



Montessori - a never ending conversation

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Paul Epstein, Ph.D. *Montessori: A never ending conversation.*

a life with children

Accordingly this is the method that we shall follow: studying, repeating, working experimentally: the subject of our study is humanity; our purpose is to become teachers. Now, what really makes a teacher is love for the human child; for it is love that transforms the social duty of the educator into the higher consciousness of a mission.

Maria Montessori. *Pedagogical anthropology*, p. 34.



a life with children

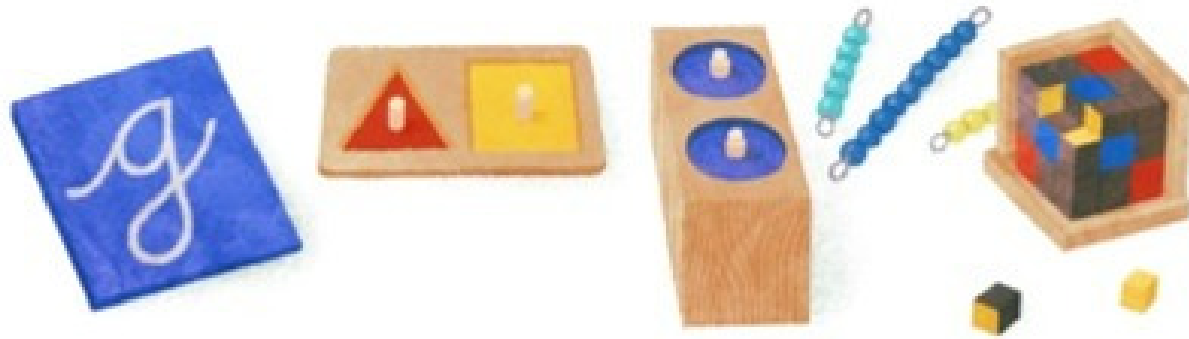
Thinking back, when did you know you would have a life with children?

Was there a particular child or children who touched your heart?

What did, and does, that “touch” mean to you?

What have children taught you about yourself?

Montessori 142



who attends Montessori schools?

