

The Montessori Review

September 2018
Volume 6 Issue 1



NEWS FROM THE MONTESSORI TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM
AT OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY

EVENTS

It's Peace Month!

Remember to be kind to yourself, those around you, your environment, and the ones you love.

"If you think peaceful thoughts you will feel peaceful emotions." – Wayne Dyer

Teachers ½ to Eat Too!

Every Sunday thru Thursday in September Teachers and Admin get a ½ priced 4 course classic experience for two.

The Melting Pot
4 E. Sheridan Ave. OKC, OK



Skeleton Museum: Teacher Open House

September - October
Grab your School ID* and a friend for this FREE Osteology Adventure!
FREE Admission* for (2)
Field Trip Information Kits
FREE Classroom Gifts
Program Material Previews
Teacher Scavenger Hunts
FREE Raffle Prizes
SkeletonMuseum.com
Education@MuseumOfOsteology.org
(405) 814-0006

Oklahoma Fall Arts Institute at Quartz Mountain

Educators currently employed in Oklahoma public schools automatically receive full scholarships to attend OFAI. Scholarships include tuition and room and board. Oklahoma private school educators qualify for a 50% discount on tuition.
Oai.oaiquartz.org (405) 605-7500

inside

"Peace is what every human being is craving for, and it can be brought about by humanity through the child."
-Maria Montessori

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Spreading Montessori to the Mainstream

by Alicia Marie Clark

"I would say that parents, understandably, are anxious to do the best for their children. They are extremely upset at the notion of leaving their children in the vestibule of life until the age of six. Now, whether or not the Montessori approach might be construed as a valid alternative to existing nursery school, kindergarten approaches, is really not the question. The fact is that the college-educated parents, many of whom are better educated than the people teaching their children, are like natives in an underdeveloped country, and are restless. They want something." - Nancy McCormick Rambusch (Nancy McCormick Rambusch, "Montessori Insights and American Children Today," Catholic Reporter, May 31, 1963.)

I have learned in my short time of being engulfed in Montessori education, all the beautiful and not so attractive ideals of the Montessori culture, what it has become and what others would like it to be. I call it a culture because from the outside it seems like a small knit tribe of educators and parents that have a thriving culture of their own. Only to be opened to those who truly understand, have fallen in love with the method, or just have enough money to squeeze through the door.

When my first child was born, like any new mother I had no clue what to do. I read book after book, researched online articles, and reached out to any free service I could find that would help me be the best parent I could be. I read up on how different cultures around the world raise children. I learned that Americans and Europeans push their children in strollers, and to other cultures who carry and wear their babies, we look like we are pushing our children away. As we keep our children in barred caged beds, other families sleep in the same bed. During this time of questioning my own beliefs and those who I was learning about, I magically stumbled upon the Montessori Method. I soon remembered when I was young I had the privilege of attending a small Montessori school in Norman, Oklahoma called the Pumpkin Patch. I couldn't remember what was so special about it though. My visual memory only leads me to a boy sitting across the table from me eating paste. Regardless of my memories, my mom always had such a fond tone in

her voice when talking about me going to Montessori school. So, I continued my search and found article after article on the 'prepared environment.' It totally made sense to me! The world is too big for a little person, we must bring it down to their level, make it comfortable and intriguing not scary and overwhelming. By six months old my son had a mattress on the floor, no crib. Not only did it make it easier for me to nurse him, ween him, and put him to bed, he also had the freedom of getting up and out of his bed whenever he chose. For some families this doesn't work, but for ours it was a tiny miracle. As I immersed myself in finding more information, I also struggled with the why of it being some what exclusive. I wanted to know how I could be more involved in this culture.

Growing up with the privilege of attending private schools and graduating from a private high school. I knew about the Montessori schools in my community because my friends that I grew up with attended them. However, I still did not know how to get my foot in the door, other than to put my child on the wait list to attend one of these schools.

