

Pathways and Strategies for Transitioning from Montessori to Middle School and beyond

A Learning Engagement and Resource Guide for Montessori Parents



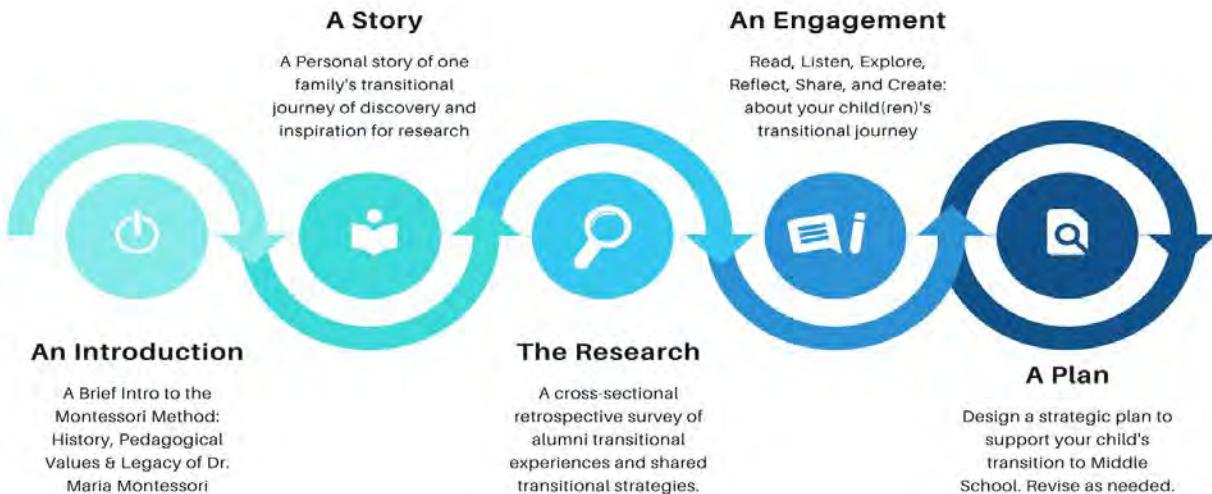
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About the Author and Designer

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PATHWAYS & STRATEGIES FOR TRANSITIONING FROM MONTESSORI TO MIDDLE SCHOOL AND BEYOND

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About this Learning Engagement

Change is not always easy. When transitioning between schools that follow different approaches to learning, students must acclimate to different ways of engagement, different ways of expression, and different ways of how knowledge may be represented—that gap and challenge of adjusting between different modes of learning is a phenomenon called “educational discontinuity.” When it comes to the transition for Montessori students moving to other types of learning environments, much of the available research today offers a promising picture of the long-term learning outcomes. This includes studies by UVA Professor, Dr. Angeline Stoll Lillard, author of *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, whose ground-breaking replicated studies and book suggests Montessori students tend to do very well or on par academically to their non-Montessori peers (Lillard, 2005). But if we focus on the transitional experience itself, particularly during or after Montessori upper elementary (ages 9-12), what are, if any, the most common challenges Montessori students encounter as they get settled into new learning environments? What are strategies that have been effective for a smooth transition? This learning engagement is meant to explore these questions. It is designed for Montessori parents but may be helpful to others as well. It starts with an exploration of foundational concepts of the Montessori philosophy and method of learning. Then, insight is shared from Montessori alumni about their transitional experience. Through brief readings and media, personal analysis and reflections, parents will create their own family plan to support their child(ren)’s transition after Montessori. This learning engagement and guide is not meant to provide prescriptive answers, but rather, serve as a starting point; an exercise for exploration and discussion when considering pathways and strategies for bridging the educational experience from Montessori to new learning environments.

Who Should Engage?

- Parents, guardians and anyone with interest in helping to support the journey of their student(s) from Montessori to middle school and beyond.

What You Will Need to Engage:

- A commitment to reflect and plan for your child's educational journey. It is recommended that you engage in all presented activities.
- Work at your own pace; time needed will depend on your familiarity with key concepts.
- For action prompts, connect with your chosen person (ie a parenting partner, your child, family member or fellow Montessori parent) for discussion and reflection. Or you may pair up with your person to go through the exercises synchronously together.
- If working with the printed guide, you will need a pencil and drawing utensils.
- If working with the digital guide, you will need a notebook, pencil and drawing utensils.
- Optional: Access to the internet for supplemental online resources, embedded media, activities, and for reviewing peer responses and sharing feedback.

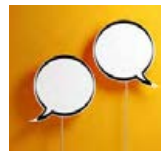
How to Engage

1. A Learning Engagement and Resource Guide: Reflect, Share and Create.



Reflect

1. Take a moment to reflect.
2. Journal your thoughts.
3. Note lingering questions.



Share

1. Write your response to prompts.
2. Share and discuss.
3. Return to note any changes in your perspective.



Create

1. Draw your response to prompts.
2. Share and discuss.
3. Return to note any changes in your perspective.

2. **Follow up Coffee & Conversation Meeting.** Organize a gathering for further community reflection. Suggested questions for a group discussion are provided.

3. **Pay it forward.** Build a network of support; reach out to parents of younger Montessori students.



Learning Goals & Objectives

Upon completion of this learning engagement, you will be able to:

- 1 Understand and describe the Montessori philosophy and educational ecosystem. Being able to explain the Montessori pedagogy will enable you to advocate for your child at their new school.
 - Review core values of the Montessori philosophy and approach.
 - Relate Montessori values to lived and shared experiences.
- 2 Assess desired virtues and values for character development and educational journey. Determining your family's desired virtues and values will facilitate deciding what learning environment is best for your child.
 - Reflect on virtues and values fostered in your child's current learning environment.
 - Consider your child's learning strengths (gains) and challenges (pains).
 - Consider desired values and virtues for your child's future learning environment.
- 3 Explore pathways after Montessori (ie schools and colleges attended by Montessori alumni) Engage with a digital map of some schools and colleges attended by Montessori alumni.
 - Explore a digital map or list of schools attended by Montessori alumni.
 - Examine school mission statements and note admission requirements.
 - Identify three schools of interest for further investigation.
- 4 Plan and strategize for your child's transition. Through reflection and metacognition, consider how you can help facilitate a smooth transition for your child.
 - Consider supports that will be needed for the transition.
 - Design a strategic plan to prepare your child for the admissions process.
 - Create a plan to communicate your child's strengths and anticipated challenges to their current and future teachers.

Our Work Spaces

In Montessori, children select and may do their work on floor mats that delineate their work spaces. Lessons are presented from left to right and from top to bottom. Inspired by that sequence and organization, this page represents the contents of this guide as the following delineated work spaces for your engagement. *Each mat holds the page number and topic.*

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to the Montessori
Method

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Infographics –
Compare Values

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New Beginning

“We cannot know the consequences of suppressing a child’s spontaneity when he is just beginning to be active. We may even suffocate life itself. That humanity which is revealed in all its intellectual splendor during the sweet and tender age of childhood should be respected with a kind of religious veneration. It is like the sun which appears at dawn or a flower just beginning to bloom. Education cannot be effective unless it helps a child to open up himself to life.”

– Dr. Maria Montessori (1909, p. 50)



"Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed." – Dr. Montessori, "The Absorbent Mind"

A Brief Intro to the Montessori

In this work area (pages 7-11), read and consider the history and core values of the Montessori Philosophy and Method. At the end of this section, you will be asked to take one (1) minute to write your reflections on one (1) of the following prompts:

- What values of the Montessori Curriculum do you appreciate the most?
- Is what you appreciate the most different from your child appreciates?

Over a hundred and ten years ago, Dr. Maria Montessori proposed that educators should "follow the child." She believed that educators (and parents) must "learn from the child himself the ways and means to his own education, that is, [the educator] will learn from the child how to perfect himself as a teacher" (Montessori, 1909, p. 8). As the first female Italian physician and a scientist, along with advanced studies in pedagogy at the University of Rome, Dr. Montessori's philosophy and educational method draws from her knowledge of human development and follows the scientific principle of careful observation. Her fascination and inquiry into the essence of learning was inspired by the work of French physician and educationists Jean Marc Gaspard Itard and Édouard Séguin. Dr. Montessori referred to her methodology as "scientific pedagogy"; and presented it as a philosophical approach to education that aligned with the cognitive, physical, emotional and social arc of human development. The first "Casa dei Bambini" (Children's House) opened in the San Lorenzo quarter in Rome, Italy in 1907.

A Journey of Discovery

A deep sense of respect for the dignity and capacities of the young human are central tenets of the Montessori philosophy. Dr. Montessori believed that education was a "journey" that entailed "discovery" and that through spontaneous action and lived experiences, a young human may actualize their natural full potential and exercise their "intrinsic dignity" (ibid, p. 14; 161-163). In her view, the purpose of education was to facilitate the "training and sharpening of the senses" in order to provide a "solid foundation for intellectual growth" and thereby collectively advance peace and unity (ibid p. 99; 163). In constructing her theories and designing curriculum, she applied physiological lens and contended that it was essential for "intelligent beings," to enjoy certain "liberties" in a "prepared learning environment" which above all, afforded respect for "the gradual unfolding of a child's life" (ibid, p. 61). Considering our natural impulse to expand our intellect for purposeful work—Montessori believed that what children needed most from an education was the opportunity to develop their innate capabilities in a "suitable environment where a child can pursue a series of interesting [learning] objectives and thus channel his random energies into orderly and well-executed actions" (ibid, p. 59; 62; 76; 102; 176). Her distinctive approach regards the learner as an 'explorer' and the role of the teacher as that of a guide (Montessori called them 'directresses') and facilitator of exploration (ibid). She believed exploration was afforded in education by having freedom of expression, freedom of movement, and freedom of choice (ibid).



What values are most important for your child's education?

Autonomy in Education

The intended "liberties" or "freedom" in education are of a very particular sense. Montessori held that freedoms should be bounded within an orderly structure. She often clarified in her work that by "liberty," she did not mean "countenance to the external disorderly actions which children left to themselves engage in as a relief from their aimless activity," but rather freedom to develop their physical, socio-emotional, intellectual selves without environmental restrictions to their natural curiosity, interests and motivations (ibid). For more on these "freedoms," review page 10.

The Montessori Curriculum

The Montessori pedagogy consists of carefully designed didactic materials and scaffolded lessons on a curricular continuum that involves what contemporary educational theories today refer to as “recursive-ness” and “excursiveness” (Land et al, 2005). She did not believe that education should be homogeneous and contended that though there should be intentionality in educational design (ibid).

Montessori regarded intellectual growth as spanning four “planes of development” she called infancy (age 0 to 6 years old), childhood (age 6 to 12), adolescence (age 12 to 15), and maturity (age 18 to 24). She believed these planes of development included sensitive periods of growth of certain faculties—physical and biological independence during infancy, mental [reasoning] independence during childhood, social independence during adolescence, and spiritual and moral independence during the plane of maturity. Within these planes, Montessori believed there were sensitive periods; windows of opportunities to acquire a specific skill or attribute such as language acquisition. Montessori placed children in mixed-aged classrooms; these are called the infant and toddler classroom (0-3 years old), primary (3-6 years old), lower elementary (6 to 9 years old) and upper elementary (9 to 12 years old). Montessori called the curriculum for upper elementary “[Cosmic Education](#)”(click to see youtube video) and envisioned it as an introduction to human knowledge and culture through storytelling and experimentation (Montessori, 1909).

The prepared environment

The Montessori prepared learning environment has mixed-aged classes with child-size furniture and didactic materials designed to engage learners in exploring “key concepts” that progress in curricular discovery. Each new concept builds upon the last and are presented in a three period lessons that include 1) a naming period, 2) recognition and association,

and 3) recall. Montessori believed there was a deep connection between the hand and mind and designed materials that presented concrete to abstract concepts and afforded higher and higher level of abstraction (Polk Lillard and Lillard Jensen, 2003, p. 64). She recognized children have an insatiable desire for mean-making and sense-making of their world (ibid). Each new lesson affords a child a new choice of work. “Homework” is seen as the practical life work of the home. Furthermore, practical life works are presented as having equal value to the disciplines. This includes grace and courtesy lessons meant to advance social peace and order in the classroom community. There are no “exams”; self-correction is integrated in the design of didactic materials. In this way, the independent action of the child spurs self-evaluation. Further evidence of student learning is carefully observed by a trained Montessori teacher as the child interleaves their learning through free selection and execution in a classroom in their learning activities.