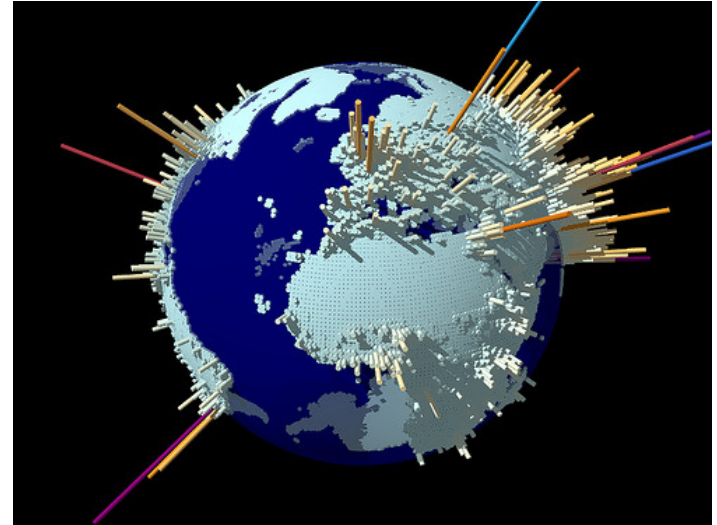
World population 7,100,000,000

Percent of children < age 15 33%

Number of children 2,343,000,000

of Montessori schools 20,000

Percent of children attending 0.0005



illustrious Montessorians

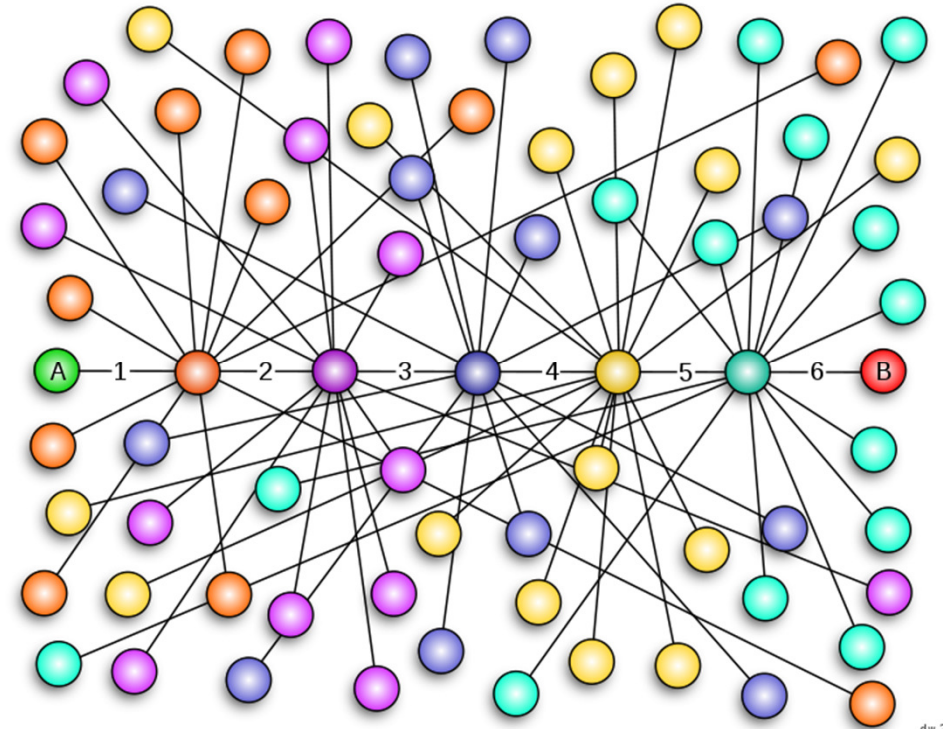
- **Larry Page and Sergey Brin, founders of Google**
- **Will Wright, creator of “The Sims” video game**
- **Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com**
- **Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia**
- **Anne Frank**
- **Sean “Puff Daddy” Combs**
- **T. Berry Brazelton**
- **Peter Drucker**
- **Gabriel Garcia Marquez**
- **Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis**
- **Julia Child**

Advocates:

- **Alice Waters (restauranteur)**
- **Thomas Edison (a school founder)**
- **Mister Rogers**
- **Jean Piaget**

Montessori 6-degrees

6-degrees of separation is “the idea that everyone is on average approximately six steps away, by way of introduction, from any other person in the world, so that a chain of ‘a friend of a friend’ statements can be made, on average, to connect any two people in six steps or fewer.”



dw 2010

Six degrees of separation. Retrieved September 29, 2012, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six_degrees_of_separation

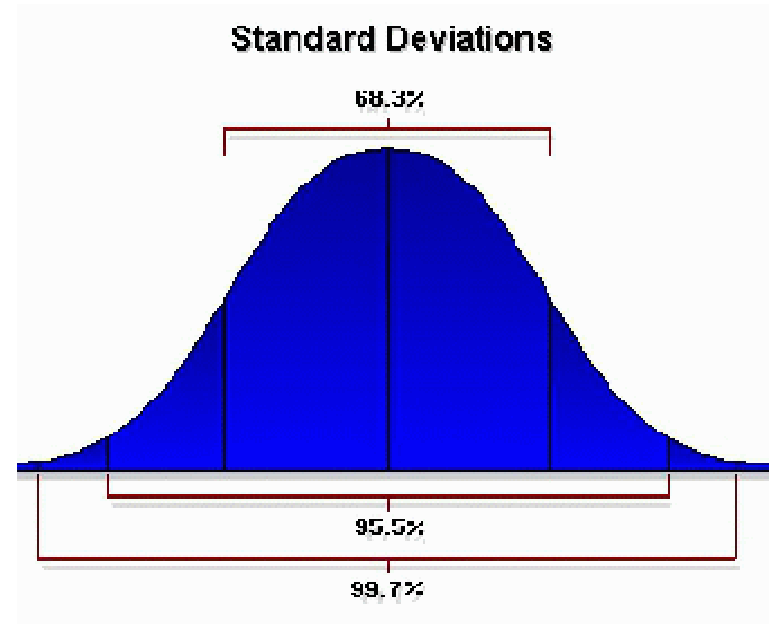
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test-based learning

Knowledge can be segmented and categorized.

