi-cultural society, it is vital to be inclusive of all members of the community. The school is a small community which can be cohesive or separate. When communication is, clear and inclusive, caregivers are motivated to gather as a community to attend family education classes. Attending these classes will help caregivers understand Montessori philosophy and education, and will be able to have a greater positive influence on their children at home.

Surveys and questionnaire's in a variety of languages show the inclusiveness of a school community. Research has shown communication is key in building strong school communities. School, family and community partnerships are the main characters in a strong school community (Epstein, 2002). These three main characters working together are what make the whole survive successfully.

Methodology

Surveys come in a variety of forms and are useful in collecting data from a larger school community. They are efficient and provide the school with anonymous data which can be easily used to implement changes going forward. The use of survey tools gives both the families and school a voice and a subtle way of working together without infringing on a family's personal time. The results are quick and efficient to collate and are a professional means of utilizing familial input within a school community. For this action research, four types of data tools were used to collect a variety of information ranging in quantitative and qualitative data. Wilder Institute (2009) states, 'quantitative data is information you collect in numerical form, such as rating scales or documented frequency or specific behaviors' (p. 2). Analyzing quantitative data is a meticulous process requiring organized, complete and accurate information. The surveys for Montessori family education were, for the most part, quantitative. There were a few questions which were qualitative. Wilder institute (2009) continues, 'qualitative data is non-numerical information, such as responses gathered through interviews, observations, focus groups, written documents or journals, or open-ended survey questions' (p.5). For the purpose of this action research, open-ended questions were used to gather qualitative responses from families. Open-ended questions give the participant freedom to use their voice and to state their opinion regarding the topic in question.

Our preschool has a group of 32 caregivers from 28 families. The preschool serves children aged three through kindergarten. Upon completion of Montessori kindergarten, a few children continue in the adjacent elementary program but most move on to other non- Montessori school. Caregivers in the elementary program tend to be more vocal in their opinions as they are more comfortable in the school atmosphere. Surveys offered the caregivers, of the younger age group children, a platform to voice their opinion on topics they may not feel comfortable talking about.

A variety of information gathering tools were used for gathering data for Montessori family education classes. A total of three family education classes were held for the duration of this action research. The first family education class was titled as a ‘Montessori parent evening’ instead of a ‘Montessori family education class’. The reason for this was to keep the original format to provide valid data results in comparison to the successive family education classes. Parent evenings were formerly held on Wednesday evenings at 6:30pm. The average attendance for a parent evening was 8 people (see appendix A). The format of the evening was chosen by the school staff and caregivers were often coaxed into attending each evening. Often, staff members were required to speak to the caregivers who had not signed up to try and persuade them in the importance of attending.

During the parent evening, personal interactions were encouraged by offering attendees coffee and food before commencing the family education evening. As the caregivers entered the school for evening, they were offered a spread of coffee, tea, biscuits and food. Once most of the caregivers had arrived, they were kindly asked to move into the classroom to take a seat in the chairs provided. This model of evenings was proven to be a lackluster event which most caregivers felt was an inconvenience in their family evening schedule at home.

The evening started with welcoming the families and a brief 15-minute introduction on the theory and Montessori philosophy on why we use these specific Montessori materials within the classroom. Following this introduction, there were no follow up questions from the attendees.

The layout of the classroom was usually in a row of adult chairs facing into the classroom. The focus with each family evening was on the Montessori materials in the classroom. The materials which were discussed would depend on which area of the classroom was the topic for the evening; practical life, sensorial, language and math were the circulated topics. Participation was sporadic and inconsistent amongst the attendees.

The classroom was previously set up so that a variety of Montessori language materials were arranged on different work tables in the classroom. The materials were chosen to represent the different ages of children and the materials they could possibly be working with at any given age. We started presenting the materials which we would use with the youngest children in the classroom. For each presentation, we did a demonstration on how the material is used and we would nominate one caregiver for each presentation. For each parent evening, we would average 5 – 7 presentations, leaving approximately 15 minutes in the end for any questions or discussion.

Pre-action research was originally titled as a ‘parent evening’, post-action research was titled as a ‘Montessori family education class’. The pre-action research evening began with Montessori theory and philosophy and discussed the Montessori materials related to a specific area. The Montessori classroom consists of four main areas and these were the topics of the evenings. These four areas were rotated as topics for evenings often causing a repeat of topics for many s.

Before embarking on any changes to the evening, active consent forms were sent home. Due to our high population of Chinese descendant families, all forms were translated into Chinese for their perusal.

Data Analysis

Our attendance averaged five to eight caregivers per evening. In a classroom with a total of 28 families, this was approximately 20% attendance. Of this 20%, predominantly non-Asian families consistently attended. In the Asian community, family dinner time is an important part of the day. This family meal takes precedence over attending events outside the home. Our parent evenings were held from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm on Thursday evenings. The topics focused on presenting the materials within the Montessori classroom and focused on one area such as math or language. The Montessori parent evening consisted of a presentation on the theory behind the Montessori philosophy and a few presentations on a selection of Montessori materials. Montessori materials have a specific purpose and each material in the classroom serves a deeper purpose for the child. Other than poor attendance, participation was also very limited and due to this, caregivers were nominated to participate in the chosen activities for presentations. Attendees were given the option to ask questions at any time and on average there were no more than two questions per parent evening. All in all, the evenings were lackluster events which families were not looking forward to and saw it as more of a chore and duty towards the school than a learning experience.

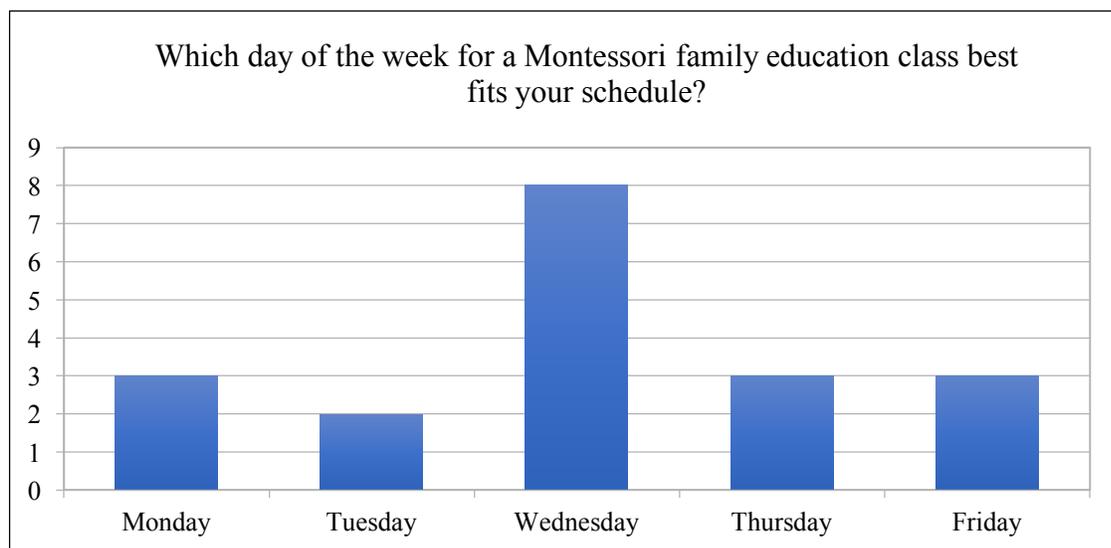


Figure 1. A Likert scale shows which day is favorable for most caregivers.