Pedagogical values and virtues

The values and virtues of Montessori’s carefully designed environment cannot be understated. From the attributes of every sensorial material to mixed-aged learning cohorts to the autonomous progression afforded by the curriculum, every detail is designed and arranged with intentionality and meant to draw out the intrinsic motivation of the child (ibid, p.

99; 179). Montessori replaced the emphasis on verbal instruction with material that contains “within itself its own control of error and thus affords children the opportunity of teaching themselves by their own efforts” (ibid, p. 319). Her method places emphasis on the idea that work is construction of self. She found that affordances such as time to work at one’s own pace builds concentration and fosters a deeper sense of understanding, of one’s own individuality, and respect for others. This in turn fosters a sense of



What areas of the classroom most attract your child?

What areas does your child avoid?



What intrinsically motivates your child?

community. Montessori regarded education to have a spiritual element that advances peace (ibid, p. 320).

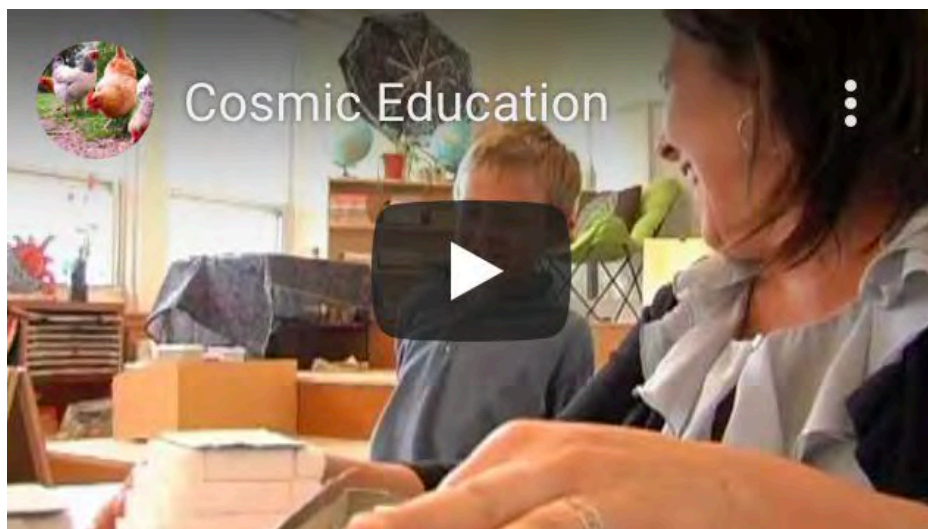
Maria Montessori's legacy

In her time, Montessori's ideas were considered radical and received criticism from some of her contemporary colleagues including John Dewey. Nonetheless, Montessori's theories on education greatly influenced later Constructivist educational theorists including Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky (Mooney 2002 p 23). Her research, philosophy, and legacy has impacted the fundamental way educators worldwide regard the needs of learners and the importance of a prepared learning environment (ibid). Modern neurological science has confirmed what Montessori could only then infer from outward observation: that there is a connection between our hands and our brain; the child "builds a more efficient brain by eliminating some neural possibilities through inactivation and strengthening desired neural pathways by repeated usage" (Polk Lillard and Lillard Jensen, 2003, p. 36). Today, her methods are implemented in schools around the world and interest continues to grow (Montessori Public Policy Initiative 2019). Schools receive accreditation by the American Montessori Society (AMS) or the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).

Dr. Maria Montessori was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times. Montessori alumni include Anne Frank, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, Nobel Prize-winning novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez, British Prince William and Prince Harry, and Google founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin. Alumnus and Amazon CEO, Jeff Bezos, recently announced a \$2 billion-dollar initiative to create a network of Montessori schools in low-income communities (Guernsey 2019). While it is not possible to quantify the impacts of her educational approach on our world, there are enduring manifestations of the intrinsic motivation, self-discipline, respect for others, stewardship of the earth and love of learning in the many lives her educational methods have transformed.

Watch a video to learn more about Montessori Cosmic Education (2:36 minutes)

<https://youtu.be/4Tl6o1Vq eas>



Montessori Freedom within Structure

Freedom of Movement

In Montessori classrooms, mats represent a learner's work space. Students are given 'grace and courtesy' lessons to instill respect for each other's work area and may exercise the freedom to choose where they work in the classroom—with a rug on the floor, on a table or in designated spaces outside of the classroom (Montessori, 1909, p. 48, 85). The teacher's role is to check that movements are purposeful.

Freedom of Expression

In a Montessori classroom, students' voices hold high value and they are encouraged to express themselves as long as they are respectful and not harmful to fellow students or the environment. A social life full of activity is encouraged as a means to build community and develop peace and unity. (ibid p. 49; 50)

Freedom of Choice

In a Montessori classroom, students may exercise freedom of choosing work based on the lessons they have received. A child's natural interests may drive their selection and interleaving of concepts and disciplines. Students may also select whether they do the work independently or collaboratively. When a student is not inclined to work on a particular discipline area, the teacher's role is to check and redirect their attention as needed (ibid p. 69; 93; 96-98).

Freedom of Execution

Montessori emphasized children's freedom to focus on an activity without interruption from adults and allowed a three-hour 'work cycle.' Student may exercise freedom to choose their work and is progressively guided through curriculum to higher cognitive processes. This schema represents individual and group level affordances now referred to as 'hacker ethic,' 'dynamic enterprise,' and 'group flow' by contemporary educational theorists (West 2014).



Montessori Sensorial Materials

Dr. Montessori believed in a strong connection between the hand and mind and that before a new abstract concept is presented, a learner must first have a sensorial understanding of the concept. The Moveable Alphabet is one of many didactic materials she designed for language. It is presented in primary years (3-5). Letters are first presented in cursive by their sound and are color-coded: **consonants are red; vowels are blue**. The name of the letter is learned after the sounds are mastered. Cursive writing is presented before print letters given they require more fluid motions of the wrist. Reading and writing is presented as flowing from left to right and from top to bottom. (ibid, p. 63, 99; 185-241)

The Montessori Community

Montessori designed her classrooms as interactive learning spaces where individual learners could work on sense-making and engage in constructing knowledge together by selecting, organizing and integrating new concepts with prior knowledge after scaffolded lessons that engage their different senses. In this sense, Montessori classrooms are multimodal learning environments (Moreno et al, 2007). Such learning spaces afford the fostering of community—which is now highly regarded as critical to learning (Oblinger et al, 2006).

"One detail that is commonly little understood is the distinction between teaching a child how he should act, but leaving him free in the practical application of this freedom, and that which is followed in other systems of education, namely, of imposing the will and power of an adult upon the child and thus guiding him in all his actions."
– Dr. Maria Montessori (1909, p. 93)

Comparing Pedagogical Frameworks: Montessori and Mainstream School Values & Virtues

According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities' VALUE framework (2019), the purpose of a liberal college education is to prepare students for citizenship and work. If we agree, what virtues need to be developed to bridge across educational transitions, to college, to citizenship and to the workforce? In Nicomachean Ethics Book II, the philosopher Aristotle defines virtues as excellences of character acquired through action: "Virtue of character results from habit...We become just by doing just actions." Dr. Maria Montessori designed her method with a similar premise—she believed that through spontaneous action, humans may actualize their natural social, emotional and cognitive potential and exercise what she called "intrinsic dignity" (Discovery of the Child, 1909, p. 14; 161). The following provides an overview of Montessori values and virtues compared to 'mainstream' systems of education. **Note this list is not intended to be comprehensive—school values vary widely by pedagogical approach and by type—public, public charter or independent schools may aim for different virtues. Next time you tour a school, inquire what values are a part of their school mission.**

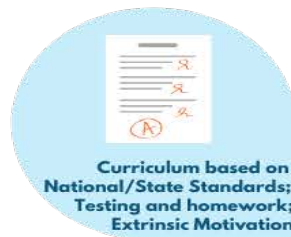


What do you believe is the purpose of education?

Montessori values & virtues fostered



Mainstream values & virtues fostered



Glossary of the Montessori Method

Definitions gleaned from text of Lillard, A.S (2005). *The Science Behind the Genius*. New York: Oxford University Press

Absorbent Mind: The ability and ease with which young children (birth to 6) learn from their environment.

Reasoning Mind: The emerging ability of the child in the elementary years to learn through abstraction and imagination.

The Control of Error: The intentional design of Montessori materials that makes apparent mistakes made, thereby allowing children to see their own error and correct it themselves.

Cosmic Education: Dr. Montessori's plan and underlying story about the creation of the universe. It is multi-cultural and interdisciplinary.

Cycle of Activity: Periods of concentration on a particular task that should be worked to completion.

Didactic Materials: The educational, hands-on materials, which allow for auto-education.

Discovery of the Child: Dr. Montessori's awareness and realization of the young child's abilities and the spontaneous love of work and learning.

Freedom: The child's free movements and experiences in an environment that provides discipline through liberty and respect for his or her rights.

Individual liberty: The value for self-actualization; that the child should have freedom to act on their own accord without assistance or limitations determined by the group or environment. That allows for the child's own self-construction and what Montessori called "intrinsic dignity of the child" (Montessori, 1909, p. 14).

Normalized Child: The child who has adapted to their Montessori classroom environment and has developed self-discipline.

Prepared Environment: A learning environment designed to be peaceful and orderly for enabling the child to be free to learn through action.

Spontaneous Activity: Students learn through action; by doing work with a variety of materials.

Uninterrupted Work: Cycles of uninterrupted work where the child is able to choose work without interruption and with freedom to choose their work. This includes completion of the work cycle by putting each material away before choosing another. This period must be three hours to allow for the development of habits of mind, including work approach, concentration and understanding.



Watch a graphic sketch video – how many of these concepts and terms are mentioned?

<https://youtu.be/UzmvTVAuuyI>

One Minute Reflection

Work areas I-II (pages 7-12)



Share

Take one minute to **write or draw** your reflections on one (1) of the following prompts. Then, discuss with your person of choice (a parenting partner, your child, a family member, or a friend). Note any changes in your perspective.

- What Montessori Method values do you appreciate the most?
- What values do you consider most important for education?
- You have one minute in a school hallway to explain Montessori education to someone unfamiliar with the Method. Go.



Create

Write your reflection in this space.

Draw an illustration of your thoughts.

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Optional: Share your reflection online here: <https://padlet.com/cristibenitez/s6cfco463ipp>

"The system is partly a memory of its past, just as in origami, the essence of a bird or a horse is both in the nature and order of the folds made. The question that must be answered when faced with a problem of planning or design of a system, is what exactly is a system? It is therefore necessary to know the nature of the inner structure before plans can be made. – Wolfgang Jonas, "On the Foundations of a Science of the Artificial"

*A family Story –
The transition
after Montessori*

In work area III (pages 13-17), a family's story is shared. At the end of this section, you will be asked to take one minute to write your reflections on one of the following prompts.

- Why did you initially choose Montessori for your child(ren)?
- What are your child(ren)'s strengths and educational needs?

When our first baby began to crawl, I was compelled to set in motion a protective plan in our home to keep our baby safe. Anticipating that the sharp edges of our coffee table and that electrical outlets posed dangers to her young curious mind, I was compelled to set in motion a protective plan in our home environment to keep our baby safe as she toddled towards physical independence.

Preparing for my eldest's transition to middle school felt no different in urgency as the day loomed ahead—except in this case, a trip to Home Depot would not result in acquiring the tools and resources I needed. After eight years of being able to drop her off at her Montessori school without a worry; ensured she would spend a full day of purposeful action in a nurturing learning community, the transition to a new learning environment and an entirely different approach to learning seemed daunting. There was sadness at arriving at the necessary transition but also for how different her world was about to become. The transitional worries did not get any easier with my second daughter after her eight and a half years in Montessori, and I am now back at this same square with my youngest, my son, after his nine years in Montessori. What I sensed from the first instance and now anticipating again is what educational theories refer to as 'educational discontinuity'. Educational discontinuity is what students experience as a result of ideological differences in approach between two different educational systems. After Montessori, there is a need to transition and adopt into an entirely new way of learning.

Why Montessori?

I imagine that someone unfamiliar with Montessori may wonder why go through such a transition three times? Why not transition earlier or perhaps avoid the transition all together by enrolling our children in a school with mainstream methods of instruction? The answer, at least for me, was in the enthusiasm and happiness I observed from the very first tour of a Montessori classroom to the excitement in each of my children's voices each day when they shared about their daily work. Their time learning seemed very meaningful to them and because it was so, they were happily engaged every day. Granted, one exuberantly shared every detail, another preferred to keep their work a mystery, and the other shared depending on the day. Each of my three children have vastly different natural constitutions but as their little personalities blossomed in their early years, it became clear to me that there was something quite amazing about the Montessori method. The prepared environment and guidance seemed to facilitate the actualization of their full individual physical, socio-emotional and cognitive potential. That was exciting to observe as a parent. It made me realize that so much focus is put on education preparing the individual for their future work when their current life experience and current work is just as meaningful and important.