The rules of categorization are “legitimized” with reference to standards.

A test score is valid with reference to the standards.



test-based learning

Standards are good! We want chairs to hold our weights and brakes to stop our cars.

If the chair does hold our weight; if the brakes to stop our cars – we have good products.

Chairs and cars are products; are things.

Children are not products; they are not things.

the true nature of children

Children are not things.

Children are beings.

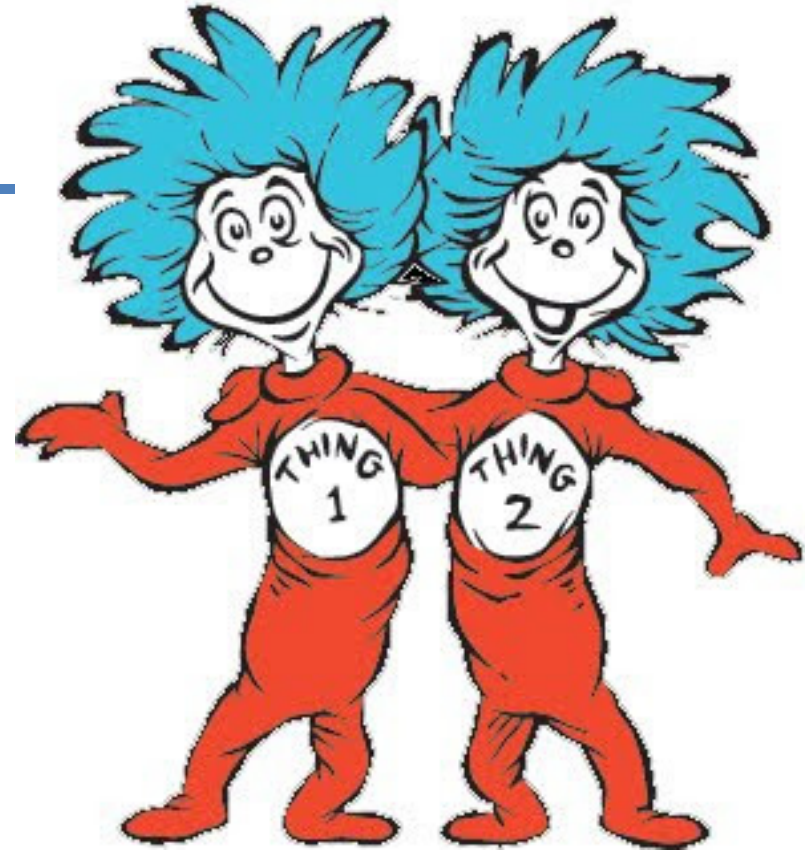
Beings are unique, are made up of unique capabilities and potentials.

Why would we want to subject children to a “thing-like” education?

think about it!

What does it say about us that we would subject children to a “thing-like” education?

How can we tolerate such a thing?



an education for life

The concept of an education centered upon the care of the living being alters all previous ideas. Resting no longer on a curriculum, or a timetable, education must conform to the facts of human life.

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, p. 12.



our mission

[We] are here to offer to this life, which came into the world by itself, the means necessary for its development, and having done that we must await this development with respect. Let us leave the life free to develop within the limits of the good, and let us observe this inner life developing. This is the whole of our mission.

Maria Montessori. *Dr. Montessori's own handbook*, pp. 133-134.

accountable for

- ✓ **Understanding learning styles.**
- ✓ **Personalizing instruction.**
- ✓ **Maximizing potential.**
- ✓ **Engaging capabilities.**
- ✓ **Developing abilities to think, create, design, reflect, solve problems.**

how children learn

influences whom they will become



facts of human life

No two humans learn in the same way.