A sign-up sheet with each child's name was posted on the notice board in front of the main door of the classroom. The sign-up sheet was usually posted on the Friday or Monday preceding the event. At the end of the day on Tuesday, staff would view the sign-up sheet to see who had confirmed their attendance for the evening. For every previous parent evening, the staff had been under pressure to coax families to sign up for parent evenings convincing them this was a positive step in aiding their child's development. A wide variety of reasons were given for not being able to attend. The last pre-action research format parent evening was held near the end of the first trimester. A total of 7 adults from 5 different families attended this parent evening. The topic was the Montessori materials in the language area of the classroom.

Out of 32 children in the classroom, there are a total of 28 families. During this research, a total of three Montessori family education classes were observed. During the first

evening, the format was in the ‘original’ format and a total number of 8 adults from 5 different families attended (see Figure 2).’

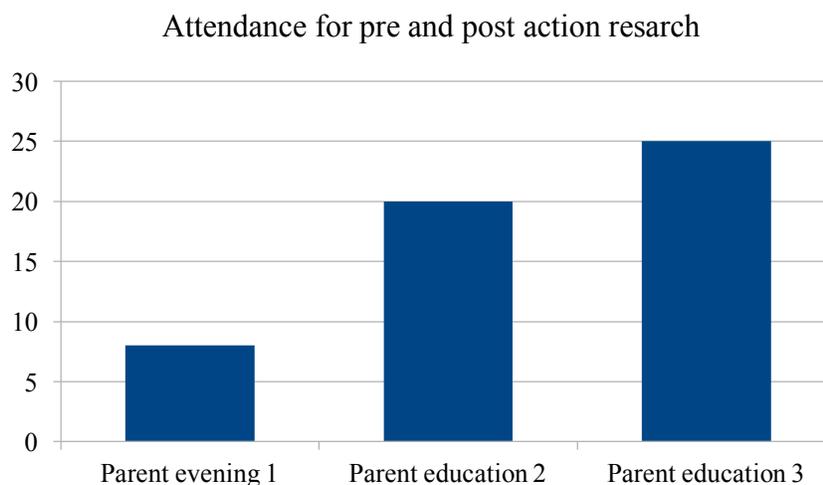


Figure 2. Comparison of attendance for pre-and post-action research.

All families received an active consent form and a Likert scale and questionnaire prior to the second education class in both English and Chinese. (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E). So as not to burden the adults with many forms, it was more efficient to put the active consent form and Likert scale together. The intention was to collect data from this Likert scale and questionnaire to decide on the format of the second Montessori family education class. A Likert scale was chosen for its straight forward approach in collecting information. Considering information was gathered in two different languages, the Likert scale was an effective tool, simple to translate yet provided the results needed to make effective changes. The questionnaire was used for qualitative measures for those who felt more comfortable writing their answers. A

total of 28 active consent were sent back out of a total of 22 were returned resulting in a 79% return rate (see Figure 3).

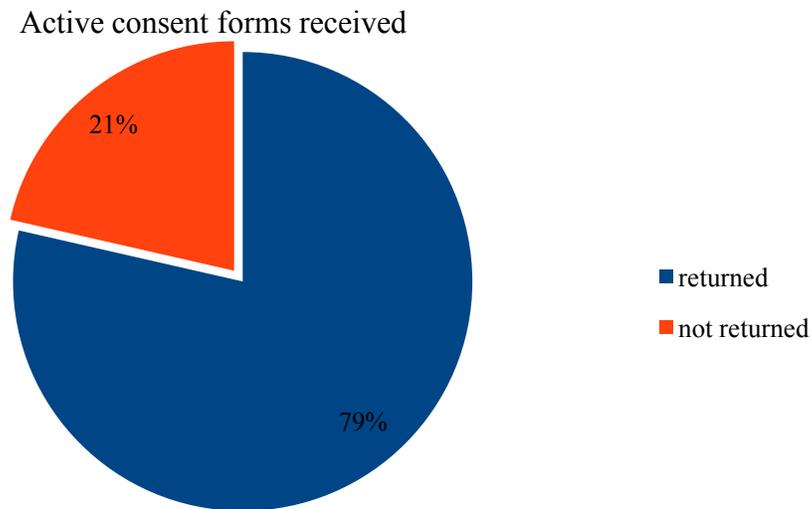


Figure 3. Percentage rate of active consent forms received.

It was required that the adults fill out a code on each form but almost all adults sent their forms back with their name on it thus nulling the confidential code.

A total of 22 Likert scale and questionnaire forms from a total of 28 handed out, 22 were returned (see Figure 3).

Likert Scale forms received

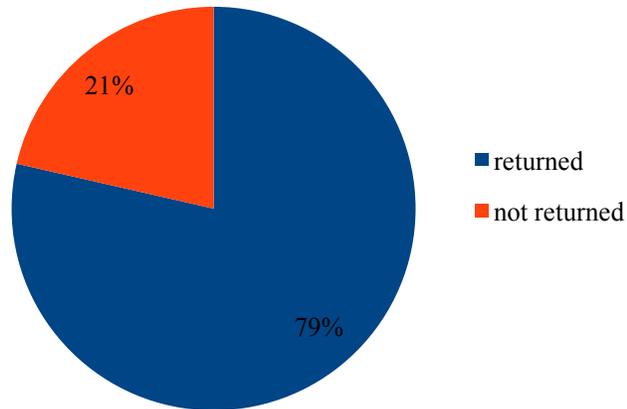


Figure 4. Percentage of Likert scale forms received.

Based on the results of this Likert questionnaire, the second Montessori family education class was formed. The parent evening was originally at 6:30pm and was changed to a more inclusive event titled as a 'Montessori family education class' at 4:00 pm with child care provided (see Figure 5).

Which time for education best work for you?

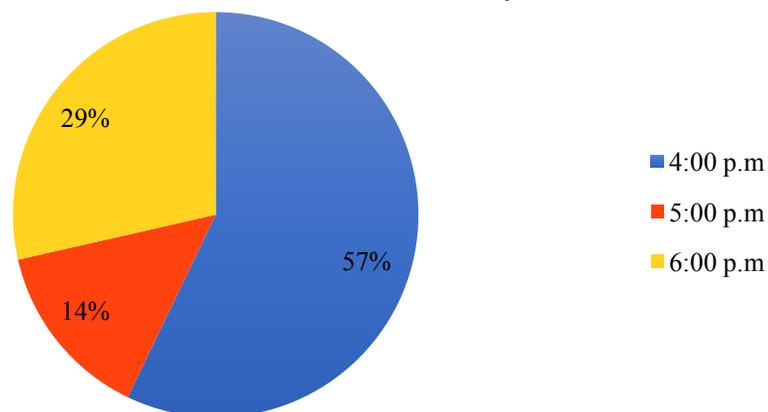


Figure 5. Time slots for Montessori family education classes.

