

Maria montessori



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

When looking up the word “ expert” in the dictionary the meaning of the word has two explanations the first being: “ a person specially trained and qualified in any department of science or art. ; one who professes to have such a qualification. ” The second explanation of the word is:” possessing skill or knowledge in any work or branch, skilful, dexterous”. On the other hand when one looks at the word enlightened the following explanation is given:” elevated by, advanced in knowledge, not barbarous in outlook.

I prefer to use the word enlightened generalist as I feel that the Montessori teacher is not necessarily an expert in anything but rather an enlightened generalist and life- long learner. Unlike mainstream schools where children get taught by different teachers for different subjects, the Montessori teacher has knowledge of all the subjects and teaches all the subjects such as maths, culture, language and so forth to a mixed age group over a three year period. The Montessori curriculum is also very much intergraded; maths can be linked to culture and language to maths.

For example when children learn about the story of language it covers language and where it comes from but also the culture and the timelines of the story of language. Through an intergraded curriculum the teacher can reinforce various areas of study without the children feeling that it is repetitive or being drilled in like the “ parrot” work I had at school. The children then form a better idea of how interconnected the universe around them is as they are moving into the plane of development from Concrete to Abstract thinking.

It is there for very important that the enlightened generalist teacher comes up with ways to speak to the child’s imagination. The teacher does not only

have to be knowledgeable of the subjects but needs to look at the child's growth in terms of moral learning. By concentrating on this the child will have an appreciation for life and not only empathize, but apply what they know and do community projects as a class. The teacher will guide the children into the right direction, but it will be a task where the children get to go out in the world and make a difference and experience things first hand.

As in pre-school the Montessori materials in the elementary classroom serve a purpose and this is also relative to the elementary child. The materials are made and prepared to aid in abstract concepts, grab the imagination and give the child a view of the universe and the role they can play in it. Dr Maria Montessori used the term " Cosmic education". She felt that natural sciences, social sciences and life skills played a very important role in the child's second plane of development. During her time in India Maria Montessori along with her son Mario developed the elementary curriculum.

This part of the curriculum offers the child to see themselves in the context of the universe. " Let us give him a vision of the whole universe ...for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity...The stars, earth, stones, life of all kinds form a whole in relation with each other, and so close is this relation we cannot " understand a stone without Some understanding of the great sun! No matter what we touch, an atom, or a cell, we cannot explain it without knowledge of the wide universe. Maria Montessori, To Educate Human Potential, p 8-9. The five great lessons are at the centre of the elementary education. These lessons are stories that the entail the beginning of the universe, the formation of the

stars and the planets and animal life, the arrival of humans and language, and the origins of mathematics, geometry and the sciences.

The enlightened teacher's duty is to have well prepared environment with work cards and materials as well as being the story teller that evokes a spark of interest in the child's thirst for knowledge and period for asking " why? She has to awaken the child's spirit and imagination; this in turn will encourage the child's desire for independence and help with self -esteem. The child needs to be able to feel free to ask questions and explore ideas and do projects that they are interested in. The Montessori Directress needs to be aware that she needs to be flexible and give the child the freedom to do what he/she wants to do. The teacher of the Montessori elementary classroom is in a position where she has the children for a three year cycle.

By having the child in her environment she would be able to see which subjects need to be re-presented perhaps and know the child's interests and form a bond with them over this period. If a child comes to the teacher and wants to do a project on thunder because they heard it for the first time, the enlightened generalist would let them. She also needs to have a small library and access to the internet and computer to enable the child to research subjects or find information when the knowledge she has is too little.

The child is not the only one learning, but also the teacher. The " enlightened generalist" teacher needs to have a good sense of self with the ability to do proper observations and assessments of what works for each individual child. She needs to be aware of each child's stage of development and be able to recognize multiple intelligences. Continuous research, updating and refinement of her skills in child development are imperative.

Many parents that send their child to a Montessori Elementary school will have pre conceived ideas on how they were taught and what they hear along the grapevine from friends and other parents on how things are done differently in mainstream. The directress needs to have a thorough knowledge of the curriculum to educate and inform parents. They do not only need to educate parents but also have the ability to skilfully explain where their children are at and discuss concerns if a problem should arise. This should be handled in a sensitive manner and the use of correct language.

Proper record keeping and observation skills would be the tools she requires in order for her to make these assessments. Traditional schools are different in their approach and philosophy but the children have the advantage of learning at their own pace and the directress is aware of each child strength and obstacle in some cases as they work closely together and on a very personal level. Tim Seldin is the President of the Montessori Foundation in America and Chair of the International Montessori Council; he has 44 years of experience in child development and with the Montessori Method.

In many of his talks he says that children in a Montessori environment are not taught to be competitive but rather to become independent, self-loving people with the school needing to be a place of nurturing rather than a competitive space where a " product is manufactured". He says that it is the goal of the Montessori Method to encourage learners to become self-confident and to be able to problem solve. The outcome at the end of the day is to have a child that is emotionally happy, self-driven, balanced and empowered.

They are not fed through a system but rather cared for as individual that will take on life with confidence, compassion and “ spiritual balance”. The enlightened generalist’s duty is to be the catalyst, mentor and example of this in the environment for children to reach their full potential on all levels spiritually as well as mentally. The enlightened generalist as previously discussed need to have a sense of self and this would include her strengths and weaknesses. As an example I would use myself, I am not the world’s greatest mathematician, but I have a love for language and the outdoors.

If I am the directress in the classroom I can not only do language presentations, but I also need to do the work I do not necessarily enjoy presenting. It is not about me and what I would enjoy doing, the directress is in service of the child and by not having confidence in my own ability I will not serve the child. Using my strength to inspire other children with my love for nature and the protection of it will be to the child’s benefit as I am passionate about it, but on the other hand I need to be aware of my weaknesses and working on that makes one an “ enlightened generalist”.

The concerns that come to mind in an Elementary environment for me through my observations would be directresses that are not qualified to do their work or are not passionate about what they do. The elementary child needs inspiration and if the teacher is not inspired or aware of her own faults or willing to listen to constructive criticism. How will the children be inspired or motivated? Maria Montessori believed that in order for the classroom to work well, the adult should look at themselves first. “ A teacher, therefor, who would think that he could prepare himself for his mission through study alone, would be mistaken.

The first thing required of the teacher is that he be rightly disposed for his task..." Maria Montessori, *The Secret to Childhood*. An "enlightened generalist" teacher is the keeper of the environment where she safely guards the child in terms of the work cycle. She motivates, encourages, and inspires children to become all that they can be through providing the child with love, nurturing, and being an example to those around her. She is always learning and opening herself up to ideas and bettering herself academically and spiritually.