No two humans learn at the same time.

facts of human life

When we are interested, we become motivated.

When we are motivated, we choose, engage, investigate, explore, and discover.

facts of human life

We will only learn when we are ready.

When we develop coordination, we can collaborate by internal choice instead of complying to external control.

the normalized child

- Learn how to learn.
- Learn how to make responsible choices and anticipate consequences of their choices.
- Develop their abilities to take risks and step into new works.
- Persist in their pursuits.
- Reflect on their progress and accomplishments.
- Develop their abilities to be creative, innovative, and problem-solvers.
- Communicate and get along with others.
- Accept and be accepting.

the normalized child

- 1. An enormous capacity for intellectual accomplishment.**
- 2. Cooperative and helpful.**
- 3. No interest in rewards.**
- 4. Finds joy in work; loves to work.**
- 5. Has a love of order.**
- 6. Inner discipline and peace grows over time.**

a never ending conversation

This idea, that life acts of itself and that in order to study it, to divine its secrets or to direct its activity, it is necessary to observe it and to understand it without intervening – this idea, I say, is very difficult for anyone to assimilate and to put into practice.

Maria Montessori. *The Montessori Method*.

a sacred trust

I promise with full humility that I will care for and cherish the single most important person in your life. That I can be counted on to nurture your child at least better than you would if your life's circumstances allowed you to be with your child right now. That I will endeavor to live far past the sacred trust I have made with you.

the call of the child

Such is the child's power. Whatever be our political or religious affiliations, we are all near to the child and we all love him. It is from this love that comes the child's power for unity ... The child is the only point on which there converges from everyone a feeling of gentleness and love. People's souls soften and sweeten when one speaks of children; the whole of mankind shares in the deep emotions which they awaken. The child is a well-spring of love. Whenever we touch the child, we touch love. It is a difficult love to define; we all feel it, but no one can describe its roots or evaluate the immense consequences which flow from it ... In the vicinity of children mistrust melts away; we come sweet and kindly, because, when we are gathered about them, we feel warmed by that flame of love which is there, where life originates.

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, pp. 262-264.

the call of love

**Of all things love is
the most potent.**

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, p. 269.



the call of love

Let us try to comprehend the nature of love If we want to produce harmony in the world, it is clear that we ought to think more about this The child is the only point on which there converges from everyone a feeling of gentleness and love. People's souls soften and sweeten when one speaks of children; the whole of mankind shares in the deep emotions which they awaken. The child is a well-spring of love. Whenever we touch the child, we touch love. It is a difficult love to define; we all feel it, but no one can describe its roots or evaluate the immense consequences which flow from it In the vicinity of children mistrust melts away; we become sweet and kindly, because, when we are gathered about them, we feel warmed by that flame of life which is there, where life originates.

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, pp. 263-264.

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the call of love

Romeo

**O, she doth teach the torches to burn bright! ...
Did my heart love till now? forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.**

Act I, Scene V

the call of love

Romeo

But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale with grief,
That thou her maid art far more fair than she

Juliet

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Act II, Scene II

the call of love

**Of all things love is
the most potent.**

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, p. 269.



love and its source

There are two levels of love. Often, when we speak of our love for children, we refer to the care we take of them, the caresses and affection we shower on those we know and who arouse our tender feelings, and if a spiritual relationship binds us to them, we show it by teaching them their prayers.

But I am speaking of something different. It is a level of love which is no longer personal or material. To serve the children is to feel one is serving the spirit of man, a spirit which has to free itself. The difference of level has truly been set not by the teacher but by the child. It is the teacher who feels she has been lifted to a height she never knew before. The child has made her grow till she is brought within his sphere

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, p. 258.

personal preparation

The real preparation for education is the study of one's self. The training of the teacher who is to help life is something far more than the learning of ideas. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit.

