



PARENT CORNER: 3

February 2019

Hello again parents,

Last week you should have received an email in which I explained the rationale for emotional learning, what it looks like, how we approach this important concept at Claire's Montessori, and why it's so critical to your child or children's success in school and in life. As a reminder, these notes are recorded for your convenience. (The previous week I spoke to the importance of social learning as regards success in school and in life so check that article out too if you haven't done so already.)

This week I'm going to speak about the approach needed for strong academic learning and how Montessori education fits into the latest brain research suggestions. So, this week we will complete the series on the 3 pillars of education needed for a 21st Century education success. As a reminder these are: social learning, emotional learning and a broad approach to academic learning to ensure success for children in today's world.

Howard Gardener is the father of the theory of Multiple Intelligences and the importance of taking care to education students according to their predominate intelligence type. He proposes 8 different intelligences that are helpful in helping educators understand why a specific approach may not work for certain students and helps guide us in what to consider.

Thankfully, inherent in the Montessori approach to education are different ways to 'teach' a student a particular concept. In some instances, the teacher-guide will notice that a child does so much better at assimilating information when using a specific material over another. As such we will use the material that speaks to the child (or in Howard Gardner's terms works for the child's specific intelligence needs) to ensure success with an academic skill.

You will probably have noticed that at Claire's Montessori we use song, gross motor movement, the movement of the hand to help establish neuropathways in the brain, color coding, sensorial experiences, practical life experiences and much more to teach students the gamut of academic concepts. We most definitely are able to meet the many different needs as regards the 8 emotional intelligences. This of course, allows more success for more students and as such Montessori education often gets the label of education for the gifted student. However, it's because we meet each child's individual needs that we are able to educate students to their potential. Dr. Montessori talked about educating for the human potential and that is what she did when developing her education method.

You will notice that every classroom, even our elementary classrooms, have different ways of stimulating the imagination of students and meeting their various education needs.

At the most basic of our learning is the Practical Life area of our classroom. This part of the classroom does exactly what it says, it allows each child to develop fundamental life skills at each level of development so that every student who graduates from our programs will have established specific life skills according to his or her age level.

This will take the form of learning how to clean up after oneself at a young age to learning how to use a computer or how to fix or build something at the elementary levels.

Our Sensorial area of the classroom meets the needs for all humans to use their senses for learning and to be able to differentiate and trust the senses to inform the brain at all stages of life. It's our senses that play a large part in our emotions and also in our ability to discriminate things like size, shape, color and as such Montessori students often are able to put their hands out and show exactly how long a meter is for example. This area of learning in the classroom is used for geometry and measurement skills in our elementary levels but at the younger levels this area basically develops the neuropathways for all academic learning.

Of course, we can't forget the all-important Cultural area of our classrooms. Built into a Montessori Scope and Sequence at all levels is the work on the continents, cultures, biology and zoology at even the Toddler level. As we work with an integrated spiral curriculum at Claire's Montessori School our students have an advantage over all other students in that they experience all our cultural subjects every 3 years at higher levels of difficulty as they move through our programs. In fact, at the Upper Elementary level some of the work that is done by the older students is at much higher levels than their grade level counterparts in traditional stand and deliver education schools all because of the implementation of the integrated spiral curriculum.

Finally, let's talk about our approach to math and language in the Montessori Method of education: of course, I'm sure you are well aware by now, that every child is introduced to these very important learning concepts using didactic materials. These materials are designed to help the child develop neuropathways in the brain as the hand is used with each material. The materials are also process oriented so that there is understanding of the various concepts rather than just rote memory used to get an end result. As such, generally students remember the concepts more easily and the concepts are cemented for life rather than having to be re-learned over and over. This also allows us to scaffold concepts more quickly and more regularly than in traditional education methods.

Well, parents I could go on and on about the rationale and the concepts behind our Montessori education Methodology, but in the interest of time, I'll leave you with the following quotes as regards education. In another email, I'll go ahead and talk about how test students because we do not test in ways that you may be familiar, but we test in very in-depth ways to ensure conceptual learning and retention.

Practices Supported by Research

Having an understanding of different teaching approaches from which we all can learn, as well as a toolbox with a variety of ways to present content to students, is valuable for increasing the accessibility of learning experiences for all students. To develop this toolbox, it is especially important to gather ongoing information about student strengths and challenges as well as their developing interests and activities they dislike. Providing different contexts for students and engaging a variety of their senses -- for example, learning about fractions through musical notes, flower petals, and poetic meter -- is supported by research. Specifically:

- *Providing students with multiple ways to access content improves learning (Hattie, 2011).*
- *Providing students with multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge and skills increases engagement and learning, and provides teachers with more accurate understanding of students' knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond, 2010).*
- *Instruction should be informed as much as possible by detailed knowledge about students' specific strengths, needs, and areas for growth (Tomlinson, 2014).*

<https://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-research> retrieved February 22, 2019

Lastly, I'll leave you with this quote again from Edutopia from another article speaking to what allows for students' optimum academic success:

Expect variability, and embrace it: Our brains do not mature on precisely calibrated schedules, and students throughout the school-age years arrive in classrooms representing a wide spectrum of cognitive, social, and emotional development. Personalization is understanding where each student is developmentally, and scaffolding a learning experience that begins at their current level.

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/bringing-science-learning-classrooms> retrieved February 22, 2019