*Why did you initially
choose Montessori for
your child(ren)?*

A leap of faith and discovery

Montessori changed my perspective as a parent. It deepened my respect for my children's voices. I became attuned of their efforts in constructing themselves out of the folds and order in their world. As an educational approach that seemed to guide learning in a manner that is aligned with their developmental needs, and that fulfilled my children's natural curiosity, Montessori simply felt as the right fit for our family. And so, we took a big leap of faith. We invested in the time and patience the method requires according to each child's natural tendencies. This "unschooling" was not overnight; it was challenging as a parent to not truly know in a quantifiable sense where our children were in the process of reaching learning objectives. Yet, we were continually encouraged by our children's enthusiasm for learning and by how well their teachers got to know them as individuals. We did not receive report cards, but the amount of joy they exhibited in their learning became far more meaningful a measure of how they were engaging as learners. I imagined that the opportunity for discovery of each of their own unique intellectual passions may be the best head start we could offer as parents. The additional time in a nurturing environment where our children were happily engaged in learning seemed worthwhile for as long as we could keep them in Montessori.

And yet, the transition, of dealing with the educational divide, or "educational discontinuity," was something to contend with at the end of Montessori elementary years. It loomed in the back of my mind from the very start. When my first daughter was in her final year of primary, I considered the pathways ahead and considered an early transition for first grade. Although I attended parent education seminars at my child's school and was aware of the work my child was doing in the classroom, I did not yet understand *how Montessori exactly worked*. I was concerned my daughter was not spending time in the language section as much as she spent working on puzzle maps and washing tables. I did not yet understand the interdisciplinary nature of the Montessori curriculum, and how lessons are scaffolded from concrete concepts to abstractions in multi-year cycles; how it loops back to earlier lessons to build upon concepts to present higher and higher abstractions. At that time, I noted that other children of my daughter's age attending mainstream schools were already beginning to read and write while my daughter had no interest. Such concern may have been a natural point of deviation from Montessori. I knew continuing in Montessori would require either a deeper understanding of the pedagogy or taking repetitive leaps of faith. Despite some skepticism, I convinced myself to pursue both. It required reflecting and assessing our values as a family. What virtues do we aspire for our children? What values and virtues do we appreciate about Montessori? Are the virtues worthy considerations of investment in time and resources? And perhaps the most pressing question, would this be worth a long daily morning commute—for fifteen years?

Pedagogical values and virtues

While the socio-emotional and physical benefits of a Montessori education were clear to me for each of my three children, particularly in primary, what I had challenges understanding the cognitive benefits and educational transfer benefit for the elementary years. Through reading Montessori's books and watching videos (see recommended resources on page 43), talking with parents and alumni, as well as engaging in workshops offered by the school, I came to appreciate the purpose of the materials, the three period lessons and the values and virtues of the philosophy. I came to appreciate the design—Dr. Montessori regarded the young child as having "intrinsic dignity." I came to appreciate how every detail of a Montessori classroom is meant to draw out and encourage the child's intrinsic motivation to learn. However, the greatest appreciation came about until after our first transition.

My first daughter's motivations eventually led to reading (thank goodness!) and it came about in a spontaneous burst of interest and activity when she was almost seven years old. I would often find her dozed off at bedtime with a book on top of her head. In fifth grade, she became deeply motivated by the idea to go to Paris to study French culture and language along with three classmates. They fundraised, budgeted and planned every detail, including holding bake sales at dismissal—almost every week for several months. Eventually they re-evaluated goals and realized their “going out” would require a whole lot more bake sales. They eventually culminated their Montessori years with a self-funded trip to NYC to visit the Met, eat at a fancy French restaurant, and explore French cultural influences in the city—and they raised enough to take their teacher as a chaperone.

Transitional

Pains

After Montessori, she transitioned to our local public middle school. Going from a graduating Montessori class of ten to a public school of over two hundred students in her grade level did not happen without some challenges. Academically, she excelled and was even bored in some classes where she had already encountered the concepts in Montessori. For example, her public school seventh grade curriculum required a course in geography. Studying bodies of water and land mass forms was something she had covered in her primary years with the Montessori puzzle maps. Socially, however, there were a few tough situations encountered in that first year after Montessori that we had to overcome. Most of the challenges stemmed from dealing with drastically different values and virtues of the new learning system. The way peers and adults expressed themselves was sometimes different and not always respectful. Freedom of movement seemed to not exist as a value; in fact, she had assigned seating for every class period—frustratingly, even at lunch time. Homework was another point of stress and it initially required daily support at home. Though she did well academically, it took time for her to feel comfortable and settled in her new school.



Think about your child's learning journey. What has been challenging for them? What supports will be needed?

Transitional

Gains

During the process of constructing our own family's bridge across the educational divide, I also saw many daily manifestations of the values and virtues my daughter had gained as a Montessori student. She was capable of keeping prolonged focus, of organizing her time, was comfortable taking initiative and she seemed to have a very deep sense of self. Despite the rigidity of her new curricular environment, she retained her sense of curiosity and initiative for exploration. She excelled in her social science and math courses. She seemed to have a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts. Often, she would draw from concepts learned in Montessori for making sense of new and higher mathematical abstractions. She made meaningful connections in learning as well as in forming a new community of peers. She was comfortable advocating for herself with teachers—however, I also quickly learned how necessary it was to intervene as a parent in a system that did not hold a child's voice in the same level of regard and respect. Communication and awareness of the logistical nuances of her middle school experience was key for effective advocacy with school leadership.



Think about your child's learning journey. What has been their strengths?

High school came quickly; she was happily and actively engaged in academic, athletic, and extracurricular pursuits. At fifteen, she left home to study abroad during the summer; an experience she sought out for herself. Any worry or hesitation I harbored for that idea was subsided by her level of confidence and independence. At sixteen, she started a jewelry-making venture with a friend. Her intrinsic motivation and sense of independence has led her to new pathways. It is exciting to see how her journey and work of self-construction continues to unfold. She is now a freshman at the University of San Diego, in California, pursuing a concentration in environmental studies.

A second journey unfolds

My second daughter's transition was completely different. We sought and enrolled her in an independent middle school. Getting acclimated to a demanding homework load took time and tears early on. But apart from this, she had a smoother transition going from her Montessori class of seven to an independent middle school cohort of twenty-four students. Her school follows a project-based learning college prep curriculum in their middle and high school. Her new school was able to meet her where she was to bridge the educational transition. Her teachers were familiar with Montessori from their lower school curriculum. Her teacher's efforts, along with the interdisciplinary curriculum and a nurturing school community are what we credit for her ease of transition. As a student, she did not have to construct the bridge alone. In some classes, we found she was ahead academically— particularly in math, while in others, she required support to figure out the terminology and knowledge gaps. And credit is due to the communications and efforts her school pours into fostering virtues and values of respect, diversity, initiative, and refining metacognitive skills. Our second daughter is now in eighth grade.

The Third time around

As our youngest reached fifth grade, I began to seek resources and consider his journey to middle school. While I found in the literature studies that discuss positive educational outcomes gains of a Montessori education (Stoll Lillard, 2005, p. 337), and that seemed reassuring and promising prospects, what I felt would be most useful and meaningful at this stage in our family's Montessori journey was practical advice for the actual transition. At the same time, other Montessori families preparing for the transition who knew our family had gone through the transition twice, approached us seeking to learn about our experience. Of course, our insight was limited to our own circumstances. Transitional experiences are deeply impacted by the receiving middle school environments.

Seeking Collective Wisdom

Yet, I wondered if there are common challenges that Montessori alumni seem to encounter? And if so, what strategies had proven effective for them? So much about Montessori focuses on building community and yet this collective insight and wisdom seemed missing.

Scholarly Inquiry as a Grad student

It seemed like a worthwhile and valuable inquiry to explore as a parent, graduate student and as an educator. As a graduate student learning about learning, design and technology in higher education and as an administrator at a research university, I also had other questions from the lens of learning and service design. What were the educational affordances of Montessori? What is the best way to compare pedagogical frameworks? Did they align with learning objectives for college readiness? What exactly concerned the problem space of the transition experience? Where does it begin and end? I centered my research on these questions.

The Research

Keep in mind that any research findings “must be taken with a grain of salt because of methodological shortcomings” (Stoll Lillard, 2005, p.34; Bhattacharjee, 2012, p. 43-65). While the research data is interesting to consider and there is value in collective stories of lived experiences, findings should not be considered comprehensive nor is it feasible to draw any conclusions from the data. Nonetheless, I hope the insight gleaned from Montessori alumni discussed in the next section, the Research Report, may prove useful.

A Starting Point

This transition learning engagement and resource guide is meant to be a starting point for community conversations. I encourage you to actively engage in sharing your thoughts and takeaways with your parenting partner, your child, your child’s teacher(s), and other Montessori parents. After your child transitions, share your experiences with parents of younger Montessori students as a means to build networks of support. Through community engagement and dialogue, we can begin to arrive at practical and collective wisdom—your feedback and ideas are welcome and an important part of the exchange.

peace,
Cristina

Cristina Benitez
mom of Montessori alumni '13, '18, '20 (primary to 6th grade)
<http://about.me/cristibenitez>



Share

One Minute Reflection

Work area III (pages 13-18)



Share

Take one minute to **write** or **draw** your reflection on one of the following prompts. Then, discuss with your chosen person (parenting partner, your child(ren), your family member, or a friend). Note any changes.

- Why did you choose Montessori for your child(ren)?
- What are the strengths and educational needs of your child(ren)?



Create

Write your reflection in this space.

Handwriting practice area consisting of ten horizontal lines with dashed midlines for letter height guidance.

Draw an illustration of your thoughts.

A large empty rectangular box for drawing an illustration.

Optional: Share your reflection online here: <https://padlet.com/cristibenitez/di0s3jf5ncow>

Research -
*A Survey of
Collective Wisdom*

In the next work area IV (pages 20-35), a survey report is shared for your review. After reading and considering the data in this section, you will be asked to take one minute to write your reflections on one of the following prompts.

- Which of the challenges mentioned by alumni did you find surprising, if any? Why?
- Among the tips and strategies shared by alumni, which ones do you plan to include in your family's transition plan?
- Are there other strategies not mentioned that you would recommend?

Will the survey report provide evidence of Montessori Educational Outcomes?

No. While interesting and valuable to consider shared recollections of lived experiences by alumni, the survey results are not evidence of Montessori learning outcomes nor of generalized transitional experiences. Take findings as practical wisdom shared by alumni.

If you are interested in learning about academic learning outcomes, you may watch this academic presentation by Dr. Steve Hughes (2019) which provides an overview of the latest research on Montessori learning outcomes. Dr. Steve Hughes is a board-certified pediatric neuropsychologist and the chair of the Association of Montessori Internationale's (AMI) Global Research Committee.



Dr. Steve Hughes: 5 year research project - Montessori Global Outcomes

<https://youtu.be/DL2-OmzFnSI?t=1065> (22 minutes; 22:25 to 39:14 recommended viewing)

Adult Montessori alumni retrospective impressions on transitioning to a new learning environment

by
Cristina Benitez

Prepared on
November 30, 2019

Abstract: Introduction: This study examined the retrospective impressions of adult Montessori alumni who transitioned during upper elementary years (grade four to six) to a new learning environment for middle school on their transition and adaptation to a new pedagogical approach and school community. The aim of this study was to identify common challenges and glean effective strategies for mitigating the educational discontinuity. **Methods:** In this cross-sectional study, data was collected from (n=90) ninety respondents identifying as adult Montessori alumni, parents of Montessori alumni, and educators who work with Montessori alumni during the month of November 2019; the data was divided into subsets. The focus of this report is on a subset of forty-one (41) responses from Montessori alumni who transitioned in upper elementary years (age 9-12) or later. A total of eighteen (18) schools in ten (10) states and the District of Columbia in the United States were represented. Data was analyzed using inductive coding and thematic categorization. **Results:** The Montessori education virtues and values most mentioned by alumni as being of the most value to them are: Independence and discovery (75.60%), Respect for humanity and the Earth (65.85%), and Freedom of Movement within the classroom (63.41%). Ninety (90%) of Alumni responded they would recommend Montessori to a friend for their child. Regarding educational gains, in open-ended responses, Alumni indicated appreciation for gaining an affinity for learning (46%), community (46%) and initiative (29%). Sixty-six percent (66%) indicated they settled into their new school environments within one semester. Top transitional challenges reported were getting use to homework (25%), a restrictive pace of learning (24%) and social acclimation (22%). Twenty-six (26) distinct strategies and forty-five (45) bits of advice was offered by respondents. **The collective insight shared by adult Montessori Alumni respondents suggests that respondents retained value for educational gains though most experienced a period with challenges in their new environment. Ninety-five (95%) recall being comfortable and settled to new school within one year of transition; 44% within one month and 22% within one semester.**

Research Questions

When transitioning between schools that follow different pedagogical approaches, students must acclimate to different means of engagement, expression, and representation in their new learning environment. What are some of the most common challenges that Montessori students encounter? What are some strategies that have been effective?