I have been told my whole life that I should be a teacher. The stress, and turmoil of taking care of other people's children while being underpaid was never appealing. What feared me most was the idea of having to control these young people and deal with the repercussions of their behavior when they do not want to be controlled. What joy the teachings of Montessori have brought me! Not only do I not have to try and control my classroom, because it naturally controls itself. But, giving the child freedom within limits and approaching the classroom as a scientific teacher who is a guide and an observer, did not only shift my awareness but opened the door to my calling.

I can only continue to think of myself as being lucky or just being in the right place at the right time. Not only do I have the privilege of completing my Montessori teacher education at Oklahoma City University, but I am in the program that the American Montessori pioneers, Peggy Leoffler, and Bee Pape began. Their contributions to the Oklahoma City University Montessori Teacher Education Program, Casady School and hard work on the AMS board is largely responsible for the role

research plays in the American Montessori Society today. Peggy Leoffler wrote many publications, made strong arguments for educational research, observation, and developed associations between Piaget, Vygotsky and Montessori.

“If we truly believe that Montessori education is effective, then we cannot be satisfied with serving small numbers of privileged children.”

- AMI president André Roberfroid

This past weekend I had the opportunity to attend the OKAEYC Early Childhood conference. The hall was filled with traditional educators and four little Montessori teachers. The head speaker for the event, Jill Soto, spoke on intentional teaching and her love for the philosophy of Vygotsky. She gave the group seven tips and three strategies to achieve the goal of being an intentional teacher. All of which melded well with the Montessori Method, so much as it baffled me as to why Maria Montessori and her philosophy is pushed to the way side in traditional education.

Here are Jill Soto’s seven tips.

1. Be coherent. Have a logical flow of a connected learning progression.
2. Use resources and technologies that enhance learning.
3. Have a safe, respectful, well organized learning environment.
4. Provide challenging, rigorous learning experiences.
5. Provide thoughtful interactive learning, where children can model for children, and teachers can model for children.
6. Be creative in a problem-solving culture.
7. Monitor, assess, and have feedback. Observation is a critical part of the process.

Jill Soto’s three strategies:

1. Have awareness.
2. Prepare a daily schedule.
3. Scaffold.

She ended her lecture with three sayings, “Be kind, be kind, be kind.” – Mr. Rogers

I was pleasantly surprised that Jill Soto unknowingly made associations to Vygotsky and Montessori in her seven tips and three strategies she shared with the teacher community. I can only wonder what Peggy Leoffler’s input on the conference would have been.

Across the globe it seems educators are searching for better ways to reach young children, use different strategies to teach, and promote peace and respect. The Montessori method is not new, it is not a method of teaching that has failed. In fact, it has been around for over one hundred years. Its benefits have given children confidence to be independent, respectful, diligent little people. Despite the steady growth in number, Montessori schools have never thrived in breaking into the mainstream of education, its policy makers or academics. Most Americans continue to be uninformed about Montessori education. It has strong stereotypes, and distinctive cultural practices, which may be the underlying turn off. This is where I find that it is our job as parents and Montessori teachers to tell our stories about Montessori. What better time than now, when similar principles and philosophies are being incorporated in the traditional education classroom. “If we truly believe that Montessori education is effective,” announced AMI president André Roberfroid on the occasion of the Centenary Conference, “then we cannot be satisfied with serving small numbers of privileged children.” (Whitescarver, Keith & Cossentino, Jacqueline, *Montessori and the Mainstream: A Century of Reform on the Margins*, College of William and Mary 2591). I feel as Montessorians who strongly believe in the philosophy that we must also feel obliged to spread it. We should not feel as competitors with traditional teachers but as comrades on the same mission to provide excellence and only the best for our children.

I strongly think it is important as more Montessori schools open and the philosophy branches out and hopefully reaches the mainstream with open arms. That the time-honored practices and the wholesome traditions of Maria Montessori, continue as the solid foundation for Montessori education. I also hope if the current trend of growth and circulation into the public continues, Montessorians continue to hold Montessori teacher education as a valuable requirement.

