



# MONTESSORI OF MACON

EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD FOR A WHOLE WORLD



PEACE BEGINS WITH YOU!

## NEWSLETTER

Session #3 | March 2023

## MARCH 2023

3..... Last Day of Session #3  
6-24..... Spring Break  
27..... First Day of Session #4

## APRIL 2023

5..... School Picture Day!  
Toddler, Primary  
6 ..... School Picture Day!  
Lower EI, Upper EI, Middle School  
11 ..... School Picture Make-up Day

## MAY 2023

26..... Last Day of School  
29 - 31 ..... School Closed

## JUNE 2023

1-2 ..... School Closed  
5-23..... Summer Camp  
(For Returning Students Enrolled  
for 23-24 School Year)  
26-30..... School Closed

## JULY 2023

3-7 ..... School Closed  
7..... Visit MoM Day  
10..... First Day of 23/24 School Year



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# THE WISDOM OF HINDSIGHT

by Michele Scott



I know you have heard this countless times, but this time with your children goes by so fast! As the parent of daughters 18 and 22, I am here to tell you that “fast” doesn’t come close to describing it. And while you have heard and “know” this, there is something about the wisdom of hindsight that teaches lessons and provides meaning we cannot grasp in the present moment. I often reflect on what I wish my 30-year-old self could have known in those early parenting years, but that knowledge is only crystal clear when looking in the rear-view mirror.

As a mom of young adults, I wish I had the perspective when my children were little to realize the really important things. I can remember when my oldest child was in kindergarten. She has always had a love and ease for math, so multiplication in kindergarten came very easy for her. In contrast, reading was more of a struggle. I remember asking her Primary teacher, “Does she have a reading problem? Other students are reading better than her. Do you think something is wrong?” (Not to mention the doubt a good birthday party can give parents if others compare how fast their child could master a skill!) Her teacher assured me she was right where she needed to be and was just fine. I wished I had known at that moment that she was, in fact, learning to read, and the “when” she reads, or “how quickly” she is a fluent reader, is not what matters. I can tell you no one has asked her in the last 17 years how old she was when she learned to read because that isn’t the important part. Her growing up in a learning environment that supported her in challenging areas and provided repetition and practice; now, that’s what still matters to this day.

When I enrolled my children at two years old at Montessori of Macon, I didn’t decide with Middle School in mind. As a parent of a toddler, I didn’t know that Middle School is one of the most vulnerable times for adolescents because they seek ways to establish their independent identity apart from their family. And some of those ways are not good choices! Unfortunately, studies have shown that children sometimes get lost in Middle School. As my daughters got older, I was so grateful for the decision I made many years before allowing them to attend our MoM Middle School and not to be “lost” in a big school/system.

Of course, with young children, you are focused on the current parenting challenge and stage. So I was making a decision for the early stage of their development that would benefit my daughters in ways I couldn’t yet imagine. I couldn’t even imagine how parenting adolescent children looked. Thankfully it is a gift that young parents don’t know about parenting adolescents! If any of us knew what we didn’t know, we would not have slept at night, instead of our toddlers!

My young-adult children also have their perspectives of their time at MoM and what matters most. My youngest daughter is now a freshman in college. For one of her college essays, she was asked to write about “a light bulb moment that challenged beliefs or worldview.” She wrote about her experience growing up in a Montessori school through 8th grade and transitioning to a public high school in the following excerpt of her essay:

I went to a small Montessori school from 2 years old to 8th grade. Montessori allows students to learn at their pace and is centered around independence. With independence, Montessori gives children choices. Those choices are appropriate for the child’s age, but there are choices. What work do you want to do next? Where do you want to sit to do your work? When researching bacteria, what do you want your presentation to look like – a skit, a rap song, or a report? There are always boundaries to the choices, but children are given choices within those boundaries. A Montessori classroom values practice in making choices as important as practicing math skills. Both are needed to be productive citizens. This independence helps children learn self-regulation, cause/effect of decisions, prioritization, and so much more. These choices also foster a love of learning and curiosity in a very mutually respectful environment.