Survey Objectives

The purpose of this survey was to investigate and collect data on transitional experiences, challenges, and strategies from adult Montessori alumni, parents of Montessori alumni, as well as educators who work with middle to high school students.

Survey Sampling

Snowball sampling was used to distribute the survey to the targeted cross-section of the population with endorsement from alumni, parents and educational leaders of Christian Family Montessori (DC), Barrie Prep (MD), The Journey School (MD), and the Montessori Public Policy Initiative (DC).

Participants

A total of ($n = 90$) ninety responses were collected. A subset of seventy-six (76) respondents self-identified as an adult Montessori alumni and/or parent of a Montessori alumni who transitioned during the upper elementary years or later (9-15 years old). [Much of this report focuses on the forty-one \(41\) respondents who identified as adult Montessori alumni who transitioned during or after upper elementary \(9-15 years old\).](#)

Data Collected

Qualitative: Qualitative data included open-ended query responses and comments.

Quantitative: Quantitative data included five-point Likert scales and category ranking metrics.

Limitations

The main limitations for this survey are its retrospective design and sampling bias in that random assignment was not possible. Avoiding this bias is very difficult for studies regarding the Montessori Method (Lillard, 2005, p. 34) because parents choose to send their children to a Montessori school. Also, Respondents are seven or more years removed from their experience and as such, limits their recall. Respondents represent eighteen different Montessori schools which represents a very small sample of Montessori (AMI or AMS) schools in the United States. Furthermore, there is variability in how the Montessori Method is implemented. The data collected and analyzes provides a glimpse of lived experiences of Montessori alumni but cannot be extrapolated to alumni of any given school, much less about all Montessori alumni.

Strengths

The strength of this study is that it represents collective wisdom shared by alumni about their lived experiences. Design of the survey instrument was aimed to authenticate responses, including through expert endorsements, respondent-friendly length and access, and clear questions.

Survey Instrument Questions

See Survey Appendix I (page 34) for a full list of questions.

Survey Analysis

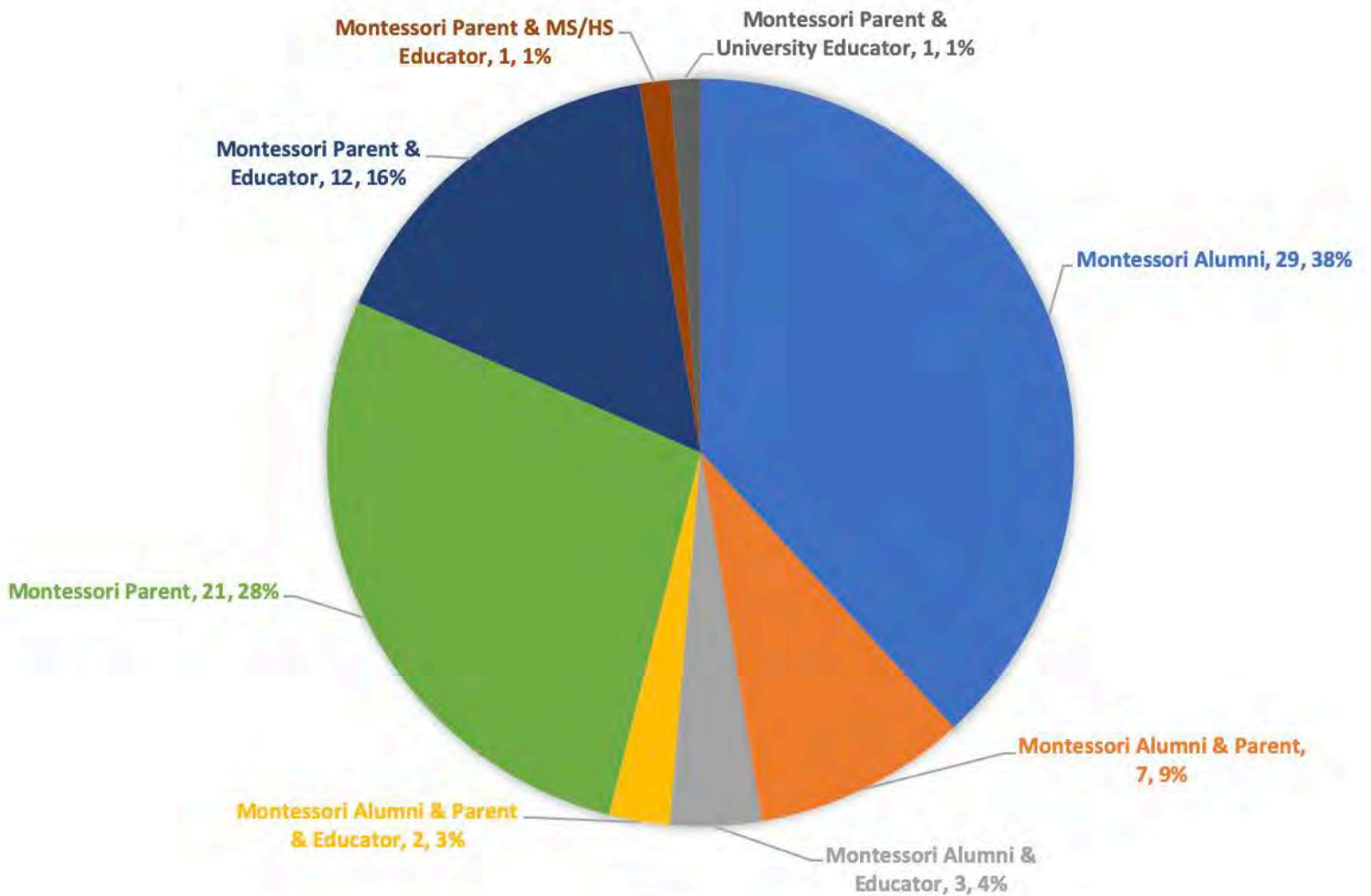
Qualitative data was analyzed using inductive coding and categorization.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Respondent Identification (Q5)

Among a subset of seventy-six (76) respondents, a total of forty-one (41) respondents identified as adult alumni. Thirty-eight percent (38%) identified as Montessori Alumni. Nine percent (9%) identified as being a Montessori Alumni and a Parent, Four percent (4%) identified as an Alumni and Educator, and three (3%) identified as being a Montessori Alumni, Parent and Educator.

The following graph shows the breakdown of this subset.



Respondent School Affiliations (Q6-Q8)

Among the forty-one (41) adult Montessori alumni, eighteen (18) Montessori schools of affiliation were identified, including schools in the following places: one (1) in Arizona, one (1) in Washington, D.C., one (1) in Indiana, one (1) in North Carolina, one (1) in Ohio, one (1) in Texas, one (1) in Virginia, two (2) in Georgia, three (3) in New York, three (3) in California, and three schools (3) in Maryland. The school of most frequent affiliation to adult Montessori Alumni was Christian Family Montessori in Washington, D.C. with twelve (12) alumni respondents followed by Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School in Maryland with four (4) alumni respondents.

Of the eighteen (18) schools, twelve (13) have AMS accreditation, two (2) have AMI accreditation and three (3) are of undetermined accreditation. Accreditation determined from responses and was cross-checked: a) via the school's website and b) via the AMS and AMI's online school directories. Twenty-nine (29) of forty-one (41) adult Montessori alumni responded "I am not sure or did not know" regarding their alma mater's accreditation. This may indicate schools need to inform their students and families more about their accreditation type and status.

Twelve (12) schools are independent, three (3) are public, two are public charter (2), and one (1) undetermined type.

Arbor Montessori School (GA; independent; AMI)
Barrie Montessori (MD; independent; AMS)
Bennett Park Montessori Center (NY; public; AMS)
Christian Family Montessori School (DC; independent; AMI)
Montessori School in San Bernardino (CA; undetermined type and accreditation)
Elizabeth Ann Clune Montessori of Ithaca (NY; independent; AMS)
Ghent Montessori (VA; independent; undetermined accreditation)
Good Shepherd Montessori School (IN; independent; AMS)
Monocacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School (MD; public charter; AMS)
Montessori Child Enrichment Center [now Firelands Montessori] (OH; independent; AMS)
Montessori Greenhouse (CA; independent; AMS)
Montessori of Macon (GA; independent; AMS)
Montessori on the Lake (CA; independent; AMS)
Montessori School of Flagstaff (AZ; public charter; AMS)
New City Montessori School (MD; independent—closed; undetermined accreditation)
Park Road Montessori (NC; public; AMS)
Robert Goddard Montessori (NY; public; AMS)
School of the Woods (TX; independent; AMS)

Time of Transition (Q9-Q10)

Among the subset of forty-one (41) alumni respondents, sixty-six (66%) indicated they transitioned from Montessori to a new learning environment during or upon completion of upper elementary years (ages 9-12). Thirty-four percent (34%) transitioned during or upon completion of middle school years (ages 13-15).

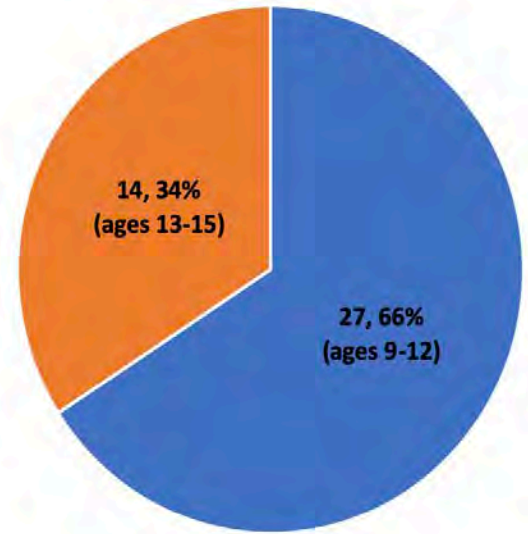
Receiving School Type (Q11-Q13)

Of this subset (n=41) of Montessori Alumni respondents, the majority, forty-nine (49%), transitioned to a public school, ten percent (10%) transitioned to a Public Charter School, thirty-one (31%) went to a school with a religious affiliation and ten (10%) went to a school with no religious affiliation.

