



Montessori Messenger

November 22, 2013

Dedicated to the joy in education and the lifelong desire to know.

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Continuing the Montessori School Experience

By Pat Critchfield

Parents and visitors to our school come away from their observations impressed by the concentration, self-direction, and purpose evident in the Montessori classrooms. Charmed and mystified by the whole of the experience, they are witness to the advantages of the Montessori Method, yet may not be able to abstract its component parts. Further, they may not be aware of the unique opportunity offered students by continuing the Montessori Method of education into the kindergarten and elementary years.

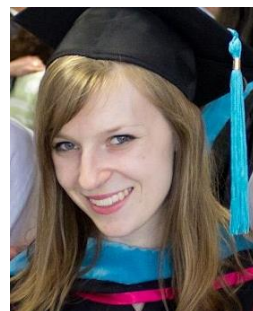
The casual observer, looking in on a classroom, notes that the students are busily engaged with various projects, of a concrete nature, either individually or cooperatively in small groups. The observer may not know that the integrated curriculum is sequential, building upon itself, and is individualized to meet the needs of every learner. This means that each child is challenged, given opportunity for extension in areas of interest, and permitted repetition in areas of need. The learner builds true understanding over time by work with concrete manipulative materials designed to teach specific concepts. This understanding is the basis for abstraction as the child assimilates and accommodates the new, mentally matching the known to the recently acquired. The learner has constructed knowledge that is distinct from rote memorization or the amalgamation of isolated fragments. The integration of language with cultural subjects and math aids the child in the effort to construct meaning. Montessori students perform well academically, and test well, because the Montessori Method develops the intellect while teaching children how to learn.



THE JOY OF MASTERY

Kate entered her Montessori classroom wide-eyed with all the expectations that a three year old brings.

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Former DMS student. Kenyon College & Indiana University graduate.

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Continuing the Montessori School Experience (from page 1)



Just as Montessori students develop true understanding through their individualized contact with a material rich curriculum, so they develop habits and attitudes that are of benefit to them throughout their education experience. The open environment of a Montessori classroom fosters the development of personal autonomy, responsibility, and systematic problem solving skills as children pursue areas of interest. Large blocks of independent work time permit the development of extended concentration. The ability to self-direct and carry a project through to fruition is valued not only in the school years but also in later life. Montessori students have the opportunity to demonstrate personal initiative as they learn to encourage and support others in cooperative effort. Attitudes about themselves and life-long-learning habits follow our Montessori students. These are as important to their development as excellent work habits. Our students display self-confidence based on the success to which they have become accustomed. They are enthusiastic because learning is seen as an adventure, open minded because they are aware of many possibilities, spontaneous because error is seen not as an end but a point of departure.

Montessori students are well received when they leave the Montessori classroom. Our graduates figure prominently in gifted programs at the middle school and

high school levels. They excel in academic endeavors, as members of student governing bodies, and in extracurricular activities as diverse as forensics and soccer. Many of our former graduates report that self-motivation and an independent learning style, developed in our classrooms, were most valuable to them in the college years. Some of students have found interest, first nurtured at Montessori school, to be the foundation of career choices. The gains from extending the Montessori school experience are clearly tangible, often directly measurable, as in test results. The most gratifying measure of our success is found in the return of former Montessori students as parents of a second generation of learners.



The Montessori Elementary PTO Meeting Monday, November 25th

A meeting for parents interested in information on the Montessori elementary program will be held Monday, November 25 at 6:30P.M. in the lower elementary classroom. Former Montessori students will be on hand to speak of their transition to area public schools and the benefits of their Montessori education.

The Joy of Mastery: Journey from Discovery to Mastery to Apprentice

By Gaye Haralu

Kate entered her Montessori classroom wide-eyed with all the expectations that a three year old brings. She was eager to please and interested in everything. Initially she followed the teachers around, asking for help and seeking guidance, until she realized that there were many other teachers in the classroom in the form of her older peers. She learned to seek out their assistance and collaboration on many projects. The year ended with her full confidence in the order and understanding of *her* Montessori classroom. She was familiar with the procedures and guidelines of the classroom. She was a fully engaged member of the learning community. And her leaning about herself and the world had grown exponentially in that 9-month period. Oh...and she tried to sew by herself...she tried and she tried and she tried...up and down, back and forth...she tried. But alas, it was just out of her reach to do it perfectly.