In 9th grade, when I transferred to a public high school, it was a shock in many ways. I had entered a school system operating with the mindset that adults decide everything because they can’t trust the students to make decisions. Could I go to the bathroom without asking permission? No. Could I choose the order in which I did my work? No. Could I choose how I want to present my project? No. Could I choose where I sit? No. I truly felt like I had been dropped into a factory or a prison, depending on the day. It didn’t feel like the goal was for students to learn; it felt like the goal was “Do what I say when I say it.” Ninth-grade me was astounded by the public school system, but now as a senior, it really just scares me for the future. If students cannot be trusted to leave class and make it back without smoking, vandalizing the school, pulling the fire alarms, or getting into a fight, how are they supposed to be contributing members of society? What job will they be able to get? What kind of people will they raise their children to be?

Taking away the opportunity for choice gives students no say or ownership in their learning. If all decisions are made for them, there are no goals, nothing to look forward to, except to go through the motions of everything adults have already figured out. How does that prepare them for life when nothing beyond high school is figured out for them? How does that prepare them for the workforce where employers expect them to “think on their feet” and “figure out problems”?

Her essay reminds me of why I chose Montessori for my children and what really matters. When parents ask how students transition to a traditional learning environment, they usually ask from an academic perspective. What I know for sure is that all of our students will receive as rigorous of academic teachings as they have the ability for at MoM. By the time they enter ninth grade, they will continue in a traditional environment and have similar academic progress. I also know that allowing my children to remain at MoM through 8th grade more than prepared them academically. It also gave them so much more they needed to become successful young adults. Their experience and daily practice in making appropriate choices, problem-solving, prioritization, and figuring out how to do work and projects independently set them apart from peers who only knew a traditional learning environment. As I look back in the rear-view mirror, as a parent of young adults, I can tell you that’s the stuff that matters!

## TODDLER 1

18 mos. - 3 years old  
Ms. Deidra & Ms. Carla



# The Best Way To Describe This Session... ...Busy, Busy, **BUSY**

We started the session off by exploring arctic animals. First, the children could identify a few common animals that lived in the polar region. Then, through sensory play, they could experience what it was like for those animals to live in cold, icy areas.



We also spent a lot of time learning about penguins and discovering how the daddy penguins stayed behind to protect the baby eggs throughout the extreme cold periods with his big warm belly. The dads stayed with the egg until the baby penguins hatched.

Daily the children look forward to choosing various activities that spark their interest. By this time of the year, everyone is ultimately settled into their routine, and they enjoy working independently. Our second-year students are doing an excellent job modeling and assisting the younger first-year students. It's always lovely to see how they respect one another and their environment.



Once a week, we gather as a group to do toddler-friendly science experiments. This is always a fun time. The children love observing the different reactions each of these experiments provides. In addition, it leaves room for fascinating conversations as they try to make sense of what happened.

Overall, it's been a fantastic session, and I'm looking forward to the next one. Enjoy your spring break!



## TODDLER 2

18 mos. - 3 years old  
Ms. Moira & Ms. Hannah



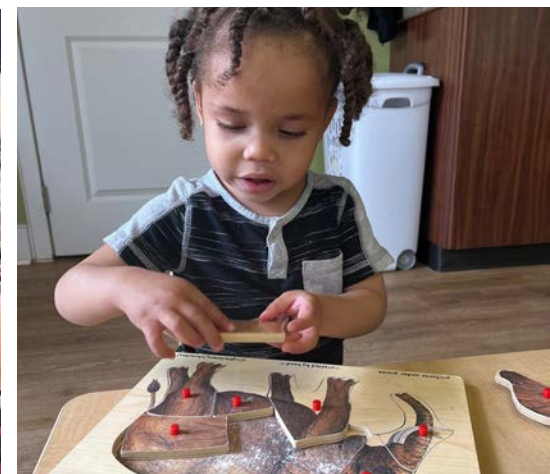
# The Formula For Meaningful And Interesting Work

Maria Montessori said, "Follow the child; they will show you what they need to develop in themselves and what area they need to be challenged in. The aim of the children who persevere in their work with an object is certainly not to 'learn'; they are drawn to it by the needs of their inner life, which must be recognized and developed by its means." We believe the child is drawn to specific activities and instinctively knows their needs. The key to this is observation. As Montessori guides, we pay careful attention to the children's interests and the activities to which they are naturally drawn. We monitor their understanding of the work and the progression of their skill development. Through our observations, we have the knowledge to provide them with meaningful and interesting work. The children are free to learn and develop at their own pace. Our classroom and work are designed to enhance and progress the children's development.