List of Schools Attended by Alumni

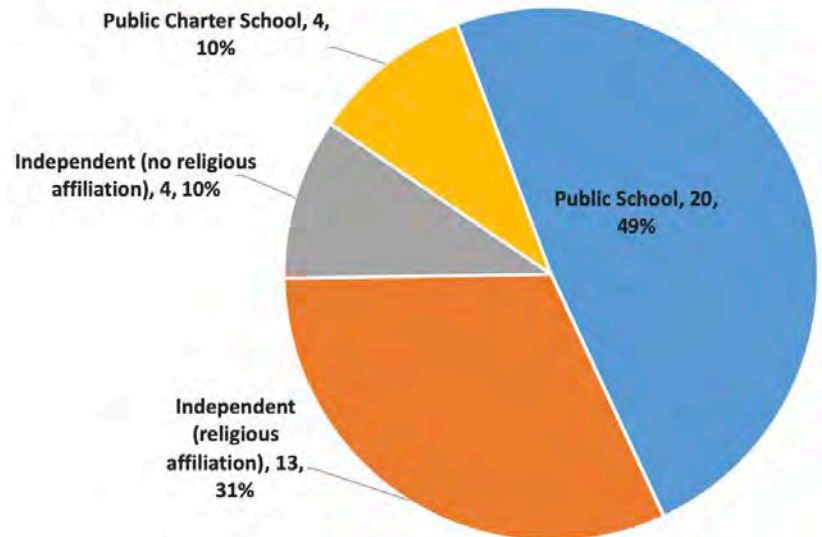
Academy of the Holy Cross, DC
 Banner Elementary, CA
 Bell Intermediate School, CA
 Berlin-Milan Middle School, OH
 Burke School, DC
 DeWitt Middle School, Ithaca, NY
 Elizabeth Seaton HS, MD
 Episcopal HS, Houston, TX
 Holton-Arms School, MD
 Holy Trinity, DC
 Hyattsville MS, MD
 Inman MS, Atlanta, GA
 James Hubert Blake HS, MD
 John Adams HS, South Bend, IN
 Key School, MD
 Middletown HS, Middletown, MD
 Mount Rainier ES, MD
 Myers Park HS, Charlotte, NC
 Nardin Academy, Buffalo, NY
 Norfolk Collegiate School, VA
 Northland Prep, Flagstaff, AZ
 Oakdale HS, Ijamsville, MD
 Orange County School of the Arts, Santa Ana, CA
 Other school in MD
 Other school not in the DMV area
 Piedmont Open Middle, Charlotte, NC
 School Without Walls, DC
 Silver Spring International MS, MD
 St Anselm's Abbey School, DC
 St Anthony's, DC
 Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, MD
 Tuscarora High School
 Urbana High School, Ijamsville, MD
 Washington Latin, DC

Age at Transition (n= 41)



- During or upon completion of upper elementary years (ages 9-12)
- During or upon completion of middle school years (ages 13-15)

Adult Montessori Alumni Receiving School Type after Montessori

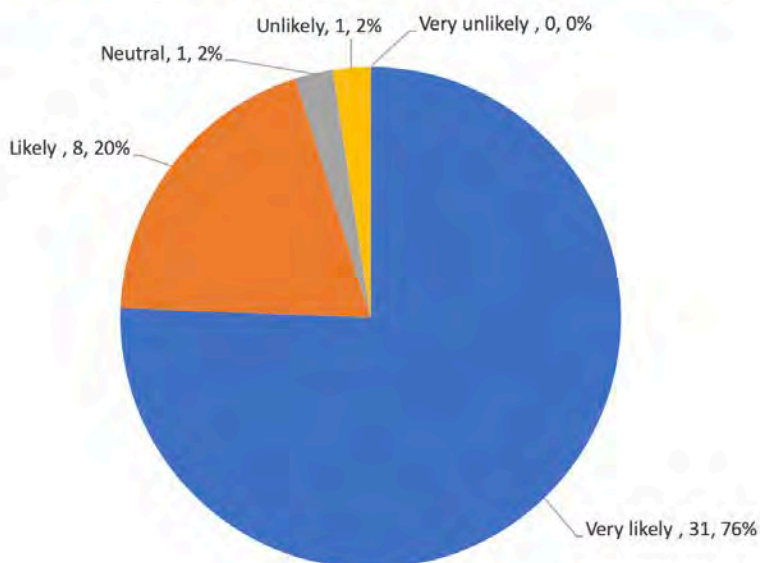


Likelihood of Alumni

Recommendation (Q14)

Among alumni (n=41) who transitioned during or upon completion of upper elementary or middle school years (age 9-15), **ninety percent (90%) are likely or highly likely to recommend Montessori education** to a friend exploring options for their child. Among the wider subset of adult alumni, parents of alumni and educators (n=76), that figure is ninety seven percent (97%).

Likelihood of Adult Montessori Alumni Recommending Montessori Education (n=41)



Virtues and Values (Q15)

From a list of Montessori virtues and values, respondents were asked to select up to five that were of most value to them. To minimize response bias, the list was presented in randomized order to each survey participant. The percentage of adult Montessori alumni (n=41) who indicated their value for a particular Montessori virtue or value is as follows:

- Independence and discovery (75.60%)
- Respect for Humanity and the Earth (65.85%)
- Freedom of Movement within the classroom (63.41%)
- Behavioral Intrinsic Rewards—no grades (60.96%)
- Adult respect and value of the child's voice (53.60%)
- Learners advance at own pace through the curriculum (51.22%)
- Collaboration in learning is encouraged (34.15%)
- Work of the family life and the home is valued—no homework (31.71%)
- Grace and Courtesy lessons foster a sense of community (26.83%)
- Curriculum based on cognitive development (12.19%)

The frequency of selection may indicate that in this sample, though they all attended different types of Montessori schools with different types of accreditation, there seemed to be some common values shared from their school experiences, with 'independence and discovery' being the most commonly indicated value for all respondents.

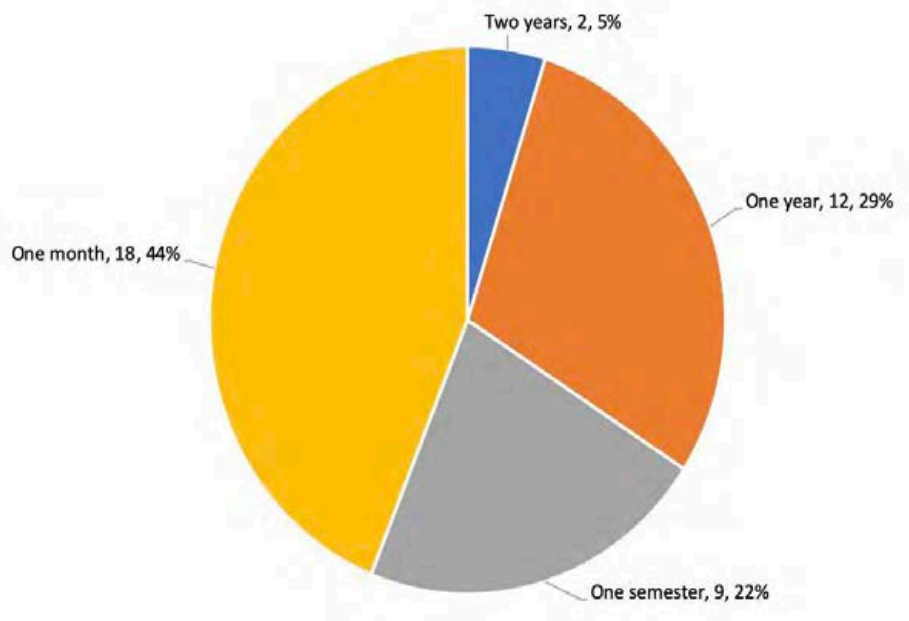
Montessori Loves (Q16)

Respondents were asked as an open-ended question to elaborate on what they love most about Montessori. Adult Montessori Respondents (n=41) most frequently discussed their gained Affinity for learning (46%), Community (46%) and Initiative (29%).



Length of Transition (Q17)

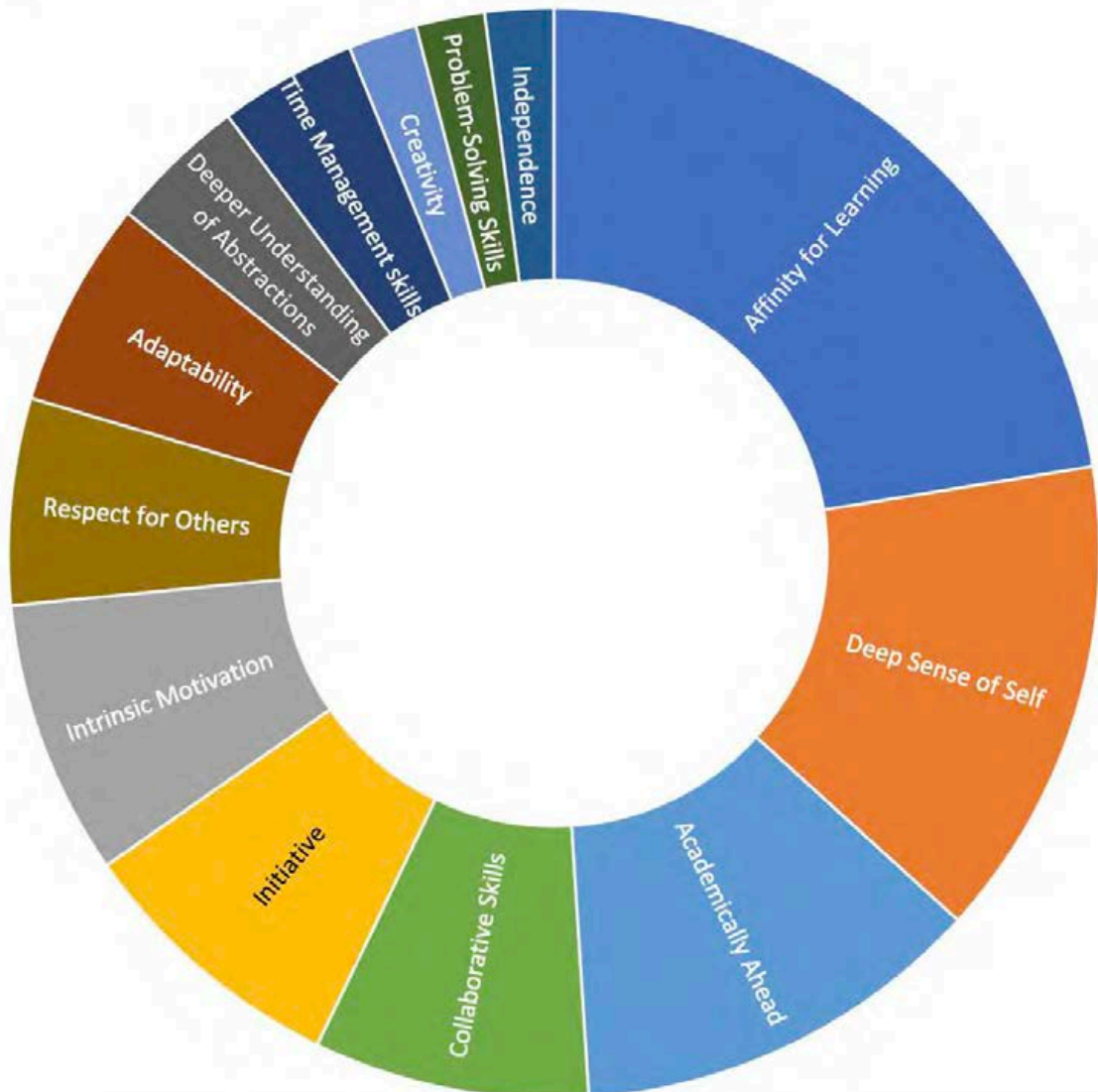
Respondents were asked how long did it take for them to feel more-or-less settled into the new school? "More-or-less settled" was defined to mean comfortable and adapted to the new method of learning and environment. Of adult Montessori alumni respondents (n=41), sixty-six percent (66%) responded that it took them one semester or less to feel comfortable and adapted into their new method of learning and environment. For thirty-four (34%), it took one to two (1-2) years.



Educational Gains (Q18)

Respondents were asked, as an open ended question, what they felt they gained from a Montessori education that helped facilitate their transition to a new learning environment. Responses were coded by thematic categorization. Among adult Montessori Alumni (n=41), twenty-seven percent (27%) mentioned their transition was facilitated by having gained an Affinity for Learning, seventeen percent (17%) mentioned they had gained a Deep Sense of Self, and fifteen percent (15%) mentioned they transitioned Academically ahead of their grade level. Respondents discussed a wide variety of educational gains. Their responses provide a glimpse of what Alumni in this survey felt eased their transition. However, it is important to note that lack of mention in an open-ended question does not mean the respondent did not have a particular gain.

- Affinity for Learning
- Deep Sense of Self
- Intrinsic Motivation
- Initiative
- Academically Ahead
- Collaborative Skills
- Time Management skills
- Adaptability
- Deeper Understanding of Abstractions
- Respect for Others
- Independence
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Creativity



(Sample) Recollections from Montessori Alumni of Montessori Loves and Educational Gains (Q16 and Q18):

Alumni identified provided permission for inclusion of name. Otherwise quoted without attribution.