Kate returned to her Montessori classroom for her second year as a 4 year old. The teachers and classroom were familiar. Many of her friends were present, but some had moved on and some were new students. All in all, she felt at home with familiar people and routines. It did not take Kate long to dive headlong into her work. She remembered these lessons: ones she enjoyed and some that were not so interesting. And there was the sewing work...She remembered that lesson. One day she decided to pick that lesson up again. She tried and although she remembered it, it was still not quite right. She worked it and worked it and then she got it. She did it! She found the teacher and showed her and had to take it apart and do it again. Could she do it again?...yes! She felt such a sense of pride and accomplishment. Her entire year was a lot like that sewing lesson. She mastered lessons that were just beyond her the first year. She pushed herself and did as much as she could. Kate discovered other lessons that were just out of her reach. She understood her numbers 0-9; she understood her teen numbers. But that Hundred Board was a lot of numbers and she still got stuck on what comes after 29! At least there is next year, Kindergarten....what will it hold?

Kate returned to her Montessori classroom for her third year. She had watched the Kindergartners for 2 years. She had looked up to them and learned from them. Now, she was a Kindergartner! Once again, the teachers and classroom were familiar. She knew almost all of the students and was very comfortable with them. They were her learning community. There were new little faces: three year olds who missed their parents and got into everything without knowing how to do



things. She could help them. She knew the drill. She could not wait to continue her reading and working with numbers. And she got to put the Pink Tower and Broad Stair together for extensions work and build the MAZE all by herself. She had watched the older students do it and even joined in some times. But now she knew she could figure it out all by herself. By year's end Kate had explored and mastered almost every lesson in this classroom. This is her learning home. She understands it and can teach her younger friends. The lessons that were daunting or took "so long" to do last year, take very little time this year. Kate understands how things work. She is confident and helpful. She pursues those things that interest her and she even has mastered things that she is not so keen on. She contributes greatly to her learning community as she reads and assists at every level, the same lessons someone once helped her with.

Kate leaves after 3 years in her Montessori classroom happy and confident, secure in who she is and her ability to master any learning task or environment.

The Importance of the Three Year Cycle in Montessori Education Specifically in the 3-6 Classroom

By Gaye Haralu



In Montessori education multi-age level classrooms are created for the purpose of optimal development, growth and challenge for the individual child. These multi-age level classrooms reflect the planes of human development which Dr. Montessori observed and documented in her work with children. Dr. Montessori observed that development and learning seemed to cycle around the years of 0-3, 3-6, 6-9, 9-12 and 12-15.

The three year cycle is important because it allows the child to progress through various stages of growth and development while the environment and some of the personalities remain constant. The first year of the cycle is all about adjustment, discovery and learning how to succeed in the environment. First year students are bright eyed with the wonder of all that their classroom and world hold. The opportunities granted to them to try and succeed or try and fail and learn from their failures allows them to develop confidence and focus.

The second year of the cycle is concerned with mastery. A second

year student already knows how the environment works therefore she is all about the “work.” Second year students tend to go from lesson to lesson according to their interests and skill level. All the while they are discovering new capabilities within themselves that propel them forward and cause them to work very hard toward mastery of their goals resulting in great joy.



Third year students return to complete the three year learning cycle, the pinnacle of their learning environment. Being very familiar with the environment, they emerge as leaders almost without even realizing it. They have an ever growing confidence that spills over to the group at large and the instruction of individual students. Third year students are still progressing in their mastery of lessons and the environment, however they are realizing their potential to assist at every level. This opportunity for leadership is an unprecedented chance for the child to complete the learning cycle and graduate to the next level with great confidence and a keen awareness of his/her role in learning community.



Interview: Leah Missik

By Stuart Critchfield

Leah, let's start by telling the readers a little bit about yourself in the present.

I am 23 years old and am currently working for the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) as a Renewable Energy Analyst in Nashville, Tennessee. My job involves supporting our small-scale renewable energy program, through which TVA buys power at a premium rate from people who have installed renewable systems (primarily solar panels) on their homes or businesses.

As my job suggests, I am very interested in environmental policy and climate change, and I hope to continue pursuing these issues through my future work. I am also very interested in international development and I love to travel and learn languages. In my spare time, I have taken up running and I finished my first marathon at the end of October.

