



November 2023, Issue 5

HORME MONTESSORI NEWSLETTER

Hello All!

First, thank you to all the new subscribers for signing up to receive the (intended to be) monthly newsletters.

This year has been another busy one, filled with meeting new families at the Parent/Child groups, supporting guides in their Prepared Environments, pursuing new educational pursuits, and most exciting, opening the Horne Montessori Microschool!

With these changes comes a new direction in the newsletter that will help both families enrolled in the microschool and subscribers who want inspiration and information. This means the newsletter will be a little longer. Each month I will discuss what we are doing in our microschool, explore a topic related to the Montessori philosophy and practice, and continue to share stories of fellow Montessorians and links to check out.

In this issue, I am excited to share Valentina's story of how she came into Montessori education and what inspires her!

Thanks for joining me here!

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OCTOBER IN THE MICROSCHOOL

This was the first month of the Horne Montessori Microschool! It was such a great month filled with exploration, learning new routines, and getting to know each other.

The first month of the school had one student which was a great way to orient them to a new space and new routines. It has been wonderful to see the growth of this young child in such a short amount of time! In just a matter of weeks, we got into a great rhythm of our two-hour work cycle, preparing for meals, exploring nature in the arroyo behind the school, and connecting with one another.

We did a couple of small projects including painting pumpkins and doing our first baking project (check the links at the end for the recipe!)

Our biggest routine that we have been working on is the classic action of removing an activity from the shelf and replacing it when completed. This is a routine that takes some time to get into the habit of and is guided a lot through modeling.



THE ADULT AND CHILD IN THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT

There is a lot of focus on the materials that are associated with Montessori. There are plenty of Instagram accounts and Pinterest images out there for sourcing and setting up Montessori activities for children.

But the role of the adult, whether at home or in a more formal school setting, is often a less examined topic. Speaking from experience, this can easily play out in newly trained Montessori teachers as well. The training is fast-paced and rigorous with a focus on passing tests at the end of training. This can easily leave the trained adult hyperfocused on the materials and how to present them.

So let's take this opportunity to examine exactly what the role of the adult is when it comes to Montessori.

The first essential for the adult when practicing Montessori is to connect with the child. The child needs to feel accepted and safe with the adults that live and work with in order to reach their own potential. According to Forest for the Trees Perinatal Psychology, children only need adults to meet their needs **30%** of the time in order to develop happy, well-attached children.

The next essential role of the adult is to prepare the environment. At home, this means having the items to care for the child - general hygiene items, clothes, somewhere to sleep, food, some things to play with that will stimulate their mind and attention from the adult. In a school setting, this would be a place to keep the child's items from home, possibly somewhere to sleep, food (from home or provided by the school) developmentally appropriate activities, and attention from the adult.

After this is acting as the bridge between the child and the adult. We use our attachment to the child as the catalyst of interest in the things we do and interact with in our environment. At home, this would be how meals are enjoyed together, how the house is taken care of, the activities the family enjoys doing for fun and how the family interacts with one another. At school, this would be how to navigate the routines of the day, and connect the children with the activities by giving a joyful demonstration of how they are used.

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After this, the adult observes the child. We watch how the child interacts with the environment and activities. Are they struggling? Then there might need to be more collaboration or something changed to admit the child in being successful and then adding additional steps or changing furniture in the space. Is the child easily succeeding? Then its time to introduce something more complex - maybe making a chart of responsibilities for morning and evening at home or introducing an activity with more steps and giving them more independence. After our observations, the adults are then changing the environment to aid the child or increase challenge or independence It is this point where the cycle continues: prepare the space, observe, prepare the space, observe, and it continues like this.

The adult plays such an important role in the child's growth towards increased independence by creating an environment that meets the child where they are developmentally, allowing the child to feel empowered in their family and community. The path towards independence is achieved by an adult who observes and creates opportunities to increase autonomy when the child demonstrates through actions they are ready for more.

“Horme belongs to life in general, to what might be called the divine urge, the source of all evolution. This vital force for his growth stimulates the child to perform many actions and, if he is permitted to grow normally, without being hindered, it shows itself in what we call the ‘joy of life’”.

Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind



Valentina's Story

The many facets of Montessori

How did you first get started in Montessori?