- “I have personally observed that I am able and engaged in designing and pursuing my own intellectual projects, without needing too much external support (or only strategic support) or validation. I am good at teaching myself. I attribute this to Montessori school.” – Samantha Meier, Alumna, Montessori School of Flagstaff (AZ; Public Charter; AMS)
- “Montessori taught me responsibility, respect, an ability to recognize and appreciate diverse learning styles, perspectives, and interests, and built a foundation for a life of learning and attention to process.” – Cecilia Lapp Stoltzfus, Alumna, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; Independent; AMI)
- “I think that the extensive social interaction in the Montessori classroom allowed me to develop good interpersonal strategies that made it easy to adapt to a private, college-prep school. I also think that the independence and executive function skills I developed in Montessori made it easy for me to manage a difficult course load in high school and college. I was also about two years ahead academically when I transitioned, so that facilitated the schoolwork.” – Cora Tench, Alumna, Montessori of Macon (GA; independent; AMS); Montessori Guide (AMI)
- “In many ways, I had a strong academic background before switching schools, so some of 7th grade, especially English class, was review for me.” – Aleja Hertzler-McCain, Alumna, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; Independent; AMI)
- “I feel like Montessori education helped me develop a sense of personal responsibility for my work and learning, and so even though the introduction of homework was new, I had motivation to do it.” – Yves Eisenberg, Alumnus, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; Independent; AMI)
- “I think I arrived at the public high school with a clearer sense of who I was and what I cared about than a lot of my peers. This was important in a time when social pressures can essentially erase your sense of self.” – Klaus Mayr, Alumnus, Park Road Montessori (NC; public; AMS)
- “I love that children are treated as individuals rather than statistics. Adults listen and cultivate relationships with their students as guides rather than imposing authority figures. Students are encouraged to think deeply about their privilege, their responsibilities, their interests, their cosmic understanding. They are encouraged to broker peace between peers in times of conflict. They learn the value of the environment, and of respecting the earth, cultivating its resources. There is so much. I could go on for hours. You probably get the idea.” – Kieran McKenna, Alumnus, Good Shepherd Montessori School (IN; independent; AMS)
- “[I gained] lots of academic knowledge; strong sense of self; ability to approach work independently and to engage with adults as spiritual equals.” – Anonymous
- “Confidence that I could learn whatever was being taught, courage to be invested in my own education and take it seriously, respect for the viewpoints of others.” – Logan Dwyer, Alumnus, Montessori School of Flagstaff (AZ; Public Charter; AMS)

NOTE: The previous questions focused on recollections specifically from adult Montessori alumni respondents (n=41). For wider insight, the following analysis includes responses from the subset of parents of Montessori alumni, educators, and adult alumni (n=76) who transitioned during or after upper elementary (ages 9-15 years old).

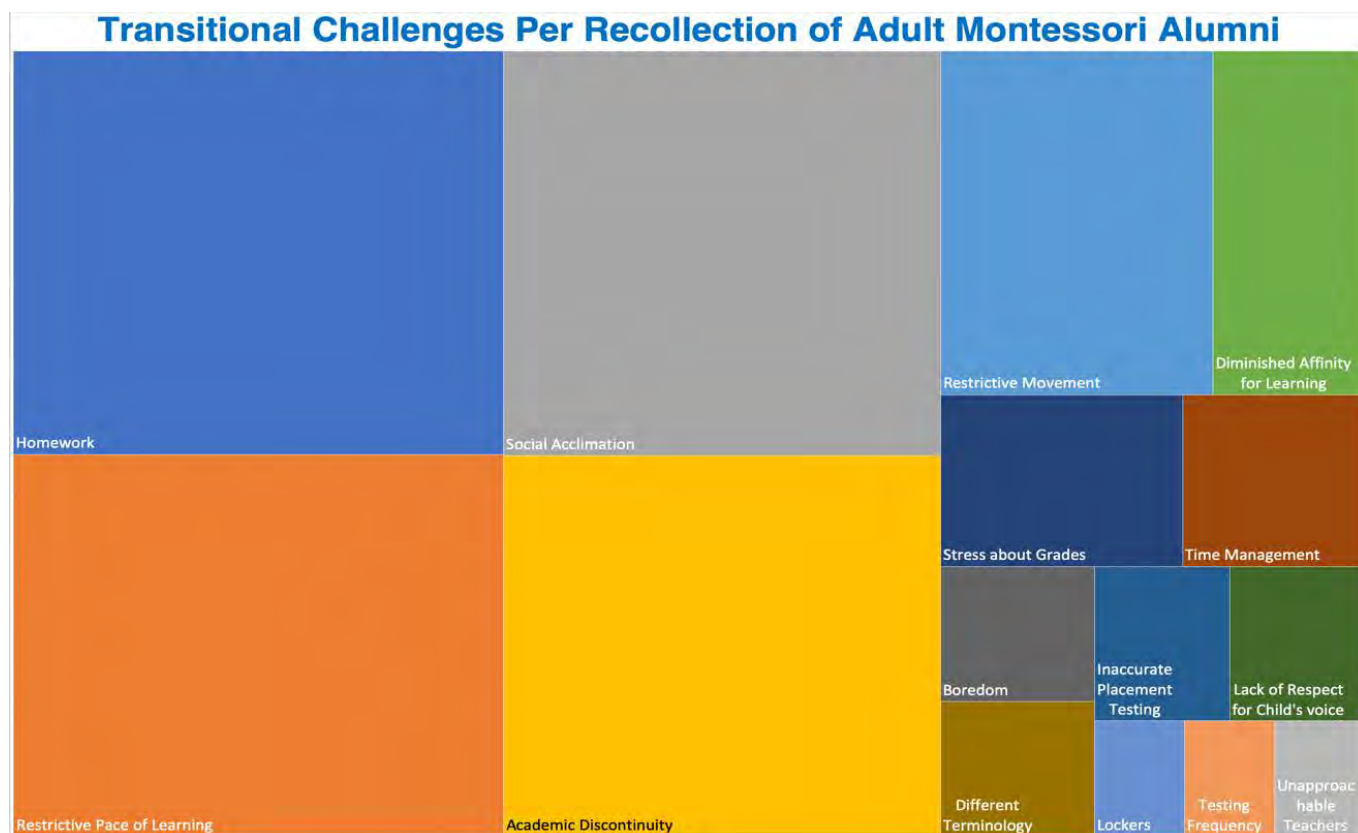
Transitional Challenges (Q19)

Respondents (n=76) were asked, in an open-ended question, what challenges (academic, social, or systemic) did they, their child, or students they worked with encounter during the transition from Montessori to a new learning environment.

Recollections shared of transitional challenges include:

- Twenty-five percent (25%) mentioned Homework
- Twenty-four percent (24%) mentioned a Restrictive Pace of Learning
- Twenty-two percent (22%) mentioned Social Acclimation
- Twenty-one percent (21%) mentioned Academic Discontinuity (ie systemic knowledge and experiential gaps)
- Twelve percent (12%) mentioned Restrictive Movement
- Seven percent (7%) mentioned a Diminished Affinity for Learning
- Five percent (5%) mentioned Stress about Grades
- Other challenges mentioned: Boredom, Inaccurate Placement Testing, Different Terminology, Dealing with Lockers, Time Management and Unapproachable Teachers.

In this hierarchical graph, size of the block corresponds to the frequency of mention.



(Sample) Recollections from Montessori Alumni of Transitional Challenges:

Names of alumni are omitted in respect to sensitivity and candidness of responses.

- “The systemic changes were the most difficult - sitting in rows of desks, working quietly and independently (rather than collaboratively) much of the time, superficial (rather than deep) study of subjects. These adjustments were hard for me and discouraged me.” – Alumna (OH; independent; AMS)
- “Sitting still for a class period.” – Montessori Alumna (DC; independent; AMI)
- “It was an adjustment to experience constant academic evaluations through tests and homework. Restriction of movement also was hard to adjust to; having to ask to go to the bathroom and having assigned seats for lunch was difficult when coming from Montessori.” – Montessori Alumna (DC; independent; AMI)
- “I encountered social challenges... but I had those in Montessori too! Being in a large, loud, authoritarian environment was an adjustment.” – Anonymous
- “Responding to strict and hierarchical teachings styles, frustration at not being able to control pace of learning, difficulty relating to other students.” – Montessori Alumna (DC; independent; AMI)
- “I really struggled being told what to work on and having to work on things for the sake of grades. Everything quickly became about who I was relative to those around me, not who I was within. Thus, I found myself looking for more educational opportunities outside of the classroom.” – Montessori Alumnus (NC; public; AMS)
- “The time spent to be taught a concept by my teacher would be equal to the time the student with the most difficulty understanding the concept would take to learn it.” – Montessori Alumnus (MD; public charter; AMS)
- “The systemic and academic challenges arose hand in hand for me after my transition. My teachers and guidance counselors were unsure what placement I should be in for classes. They had initially asked me what classes I would prefer to be placed in. I was aware that I had fallen behind in my math class during 6th grade (I had hated that subject and because I was stubborn, just refused to do it) and I was still competent in my English, science, and social studies. So I had initially chosen honors for everything with the exception of Math, in which I was placed merit. It had turned out that I was too far behind on my Math in the merit class for the teacher to be confident that I would pass, so I was promptly placed in a directed merit class. Because of the low grades in merit math, and in my science class, the guidance counselor thought it would be best to lower my other classes to directed merit as well. They wouldn't let me out of the lowest level classes until the following semester. The straight A's were easy, but I was very bored and miserable being in a class without the few friends I had made in the first two weeks of my first semester in 7th grade.” – Montessori Alumnus (MD; public charter; AMS)
- “I was confused by grades. I didn't really care about them and didn't understand their impact. I didn't learn anything new in math for nearly four years, which caused me to lose interest.” – Montessori Alumna (NC; public; AMS)
- “I was used to reading from left to right and found the sequence of questions on worksheets and standardized tests confusing.” – Montessori Alumna (DC; independent; AMI)

Transitional Strategies (Q20)

Respondents (n=76) were asked, in an open-ended question, what strategies were effective for the challenges they encountered. Responses were paraphrased for brevity. See pg. 34 for sample quotes.

The most common strategies shared (in order of frequency mentioned):

1. Offer daily family support.
2. Teach student to manage expectations of self and others.
3. Encourage extracurricular and sports engagements.
4. Teach student metacognitive skills.
5. Learn the new system.
6. Teach the student time management skills for course schedule.
7. Keep high standards for academic performance.
8. Reach out to new teachers with insight about Montessori for their background awareness about your child.
9. Be patient and take time to adjust to new environment.
10. Use your new school's resources.
11. Build friendships.
12. Find a tutor who is a Montessori alumnus or familiar with Montessori education.
13. Learn new terminology (especially in math courses).
14. Find academic fulfillment at home.
15. Encourage student to self-advocate with teachers.
16. Observe academically successful peers.
17. Teach student test-taking strategies.
18. Teach student writing skills.
19. Find academic fulfillment by taking community college courses.
20. Find academic fulfillment at your local library.
21. Accept boredom. It is not a bad thing.
22. Seek the advice of older peers at the same school or in same academic program.
23. Advocate for alternative assignments if needed.
24. Keep a positive outlook. Focus on the good in your new school environment.
25. Keep high standards for respect.
26. Teach student academic prioritization skills. Doing what is due first and not what the student is most interested in doing.

Transitional Advice (Q21)

Respondents (n=76) were asked, in an open-ended question, what advice they would offer Montessori Parents preparing for the transition.

In order of most commonly shared strategies:

1. Engage daily for encouragement and support.
2. Start the conversation early about the transition with your child.
3. Manage expectations about grades, their meaning and your value of grades.
4. Listen to your child. Don't step in unless struggling.
5. Request shadow day at schools of interest.
6. Trust your child's abilities.
7. Communicate with your child's teachers about transitional strengths and struggles.
8. Teach metacognitive strategies.
9. Don't overschedule; prioritize time for homework.
10. Don't worry.
11. Prepare in advance for homework.
12. Accept teen years is a transition in of itself.
13. After 4th grade, begin practicing rote memorization to adjust learning for the transition.
14. Avoid homework intensive middle schools.
15. Be patient; advocate for your child when needed.
16. Be positive; It will not be as hard as you think.
17. Build upon Montessori gains.
18. Encourage child to self-advocate with teachers.
19. Collaborative strategies; encourage formation of study groups with classmates.
20. Connect with future classmates before starting middle school.
21. Continue to value intellectual curiosity.
22. Discuss with student the difference between extrinsic vs intrinsic motivated learning.
23. Do not dismiss your child's concerns and fears.
24. Don't compare new school to Montessori; look for what is good and useful about the new school.
25. Don't project your anxiety and fears on your children.
26. Don't step in unless struggling.
27. Focus on new opportunities of the transition, not the fears and challenges.
28. Follow the child. Give them time, space and encouragement to self-advocate.
29. Help them avoid procrastination.
30. Keep encouraging self-discipline.
31. Keep positive.



What (3) three suggested strategies or advice tips do you find most useful?

32. Learn to navigate through the system.
33. Maintain friendships from Montessori through the transition for support.
34. Encourage choices based on own values and curiosities.
35. Manage expectations about labor intensity of middle school.
36. Encourage participation in extra-curricular activity or sports—it helps build community.
37. Practice self-advocacy skills.
38. Provide free time at home to pursue their interests.
39. Seek a Middle School that offers transitional support.
40. Stay in Montessori as long as possible.
41. Transition after 8th grade if possible.
42. Transition to public school at 5th grade.
43. Try to connect with your child's generation. Share about your own challenges to connect without lecturing.
44. Teach test prep skills.
45. Use school resources and supports available as needed.