According to the results of the of the Likert Scale, a new event was formed into a Montessori family education class. The Likert Scale asked families a selection of questions on their knowledge of Montessori education and also gave caregivers a choice to vote for the format of the next family education format. Results from the Likert scale showed strong preferences for changing the current model of parent evenings. As seen in Figure 5, 92.8% voted for a Montessori family education class focusing on Montessori theory and Montessori materials (see figure 6).

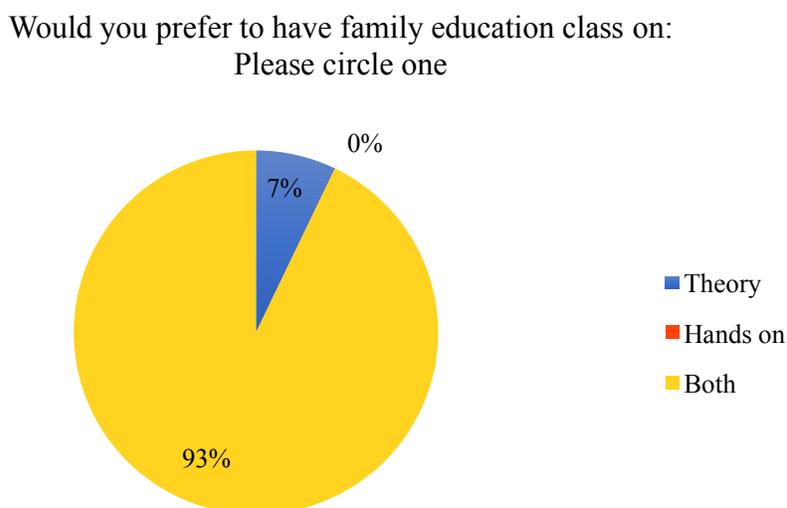


Figure 6. Caregiver preference on format of Montessori family education classes

However, an interesting correlation came to light when caregivers were asked to vote for their topics of choice for Montessori family education. Caregivers were given a choice of 10 topics for education and the topic requiring Montessori theory and Montessori materials ranked 5th in popularity, families were asked to rank from 1 to 10, 1 being the most interested and 10 being the least interested (see Figure 7).

Which topics would you like to see discussed during a Montessori family education class?

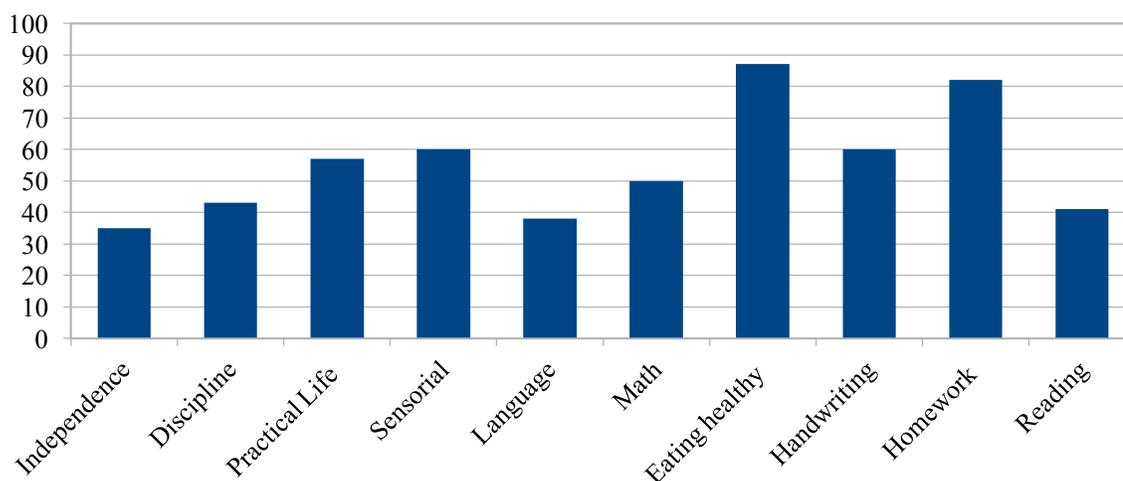


Figure 7. Topics of interest for Montessori family education classes.

Figure 7 shows, Independence and Language were the top two choices for caregivers. Since discipline was in the top 5, it was decided to adjoin independence and discipline as these two topics are closely intertwined in the Montessori philosophy.

In the process of analyzing Montessori family education within a school community, it was important to think about how to approach Montessori education for adults in a culturally comfortable manner. Out of 32 children in the classroom, 28 children are of Chinese descent. Caregivers were given the choice of the presence of a translator and interestingly, this option was declined from 100% of the adults participating in this survey (see Figure 8).

Would providing a translator help you during a education class?

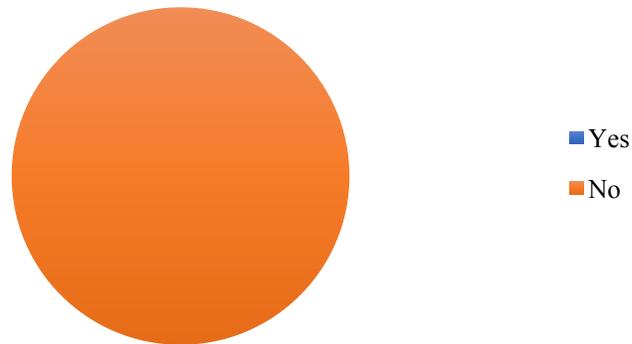


Figure 8. 100% of the caregivers participating declined the use of a translator.

Caregivers were given the option of childcare, 64% of the participants agreed that child care would be a helpful option in increasing their chances of attending a Montessori family education class. (see Figure 9)

Would providing child care with a guided activity at school influence your decision in attending a education class?

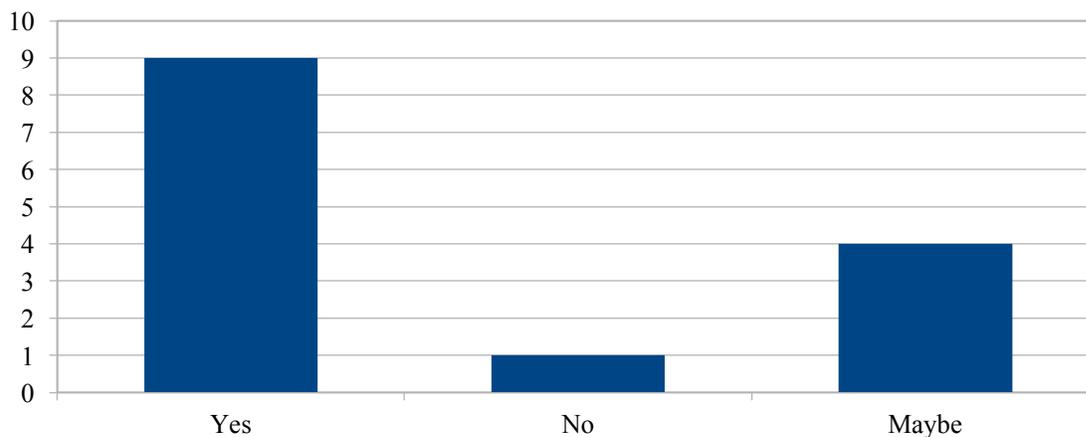


Figure 9. Providing child care during Montessori family education classes as an option.