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, p. 132.



the call of acceptance

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

I Corinthians 13: 4-8.

a spiritual pedagogy

How do you define spirituality?

What are your current personal growth practices?

What new practices would you like to learn?

a spiritual pedagogy

It has always been recognized that a teacher must be calm, but this calmness is usually considered to be one of character, a lack of nervousness. But there is here a question of a deeper calm, an empty, or better, unencumbered state that is a source of inner clarity. This calm consists in a spiritual humility and intellectual purity necessary for the understanding of a child, and which, as a consequence, must be found in the teacher.

Maria Montessori. *The secret of childhood*, p. 137.



our personal work

We insist on the fact that a teacher must prepare himself interiorly by systematically studying himself so that he can tear out his most deeply rooted defects, those in fact which impede his relations with children. In order to discover these subconscious failings, we have a need of a special kind of instruction. We must see ourselves as another sees us.

This is equivalent to saying that a teacher must be initiated. He must begin by studying his own defects, his own evil tendencies, rather than by being excessively preoccupied with a “child’s tendencies,” with the manner of “correcting a child’s mistakes,” or even with “the effects of original sin.” First remove the beam from your own eye and then you will see clearly how to remove the speck from the eye of a child.

Maria Montessori. *The secret of childhood*, p. 149.

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personal work

- **Overcome pride**
- **Diminish avarice**
- **Check anger**
- **Conquer prejudice**
- **Control loose conduct**
- **Retain envy**

shed omnipotence!

[The] first step to take in order to become a Montessori teacher is to shed omnipotence and to become a joyous observer. If the teacher can really enter into the joy of seeing things, being born and growing under his own eyes, and clothe himself in the garment of humility, many delights are reserved for him that are denied to those who assume infallibility and authority in front of a class.

Maria Montessori. *To educate the human potential*, pp. 83-84.



personal work

An ordinary teacher cannot be transformed into a Montessori teacher, but must be created anew, having rid herself of pedagogical prejudices. The first step is self-preparation of the imagination, for the Montessori teacher has to visualize a child who is not yet there ... and have faith in the child who will reveal himself through work. The different types of deviated children do not shake the faith of this teacher, who sees a different type of child in the spiritual field and looks confidently for this self to show when attracted by work that interests. She waits for the children to show signs of concentration.

Maria Montessori. *Education for a new world*, pp. 86-87.

personal work

- **Describe your signs and symptoms that tell you, you need to renew.**
- **What do you do to renew yourself when you are having a hectic day?**
- **What are your ongoing renewal practices?**

the influence of the child

In serving the child one serves life; in helping nature one rises to the next stage, that of super-nature, for to go upward is a law of life. And it is the children who have made this beautiful staircase that mounts ever higher. The law of nature is order, the order of the universe. It is clear that nature includes among the missions she has entrusted to the child, the mission of arousing us adults to reach a higher level. The children take us to a higher plane of the spirit and material problems are thereby solved.

Maria Montessori, *The absorbent mind*, p. 261.

a never ending conversation

[The] teacher must know and experience in her daily life the secret of childhood. Through this she arrives not only at a deeper knowledge, but at a new kind of love which does not become attached to the individual person, but to that which lies in the hidden darkness of this secret. When the children show her their real natures, she understands, perhaps for the first time, what love really is. And this revelation transforms her also. It is a thing that touches the heart, and little by little it changes people. Once these facts have been seen ... nothing can cancel the impression their spirits have made and the love they were able to awaken.

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, p. 258.



a never ending conversation

The teacher of children ... knows that she has helped mankind in an essential part of its formation. She may know nothing of the children's circumstances, except what they have told her freely in conversation; possibly she takes no interest in their future: whether they will go on to secondary schools and the university, or end their studies sooner; but she is happy in the knowledge that in this formative period they were able to do what they had to do. She will be able to say: "I have served the spirits of those children, and they have fulfilled their development, and I kept them company in their experiences.

Maria Montessori. *The absorbent mind*, p. 259.