(Sample) Transitional Advice - Direct Quotes:

Alumni identified provided permission for inclusion of name. Otherwise quoted without attribution.

- “Really try to stay in touch with your kid’s generation. If you can let them know how to navigate certain parts of the transition, it all becomes less overwhelming. Going to high school is much less daunting if you have a parent telling you funny stories about their time in high school, teaching you without explicitly telling you to sit down and listen.” – Kieran McKenna, Alumnus, Good Shepherd Montessori School (IN; independent; AMS)
- “Listen to your child, and allow and encourage your child to speak up for him/herself in respectful ways. Maybe practice what to say to the teacher with your child.” – Mandi Franz, Alumna, Montessori Child Enrichment Center (OH; independent; AMS); Montessori Guide (AMS)
- Foster relationships with future classmates in next environment through sports, music, or other activities.” – Anonymous Alumna, Elizabeth Ann Clune Montessori School of Ithaca (NY; independent; AMS)
- “It’s not nearly as hard as you think it will be! Your student will be well-prepared.” – Cora Tench, Alumna, Montessori of Macon (GA; independent; AMS); Montessori Guide (AMS)
- “I definitely advise parents to have their child visit and shadow schools. I also recommend getting the child involved in sport/activities that are local to your home area. This creates the possibility for the child to know a few children when going into a new school through their extracurricular activity.” – Jazlyn Benitez, Alumna, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; independent; AMI)
- “Don’t psych your kids out by projecting anxiety on them. Be aware that they will face social and academic struggles that they may choose not to voice.” – Cecilia Lapp Stoltzfus, Alumna, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; independent; AMI)
- “The amount of homework may overwhelm your child so make sure they don’t procrastinate and do the work in intervals.” – Clarisa de Leon, Alumna, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; independent; AMI)
- “Be there to support the best way you can. Sometimes that means listening other times that means helping with homework.” – Diana Colindres, Alumna, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; independent; AMI)
- “After doing what they are supposed to do for school, let them do what they are interested in doing when they’re at home.” – Anonymous Alumna, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; independent; AMI)
- “Reject the idea that there’s a dichotomy between Montessori and the “real world,” that we need to prepare our children only for some imagined cold and competitive world. As a Montessori alum, I have sought out environments that are as supportive of human flourishing as a great Montessori class. In addition, I work to make every part of the “real world” I inhabit a bit more like the Montessori classrooms that supported and strengthened me for ten years of my life.” – Anonymous Alumna, Arbor Montessori School (GA; independent; AMI); Montessori Guide (AMI)
- “No strategy in particular; it just took some time to adjust... Prepare them for the fact that school is no longer separate from home and much more time will be spent working on school at home.” – Ciaran Dwyer, Alumnus, Christian Family Montessori School (DC; independent; AMI)
- “Continue to allow your curiosity to grow. Just because grades and homework are added, and are important to get into college, there are so many colleges that value intellectual curiosity. Don’t focus solely on the grade, often you will learn more without that focus.” – Clarissa Harbin, Alumna, Park Road Montessori (NC; public; AMS); Ghent Montessori (VA; independent; AMS)

SURVEY REPORT APPENDIX I

Survey Questions

The following questions were asked of survey participants.

1. Are you 18 years old or older?
2. What is your name?
3. In case clarity is needed for any of your responses, what is the best phone number or email to reach you?
4. Do you approve of your name being included in a research report? Important Note: Any name(s) of child(ren) mentioned in responses will remain anonymous.
 - No, I prefer no attribution; include my responses without my name.
 - Yes, I am fine with having my name included in the research report.
 - Maybe. I have questions and would like to discuss.
5. I am a... (check all that apply)
 - Montessori Parent
 - Montessori Guide (AMI)
 - Montessori Guide (AMS)
 - Montessori Alumni (18 years or older)
 - Middle/High School Educator
 - College/University Educator
 - Graduate Student
 - Other _____
6. What is the name of the Montessori School that you, your child attended, or school(s) attended by students you have worked with?
 - Barrie Montessori
 - Christian Family Montessori School
 - The Journey School
7. What type of school is the one you indicated?
 - Homeschool
 - Independent (has a religious affiliation)
 - Independent (has no religious affiliation)
 - Public Charter School
 - Public School
 - Public Magnet School
 - I am not sure
 - Other _____
8. What is the sort of Montessori accreditation attained by the school you indicated?
 - AMI
 - AMS
 - I am not sure or do not know.
 - I am responding as an educator and have worked with students transitioning from many schools.
9. In what grade did the transition occur for you, your child or student(s) you work with?
 - Upon completion of Primary (age 3-5)
 - During or upon completion of lower elementary years (ages 5-9)
 - During or upon completion of upper elementary years (ages 9-12)
 - During or upon completion of middle school years (ages 13-15)
 - Other
10. If you selected other, please elaborate on when the transition occurred?
11. After Montessori, what type of school did you or your child attend? If you are responding as an educator, what type of school do you serve?
 - Homeschool
 - Independent (religious affiliation)
 - Independent (no religious affiliation)
 - Public School

- Public Charter School
- Other _____

12. After Montessori, what school did you or your child attend? If you are responding as an educator, what is the name of the school you presently serve? [drop down menu of local school options]

13. If other, what is the school's name? Where is it located?

14. How likely is it that you would recommend a Montessori education to a friend considering options for their child?

1 2 3 4 5
 Unlikely ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very likely

15. Of the following virtues and values that may be found in Montessori and other learning environments, indicate up to five that you value the most.

- Adult respect and value of the child's voice.
- Curriculum based on cognitive developmental stages (Montessori called them "sensitive periods").
- Independence and discovery is encouraged.
- Freedom of movement within the classroom.
- Work of family life and the home is valued; no homework.
- Learners advance at their own pace through the curriculum.
- Grace and courtesy lessons foster a sense of community.
- Respect for humanity and the earth is fostered.
- Behavioral Intrinsic rewards and self-monitoring; no grades.
- Collaboration in learning is encouraged.
- Other

16. Please elaborate on what you love most about Montessori?

17. After Montessori, how long did it take for you or your child, or student(s) to feel more-or-less settled into the new school? Take "more-or-less settled" to mean comfortable and adapted to the new method of learning and environment.

- One Month
- One Semester
- One School Year
- Two School Years
- Three School Years or more
- Other

18. What did you, your child, or your student(s) gain through a Montessori education that you feel helped facilitate the transition from Montessori to a new learning environment?

19. What challenges (academic, social, or systemic) did you, your child, or student(s) you have worked with encounter during the transition from Montessori to a new learning environment?

20. What strategies were effective in dealing with the challenges encountered?

21. What advice would you offer to future parents of Montessori students preparing for the transition?

22. What college, university, vocational, or service program are you, your child or your student(s) attending or have attended? These places will be included on a digital map of alumni pathways after Montessori.

23. Approximately how long did it take you to share your responses on this survey?

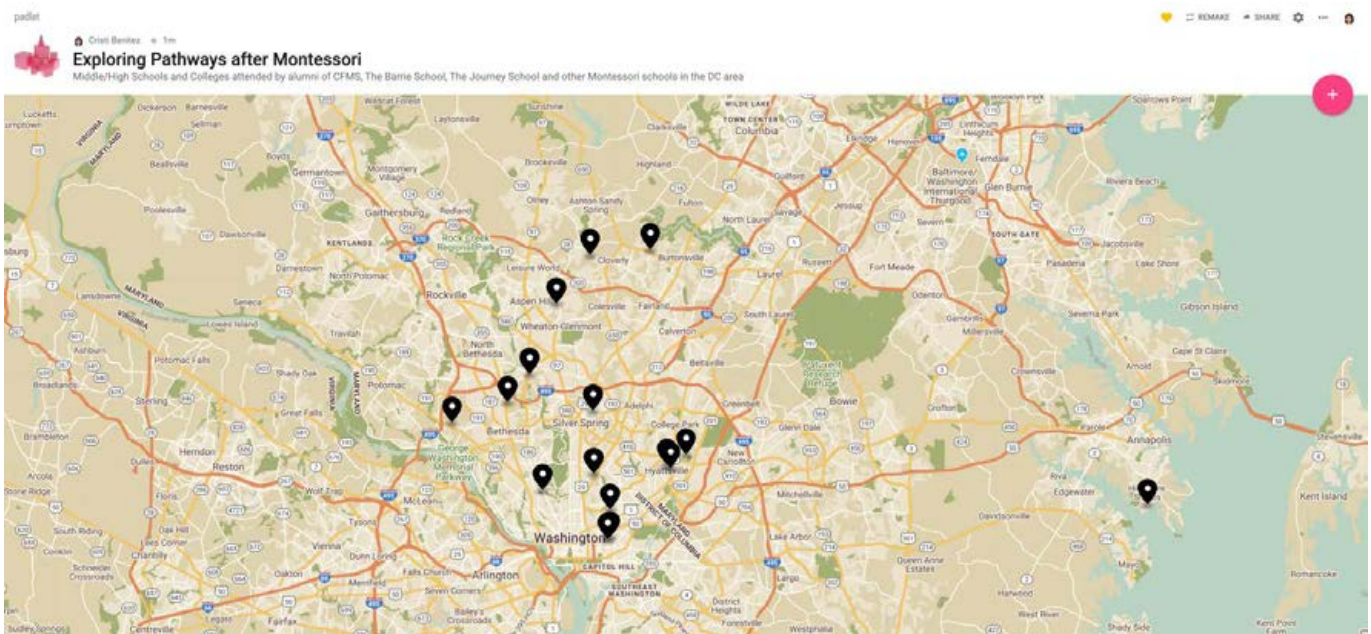
24. Please feel free to submit a comment, feedback or question here:

Pathways after Montessori – A Digital Map

This section is most relevant to parents in the Washington, DC area. For your exploration, this section offers a digital map of schools, colleges and universities attended by Montessori alumni as shared by alumni of Christian Family Montessori School (DC), The Barrie School (MD), and The Journey School (MD). Each point on the map provides a brief profile of the school's location, contact information, website link, and admissions application due date and other key admissions details.

How to Engage with this Map:

1. Explore the map online (<https://padlet.com/cristibenitez/MontessoriPathways>) or review the (abbreviated) list on pg. 38-39.
2. Identify schools of interest for your child.
3. Visit the school's websites or call the school to investigate:
 - a) school's approach to learning
 - b) values fostered
 - c) admissions open house information
 - d) application requirements



If your school is not listed: Montessori alumni are welcome to submit recommendations. The following details are required for inclusion. Submit to: cristibenitez@gmail.com.

- Name of receiving school (middle, high or college)
- Website link
- Address, email and telephone number
- Application deadline (if any)
- Grades offered

Pathways in DC – List of CFMS Alumni Receiving Schools

The following list are schools attended by Christian Family Montessori School (DC) alumni. It is provided as an (abbreviated) alternative to the digital map. If you are not a CFMS parent, check with your school whether they are able to provide a list of receiving schools.

