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The Child in the Family

In her book, The Child In The Family (1956), Maria Montessori wrote,

“The child is sensitive and impressionable to such a degree that the adult ought to monitor everything he says and does, for everything is literally engraved in the child’s mind.” (p 40)

Most parents know that the child observes everything a parent does. So the role of the parent is to put their actions behind their beliefs. Are you living your life on a daily basis in such a way that you would want your child to follow? When watching television, movies or listening to music are you making conscious choices to screen what is not appropriate for your child? Modeling also includes your interactions with other people, whether they are your spouse, family members or friends. Are you appropriately modeling how to handle and resolve problems?

The first responsibility of the adult, teacher or parent is to respect the child. Respect the child’s ability to grow and develop as a human being. Regarding the child, Montessori felt it strange that we commonly believe we must use bright colors, exaggerated gestures, and loud voices to attract his attention (page 52). This is the reason Montessori environments are as natural as possible – soothing colors on the walls, lovely, framed artwork that is

purposely placed. Montessori Directresses approach a child to speak to him, instead of shouting across the room. A parent can follow the same ideology – create a room that is relaxing and soothing for a child, approach a child and speak to them to show the child respect.

The fundamental responsibility of the Montessori education is to not become an obstacle in the development of the child (p 57). In the Montessori classroom this means the Directress lets the child select their own work, where they want to work and with whom. In the home this means parents must be models of perfection. Although not perfect, one must do one’s best to be a good example for one’s child. Think about your values and how you are expressing them to your child. If you value honesty, are you living an honest life? Do you tell little white lies? Children hear those little white lies and know the parent doesn’t really value honesty; just honesty when it works in their favor. One must always live by one’s moral code, for children see and hear everything.

When a child joins a family it is the parents’ responsibility and duty to create the very best environment for that child, allowing the child to develop his own path and future.



Magnificent Montessori Materials: Mystery Bag

The mystery bag is an interesting exercise in the early childhood classroom. The mystery bag develops a child's intellectual curiosity, refinement of senses and their stereognostic sense (how things feel). The mystery bag has endless possibilities regarding the type of bag (or box) as well as objects placed inside. Following is a description of a lesson and some lesson possibilities.

The material consists of a drawstring bag that contains a few objects that usually relate in some way. For example, a bag might contain a pinecone, an Autumn leaf and an acorn. The objects are very different in size and texture. The child is shown the objects in the bag. The objects are placed back in the bag and the child is asked to find the object that is rough (pinecone).

The mystery bag is frequently used to reinforce the geometric shapes the child learns in the sensorial area of the classroom. Once the child is familiar with the names of the geometric solids, the child is asked to put on a blindfold and pull a named geometric solid from the bag. Two children can also complete the mystery bag activity together.

Familiar objects can also be placed in the mystery bag. Montessori Directress' often place objects that match what the class is studying. If the class is studying Australia, objects in the mystery bag may include a kangaroo, koala bear, boomerang and other items that reflect the Australian culture.



The Mystery Bag Lesson:

1. First ensure the child knows all of the objects' names. If they do not know the name of the object, start with the Three Period Lesson.
2. Tell the child you are going to place the objects back in the bag.
3. Place your hand in the bag and grasp an object; say the object's name.
4. Show the child what is in your hand and say, "This is a ____."
5. Ask the child to pick a specific item out of the bag.

The child learns visual and tactile discrimination of form from the mystery bag lesson. The child also increases their vocabulary.

A toddler child can complete the mystery bag work. The toddler child enjoys the variety of objects in the mystery bag and learning the vocabulary.



Tips From Teachers: History – recording family histories

The Montessori History curriculum includes timelines. Timelines provide the child with a visual representation of history. Starting in the 3-6 year old program children participate in the creation of personal timelines. Made in many different ways, they range from pictures of the child's life to illustrations the child makes. The child shares their timeline with the class to show their own personal history.

Materials you'll need for the **Personal Timeline**:

Paper, scissors, tape, glue, markers, photos

Personal Timeline:

1. A timeline can be as short as one page or as long as a wall.
2. To make a short time line, draw a vertical line down the middle of a sheet of paper.
3. Write your child's birth date on the left side of the line at the top of the page. On the right side of the line, write the corresponding event. ("I was born!")
4. Add other important dates and events, such as when your child started to walk and talk, when siblings were born, when your child started preschool, when you took family trips, and so on, in chronological order.
5. To make a long time line, cut a length of paper from a large roll or tape several sheets of paper together. Draw a horizontal line across the middle of the banner.
6. Write the dates and events of your child's life from left to right.
7. Glue on photos or let your child illustrate each event.
8. Hang the time line in your child's room and add to it occasionally.

Family Timeline:

The family timeline can be represented by lined paper cut into strips (legal pads work well). The child counts one line on the paper strip for each year of each family member's life. So, Dad might have a strip with 32 lines. Mom may have a strip with 31 lines. The child would have a timeline that has 3 strips and an older sibling would have a strip of paper with 7 lines. The visual representation is very interesting for the child and it also helps them to see their place in the family. The child also sees the passage of time as they add a strip of paper from year to year.

Family History Albums:

Scrapbooking has taken off tremendously in the past few decades. This craft is a wonderful way to work with your child to create an on-going family history. Your album can be simple pictures slipped into a book, elaborate scrapbook pages or completely crafted on your computer. If you are interested in creating a family history album with your child a great place to start is your local craft store or scrapbook store. Many offer classes to help you begin. You can also find plenty of resources on the internet if you are interested.

Maria Montessori in What You Should Know About Your Child: "For a growing organism growth itself is happiness."

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Questions from Montessori Parents

Q: What are the advantages of a Montessori education? How long should I keep my child in a Montessori program? What resources can you recommend? What research has been conducted to prove the benefits of the program?

A:
There are many advantages of a Montessori education. Here are some advantages that were recently documented in periodical "Science" based on research by Angeline Lillard and Nicole Else-Quest.

By the end of Kindergarten, Montessori children performed better in reading and mathematics on standardized tests, engaged in more positive interactions on the playground, and showed more concern for fairness and justice. At the end of elementary school they wrote more creative sentences and complex essays, reported feeling more of a sense of community with their school.

How long you keep your child in a Montessori program is dependent on many factors including how successful your child is in their program, other educational opportunities and financial considerations. The best suggestion is to fully understand the choices you have available to you. Tour the schools you are considering,

talk to other parents who have children attending the various programs. Talk to the children attending the school if possible. What are you listening for? How does the child feel about their educational experience? What kinds of things are they studying and how much control they feel they have over their learning?

Angeline Lillard's book, [The Science Behind the Genius](#) is one recent example of Montessori education pedagogy and research. Lillard does an excellent job relating Montessori ideals and finding research, not all particular to Montessori education, which supports the Montessori Methodology.

