



CLAIRE'S MONTESSORI
INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY

PARENT CORNER

February 2019

Congratulations! Did you know that you have chosen a very special education for your child? Not only have you enrolled your child in a Montessori school, but you have chosen one that holds extremely high standards in all three of the most critical areas needed for a student's development and ultimate success (in school and in life). Many people who join our school tell us that they love the atmosphere and the family feel to the school, but they often say there's more to it, however they struggle to pin point what the 'more' is.

I'd like to think that it's these very special education areas that unconsciously parents feel and unknowing (or knowingly) understand are so important for their child's development that attract them to Claire's Montessori when looking for quality education and experience for their child. So, what are these three pillars and why are they so important for all students to learn – no matter what the student's age?

Current education theory shows that every child must have exposure to and development in: Social, Emotional and Academic Learning. So, as you can tell, I did not just say Academic Learning. Now, you may ask me why Academic Learning is last on the list and is not the only responsibility for a school in the 21st Century, and I'm excited to explain.

This week I'll explain why Social Learning is so vitally important for your child. In the following 2 weeks, I'll explain the reason for Emotional Learning and then further explain what brain research is showing as regards how students best learn their Academic subjects and what Academic Learning comprises in our school.

Social learning:

Have you noticed that your child is in a classroom of mixed ages? Do you realize that this is not by accident, but by perfect design? Dr. Montessori (the first woman surgeon in Italy and a contemporary of psychologists, Itard and Sequin) designed the classrooms this way because of the developmental milestones we as humans go through in our developmental years.

Our classrooms are laid out in such a way as to enhance and provide the most optimum social environment in which a child can thrive and flourish. In Montessori we talk about human development before adulthood in terms of the *Planes of Development*.

The first Plane of Development is from birth to age 6 years old, with numerous big milestones happening along this continuum. It's on this Plane of Development that the character of a human being is formed. Not just according to Montessori, but also according to developmental psychology. Yes, you may have just realized that you have your child in a school that bases your child's experience in developmental psychology so that every child can be the best that he or she can possibly be. It is these early years that will determine who your child will become as an adult!

The Second Plane of Development is from age 6 through 12 years old. This is the beginning of the social plane of development where children are learning how to become integrated into society as a whole. This stage is also when students' minds and personalities are elaborated upon. It's when children learn the beginnings of their moral code and also start to place more emphasis on their friends than on their family.

The Third Plane of Development is from 12 through 18 years old – adolescence - is when students' cement their social position in the world and their moral code becomes fully developed. The adolescent is now fully capable of pulling away from parents and friends become vitally important.

The Fourth Plane of Development is from 18 through 24 years old and is the final elaboration of the child becoming an adult.

OK, so now I've given you a brief overview of these Planes of Development, just how does it work in our school and for your child?

At Claire's Montessori our students are kept in authentic Montessori age guidelines because we know that these are best for developing the child's character and personality. In our Infant room you will notice that the infants are not all the same age, and the same applies in our Toddler (18 months – 3 years) and Early Childhood (3-6) communities and of course our Elementary levels as well. It is hugely important for the development of each child that they experience their school day in the company of mixed ages. This sets children up to be able to communicate, empathize, and socialize with others of varying age groups. Students also learn from each other and the older students model appropriate behavior which encourages younger students to behave more appropriately. The older students learn to become leaders and followers and leaders again, as they move up through the school; qualities that are needed when they enter the workforce and of course in life.

Consider this: Whenever we take students out on field trips people comment at 'how well behaved' our students are in comparison to other students from other schools – this is not because our students or teachers are more perfect than others – but because students are appropriately placed in social communities so that social learning is part of their norm.

As I was walking through LAX this past weekend, there were innumerable posters and adverts for developing communities and how important these communities are for children's success. What struck me was this: in our school we do not need to create artificial communities - this is part of an authentic Montessori experience free of public school red-tape and able to fully embrace the brilliance of true Montessori education. Your children experience multi-age communities which mirror real life as this is inherent in our education system – something that will, according to the research, benefit them for life.

To finish off, let's talk about two research articles which show the value and importance of social learning and its effect on academics.

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar03/vol60/num06/Creating-a-School-Community.aspx>
(Retrieved: Monday, February 4, 2019, 11:30am)

<https://educationnorthwest.org/resources/what-research-says-supporting-social-and-emotional-well-being-students>
(Retrieved: Monday, February 4, 2019 at 11:45am)

Research shows that programs that support students' development in communicating effectively, negotiating conflict, practicing empathy understanding their own skills and abilities, managing their emotions and behavior and other social and emotional skills can lead to better academic and life outcomes.

When social and emotional learning skills are intentionally taught, practiced, and reinforced in schools, students have better behavioral, social, and academic outcomes.

A growing body of research confirms the benefits of building a sense of community in school. Students in schools with a strong sense of community are more likely to be academically motivated (Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000); to act ethically and altruistically (Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon, 1997); to develop social and emotional competencies (Solomon et al., 2000); and to avoid a number of problem behaviors, including drug use and violence (Resnick et al., 1997).

When social and emotional learning skills are intentionally taught, practiced, and reinforced in schools, students have better behavioral, social, and academic outcomes. Research on students who participated in some form of SEL instruction has found short-and long-term benefits in student outcomes, with most research focusing on elementary and middle grade programs.

So, parents, this makes my argument about private Montessori schools: we provide the social and community structure and learning environments that the researchers mention, and this is available to every student who enjoys an amazing education at Claire's Montessori. Stay tuned for the next installment on emotional learning and what it looks like in Montessori and why it's important for your child's success at school and in life.

Do you want to know more about all our upper level programs – we boast that our elementary education is 21st Century cutting edge? Join us for our Open House on February 13th, at 6:00pm – we will take you on a guided tour of the two elementary classrooms and discuss the brilliance of a Montessori education for this age child.