Barrie School

Layhill Road,
Silver Spring, MD, USA
301.576.2800
admission@barrie.org

Independent School
Montessori Primary-5th Grade
Prep School 6th-12th Grade
Apply via Barrie Website
Applications due 18 Jan
<https://www.barrie.org/about>

Blake High School – MCPS

300 Norwood Road,
Silver Spring, MD 20905
240.740.1400

Public High School
Montgomery County Northeast Consortium (NEC)
Neighborhood assignment and NEC lottery-based admissions
Signature program in the Arts & Humanities
<https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools/blakehs/>

Brookewood School

Armory Avenue,
Kensington, MD, 301.949.7997
info@brookewood.org

Independent School
All-Girls 1st -12th grade
Rolling basis Admissions
Apply via website
<https://www.brookewood.org/how-to-apply.html>

Burke School

4101 Connecticut Avenue NW,
Washington, DC, USA
202.362.8882

Independent School
5th-12th Grade
Apply via Ravenna App accessible at Burke's website
Application due 10 January
<https://www.burkeschool.org/>

College Park Academy

5751 Rivertech Court,
Riverdale, MD, USA

Public Charter School
Specialty Program
Apply via PGCPSC Lottery Program:
<https://pgcpsmdc.scriborder.com/>
Apply by 31 January
<https://collegeparkacademy.net/>

DeMatha Catholic HS

4313 Madison Street,
Hyattsville, MD, USA 20781
240.764.2200

Independent School
All Boys 9th-12th grade
Apply by 15 Dec via website
<https://www.dematha.org/>

Holton-Arms School

7303 River Road,
Bethesda, MD 20817, USA
301.365.5300

Independent School
All-Girls 5th-12th grade
Apply by 10 January via website
<https://www.holton-arms.edu/about>

Hyattsville MS - PGCPSC

42nd Avenue,
Hyattsville, MD, USA
301.209.5830

Public Magnet School
Creative and Performing Arts Specialty Program
Apply by 15 Nov via PGCPSC Lottery Program:
<https://pgcpsmdc.scriborder.com/>
<https://www.pgcps.org/hyattsvillems/>

Journey School – Montessori Middle School

2430 Spencerville Road,
Spencerville, MD 20868
240.324.6160

Independent School
Montessori inspired
6th-8th Grade
Apply via School Website
Rolling basis Admissions
<http://www.thejourneyschool.net>

St. Anselm's Abby School

4501 South Dakota Avenue NE
Washington DC, USA
202.269.2350
mainoffice@saintanselms.org

Independent
Grades 6-12
Apply via Ravenna or St Anselm's website
Application due 4 February
<https://www.saintanselms.org/>

Silver Spring International MS -- MCPS

313 Wayne Avenue,
Silver Spring, MD, USA

Public School
Admissions based on residency
Special programs available to students enrolled including IB
Middle Years Programme and Language Immersion
Special program admission by application and residency by 1
Nov
<https://www2.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/schools>

Sojourner Truth Montessori MS and HS

3025 4th Street Northeast,
Washington, DC 20017, USA
202.747.0904
info@thetruthschool.org

Public Charter School
Apply via DC Common Lottery
Application due early March
<https://thetruthschool.org/>

Stone Ridge School of the Sacred

Heart 9101 Rockville Pike,
Bethesda, MD 20814, USA
301.657.4322

Independent School
Co-Ed Primary
All Girls Grades 1-12
Middle School: Apply by 25 January via website
High School: Apply by 6 December via website
<https://www.stoneridgeschool.org/>

Two Rivers Public Charter School

1234 4th Street NE
Washington, DC 20002, USA
202.546.4477
info@tworiverspcs.org

Public Charter School
Apply via DC Common Lottery
Applications due early March
<https://www.tworiverspcs.org/>

Washington Latin Public Charter School

5200 2nd St NW,
Washington, DC 20011, USA

Public Charter School
Apply via DC Common Lottery
Application due March 2020
<https://latinpcs.org/>

For more schools, visit:
<https://padlet.com/cristibenitez/MontessoriPathways>

Five Minute Reflection

Work area IV (pages 18-38)



Share

Take five minutes to **write** or **draw** your reflection on one of the following prompts. Then, discuss with your chosen person (parenting partner, your child(ren), your family member, or a friend). Note any changes.

- Which of the challenges mentioned by alumni did you find surprising, if any? Why?
- Among the tips and strategies shared by alumni, which three (3) do you plan to include in your family's transition plan?
- From the digital map or list, which school(s) do you plan to explore further?



Create

Write your reflection in this space.

A large rectangular area with horizontal dashed lines for writing a reflection.

Draw an illustration of your thoughts.

A large empty rectangular box for drawing an illustration of thoughts.

This reflection is of a more personal nature. If you wish, you may share via the previous two reflection links (pg. 13 and 19).

Montessori Transition Plan

Use this sheet to reflect and plan for your child's transition from Montessori to a new Middle School learning environment. Invite your partnering partner or family member to also do this exercise separately then compare and discuss. Save this for your reference for meeting with your child's future teacher(s) in Middle School.

Student's First Name:

Reflect on your child's learning journey. Write brief responses to the following prompts.

Why did you initially choose Montessori? Do you still hold these values?

What areas of the Montessori classroom most attracts your child?

What areas of the Montessori classroom does your child avoid?

What has been challenging for your child?

What have been your child's strengths?

What virtues (see next page) do you wish to foster in your child's educational journey?

Reflect on the Transition Survey findings. Respond to the following prompts to plan for the transition.

What three alumni challenges shared you may wish to plan for?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What three suggested strategies (new to you) do you find most useful and will apply?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What actions will be required for you to implement the strategies and prepare for your child for the transition?

-
-
-
-
-

How will you know when the plan has been successful?

What questions remain? Jot them down and discuss with your child's teacher at your next conference.



Answering these questions may help you better advocate for your child at their new school. Not sure of the answers? Discuss with your child's Montessori Guide

Reflect on Virtues in Domains of Life

Active listening	Open-mindedness
Affinity (love) for learning	Openness
Affinity (love) for truth	Patience
Ambition	Prudence
Assertiveness	Readiness
Attention	Respect
Attentiveness	Responsibility
Autonomy	Scholarliness
Awareness	Self-awareness
Carefulness	Self-care
Charity	Self-confidence
Cleverness	Self-control
Commitment	Self-Respect
Community	Sincerity
Compassion	Temperance
Confidence	Tenacity
Conscientiousness	Thoroughness
Cooperation	Tolerance
Courage	Understanding
Creativity	Wisdom
Curiosity	Wit
Determination	Wonder
Diligence	
Empathy	
Endurance	
Equanimity	
Fair-mindedness	home life
Flexibility	school life
Foresight	social life
Friendship	work life
Generosity	Life-long learning virtues
Good cheer	
Grit	
Helpfulness	
Honesty	
Humility	
Humaneness	
Inquisitiveness	
Integrity	
Justice	
Kindness	
Metacognition	
Mindfulness	



What three virtues do you deem the most important for your child's educational journey?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What three virtues do you deem the most important for your child's social life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What three virtues do you deem the most important for your child's life-long pursuits?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Domains of Life

home life
 school life
 social life
 work life
 Life-long learning virtues

Draw a picture of the virtue you deem most important in life. Ask your child to draw a picture of the same virtue. Compare and discuss.

Montessori Resources for Parents



Books:

Eissler, Trevor (2009). **Montessori Madness**. Georgetown: Sevenoff, LLC.

Lillard, A.S. (2005). **Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius**. New York: Oxford University Press

Montessori, M. (1949). **The Absorbent Mind**. New York City: Holt, Rinehart and Winston

Montessori, M. (1909; 1967). **The Discovery of the Child**. New York City: Random House Publishing

Articles:

Braff, D. (2017, August 8). **Making the Transition from Montessori to Public High School**. Chicago Tribune, Retrieved from <https://www.chicagotribune.com/lifestyles/sc-fam-montesorri-public-school-transition-0801-story.html>

Rathunde, K., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2005). **Middle School Students' Motivation and Quality of Experience: A Comparison of Montessori and Traditional School Environments**. American Journal of Education, 111(3), 341-371. doi:10.1086/428885

Videos:

On Montessori History and Principles:

Sprouts (2016, June 14). **Montessori School Education (Graphic Video)**. Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/UzmvTVAuuyI>

Harrison, Adrian (2013, May 13). **Why Montessori (Graphic Video)**. Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/yipb6iLDxoA>

On the Latest Research:

Culclasure, B. [AMI] (2018, May 25). **A Study of Montessori Education in South Carolina's Public Schools**. 2018 AMI Montessori Forum. Retrieved from <https://montessori-ami.org/resource-library/videos/brooke-culclasure-2018-montessori-forum>

Hughes, S. [Montessori Norge] (2019, May 16). **A 5 Year Project: Montessori Global Outcomes**. Montessori Norge, Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/DL2-OmzFnSI?t=1080>

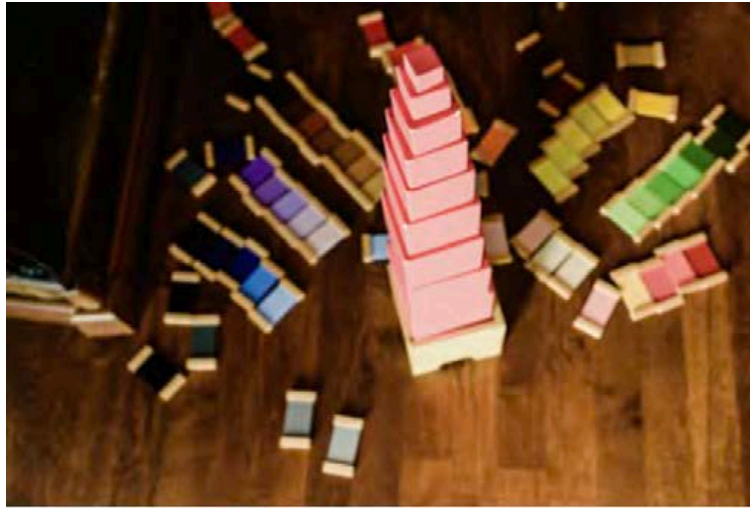
Websites:

American Montessori Internationale Website (2019). **Resource Library**. Retrieved from <https://montessori-ami.org/resource-library>

American Montessori Society Website (2019). **Resources: About Montessori**. Retrieved from <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori>

Trivia Time!

Play a Trivia Game to Recall Key Concepts



Pathways and Strategies After Montessori: A Learning Engagement and Resource Guide for Parents

Play

Challenge



A public kahoot

Check if you can recall key concepts and strategies discussed in the Montessori Pathways and Strategies Guide via this kahoot! Quiz **SHOW LESS**

Play the trivia game online here:

Short URL: <https://bit.ly/2EkIkL7>

Longer URL:

<https://create.kahoot.it/share/pathways-and-strategies-after-montessori-a-learning-engagement-and-resource-guide-for-parents/b8441bf5-1520-434d-ba31-7251ce75953b>

Every End is a New Beginning..

1. A Learning Engagement and Resource Guide



2. Follow up Coffee & Conversation Meeting

Organize a gathering for community reflection. Suggested questions:

- What virtue do you feel is most important for the transition to your child's potential new learning environment?
- What virtues do you feel are most important for the college years? How are you fostering such values and virtues now?
- Consider the following quote by Dr. Maria Montessori as it applies to the middle and high school years for your child. *"Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed."* Do you agree or disagree? What does this mean to you in the context of your family life?
- Which strategy shared by alumni did you find most helpful?
- Role Play: Pair up. Your goal is to advocate for your child whom you believe was not placed in the appropriate course level for a course of your choice. You just met your child's new counselor. She is very kind but busy and you realize you may only have two minutes to provide a compelling reason for a follow-up meeting. She asks for a quick intro about your child prior to setting up an appointment. What is most important for you to convey or ask? Take turns. The person in the role of the counselor may play devil's advocate or be very helpful but either way, keep in mind their time is constrained. After taking turns, share with the group. What seemed the most effective approach?

3. Pay it forward. Build a network of support; connect with parents of younger Montessori students to share your insight and experiences.

Thank you for your engagement. I hope you have found the information and exercises helpful for determining next steps in supporting your child's journey. Though this guide is not meant to be prescriptive, it may hopefully serve as a springboard for discussion. Your thoughts, suggestions, and questions are welcome.

Best wishes for the journey ahead!

Peace,
Cristina Benitez
cristibenitez@gmail.com
<http://about.me/cristibenitez>

Acknowledgements

The design and research of this guide would not have been possible without the contributions of many. With immense appreciation, I would like to thank all Montessori alumni^{***}, parents and school leaders who have shared the insight which informs this study and guide.

Thank you to the leadership of Christian Family Montessori School, The Journey School and Barrie Prep for their support and help with reaching alumni for the study.

I am also very thankful to the faculty of the Georgetown University M.A. in Learning, Design and Technology Program, including Professors Maggie Debelius, Yianna Vovides, and Dawan Stanford for their guidance. PhD Candidates Molly Wilder and Clark Donley also provided inspiration for contemplation through their Apprenticeship in Teaching workshop on cultivating virtues in curricular design.

Many thanks to my husband Moris and our Montessori children, Jazlyn, Ariana and Jason for their support and encouragement. Their sense of delight and joy in learning has sparked and inspired my own fascination with the cognitive journey of the human mind.

^{***} Montessori Alumni

Many thanks to all (alumni, parents, and educators) who contributed their insights for this study. From the subset of survey respondents (who transitioned during or after Montessori upper elementary), the following alumni provided permission to have their contribution acknowledged in this report.

Jazlyn Benitez	Clarissa Harbin	Cecilia Lapp Stoltzfus
Sarah Clarke	Aleja Hertzler-McCain	Kimberly Stringer
Diana Colindres	Catherine Maresca	Debra Loewenstein
Clarisa de Leon	Klaus Mayr	Cora Tench
Jaime Deason	Julia McKenna	Kat Walker
Timothy Desir	Kieran McKenna	Alex Whittington
Aidan Dwyer	Samantha Meier	Jessica X
Logan Dwyer	Jamila Moses	Stephanie X
Yves Eisenberg	Adrienne Ortega	
Mandi Franz	Jacob Shemer	
Sophie Griffiths	Micah Shenk-Evans	

