

Montessori Parent Library

Book and DVD Reviews by Audubon Parents

At Home with Montessori by Patricia Oriti.

My first reaction was that this was kind of a feel-good book about Montessori and that it could be perceived as somewhat preachy, especially for those unfamiliar with Montessori. I could imagine a parent new to the school thinking "yeah, right!" My other thought was that some might perceive many of the suggestions as impractical, and that could make them feel guilty about, for instance, not wanting to cut up their towels or rebuild their child's closet. A parent could read this book and think, the kids are taking over the house!

However, I actually read the book 4 or 5 days ago, and I have found myself recalling various things from the book since then. It provides a useful reminder that kids really see the world differently, that when you are walking somewhere, the child has a very different agenda than you do. One afternoon my child and I walked slowly and picked up leaves and rocks along the way. Having just read this book made it easier for me to "stop and smell the flowers." When we came home, we found a little basket to put her found objects in, a suggestion from the book. Overall, reading the book has made me more mindful of ways that I can allow her to explore her world and feel useful at home. I'm still not ready to let her use a real knife, though. The caution in the conclusion about how kids often don't treat their home environment in the same way was really useful for me. I have often wondered why it is so hard to get my child to pick up at home when she has learned to do it so well at school. Now I know.

Ultimately, I think the book could lead to some great discussions about how to make home a bit more like the school environment. While a parent could feel overwhelmed by all of the suggestions, a group discussion could mitigate that feeling and focus on what is useful in the book. Parents reading it on their own, however, may have a less positive experience with it.

This evening my child found the book and looked through it. We talked a little about what it was about and what the kids were doing in the pictures. There are so many pictures that the book could be used to talk to kids about what kinds of things they would like at home and what they can do to be helpful and useful.

I enjoyed the book and I'm looking forward to reading the other one. Thanks for the opportunity to review it!-

This book demonstrates how the montessori method can be extended to the home. The basis for the home environment involves keeping things in the home at child levels, allowing them to feel a part of daily family activities. Keeping the child active and involved continues their education at home. They can have their own areas of order while sharing the home space with parents. Although a "Montessori" home is not exactly designed as the classroom, it does serve as a complement to the child's overall education. --written by parent of Primary student

----Both reviews written by parents of Primary students

What is Montessori Preschool?

This book breaks down each area of the Montessori curriculum from the set up of the classroom to the shared classrooms of various ages and the unique ways in which subjects such as mathematics, art and music are introduced to each child. In the classroom, Children learn through observing exploring and figuring things out in the classroom setup. Montessori Schools offer children many hands on activities that teaches them to interact socially with other children. They also learn practical skills that are used in the home as well as daily life skills. The use of sensory materials apply to every area of the curriculum. If you need a book to explain every area of the Montessori School for pre-schoolers, This book definitely gives you a thorough overview.

. I think it is a wonderful introduction to Montessori, especially for new parents. (I know I'm repeating myself here.) It provides a biography of Maria Montessori and introduces the basic concepts--like the "absorbent mind," the "prepared environment," and the multi-age classroom. It also explains how Montessori materials are used as well as the different areas: practical life, sensorial, math, and language. More specific examples would be nice, but this is a general introduction. The book also explains the integration of the arts into the curriculum and the importance of experiencing the outdoors. The main themes of the book seem to be that Montessori education is about standing back and allowing the child to explore and the fundamental belief that each child has amazing potential and heightened receptivity during the preschool years. Reading this book makes you feel good about what your child can accomplish in a Montessori classroom. It's an empowering message, really, in these days of hyper-testing and over-achievement. Having just seen many of my friends go through the brutal process of trying to get their kids into a decent kindergarten (and being shut out for missing one answer on a test!), I am grateful for the Montessori belief in each child's potential. That is where success starts.

---Both reviews written by parents of Primary students

What is Montessori Elementary?

DVD

It was quite brief and enjoyable, giving a good overview of Montessori philosophies and techniques.

It was a bit optimistic/utopian in places
and I wonder if it would give a prospective parent
a realistic view of what to expect from ACS.
But overall it was good.

Review written by mother of Lower Elementary Student

Montessori Today by Paula Polk Lillard

Montessori Today by Paula Polk Lillard is a great introduction to Maria Montessori's concepts and how they are used in classrooms. It's more than that, though—it also gives you a better understanding of the theories and ideals behind what happens in your child's Montessori classroom no matter what your level of understanding of Montessori's theories. Lillard gives great examples as she explains the four planes of development that Montessori saw in children, planes that range from the sensitive years after birth all the way to adulthood. From Sensitive Periods to the Absorbent Mind, Lillard explains the theory and its practical application in the selection and use of classroom materials, classroom activities, and the methods by which learning is brought to children rather than “forced” upon them. Lillard also explains and illustrates how the Great Lessons are used to intrigue students and fuel their further explorations as they move from being “sensorial explorers” who are driven to understand and experience the world through the senses, to the older “reasoning explorers,” who reach for more abstract understandings of the world, all the way to the adolescent “humanistic explorers,” who engage the world of human interactions, history, needs and autonomy. Two chapters really stand out for parent readers—the chapter on the elementary teacher explains the challenges, joys and need for training for Montessori teachers; and an excellent chapter on a day in a 6-9 year old classroom with Lillard listening, interacting and reporting on the day's activities. Much of Montessori's theories apply to elementary children and less to adolescents but Lillard's book provides a great chapter on the child beyond the elementary years. In Maria Montessori's view, the 12-15 year old period was seen as just as sensitive as the birth to 3 year old span, with adolescents in need of “calm and solitude,” gentle guidance as they go through an intense period of “self-construction,” and intellectual stimulation to build upon the knowledge gained in the elementary years and prepare them not just for college study but to be productive global citizens. Another gem is the Appendix “A Student's Reflections” in which a Montessori student about to graduate from high school reflects on her time in Montessori classrooms. I would definitely recommend this book to Montessori parents with children at any age. No matter what your level of experience with Montessori, you will learn from this book and want to thank Lillard for it. Lillard makes Montessori's ideals easy to understand and always provides great discussion and examples from real-life. As Audubon Charter moves to implementing more of Montessori's principles, Lillard's book can be a community guide to what we all want our children's classrooms to look like and how to achieve that.

Review written by parent of Upper Elementary Student