

RESEARCH FINDINGS

THE MONTESSORI METHODS OF EDUCATION

Research provides some indication about how children benefit from a Montessori education. Montessori research has focused on: the history of Montessori education; beliefs and attitudes of Montessori teachers; benefits from a Montessori education for children who are either at-risk or who are exceptional learners; and achievement and social development for Montessori students versus non-Montessori students. In general, research findings over the years suggest that Montessori students achieve at greater levels as compared to their non-Montessori peers and develop more positive social skills. The best results most likely occur for children who complete the entire three year early childhood program and then continue through the entire elementary and middle school programs.

ACHIEVEMENT

- Montessori children at the end of their kindergarten year were significantly better prepared for elementary school outscoring their peers in reading and math skills. They also tested better on “executive function,” the ability to adapt to changing and more complex problems. This is an indicator of future school and life success. At the end of their elementary program, Montessori students showed greater gains in language. They write more creative essays using more complex sentences. (Lillard and Else-Quest, 2006)
- Students enrolled in Montessori middle schools reported a significantly better quality of experience in academic work. Compared to their non-Montessori peers, the Montessori students felt more active, strong, excited, happy, relaxed, sociable, and proud. They enjoyed their studies more, had greater interest in their work, and they wanted academic work more than the traditional students. (Rathunde, 2003)
- Montessori students scored 10 - 20 points higher on the California Achievement Test compared with students in traditional classrooms. (Public Montessorian, 1990)
- A majority of students scored above fiftieth percentile on Iowa Test of Basic Skills at the MacDowell Elementary School, a Montessori magnet school program in the Milwaukee school district. (Duax, 1989)
- Minority students enrolled in a Montessori program scored higher on self-concept, mathematical and geometric concepts, vocabulary recognition, attention strategies, and general intelligence. (Boehnlein, 1988)
- Black and Hispanic Montessori students scored significantly higher than other minority students on both the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and the Metropolitan Achievement Test 6 in Houston, Texas. (Dawson, 1988)
- 75% of low SES children who attended a Montessori preschool in Cleveland, Ohio, scored above school norms on the California Achievement Test. (Takacs & Clifford, 1988)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IS ENHANCED

- Montessori children in their kindergarten year demonstrated greater social development in the areas of sense of reasoning, justice, and fairness. They were more likely to engage in emotionally positive play with peers, and less likely to engage in rough, aggressive forms of play. By the end of their elementary program, Montessori children offered more positive solutions to social challenges. (Lillard and Else-Quest, 2006)

- Higher levels of self-confidence and greater participation in social interaction and for longer periods were found in Montessori students (Boehnlein, 1990).

LONGITUDINAL FINDINGS

- Montessori students were rated by their middle grades teachers in Milwaukee as “above average” on follows directions, completes work on time, listens attentively, uses correct grammar and spelling, class enthusiasm, multicultural awareness, and responsibility and dependability. (Duax, 1989)
- High school students who attended a Montessori Head Start program achieved highest level of mathematics and reading compared with students who attended other types of Head Start programs. (Miller & Medley, 1984)
- Highest high school graduation rate, lowest grade level retention rate, and highest school success ratings were achieved by students who attended Montessori early childhood programs. ((Karnes, Shwedel, & Williams, 1983)
- Increases in attention strategies, general intelligence, and academic achievement occurred over time by Montessori students from all socioeconomic levels. (Chattin-McNichols, 1992)

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