Many of our friends are very drawn to artistic projects this year. We have placed our art shelf in the center of our space and filled it with opportunities to color with crayons and markers, peel stickers, stamp, cut with scissors, tear paper, use paper cutouts, and more. Toddler art is process oriented and does not always result in a product. For example, a child may spend time peeling many stickers and sticking them to the paper. They may then take all the stickers off the paper and throw them away. For toddlers, it's about the experience and not what they create. We have also spent a lot of time at the easel painting. Standing and painting on the vertical surface of the easel improves the child's ability to naturally cross the mid-line of their body because the dominant hand has to reach all of the spaces of the surface. Children

can also improve visual attention and hand-eye coordination due to the task being closer to the child's eyes.

Our group is also very interested in animals. We have been reading about beavers. We walked to collect sticks and built a small beaver dam with sticks and playdough. We made snow playdough and let the children use play animals to make tracks in the "snow." We also have numerous books about animals that help the children to identify different species. Nurturing the children's interests creates a safe and loving environment for them to explore and develop. Observe your child and let them show you what will capture their interest. You may learn something new too!



## PRIMARY 1

3 - 6 years old  
Ms. Paula & Ms. Whitney



An excellent example of critical thinking skills at work is what happens when a child spills water in the classroom. Their teacher will encourage the child to get a mop and rag to clean the water. This seems like a basic example; however, most children in traditional settings are not allowed to solve simple problems independently.

Another way to learn cause and effect is by having only glassware in the environment. They quickly learn to handle it carefully because it can break. We provide opportunities to make choices and learn from them. For example, early in the school year, we observed children asking the adults in the environment to carry their belongings to their car, replenish paper towels at the sinks, and find spare water bottles. However, as the year goes on, they find creative ways to carry all their things and know where to get paper towels and water bottles. They solve all of these “problems” independently because we encourage them to find the solution instead of doing it for them.

Each material has an underlying problem-solving skill in the sensorial area of the classroom. Dr. Montessori named it the control of error. The control of error is when a child can independently acknowledge they have done something wrong while working with the materials. Our Math and Language materials allow the child to revise and correct independently.

Ultimately, our role as adults fostering critical thinking in our children is not to think and do for them. Instead, our primary responsibility is to allow them to make their own choices safely.

## The Importance Of Critical Thinking

We often understand our children’s learning process as their ability to memorize facts, dates, sight words, etc. However, we overlook that critical thinking is the most important ability they can foster. Critical thinking is the collection of all the skills that will help a child make decisions and find answers. The process of critical thinking is the primary determinant in deciding right from wrong. Therefore, having good critical thinking skills from the beginning of the learning process will aid our children academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

The Montessori method fosters the development of critical thinking from early on by allowing children to ask questions, compare and contrast, explain why things happen, understand and respect the point of view of others, and find creative solutions.

Children become better critical thinkers when inspired to solve and find innovative solutions to everyday situations. These sets of skills not only help children to be lifetime independent thinkers but also to be open and respectful of the point of view of others.



# Teaching Peace Is So Important, But Modeling It Is Crucial.



Recently, I came across an article on the American Montessori Society's webpage that really resonated with me. It was a reminder of why I chose to become a Montessori teacher. There is no other school in Macon like Montessori of Macon. I am grateful to be a part of a school that implements a peace curriculum that teaches children that what we do today affects the future. The article stated:

"Maria Montessori believed each generation of children brings renewed hope for a more peaceful society.[...] By creating respectful, inclusive classrooms, celebrating diversity in all its forms, crossing cultural boundaries, and modeling engaged citizenry, Montessori educators nurture students who will transform the world and make it a better place for their generation and the generations that follow."