Taking into consideration children would be hungry after a long day at school, children were given the option to enjoy a snack and dinner at school. Figure 9 showed some hesitancy in caregivers deciding for their children enjoying a meal at school. Could this be a

question of caregivers feeling uncomfortable to admitting they would attend a family education class if their child receives food? This could be a culturally relevant question for another action research project.

Would providing dinner for your child increase your change of attending a education class?

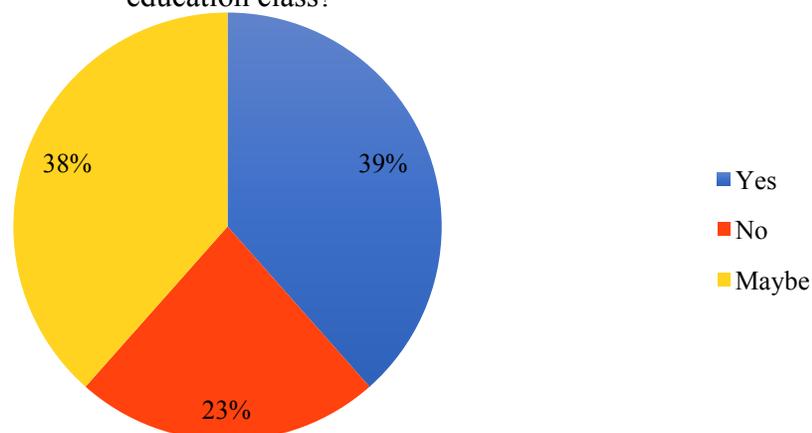


Figure 10. Providing a meal for children during child care was evenly divided.

The conclusion of the Likert scale was to reformat the current model of Montessori parent evenings on Thursdays at 6:30pm to a Montessori Family Education Class on Wednesdays at 4:00pm. The length remained unchanged at 1.5 hours. Childcare was provided with an activity and a choice of snack and meal for all children. The top choice for the Montessori family education class was ‘independence’ and because it is closely intertwined, we added ‘discipline’ to complete the topic for the evening. Due to the nature of this topic being more discussion focused, instead of the families facing forward, adult chairs were placed in a circle to encourage discussion and feedback amongst all families. Using the data from the Likert scale and making the necessary changes showed an increase of 150% from the previous Montessori parent evening (see Figure 11).

Attendance increase pre and post action research

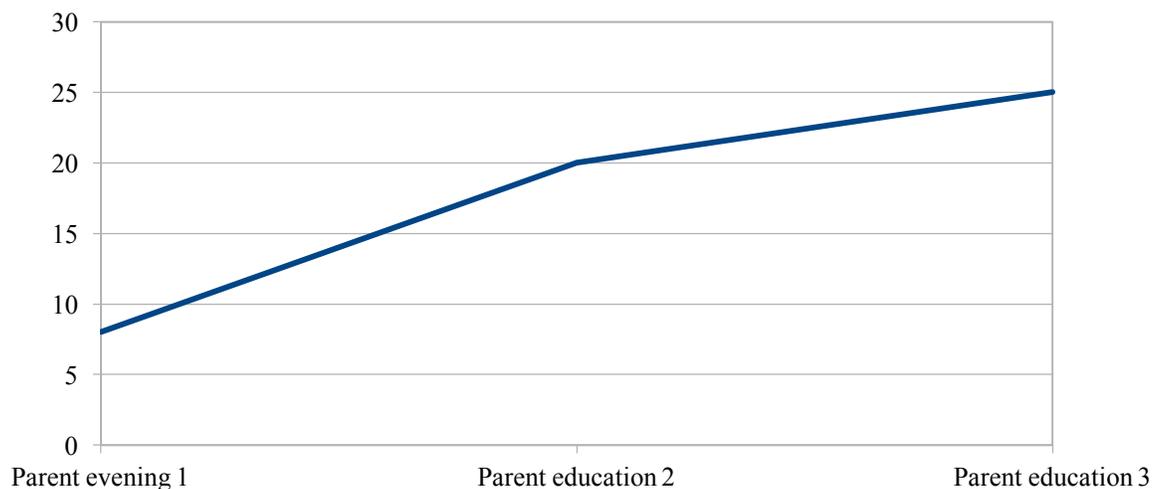


Figure 11. Linear graph showing the increase in family attendance.

The Montessori family education class started with a brief introduction welcoming all caregivers. Adults were encouraged to participate and to bring in their experiences and stories to share so others could learn and listen to a variety of experiences. After a brief introduction, caregivers were invited to participate with comments or questions and a total of three caregivers shared personal stories about discipline from their childhood. The presentation was focused on describing how discipline, independence and freedom were linked. Caregivers asked questions about how to instill limits at home and for a period of 35 minutes, caregivers were discussing amongst themselves and sharing anecdotes and stories from their trials and tribulations at home. Many caregivers, who usually didn't speak up at former parent evenings felt more comfortable to speak and share their views. It was interesting to note, from this discussion, caregivers were deciding what they would like to discuss further in future Montessori family education classes. These topics were noted down as potential ideas for future discussions.

The Montessori family education class concluded with three limits and three rules which are used in a Montessori classroom. Andrews (2013) discusses the three limits within the classroom, 'there are three guiding principles that aid us in understanding the limits to liberty:

- 1) Limits are for the protection of the individual, environment, and other people in the environment.
- 2) Limits are defined by the individual's capacity to act independently. This means that limits are flexible and have individual parameters.
- 3) Limits are defined by the context in which the activity takes place. (p.8)

Andrews (2013) highlights the importance of respect within these limits, 'respect for myself, respect for others, and respect for the environment. Respect is based in knowledge: our knowledge of the child, and the child's knowledge of himself, which comes from the use of materials.' (p.9)

A Montessori classroom does not have many rules and as Andrews (2013) has stated, the three classroom rules are:

- 1) We respect the work of others.
- 2) We take care of what we use.
- 3) We make sure every living thing is safe. (p.9)

The limits and rules within a Montessori classroom sparked more interesting conversation and caregivers asked for a condensed copy of this Montessori family education class topic for their perusal. This type of conversation and interest had never happened before in pre-action research parent evenings. For the final 20 minutes of the allotted time for this Montessori family education class, the caregivers spent time talking and discussing freedom and limits and how to instill them at home. Upon completion of this class, caregivers were sent home with a list of

household chores children can take part in their home. Also, a feedback questionnaire (Appendix E) was sent home with each family.

From this feedback questionnaire, a total of 18 were sent home and a total of 18 were returned, showing a peak in interest and participation from families (see Figure 12).