You hold degrees from Kenyon College and the University of Indiana. Tell us about these schools, why you chose them, what you studied and your general experience there.

Kenyon College is a small liberal arts school in the village of Gambier, Ohio. I chose Kenyon because of its fantastic academic reputation and because the tight-knit community there is so friendly, kind, and welcoming. I loved Kenyon, and I miss my time there! At Kenyon, I double-majored in Modern Languages (Russian and German) and International Studies, with a concentration in Environmental Studies. Kenyon was an extremely supportive environment and I had some fantastic professors who challenged me, and I believe, really expanded my critical thinking

capabilities. I am still in frequent contact with several of them.

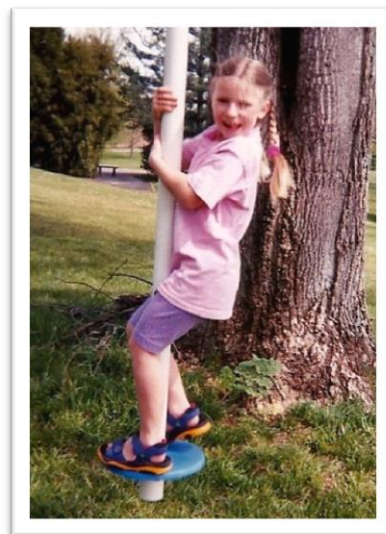
After I graduated with my B.A. from Kenyon, I attended Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) to get my Master's in Public Affairs (MPA). I chose SPEA because its MPA program is ranked #2 in the country and the Environmental Policy and Natural Resources Management concentration (which I completed along with a concentration in Comparative and International Affairs) is ranked #1. At SPEA, I took some really interesting courses from professors that were doing ground-breaking work in their field, which was exciting. For example, one of my courses, Human Behavior and Energy Consumption, explored how we should view the issues of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions through the lens of psychology and human behavior in order to more effectively address related problems.

Before all of that you attended Boyle County High School and the former Montessori Middle School of Danville.

Yes, I attended Montessori Middle for grades 6 and 7, before transferring to the Boyle County Public Schools. When I was in 8th grade at Boyle, I attended science classes at the high school, thanks to my Montessori background. Then, I was able to graduate from the high school in three years, at age 16.

I saw an Advocate Messenger article about Boyle County soccer that read, "Freshman Leah Missik had her first career hat trick, scoring twice in the first half and once in the second." Impressive for a freshman!

I started playing rec league soccer in middle school and when I transferred to the Boyle County school system, I joined the middle school team in 8th grade. I then played varsity during my three



years in high school, and was a captain during my final year. In the spring, I played with a club team in Lexington. Soccer was a huge time investment, but of course being on a team creates a sense of camaraderie and I made some close friends from my teammates. Also,

playing a sport competitively helped refine my work ethic and taught me how to push myself to achieve greater results.

Did you start Montessori at three years old?

Yes, I started Montessori at age three. I was in Jan's class. I have very happy memories of my early Montessori years. I remember the letters and words I would learn every day when they were drawn on my hands. I also remember Ren the cat, and I was always very happy when he would sit in my lap when I was reading. I began devouring books once I learned to read and I remember one book that I read over and over about natural disasters. I also remember feeling very proud when I was allowed to go in the first and second grade classes to borrow more advanced books.

You were such an enthusiastic student for us in the elementary. Do you recall your joy for learning at that time? You were so eager and loved the challenge and excitement of what came next.

I definitely recall my joy for learning. I was so enthusiastic about learning new things, and I think the educational materials at Montessori really helped with that since learning was hands-on and fun. It was also really beneficial to be able to move at our own paces. I was so excited whenever I graduated to the next level and got to start using a new learning tool (like test tubes for division!). I actually remember coming inside during recess sometimes just so I could do some more schoolwork since I was enjoying it so much!

What do you think the strengths of your Montessori education were?

I really think Montessori instills a curiosity and an enthusiasm for learning in children since they are allowed to focus on their interests and go at their own pace.

Learning at Montessori is not about meeting certain curriculum requirements and moving on—it is about discovery and a passion for knowledge, and how to assist individual children to come to this joy for learning in the way that suits them best, since not everyone is the same. I also really value Montessori's focus on problem solving, critical thinking and discussion. Practicing the ability to listen to others while talking through problems at a young age is very important.