When learning about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we discussed his famous "I have a dream[...]" speech and the importance of recognizing opportunities for change. I asked the children, "What is your dream for the world?". One student said, "I dream of people no longer littering to keep animals safe." Another child said, "I dream of trees no longer being cut down for homes so that animals always have a home." Then, a child raised their hand and shared, "I dream everything got treated better"! The kids believe our work is never over, and we can always strive to be kinder and more considerate of others.



As peace educators, we help children model and teach the importance of treating all things, living or non-living, with respect and care. It is essentially an early introduction to mindfulness. For example, you often hear in our classroom, "We must be gentle with our work. It is special to us and helps us learn." We also stress the importance of not harming others. For example, we will put bugs outside rather than squash them to further instill that it is our job to be a helper and not harm others. I adore the message this sends to the children. It genuinely makes me feel more compassionate just by modeling this behavior in the classroom. The amount of love and kindness I see exhibited by the children daily is heart-warming.

In this session, we will continue discussing ways we can be peacemakers. We have been learning about arctic animals and their young, Antarctica, and Asia. In addition, the children have enjoyed making Borax crystals, trying out different recipes for seasonal vegetables, making Valentine's crafts, and planning our spring garden. Seeing the Primary 2 students grow and reach their academic achievements as the school year progresses has been so wonderful!



## LOWER ELEMENTARY

1st through 3rd Grades  
Ms. Gyni & Ms. Katherine



# PEACE EDUCATION

Dr. Maria Montessori understood the value of peace education in the classroom when she first established a Montessori school in 1907. She once said, "establishing lasting peace is the work of education," and we still follow this philosophy in the classroom today. In addition to academic lessons, much of our session is devoted to fostering respect, compassion, and self-love in the classroom. Peace education is a vital component of "educating the whole child", especially at the elementary age when children begin to learn how to navigate social situations outside the home. This is essential work because a peaceful child is ultimately more confident, focused, and generally happier.

Our classroom has a Peace Bench where children can sit and reflect or talk through a problem with a friend. We keep a "Peace Rose" there to facilitate conversation as it is passed from child to child. In addition, children learn how to convey an "I-message," where they tell their friends how a problem makes them feel and how they'd like to resolve it.

We read books about some Peace Makers together, and children research others independently. We talk about how these individuals make a difference in the world and inspire us in our thoughts



and actions. In addition, Ms. Maria, our Yoga teacher, helps children practice mindfulness with breathing techniques and stretches during weekly Yoga classes. Occasionally, we will have a Peace Candle Ceremony at the end of the week, where children take turns carrying a candle and exchanging a greeting of "peace" with a friend. Children love this tradition!

Though we focus intensely on peace and peacemakers during February, culminating in our Peace Pole Ceremony, peace education is an ongoing work in our classroom. Children learn to cooperate with one another and help each other as a community while also learning how to advocate for themselves using I-messages.

Through all this work, we strive to create a culture of peace and understanding in the classroom. Then, children take their lessons home to their families and hopefully carry them into adulthood. After all, that was Dr. Maria Montessori's dream all along- "If we are among the men of good will who yearn for peace, we must lay the foundation for peace ourselves, by working for the social world of the child."





# UPPER ELEMENTARY

4th through 6th Grades  
Ms. Kerry & Ms. Amanda



## Imagine, Plan, PARTY!

How does one put on a Valentine's dance after a 3-year hiatus due to COVID? Well, with the kids' help of course! As with everything in our classroom, the underlying goal is always to help prepare our students for the world outside the school. So when we realized it was time to start up the annual Valentine's dance for Upper Elementary and Middle School, we started thinking about how the kids could be involved.

First, we divided the Upper Elementary students into committees and assigned a Middle School student to help lead the group. What's that? Did you say leadership opportunity? Next, the committees covered invitations/parent communication, refreshments, decorations, music, and the day-of tasks.