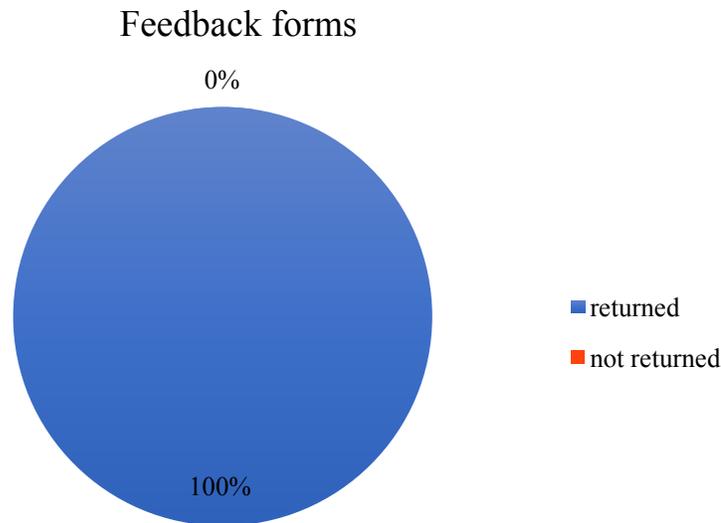


Figure 12. Feedback forms returned upon completion

The results of the feedback questionnaire were highly positive and based on the return rate, caregivers and families had shown a significant peak in participation in Montessori family education classes.

83% of the caregivers did not have a prior understanding of the Montessori material which was presented during the second education class (see Figure 13).

Did you have a prior understanding of the Montessori material which was presented today?

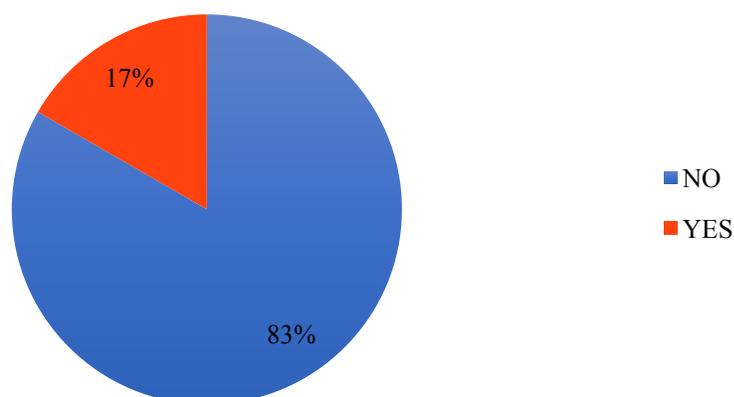


Figure 13. Percentage of caregivers with prior knowledge on the topic presented.

Caregivers expressed 100% satisfaction with a clear presentation of the discussion, finding it helpful, an enjoyable experience, met expectations and was an appropriate length of time. Concluding, this new post-action research Montessori family education class was successful and informative.

Based on the results of the first Likert scale, the third Montessori family education class was formed using the second-choice time slot at 5:00pm (see Figure 4). The second most popular topic for a Montessori family education class was reading and language (see Figure 6). Childcare was available as was a meal for all children. A total of 27 families signed up to attend the education class. On the evening of the family education class, a total number of 25 families attended. Although, this was a smaller number than families who had signed up, this showed an increase to the previous Montessori family education class. A total number of 10 children were brought for child care and a few children had eaten a snack, although most were happy to eat again in this social setting. The classroom was set up with chairs in a circle and participants were encouraged to discuss their experiences from home. The time allotted was an hour and a half.

Families enjoyed the discussion and upon completion of the third Montessori family education class, caregivers were sent home with a feedback questionnaire. Of the 25 sent home, 15 were returned, possibly showing the caregivers were over saturated with filling out forms.

Upon completion of the successful Montessori family education class, caregivers were given a feedback questionnaire (APPENDIX E) to provide quantitative and qualitative data. This feedback was used to gain knowledge of the caregivers understanding of Montessori education and to offer caregivers further topics for consideration.

The qualitative results were 100% positive and caregivers expressed their satisfaction with the time change and providing child care. 80% of the comments were happy with the discussion format. 60% of the comments stated they enjoyed hearing other people's comments, opinions and advice. 40% of the participants stated they enjoyed the topic. Overall, these were highly positive results (see figure 14).

What would you like the presenter to know? What questions do you have? Please write them below and on the back of the page if needed.

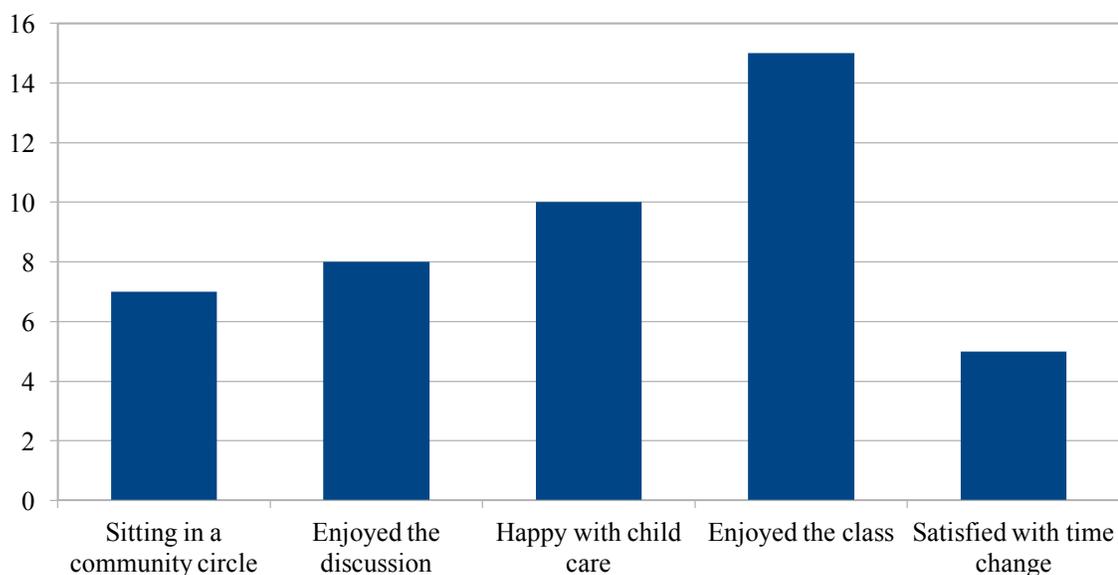


Figure 14. Qualitative results after the second family education class.

After the second Montessori family education class, caregivers had heard about this education class from other adults and booked time to join this class. A further increase of 25% was shown in attendance (see Figure 10). This result showed a 175% increase from the original parent evening to the current model of Montessori family education class.

All adults sat in a circle to encourage the discussion format as in the previous education class. A selection of language and reading materials were laid out on the floor for the teachers to use as a visual reference for the adults. During the introduction, caregivers were encouraged to participate and offer examples from their own experiences to share with others. Families appeared to be more at ease and willing to participate initially than the previous family education class. The Montessori family education class was interactive and almost all the caregivers participated either by asking questions or making comments and suggestions. A variety of language and reading activities were presented. Before each activity, an introduction to Montessori theory was presented. After each theory introduction, caregivers were also presented with critical thinking scenarios related to language and reading. The critical thinking brought out further discussion and encouraged conversation. Abiding to the set time, not all the materials were presented. However, other topics of interest arose which caregivers were interested in discussing in future family education classes. These topics have been noted for future classes. Upon completion of the second Montessori family education class, caregivers were given another feedback questionnaire. Of the 25 adults who attended a total of 21 families were present. 71% of the forms were returned for further analysis.

