

## Beyond the Academics: The Necessary Life Skills

Dear Parents,

During our recent Kindergarten Program Information Session, we had a number of parents attend to hear more about the specifics of the benefits of the program for their children. We also had parents attend who are currently in our program and some who already experienced the Kindergarten year at Westmont. We welcomed two young alumnae who spoke from the heart about their Kindergarten memories. What a delight and a proud moment for them and for Westmont; thank you Ana and Kathleen.

In the course of our informal follow-up discussion, one of our parents (Ella and Elyse's mom Erin) spoke on behalf of the "soft" skills that she believes are missing in many adults. She sees these skills developing in her children now, and attributes this to Westmont and its Montessori philosophy. As someone responsible for leading and mentoring adults in the business world, she recognizes that many of them lack the ability to collaborate, to put others before self, to be accepting, to think outside the box, to strategize, to organize, to be leaders, to problem solve, to take responsibility and to be independent thinkers. She is delighted and impressed that she sees these important life skills developing in her own children at this young age.

Erin's words brought to mind another more recent proponent of developing important life skills in young children. Ellen Galinsky, chief science officer of the Bezos Family Foundation, and senior research advisor for the Society for Human Resource Management wrote *Mind in the Making*, which outlines what she considers the seven essential skills every child should have. These are:

- Focus and Self Control
- Perspective Taking
- Communicating
- Making Connections
- Critical Thinking
- Taking on Challenges
- Self-Directed Engaged Learning



The recently released McKinsey report on the class of 2030 and life-ready learning, highlights the following:

- The need for soft skills in 30-40% of jobs in growth industry.
- 67% of teachers want to personalize learning but only 30% saying they actually do it.
- Students believe they learn more when they have greater voice and choice.

When Dr. Montessori first worked with children, she realized the importance of developing what she called life skills. It was through scientific observation and real-life implementation and assessment that she developed her philosophy and curriculum. Realizing that true education required the teaching of hard and soft skills, she developed an individualized approach.

Westmont's mission is to live up to Dr. Montessori's ideals and prepare children for life. Every day our dedicated and passionate teachers guide children to be curious, joyful learners, who are compassionate and self-reliant, who can collaborate with others, make choices, accept challenges and take responsibility for their actions.

We are honored to continue Dr. Montessori's work and thank you for your continued partnership in preparing our students, and your children, for life.

Colette