Through my own experience nothing has been more rewarding and important as engulfing

myself in the Montessori Teacher Education Program. It has helped me fully understand Maria Montessori, the philosophers she admired and worked with and the strategies and development of the method. I also feel it is important for traditional teachers wanting to teach the way of Montessori, to get the training and certification to do so. I understand teachers who feel they've already put in the work and are not wanting to further their education. However, when I attended the Early Childhood conference, I was surprised that teachers had to be reminded that their most important job is to teach children to learn how to learn, to have a purpose for teaching, and to model respect. Speaking as a parent, I assumed this was already the known job of a teacher that needed no reminders. If the parents and the students are expressing dislike with the education system. Maybe it's time we as teachers take a little look on the inside and find ways to better ourselves, our tactics and our strategies, which will in turn better the system. Maybe it's time we truly become powerful advocates

of the Montessori philosophy.

As I have begun my own Montessori journey, my friends and acquaintances have begun to be new parents looking for an alternative to traditional schooling, while struggling to find the perfect school in a pond of uncertainty. I am often asked when I am going to open my own school for their children to attend. Although I am humbly honored, I respond with smiles and shrugs, I have not looked that far ahead in my journey, I have so much more to learn. I only bring this up to point out the fact that there is a want and a need for alternative schooling. There is not such a greater time than now to push the Montessori Method to the mainstream. I'm not saying Montessori is for everyone but there could be those teachers, parents and children who need it and haven't found it.



JUST THE INTERN

“Just the intern? That’s an important job! You are with my child every day. Thanks for being here.” – Parent of a student

I am Alicia Marie Clark. I just thought I’d let you know who was writing the Montessori Review this year. Well it’s me, “Just the intern.” I actually said this to a parent on orientation night at my intern site. He kindly reminded me no matter the title, my job was still very important. I totally agree, it’s been rewarding, challenging, and an eye opener. I love it! I am also a mom of two, a Graduate Assistant, a graduate student, and an artist.

My goal for the Montessori Review, is to keep you the reader informed, to write material that gets you thinking, to bring up topics not frequently discussed, to share ideas and to have fun!

In the next issue you will read about and meet the interns. Get a look at the new Montessori school in Oklahoma City, Heartland Montessori School. Meet the director and teachers and learn about the ups and downs of opening a new school.

If you would also like to be involved in the Montessori Review. Have questions, suggestions, or a few words to say. Don’t hesitate to contact us.



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National Montessori Events 2018

9/30 Montessori Public Policy Initiative Alexandria, VA

10/6 Montessori Consortium of the Great Lakes South Bend, IN

11/10 Wisconsin Montessori Association Milwaukee, WI

1/12 University of Wisconsin Conference La Crosse, WI

2/14 Montessori Model UN New York, NY Applications available soon.

2/23 Association of Illinois Montessori Schools Lisle (Chicago) IL Applications available soon.

3/2 Cincinnati Montessori Society Covington, KY Applications available soon.

3/21 American Montessori Society Washington, DC Application open

3/21 Montessori Model UN New York, NY Applications available soon.

4/5 Children Change the World Conference Calgary, AB Applications available soon.

Local Teacher Discounts

Best of Books 1313 E Danforth Rd, Edmond, OK 73034 : Teachers receive 20% off their purchase of regularly priced items at Best of Books. Best of Books also hosts BOB's Book Drives that raise money for schools in the metro.

Copelin's 425 W Main St, Norman, OK 73069 : Copelin's offers a VIP stamp card. For every ten dollars spent on toys and teaching tools, you receive a stamp. Once your card is filled, you receive ten dollars off a future purchase.

Full Circle Bookstore 1900 Northwest Expwy, Oklahoma City, OK 73118 : Teachers receive a 10% discount with a valid school ID.

The Learning Tree 7638 N Western Ave, Oklahoma City, OK 73116 : Teachers receive a 15% discount on teaching and classroom materials. Be sure to mention that you are a teacher to receive the discount.

Pie Junkie 1711 NW 16th St, Oklahoma City, OK 73106 : Teachers receive 10% off slices and drinks with a school ID.

Empire Slice 1734 NW 16th St, Oklahoma City, OK 73106 : Offers an "Empire for Education" discount of 25% for all teachers across the state (public, private, collegiate).

Plenty Mercantile 807 N Broadway Ave, Oklahoma City, OK 73102: Teachers get 10% off their entire purchase with an ID.