Of the 15 that responded, 80% had no prior knowledge on the topic presented (see Figure 15).

Did you have prior understanding of the Montessori material which was presented today?

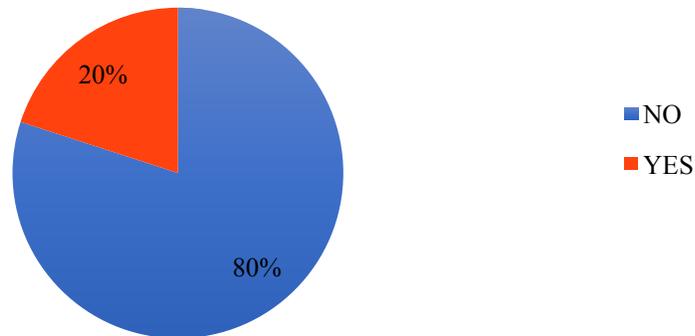


Figure 15. Family education class number 3. Quantitative results from the feedback questionnaire.

100% of the participants thought the presentation was clearly presented, useful and an enjoyable experience that met their expectations within an appropriate amount of time. Qualitative responses were thankful for the discussion format and felt they had learned a great deal from the presentation as well as other caregivers. Hearing they weren't alone in their struggles was an important factor in both education classes (see Figure 16).

**What would you like the presenter to know?
What questions do you have? Please write them
below and on the back of the page if needed.**

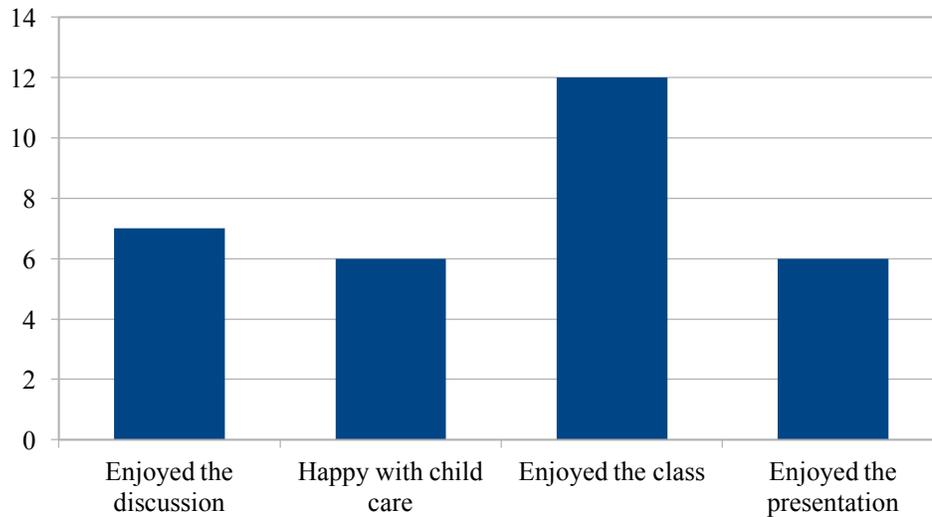


Figure 16. Qualitative responses from the third family education class feedback questionnaire.

It was interesting to observe the results of the caregivers choosing topics for their future Montessori family education classes. The results for the previously presented topic was significantly reduced, showing the adults had fulfilled their need to further explore this topic (see Figure 17).

**What topics would you like to see presented next time?
Please circle which topics are of interest to you?**

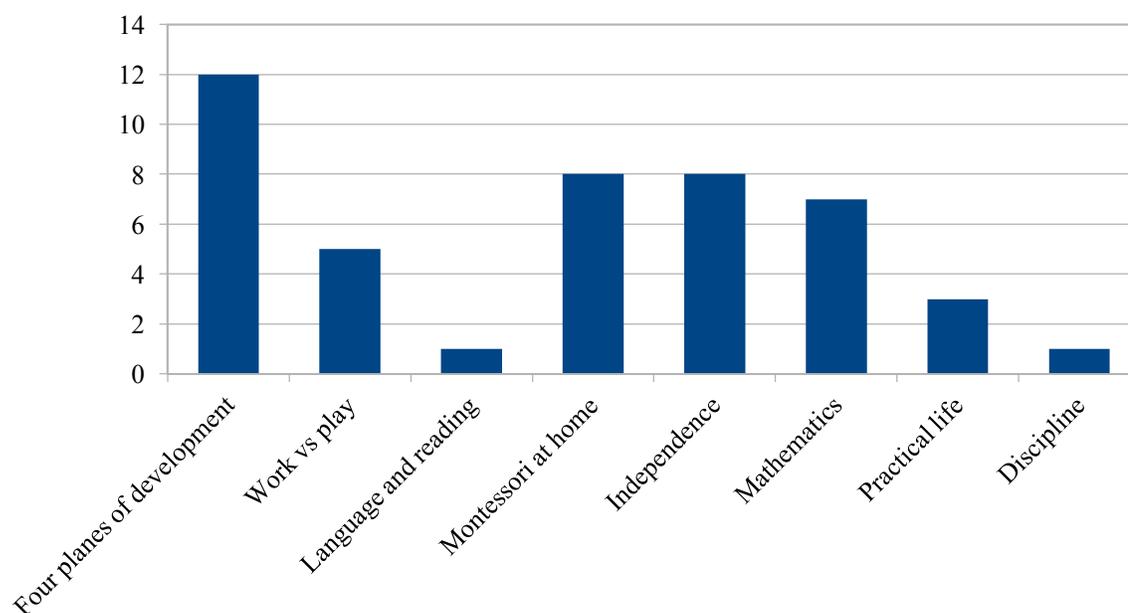


Figure 17. Results from the third family education class feedback questionnaire.

Responding to the caregivers needs has proven successful and opened the door for further and more in depth enquiry into Montessori philosophy. Possibly the discussion format help the adults feel more at ease when learning and discussing a new topic related to children.

In conclusion, the action research was a success. Attendance increased by 175% and changing the schedule significantly influenced this positive result. The most frequent excuse for previous parent evenings was that adults didn't know, forgot or didn't have the time to attend. Despite our reminders through a variety of avenues of communication, this did not increase attendance. Using a survey was a simple yet effective method to gather information to better understand the needs of the caregivers. Due to the time constraints of this research, adults were not given much notice. In our past experience of caregivers telling us that they needed more time to plan, we were under the assumption this would not work with the short notice. However, the time change was convenient for the caregivers as this was regular pick

up time for the children at the end of the day. At pick-up, the children were excited to join the 'party' in the neighboring classroom. The time change and influence from their children wanting to attend coaxed the caregivers to attend. One child in our school has a grandmother who picks her up during the week. Grandmother was not planning on attending the family education class, however, her granddaughter did not want to go home because she wanted to join in on the after-school activities with her friends. This was enough to coax grandma into joining and eventually participating in our Montessori family education class. Providing child care for families shows caregivers the school is able to meet them half way.

