

Working Thesis

“The Montessori method should be the focal point in all learning environments. It effectively addresses a diverse set of learners through a meaningful, individualized practice.”

Achievement Gap

According to the National Education Association (NEA), the factors that contribute towards the achievement gap include low expectations for students, poor instructional leadership, large class sizes, inadequate materials, and students being responsible for their own learning. The Montessori Method addresses all of these factors. Recent research suggests that Public Montessori raises achievement and closes gaps (David Ayer-2017). Dr. Angeline Lillard conducted a three-year study of children that underwent public Montessori training. **She found that these students were rated higher in academic achievement, social cognition, mastery orientation, and school enjoyment.** There are of course many other factors among the above mentioned that contribute towards the achievement gap, most of which are out of the schools control, ie. Community safety, economic opportunity for the student’s families, income level, student’s background, budget deficits, etc. The list goes on, but life is about doing the best you can with what you have. Young learners are resilient in nature and they are ready to take on challenges when given the proper guidance to do so. Montessori knows that and uses it as an advantage. Students already have what it takes inside of them to achieve success and it is the educator’s job to help them find it. That is what Montessori is all about. It is student-centered, individualized, and reliant on the learner’s intrinsic motivation; all of which taking care of the school-controlled factors that contribute towards the achievement gap, in turn, making it non-existent.

Intrinsic Motivation

A lot of educators focus on teaching students *what* to think, but even if you give a student all of the information in the world it won’t do them any good if they don’t know what to do with it. That is where the Montessori approach comes in. **Its soul focus is not only teaching students *how to think, but how to love to think. It awakens the learner’s raw curiosity.*** Introducing new information to the student is only the beginning, and that’s where most educators stop. They teach them the material and then assess them on it. If they do poorly on the assessment they are given a bad grade or are told to try again. This is discouraging to the learner and incidentally, makes them hate to learn. Intrinsic motivation is thrown out the window in this case. Montessori learners thrive on their self-motivation. **Montessori educators never say “good job”, instead they get excited with the student for completing a task successfully. An educator should**

never have to say good job to a student because they should already know that they did a good job in the first place. Montessori turns students into learners, learners into thinkers, thinkers into doers, and doers into anything they want to be. All of this happens through guiding the learner through their own mind and inspiring them to use it productively.

-Building from above-

The Flow Theory involves a state in which a person feels fully immersed in an activity with focused energy. In other words, this is what Michael Jordan entered when getting into “the zone”. I would like to point out, as stated **(include video)**

Fostering a Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is believing that, with effort, you can achieve anything. As included in Ayer’s article on the study conducted by Dr. Lillard, children in a Montessori program were more likely to have a growth mindset by the latter half of their preschool years. The study that proved this is really quite interesting. The students were given two puzzles, one solvable the other unsolvable. More of the students in the Montessori program were choosing the unsolvable puzzle simply because they thought they could do it. These children literally believe that they can solve the impossible, that’s what the future needs.

Play

“I spend a lot less time sharpening pencils”, says Cathy Wells, at Eagle Mountain Elementary School in Texas. This school is one of dozens of schools in Texas, Oklahoma, and California that are testing out extra recess time as part of a three-year trial. The students were grinding and chewing on the pencils. So naturally, that means they have ADHD or need to be tested for it. Or even more naturally, they need a break. Not just any break, but one that allows them to access physical activity while giving their brains a rest. Bob Murray, a pediatrician at Ohio State University, says “If you want a child to be attentive and stay on task- if you want them to encode the information you’re giving them in their memory- you’ve got to give them regular breaks.” At **The Community Montessori School in Floyd County Indiana, the instructors keep the doors OPEN.** Yes, this is done in a safe manner. This environment allows the learners an option of deciding when they need a physical release of energy. I asked the director if this had a counter-productive side, seeing as the learners can just “play” the whole time and not get any work or learning done. The director replied simply by saying, **“Playing is learning here.”**

Constructivism

(Article: An Exploratory View on Constructivist Research)

Constructivists share a focus on the **learner centered approach** and the density of the learner's cognitive course of action for their learning and support needs and the value of providing learners with opportunities to make meaning and be real dynamic contributors in the learning-teaching experience. Further they believe that knowledge is constructed, involving **social processes, interaction with the environment and self-reflection**, required a great resource framework, in that they:

- encourage learner centered experiences
- provide opportunities for learners to work together
 - encourages individuals to make sense of information for themselves
- assist novice learners to develop expertise
- focuses on the role of social interaction & the impact of socio cultural factors on one's ability.

The above entry, in its entirety, screams Montessori. The soul focus of this method touches all of the points of constructivism, i.e., self-directed activity, hands-on learning, and collaborative play.

Assessment

Tests and quizzes and grades, oh my! Who needs those when you have scientific observation; the process is assessed instead of the product. The basis of assessment in Montessori is formative, not summative. This is where the development and progress of the whole child is being monitored continuously. The purpose is to monitor for mastery and understanding. This is extremely productive because the instructor will see where a student isn't understanding something early on and can adjust the way the material is presented in accordance to how that student learns. When there is learning present, assessment occurs naturally. It actually occurs in a few different ways such as observations, presentations, control of error within the materials of the environment (gives automatic feedback to both the learner and guide), and lesson progress of the learner. There are also two main areas of focus when assessing the child (work engagement and social and emotional behavior). All of this is taken into consideration as well as how the environment impacts the learning outcomes. It's about observing and analyzing what the student is ready to learn, so the teacher works at the pace of the learner. It can't make much more sense than that.

Flow Theory

Scaffolding

Citations

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Ideas:

Dear Millennials, Let's talk education-today

Millennial Forum: Updating Ourselves

#Montessoriblog

#Montessoritravelblog

#educationtoday

#doingourresearch