Did being a Montessori student impact the student you later became?

My Montessori background definitely had a huge impact on the student I was later on. I have been told by former teachers and professors at all levels of my education that I was one of their most enthusiastic students and that they really appreciated my energy and my desire to learn. These are among the traits I value most about myself, and I know they were largely developed during my early years at Montessori, where I was not only allowed but encouraged to delve into my interests and learn at a fast pace which suited me. I was always provided with new learning material when I needed it so I never got bored. For example, I remember how much I loved learning about prehistoric creatures in 1st and 2nd grade, and Pat recognized this and helped me create large cardboard models of creatures I found interesting.

Do you have any favorite memories or lasting impressions of DMS that you would like to share?

The example I gave about creating cardboard models of prehistoric creatures is one of them, because I was encouraged and assisted in further



Kenyon College

2014 U.S. News & World Report #32 National Liberal Arts College

2010 Forbes – One of most beautiful college campuses in the world.

2006 Newsweek – One of the “New Ivies.”



Indiana University

#2 School of Public and Environmental Affairs, U.S. News & World Report 2014.

investigating something I was enthusiastic about. I also remember many other great projects we did, such as a long timeline of life on earth that we illustrated. The field trips I took to Mammoth Cave in third grade and to Pine Mountain in fourth are also great memories. These trips were not only fun, but also really educational. Around the time of the Mammoth Cave trip, I became so enthusiastic about bats! I think DMS really makes subject material interesting for its students. I also remember in third or fourth grade raising money to adopt acres of rainforest through the Nature Conservancy because of the wishes of some of the students. I think it is telling that there was a large group of kids that had this passion for



the environment and were supported in their endeavors to make a positive impact at such a young age.

What would you say to a parent considering Montessori elementary for their child?

I would certainly encourage them to choose Montessori. Not only do children leave the school with an advanced education for their age, but they also develop an important love of learning, as well as critical thinking and problem solving skills that are so important throughout life. I think Montessori also develops a sense of independence and helps teach children how to pursue their individual passions. At the same time, Montessori also develops a strong sense of compassion and respect for other people and creatures, and for the earth.

What are your plans for the future?

I plan to continue working on issues related to climate change, and I hope to find a job that allows me to combine this with my other interests in international development and women's

empowerment. I also aim to continue traveling, and in conjunction, develop my foreign language skills. For fun, I've been developing my writing and photography skills and reflecting on my travels in my blog at wentlooking.wordpress.com.

Is there anything else you would like to say?

I am very grateful that I had the opportunity to attend DMS, because it really helped develop aspects that I consider integral to my person today. I wish every child could be so lucky!

Thanks Leah!



Student Yoga

By Shona Storz

Dear DMS Parents,

I am very excited to announce that I am teaching yoga to your children at Danville Montessori School. We will be practicing yoga every Thursday/Friday (depending on the class) during the colder months when it becomes more difficult for the kids to go outside due to weather. This will be my third year teaching yoga at DMS, and I am excited for the opportunity to teach your children again, as well as meet all the new students. The kids look forward to their yoga classes each week and I continue to hear so many wonderful stories and accounts from kids, parents and teachers that they are thoroughly enjoying this new experience.

I wanted to make you aware of some of the amazing benefits of practicing yoga with children.

- Builds body awareness, confidence and self-esteem
- Physically it improves balance, flexibility, strength, and coordination
- Improves concentration and focus
- Helps develop calmness and relaxation
- Helps children deal with stress and regulate emotions
- Enhances imagination and creativity
- Teaches children to enjoy exercise in a non-competitive environment

Please ask your children to tell you about and show you their yoga. In the Pre-primary and Lower Elementary we are practicing yoga primarily through storytelling. You may be surprised at how much of the stories they will remember including the yoga poses. In the Upper Elementary we are practicing yoga as a group, independently and in partners. I enjoy the unique experience of teaching yoga to children and the smiles, enthusiasm and excitement I see is amazing!

Encourage your children to continue enjoying yoga on their own or with friends and family. If you would like me to recommend any kid-friendly yoga resources, let me know. And please feel free to contact me with any questions, concerns, or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Shonna Storz

sstorz1@yahoo.com