Montessori family education is vital for all caregivers with children in a Montessori school. Using the surveys gave caregivers a voice and the school feedback on their needs. Schools often get in the habit of consistency which prevents change. Caregivers within a school fluctuate, as do their needs. It is important to continuously receive feedback so the school is better able to meet their needs and in turn, the school will have their needs met using the right resources.

Action research and teaching practice go hand in hand. Analyzing the surveys has shown the importance of receiving feedback and the importance of a proactive approach within a school community. Without surveys and feedback, schools function on often outdated methods of practice in dire need of change. Hendricks (2017) states, 'As human beings, we are constantly looking for solutions to everyday problems, whether that means coming up with a way to get our kids to school or dealing with a difficult colleague. With these types of everyday problems, though, we may try a solution based on experience or convenience, or-in the case of a difficult colleague-we may ignore the problem altogether and hope it goes away' (p.2). Using action

research within a school is an excellent method to face problems head on and in finding a good solution.

Montessori family education is a unique approach to a child's learning and it is vital caregivers have a good understanding of the Montessori method. However, family units are often busy with their day-to-day routines and adding more this routine is challenging. Upon analyzing the findings of this research, it has shown how important it is for a school to meet caregivers half way. Offering child care, dinner and adjusting the time are all good options in meeting a family half-way.

Offering child care significantly increased the participation in Montessori family education classes. Child care offered caregivers the leniency of trying to reorganize their entire family evening for a school event. For previous Montessori family education classes, teachers would find it challenging to get caregivers to commit. In many cases, caregivers would commit to only not show up to the evening later on. Our school is in a small a community with many families often sharing babysitters. Previous parent education classes were held in the evening when most children and families were winding down their day. Families with young babies found it virtually impossible to attend. Changing the day of the week and the scheduled time was another big factor in improving attendance.

Qualitative results showed positive feedback for the layout of the Montessori family education class. The discussion format helped the caregivers feel comfortable and at ease with each other. This format also brought new topics to fruition for future Montessori family education classes. The findings from this action research show that caregivers are willing to commit the time if they are given then right environment to do so. Adjusting time schedules and offering child care proved to be a large deciding factor in attendance.

Observing these results show the importance of implementing changes earlier in the school year. It would be beneficial to send surveys to families in the beginning of the school year so the school is best able to accommodate their needs. Due to the unique nature of Montessori education, familial inclusion is helpful for the child. Attending Montessori family education classes, caregivers can learn about the importance of using the correct terminology to best reach out to their child. Understanding the names of the materials used in Montessori education help the caregivers understand what their children are currently working on in the classroom. Action research on Montessori family education, help caregivers build a bridge between school and home environments.

Observing the adults within the discussion format opened new thoughts for future action research. Do all topics for Montessori education have to be directly related to Montessori philosophy? Adults started spontaneously discussing technology usage within the home. Montessori philosophy was formed at a time when technology was not a threat to child development. Further action research could spend time discovering and discussing current topics in family dynamics and child development.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Parent Education in a Montessori School Active Consent Form

Dear Parents,

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 Montessori teacher of students at Pacific Rim Montessori Academy, I have chosen to learn about parent education for a Montessori classroom because it is important for the community of our school. I am working with a faculty member at St. Catherine University and a project coach 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 person. Only Meenu Chaudhary and administrative staff will have access to the identifiable data for this study; We will keep it confidential.

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.

There foreseeable risks for this action research are minimal to none.

Procedures:

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to complete questionnaires before and after parent evenings, answer written questions before and after parent's evenings. These will be short questionnaires and questions and will provide me with information regarding Montessori philosophy and education. The questionnaire and survey will take 10 minutes of your time to complete. This study will take approximately four to six weeks and will last for the duration of the parent education evening. Each education evening is one and a half hours in length.

This study is voluntary. If you decide you do want to be a participant and/or have your data from the questionnaires and written answers included in my study, you need to check the appropriate box(es), sign this form, and return it by . 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, 604 722 2659. You may ask questions now, or if you have any additional questions later, you can ask me or my project coach Amanda Perna at 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.

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

Appendix B

Active Consent Form – Chinese Translation

蒙特梭利學校的家長教育 研究參與同意書

親愛的家長們，

您可能已經知道我現在正在美國的聖凱瑟琳大學 (St. Catherine University) 學習教育碩士學位。其中非常重要的一部分是做一項行動研究項目。

作為一名 Pacific Rim Montessori Academy 的老師，我希望對家長教育進行更一步的了解，因為家長教育是我們學校很重要的一部分。我現在正在和一位聖凱瑟琳大學的導師一起完成這個研究項目。

我會將研究項目的結果寫入我的報告當中。但是報告中不會有提及學校的名字，任何孩子或家長的姓名，或任何其他個人隱私。只有學校校長 Meenu Chaudhary 以及行政可以看到這些資料。我們會將所有隱私的資料保管好。

當我完成我的報告之後，電子版的報告會被發表在聖凱瑟琳大學圖書館的名叫 SOPHIA 的系統裡。這個系統保存了所有大學導師和碩士博士生的報告。我希望我的研究項目可以幫助其他老師。

這項行動研究項目基本不會呈現任何風險。

步驟：

如果您選擇參與這項研究，您會被要求在家長教育前後各完成一個問卷調查以及一些問題。這些問題將會幫助我了解您對蒙特梭利教育理念的理解。這些問題會佔用您大約 10 分鐘的時間。這項研究總共會持續 4 到 6 週。每一次的家長教育大約是一個半小時長。

參與這項研究是自願的。如果您願意參與我的研究項目，並且願意將您問卷調查的答案包括在我的報告裡，請您在下面的格子中標明，並且在下面簽名。如果在任何時候您不願意繼續參加這項研究，請您儘管告知，我會將您的答案盡量從我的報告中移除。

如果您不願意參與這項研究，您也不需要將這份表格繳回。同時，也不會對您有任何的影響。

如果您有任何問題，請儘管與我聯繫。我的電話是 604-722-2659。如果您在這項研究進行過程中有任何問題，您也可以隨時與我聯繫或電郵給我的導師 Amanda Perna (amperna@skate.edu)。如果您對我的研究項目有問題，並且希望與其他人聯繫，請致電給聖凱瑟琳大學審查委員會的 Dr. John Schmitt (651-690-7739)。

請標明，我願意

- 參與這項研究。
 將我的答案包括在報告中。

參與者簽名

日期

研究者簽名

日期

請在 7 天之內回覆。謝謝！

Appendix C
Likert Scale and Questionnaire

Education Classes

For confidential purposes, please do not write your name. Please write the first three letters of your mother's maiden name and the date of the month of their birth. For example: Last name is Milenovic and day born is 23 – you would write MIL23

Check here if you would like to continue but prefer not to have your responses included in the study"

Check here if you would like to continue and will allow your responses to be included in the study"?

Completion of these questions is voluntary and anonymous (or confidential). Completing this feedback form is completely voluntary and you may quit at any time. The tool will not collect your email or log in information, and the researcher will not know who completed this form.

