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# The Kindergarten Experience and Beyond: The Fringe Benefits

**By: Colette Cross, Head of School**

We already know that you value the importance of an early childhood education. Over 100 years ago Dr. Maria Montessori championed the cause for a “revolution in society’s approach to human development” (Montessori, 1966). Dr. Montessori subsequently developed a method of education that continues to withstand the test of time, and is proving to be the educational model that is influencing educational reform today. Dr. Montessori designed the Montessori curriculum to encompass three year cycles, birth to three years old, three to six, six to nine, and so on. These age spans are important because of the planes of development that occur during these time periods. The Kindergarten year completes the 3-6 cycle, vital years for the developing mind, and as Montessori says, for the acquisition of “intellectual vigor, independence, and initiative”(Montessori, 2004). This is the age when the child is moving from the concrete stage of learning to the abstract stage, and we want them to make that move by building on the foundation of their Montessori experiences leading up to their Kindergarten year.

At Westmont we know that our students will eventually move on to a new environment; we have been following our students transitions for over twenty years. It is important for us to know that our children are moving on with all the necessary skills to experience success. In today’s world great emphasis is placed on academic achievement and teaching to the test. There is a lot of buzz regarding common core standards and New Jersey is one of the states that has adapted the common core into its curriculum. To clarify, the Common Core State Standards are a set of baseline expectations determined by states for each grade level in publicly funded schools.

The attention to the common core standards has, in fact, been very beneficial to the Montessori community. The Montessori curriculums, Primary and Elementary, have been examined and analyzed for comparison to the standards and guidelines set by states across the USA. Not surprisingly, the Montessori materials and lessons, when measured and aligned to the core objectives, show that they not only reach the set standards but, exceed them. This is an outcome we are proud to preach and one that will serve to keep Montessori education in the limelight. We are confident our academic curriculum meets the needs of each individual Kindergarten child and that it does indeed make the grade. We continue to be reaffirmed that Dr. Montessori got it right the first time around.

We also know that there is much more to educating a child

than addressing the academic curriculum, and, we want so much more for our Kindergarten students and indeed all of our students. Our world continues to be complex and challenging and children need to be prepared to function in and adapt to this world. We recognize that our curriculum and philosophy will make this grade also, and facilitate this preparation. We want our Kindergarten students to reap all the benefits of this preparation in a year when so many things come together for them. We want to give ample time for fine tuning their problem solving, critical thinking and reasoning skills. We want to highlight their leadership potential. We want to continue to help them develop empathy, and be community minded. We want to emphasize their creativity, curiosity and communications skills. We want them to learn from their mistakes, and be confident in their own abilities.



We want to build upon the skills that are developing and fully support their preparation for life.

When all is said and done we want to have lived up to our vision of helping each child reach his potential at this critical juncture. We want to send our Kindergarten students into the world as resilient, responsible, confident citizens.

*Within the child lies the face of the future*

- Dr Maria Montessori

References:

Montessori, M. (1966). *The Discovery of the Child*. Thiruvananthapuram, Madras, India: Kalakshetra Press

Montessori, M (2004). *The Montessori Method*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield publishers.

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