I was a Montessori child! I attended a Montessori school back in Mexico, where I am from, for 7 years. I always remember them as the most fun and amazing years of my childhood. My mom did not have any experience with Montessori, but as she was looking for a school to send me, she visited a Montessori and she loved it.

What did your journey through Montessori up to now look like?

Growing up I knew I wanted to be a Montessori guide. I thought I was called to work in a children's house level but ended up working in the toddler level. I have been a teacher assistant, a lead teacher and currently working on my own Nido and toddler class, by offering sessions for children to come and work along with their caregivers, as they also get immersed and receive the support they need. My intention is to offer an environment where both the caregiver and the child feel safe and have a sense of belonging. My vision is to protect motherhood/parenthood and to honor that beautiful relationship between both parties. Also, as a plus, I am planning on offering a full immersion Spanish classes. Having the child immersed in a foreign language at such a young age is so beneficial and has an easier adoption of it.

How do you implement Montessori outside of a traditional classroom?

I do not have children yet, but I do work privately with a few children in my community. I visit their home once or twice a week and, even though I have set up a work shelf in their house, most of their Montessori experience comes with inviting them to work with daily life tasks, such as loading and unloading the dishwasher or putting their laundry in the washer machine, just to name some examples. I truly believe in the importance of trusting the child and, at the same time, modeling to parents how Montessori does not only belong in a classroom but in our daily lives.

What stands out most to you about the Montessori philosophy?

“Follow the child” and “help me do it myself” - both of these phrases by Maria Montessori. They said it all.

What was the biggest challenge to you in implementing Montessori throughout your career?

I guess there is some misconception about what Montessori truly is. I often encounter people who do not agree with the philosophy, just to realize that, after listening to them, they do not have a clear picture of what involves sending a child to a Montessori school or practicing it at home. I think a lot of Montessorians have heard people say that “Montessori, is the place where they allow the children to do whatever they want”. Not sure where this comes from, but it is a common belief.

How do you think Montessori has impacted the children you work with?

I have worked in both a Montessori environment and a public school and the differences are clearer and big. Most importantly, the freedom in a Montessori environment presents benefits to the construction of their personality. They move, they play, they work, they cooperate, they rest. A Montessori environment respects the development of the child.

What do you hope the children you work with get out of Montessori in the long run?

I hope for them to be free, to enjoy nature, to believe in themselves, to laugh, and to do things according to their age and needs.

What do you like to do for fun?

I love to rest. I understand the importance of self-care, especially when working with children. I enjoy nature walks, yoga, playing the violin, reading, and traveling with my husband! I am often found creating and making crafts. Also, I am constantly looking for workshops or classes to learn more and to better serve the community.

What is something you would like others to know about you?

I am originally from Mexico. I am from a state called Yucatan, where the ocean is so close by. I am a Special Education Teacher (got my degree in Mexico) and I am a certified AMI Assistance to Infancy teacher (0-3 years). Also, I am a certified Yoga Teacher, and I took an herbalism class. I love warm weather and reading a book while drinking some tea.

I have several jobs, but all of them fall into the same topic: Montessori.

I work privately at home with children (Montessori at home)

I work at a Montessori school as a Spanish teacher.

My most recent project: Nido classes and Spanish Circle Time. In the first one, I offer sessions to children with their caregivers in Spanish. I am hoping to polish this project more and offer more of this in September. The Spanish Circle Time is offered to children of elementary age. Through music, movement, poems and rhymes, instruments, and more, the children have the opportunity to learn Spanish in a Montessori way. Both projects are completely new, and I am looking forward to seeing where this goes!

If you would like to know more of what Valentina is up to with her many facets of Montessori, be sure to check her out on Instagram [@colibrispanish_montessori](#)



Links I Love

Here are a few links I have been loving lately, I hope you do, too!

THREE POTTY LEARNING HACKS FROM A MONTESSORI PARENT

One day, you will go through the toileting process with your own child or a child in your class. Check out Nicole Kavanaugh's blog post about what she has learned as a Montessori parent after toilet-training 5 children.

Montessori education's impact on academic and nonacademic outcomes

If you enjoy reading research articles, here is an interesting one that discusses research that shows the impact of Montessori on academic and non-academic outcomes.

Involve Your Child in Preparing Food

A quick guide from Aid to Life on how to involve your child in meal prep at home.

Enjoy the reading!