

August 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

When my first child was approaching elementary school age I began to reflect on my schooling as a child. I remembered always feeling like I had more to give, more to learn, more to understand, more to evolve my mind to be. I was the child who always got in "trouble" because I was social and wanted to talk and share my educational experience with my schoolmates. The traditional California elementary through high school model was hard for me because I didn't sit still well and my mind was always busy. In reflection, this was because I was unfulfilled. I didn't feel in control of my learning. As the teachers stood in the front of the class speaking to all the children, I was ready to get to work because I already understood and was ready to apply the information, yet I couldn't. I was on hold for the rest of the class. I believe this held me back and stifled me. I did well in school with grades yet I felt that there was so much left on the table for me. I felt restricted and confined to a traditional model of learning that left me yearning for a more meaningful, self-evolving and reflective experience. A whole experience.

I knew I wanted more for my children. I wanted a whole human experience. I wanted them to have the ability to learn to love learning in an environment that they felt they had some control over. I wanted my children to grow into confidence focusing on their whole person. I wanted a school that reflected those values and provided the experience I so longed for as a child. With that, I began the all-important task of "researching" schools.

I narrowed my search to three. Then I got serious. I had heard of "Montessori" before but I had never fully immersed myself in the Philosophy. I had this preconceived idea that it was a laid-back relaxed non-academically focused style of teaching and learning. That was my thinking before I actually had children and watched how they learned. I grew to understand that adults are often the inhibitors of growth and education for children, not the facilitators that we believe ourselves to be. Oh, how wrong I was in my Montessori based education beliefs before. As I learned about Maria Montessori and her understanding of how young human minds work I immediately found myself in complete agreement, supported by my own observations. I knew that my children needed a whole human experience where learning is fun and self-driven. Where the materials are those drawn from nature with simple materials, not flashy overstimulating activities and materials. Thus, my mind was decided by instinct and observation of my most precious beings. They were destined to be Montessori taught children.

River Montessori Charter School has been such a blessing to our public school system. To be given the opportunity to have my children receive a Montessori Public education is beyond my once low expectations of the California school system I was so nervous to enroll my children in. I believe most, if not all, educators care deeply about the

children they teach. They decide to teach because it is a calling, not for money or recognition. With Montessori Teachers, there is an extra element that makes them so special. They see themselves as Guides who assist children through the educational journey. Guiding a child implies a partnership, a joint effort in achieving the goals set together; as opposed to teaching an unwilling participant where goals have been set for them. This is what was missing from my childhood. If I had been in a Montessori school my Guide would have recognized my level of knowledge and would have let me apply it in action, in my work, not make me sit and listen to what I already understood.

I don't know what the future holds or how my children will grow over time. What I do know at this moment is that my children feel free to learn in an environment that suits and adjusts to their learning style. I am confident that as time goes on more people will become attuned to this unknown or misunderstood "Montessori" style of learning. I hope my children will flourish and that they will be given the opportunity to continue their Montessori journey through high school.

If I were speaking to parents who are interested in or questioning Montessori education it would be this: Montessori fills the gaps that traditional schooling does not fill. Montessori allows for the flexibility to fine tune the educational experience with and for the child. A person who does not feel like an active participant in the goals of their life will never truly invest in the experience; therefore, some of the experience is lost, not by design but by desire. Growth is the result of Desire. Learning is the result of Growth. The love of learning must develop from the desire to grow. Wholeness, Montessori is about Wholeness for the child. Who doesn't want that?! If we can begin this journey towards wholeness through a Montessori education from kindergarten through high school... well, that would be a beautiful thing.

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