1. Would you prefer to have parent education classes on: Please circle one-

Theory - Montessori in the home

Hands on experience with the materials

Both

2. Which topics would you like to see discussed during a parent education group? Write numbers 1 – 10 next to each topic. 1 – most interested to 10 – least interested

Independence

Discipline

Practical Life

Sensorial - development of the senses in the child

Language

Math

Eating healthy

Handwriting

Homework

Reading

Appendix C

3. *Would providing a translator help you during a parent education class?*

Yes (if yes, please state which language here _____)

No

4. *What is an appropriate length of time for a parent education class? Please circle one -*

1 hour

1.5 hours

2 hours

5. *Which time for parent education works best for you?*

4:00pm

5:00pm

6:00pm

6. *Which day of the week for a parent education class best fits your schedule?*

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

7. *Would providing child care with a guided activity at school help your decision in attending a parent education class?*

Yes

No

Maybe

8. *Would providing dinner for your child increase your chance of attending a parent education class?*

Yes

No

Maybe

Appendix D

李克特量表和問卷調查

在 Pacific Rim Montessori Academy 的家長教育課程

為了保證問卷調查的隱私性，請您不要寫您的姓名。請寫下您母親姓氏的前三個字母和您生日的日期。比如：您母親的姓氏是 Milenovic，您的生日是 23 日，請寫下 MIL23。

- 我希望繼續參與研究項目，但是請不要將我的答案融入到報告中。
- 我希望繼續參與研究項目，而且允許將我的答案融入到報告中。

完成這份問卷調查完全是自願的，而且是匿名的。您可以在任何時間選擇退出這項研究項目。這份調查不會向您索取您的 Email 或者任何其他個人信息。研究員也不會知道是誰填寫了這份調查。

1. 您會希望選擇哪一個家長教育課程。請選擇一項：

理論 – 在家中的蒙特梭利

有動手使用教室的教具

兩者都想要

2. 您希望在家長教育課程中討論哪些領域？請在每一個領域的旁邊寫下 1-10，1 是最感興趣，10 是最不感興趣。

獨立

紀律

日常生活領域

感觀領域 – 幫助開放孩子的感觀

語言領域

數學領域

健康的飲食

手寫

作業

閱讀

3. 在家長教育課程提供翻譯是否會對您有幫助？

會（請選擇語言： ）

不會

Appendix D

4. 您希望每一堂家長教育課程是多長時間？請選擇一個：

一個小時

一個半小時

兩個小時

5. 家長教育課程在什麼時間對您最好？

下午四點

下午五點

下午六點

6. 家長教育課程在哪一天對您最好？

星期一

星期二

星期三

星期四

星期五

7. 如果學校可以帶您的孩子做一些活動，這是否會讓您選擇來參加家長教育課程？

會

不會

也許會

8. 如果學校可以為您的孩子提供晚餐，這是否會讓您選擇來參加家長教育課程？

會

不會

也許會

Appendix E

Attendance Sheet for Parent Evening at
Pacific Rim Montessori Academy

Date:

Time of class:

Duration of class:

Total persons attended:

Appendix F

Feedback Questionnaire One

Montessori Education

For confidential purposes, please do not write your name. Please write the first three letters of your mother's maiden name and the date of the month of their birth. For example: Last name is Milenovic and day born is 23 – you would write MIL23

Check here if you would like to continue but prefer not to have your responses included in the study"

Check here if you would like to continue and will allow your responses to be included in the study"?

Completion of these questions is voluntary and anonymous (or confidential). Completing this feedback form is completely voluntary and you may quit at any time. The tool will not collect your email or log in information, and the researcher will not know who completed this form.

1. Did you attend a Montessori school as a child?

Yes no ages attended _____

2. How long has your child been in a Montessori school? _____

3. A Montessori education includes self-directed, independent freedom of choice of materials in the classroom.

True not sure false

4. All children in a Montessori classroom for children ages three to six, receive the same instruction by the time they complete the three year program.

True not sure false

5. Maria Montessori created the Montessori curriculum based on her observations of children.

True not sure false

6. Montessori education is only for children ages three to six.

True not sure false

7. Is Montessori education only for the elite?

True not sure false

8. Do Montessori schools discourage children from using their imagination?

True not sure false

9. Do Montessori schools use the term work or play when referring to children's activity in the classroom? Please circle one

Work Play

Appendix F

10. All children in an elementary Montessori classroom receive the same instruction by the time they complete the six year program.

True not sure false

11. All Montessori schools have the same materials in their classrooms?

True not sure false

12. Materials in the elementary classroom are only used in this classroom.

True not sure false

13. Montessori education focuses on following the child and individualized lesson plans.

True not sure false

14. Montessori education is for all children.

True not sure false

15. Montessori classroom environments give children the freedom to do as they please with no discipline.

True not sure false

16. Montessori encourages children of different ages to support each other.

True not sure false

Appendix G

反饋問卷調查 1

蒙特梭利教育體系

為了保證問卷調查的隱私性，請您不要寫您的姓名。請寫下您母親姓氏的前三個字母和您生日的日期。比如：您母親的姓氏是 Milenovic，您的生日是 23 日，請寫下 MIL23。

- 我希望繼續參與研究項目，但是請不要將我的答案融入到報告中。
- 我希望繼續參與研究項目，而且允許將我的答案融入到報告中。

完成這份問卷調查完全是自願的，而且是匿名的。您可以在任何時間選擇退出這項研究項目。這份調查不會向您索取您的 Email 或者任何其他個人信息。研究員也不會知道是誰填寫了這份調查。

1. 您小時候是否上過蒙特梭利教育系統的學校？

是 否 若是，幾歲？ _____

2. 您的孩子上蒙特梭利學校多久了？ _____

3. 蒙特梭利教育體系包括自主獨立地選擇想要使用地教具。

同意 不確定 不同意

4. 所有三到六歲的孩子在結束三年的教育課程時，都會得到同樣的課程。

同意 不確定 不同意

5. 蒙特梭利的課程是根據瑪麗亞蒙特梭利對小孩的觀察而定的。

同意 不確定 不同意

6. 蒙特梭利教育只是給三到六歲的孩子們的。

同意 不確定 不同意

7. 蒙特梭利教育是只為特別聰明的孩子而設立的。

同意 不確定 不同意

8. 蒙特梭利學校不鼓勵孩子用他們的想像力。

同意 不確定 不同意

Appendix G

9. 對於小孩子在蒙特梭利學校做的事情，我們使用哪一個詞彙來形容？請選擇一項。

工作 玩

10. 所有小學的孩子在結束六年的教育課程時，都會得到同樣的課程。

同意 不確定 不同意

11. 所有蒙特梭利學校都用同樣的教具。

同意 不確定 不同意

12. 小學教室的教具只限於在小學使用。

同意 不確定 不同意

13. 蒙特梭利教育的特點是跟隨小孩的學習進度以及個人化的課程計畫。

同意 不確定 不同意

14. 蒙特梭利教育適合每一個孩子。

同意 不確定 不同意

15. 蒙特梭利教室允許孩子自由的選擇想要做的事情，而且不會有任何對孩子的懲罰。

同意 不確定 不同意

16. 蒙特梭利教育鼓勵不同年齡的孩子互相幫助。

同意 不確定 不同意