Each week, the committees met and were given a task (along with some teacher support) to complete by the end of their meeting. For example, with Ms. Sherry's help, the invitation committee designed an invitation. They also brainstormed how parents could help and what supplies would be needed and then created a sign-up sheet for parent volunteers. The refreshment committee worked on planning the drinks and snacks and also considered foods they could make on dance day. The decorations committee combed through previous years' decorations and decided on a few new ones to purchase. They also planned how they wanted the Middle School classroom/dance hall to look and had the super-secret job of decorating it without the other groups seeing. The music committee took suggestions from fellow students and created a playlist of appropriate, if not silly, songs. They also helped Mr. Shelby set up the sound system on dance day. Finally, the day-of committee devised games and activities for everyone since their committees wouldn't be busy on dance day. They planned several exciting games and fun crafts for both classes to enjoy.

After all was said and done (and with some adult aid), the students learned about party planning, decorations, invitations, refreshments, and what music to play for a dance. In addition, students also practiced their communication, leadership, collaboration, and problems solving skills.

Now, the teachers didn't let them do everything on their own. We absolutely had to teach them the most critical part: dancing! We spent a few minutes here and there learning the electric slide, cha-cha slide, and (much to the students' horror) how to appropriately slow dance! They walked away with excellent life skills and enjoyed a fabulous party!



## MIDDLE SCHOOL

7th & 8th Grade  
Mr. Shelby & Ms. Susan



# Sometimes, It's About What's Learned Outside Of Scheduled Classes.

The trip to the Burton 4 H Center on Tybee Island is a fantastic opportunity for our Middle School students to learn foundational concepts in biology, ecology, geology, and history while surrounded by the very ecosystems and creatures they are studying. But more impressive and lasting is the lessons that occur outside of our scheduled classes. In addition, the Tybee trip gives our students a taste of independence and quality bonding time with their peers, which sets the foundations for even stronger relationships with themselves and their peers in and outside the classroom.

The Tybee trip is two days of classes, and we stay the night on-site. As a result, this trip is often the first time students may have stayed overnight away from their parents. This landmark moment gives our students a sense of independence and autonomy crucial to healthy development. For

example, 7th-grader Bryan reflects: "staying the night away from my family was a pretty big deal for me because it was something that I have never done before." Says 7th-grader Dominic, "it was new to me, and I was excited to have this experience!"

The trip to Tybee provides many opportunities for our students to bond. The three-hour trip there and back allows time to talk, joke, share music recommendations, watch videos together, and play games. In addition, spending time as bunkmates in our on-site dorms allows our students to interact in a laid-back setting outside school hours. Our students made lasting memories, inside jokes, and hilarious stories to share from their time in the dorms. "I will never forget cleaning the clogged toilet with Bryan," laments 7th-grader Elijah. "Sometimes, you find something to laugh about out of shared



hardships, and it brings you closer together." This unique experience of being away from their parents, traveling long distances, and sharing a dorm gives the students a familiar and exciting experience that unites them. It's the shared memories of that space and time, unique and just for them.

Upon returning home from our trip, the Middle School students created a presentation to share their most memorable and exciting moments from the trip with our families and other students. They put a lot of hard work and collaboration into creating a creatively designed and informative PowerPoint. We had the opportunity to film and show the presentation at the Tour of Lessons. It was a great way to honor our students' work and allow our parents and students from the younger grades to see what the Middle School offers. "The presentation was amazing, and having the chance to film it and edit the video myself was a fun process," reflects 7th-grader Yedidyah. Says 7th-grader Tercio, "The whole experience, from the trip itself to coming home and reflecting and putting together a presentation, was really fun and special to me."



## Montessori of Macon's Mission

"To Educate the Whole Child for a Whole World."

By the whole child, we mean the social, emotional, physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of being human. By nurturing the wholeness of our children and fostering respect for each other, nature and community we prepare them for a life of continued joy that will contribute positively to a whole world.



**MONTESSORI OF MACON**  
EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD FOR A WHOLE WORLD



**AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY\***  
education that transforms lives  
Member School

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