

Montessori Mozart programme

Montessori educators and parents are pondering the kind of education our children need to become responsible and productive members of a global society. In order to create the kind of futuristic thinking necessary to cope with our ever-changing world, higher order thinking processes deserve attention now. An arts-rich curriculum can provide a vehicle for self-expression, self-understanding, self-confidence, creative problem solving and motivation. (Pitman, 1998)

Researchers have found the arts (music most commonly) to have a positive impact on reading, math, writing, self-esteem, and brain development. The music-math connection in particular keeps coming up over and over again. Children who take music lessons score up to 35% higher on spatial tasks (Rauscher & Shaw, 1997). Attending a Montessori program from the approximate ages of three to eleven predicts significantly higher mathematics and science standardized test scores in high school (Gartner, A., Kerzner-Lipsky, D., 2002).

If research indicates that learning through the arts can benefit the 'whole' child, and academic achievement scores are significantly higher for those students studying music, and if Montessori education produces a more academically accomplished child (Takacs, 1991), then

"The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination." M. Montessori

what is the potential for the child when Montessori includes an enriched music curriculum?

The Montessori Mozart program incorporating the leading approaches and philosophies that influence early childhood music and movement in education today is being implemented in a research study through the University of Windsor with 200 Casa students who attend The Children's House Montessori in Ontario, Canada. This study is examining the differences in math scores between Casa students who receive traditional Montessori instruction and those receiving music enriched Montessori instruction. The core question being: "is the ability to learn 'anything' enhanced when music, rhythm and movement are added and the child is engaged" (i.e. wholly involved, physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially).

In the Montessori Mozart program a trained Montessori teacher who is also a music specialist provides on-site teacher professional development with ongoing discussion encouraged between sessions. Music is incorporated into the Casa curriculum enhancing the child's ability to learn concepts required in many disciplines rather than being



treated as a separate area of learning. Over the three-year Casa program the teachers will have the opportunity to deepen their musical skills from year to year, while providing students with a wide range of musical experiences. This style of learning, creativity, cooperation and self-esteem is directly compatible with the Montessori philosophy of education.

Montessori education continues to grow during a never-ending search to improve. As we face the challenges of the future, Maria Montessori's belief in the development of the human potential through leadership in education will prevail. Perhaps this is truly the time to embrace a music enriched Montessori education that serves as a model for all the Montessori classrooms globally. ■

Biographical Information:

Maureen Harris, a graduate from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor, is currently conducting a research study entitled 'A comparison of the Differences in Math Scores between Students who Receive Traditional Montessori Instruction and Students who Receive Music Enriched Montessori Instruction.'

Ms. Harris has 20 years of combined experience in Montessori teaching and music instruction/performance. The 'Montessori Mozarts' music program (Toddler, Casa and Elementary) was founded through incorporating the leading approaches and philosophies that influence early childhood music and movement education today. Ms. Harris shares a deep commitment to the Montessori philosophy and the musical development of the 'whole' child. She is also the music and movement teacher-trainer for several Montessori centers in Canada and can be reached at montessorimusic@hotmail.com.

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