

INTRODUCTION

Montessori education recently celebrated its 100th anniversary. By some measures, there are now over 5,000 Montessori schools in the United States and more than 20,000 worldwide. The Montessori “method” has educated millions of students and countless creative, confident, compassionate, and gifted leaders throughout the globe. It has a rich history and broad presence. Despite these facts, however, most parents understand very little about Montessori education and the benefits it can provide to their children.

When Dr. Montessori first formulated and set forth her ideas on education and child development, they were original and controversial. Advances in science and our understanding of human development have since reversed this perspective. Her educational theories are now strongly supported by leading neuroscientists, developmental theorists, cognitive researchers, and educational experts.

Moreover, her views regarding a child’s intellectual maturation and environmental needs are now commonly accepted prompting many traditional schools to modify their programs in recent years to incorporate Montessori-like elements. These include educational practices such as project-based learning, independent study, longer-period block scheduling, multi-age classrooms, gardening/nature programs, the deployment of multi-sensory educational materials, and the use of work stations rather than separated desks. Likewise, many teachers’ organizations, including the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the National Science Teachers’ Association, are now trying to promote the use of a Montessori-like educational model called Constructivism to guide school curriculums. This progressive educational paradigm has been shown to improve student learning and embraces guiding principles that closely reflect much of Dr. Montessori’s theories and ideals. Core elements of the Montessori method also parallel those of popular, subsequently developed educational models like Reggio Emilia (a primary difference in

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In January 2007, Montessori education celebrated its centenary. In honor of the occasion, AMI Montessori teachers from across the United States contributed their thoughts and observations to develop a list of 100 parenting tips. Addressing conception to adulthood, the list was then supplemented when appropriate with perspectives and insights derived from scientific research on child and cognitive development published over the last several decades. The suggestions outlined here are a culmination of these efforts and embody the core tenets of the Montessori education philosophy – multi-sensory learning, age-appropriate activities, independence, freedom and responsibility, structure and limits, environmental order and beauty, and grace and courtesy. Raising a joyful, focused, compassionate, creative, and curious individual is a journey filled with many gifts. The time-tested, research-supported guidance below will help parents to optimize their children’s intellectual, emotional, physical, and moral development and support them along this wonderful journey. Hopefully, the suggestions in this booklet will serve as a valuable resource for educators and parents alike in their ongoing efforts.

Prenatal

1. **Sing and read out loud to your child when you are pregnant.** The fetus is having rich language lessons in the womb which is an optimal environment for early human development. Due to early neural development, the senses (e.g., touch) and movement begin to develop after 8 weeks from the point of conception. The fetus’ ear is structurally complete at 24 weeks. A newborn has long-term verbal memory and will be soothed by the songs and books that were habitually heard while in the womb.