



WATERDOWN MONTESSORI SCHOOL

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NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2011

From the Principal's Desk

We're off! Though once again it seems as though we never really stopped. It has been a very busy, very exciting few months since school ended in June.

Children's voices continued to fill the school as the summer camps flourished. Most of the time I was in the background, but I could hear the morning circle songs, the constant chatter, and the shrieks of delight during active games. Periodically a group of children would appear at the office door, either searching for a friend during a game of sardines, or looking for a clue in a scavenger hunt. At other times there were children in the kitchen, where they sometimes came to cook. I also had the pleasure of talking to 'alumnae' parents whose children had asked to come back to the WMS camp. Two of these campers have come to camp every year since the its inception seven years ago!

Of course there was a great deal of other business going on during the summer too. There seemed to be enquires and tours almost weekly. There was rearranging, sorting and organizing to do as always, furniture moved from one classroom to another, and new materials ordered. Thanks to Mrs. Sue and her husband, the folding door has at long last been installed in the toddler room! Ballasts and light bulbs have been replaced and loose boards screwed down, thanks to loyal parent volunteers.

We welcome three new staff members this year!

Marlène B (Madame Marlène) is our new casa French teacher. Madame Marlène moved with her family to Canada from France this summer. She has extensive teaching experience and is familiar with Montessori. Her enthusiasm and energy are contagious!

You may notice a new face in the office.

Maria R is our new bookkeeper. She has been in several times during the summer as we begin the process of adapting to a new system. She is so patient with us! We are very grateful that **Sue O** is helping with the transition! A special thanks goes to **Jeff**. Jeff is the treasurer on the board, and even though his son is moving on to another school this fall, Jeff has offered to continue on in his position. He has been instrumental in setting up the new bookkeeping system, and has put a considerable amount of time into helping us this summer. Thanks, Jeff!

Some of you will recognize our new toddler assistant, **Maggie W**. She is a familiar face in the school, as she has been a nanny for several years now, and is often dropping off or picking up her charges. Maggie's warm personality and calm demeanour will be a welcome addition to the toddler class.

Many staff members were in and out during the summer months, and all of us were in the school last week. We put the final touches to the classrooms, reviewed class lists, set up timetables, put up new name tags and met with new students and their parents.

I urge you to make use of the school website: www.waterdownmontessori.com. Let us know what you find useful and what you think could be added. We want the site to be a tool for the school community in addition to a source of information to those looking for the best school choice for their children.

Welcome to a new year!

Sue Reid-Kulpaka

Principal

September Birthdays

Sebastian turned 2 on September 3.
Teague will be 4 on September 8.
Maya will be 3 on September 30.
Olivia will be 3 on September 30.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL OF YOU!

New Arrivals!

It was a *very* busy summer for babies!

The first to arrive was **Kaitlyn Mary**, on June 19, weighing 8 lbs. 9 oz. With the birth of her second grandchild, (a sister for Meghan), Mrs. Judy is now a seasoned grandmother!

Next up was a little sister for Parker. **Charlie** arrived on July 15, weighing 6 lbs. 2 oz. Congratulations to Sean and Jordan!

Ella Catherine, was born on July 28th, weighing 7 lbs. 15 oz. Jamie and Catherine have promised to let James bring her in for a visit.

The next little girl to arrive was **Charlie Ann**, on August 4, weighing 7 lbs. 5 oz. Maya is now a big sister. Congratulations to Andrew and Meena!

Then on August 16 Gabriel's little sister **Micaela** was born. She weighed 6 lbs. 10 oz. Congratulations to Tommy and Carrie!

The final baby to arrive meant that the summer ended as it began, with the birth of a WMS staff grandchild. Mrs. Phyllis is a new grandmother! Her daughter Nola gave birth to **Allynah Grace Eden**, 8 lbs. (and measuring 22 inches!) on August 23.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE FAMILIES,
AND WELCOME, BABIES!

It's Back...!

Waterdown Montessori School



Presents... our Monthly Parent/Caregiver **Coffee Club**. Join us on Tuesday, September 20 at 9:00 in the French room for coffee and treats, and some informal chat. Greet familiar faces and meet new parents!

We urge you to label all your children's belongings! Often we have several children with the same backpack or umbrella, and it may be a challenge to find the owner of a jacket or sweater left in the gym... Don't forget shoes and boots, either! We have sometimes had identical pairs go home with the wrong person.

We are hoping that our Lost and Found bin (located just inside the main entrance) will be EMPTY this year! To help with the task of labeling your children's items you will be able to place your "MABEL'S LABELS" order at any time during the school year.



It's simple. Just visit www.waterdown.mabel.ca and place your order. The labels will be delivered to your home, and the school will receive a percentage of each order. (Friends and family can use the same website address to order products too, and the school will benefit. We have just received a cheque for \$68.90 from last year's initial campaign.)

Thank you.

HANDBOOK CALENDAR CORRECTIONS:

- The **Hallowe'en Pancake Breakfast** will be held on SUNDAY, October 30.
- The **Silent Journey** will take place in January. Stay tuned!
- **Victoria Day Monday** is May 21.

IMPORTANT:

Remember to keep the office informed of any changes in information: phone numbers, email addresses etc.
Thank you!

Save the date!

We are holding a special Information / Meet the Teacher Evening on Tuesday, September 13, from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

We will begin in the gym, where an introduction to the staff will be followed by a short information session on

Sleeping Children Around the World

(See the following article for more information.)

Immediately afterwards, parents will proceed to their child's classroom, where teachers will review routines and expectations that are particular to their classrooms, and answer any questions you might have in this regard. Please be reminded that this is not the time to ask for specific information about your child. You are welcome to arrange a time to chat with your child's teacher for that purpose.

We expect EVERY family to attend, regardless of how long you have been in the school. To help ensure your attendance, we will be providing childcare for the duration of the event, in the French room. If your children will not be comfortable without you, it would be advisable to leave them at home in someone else's care.

We will begin and end promptly, as there is a board meeting scheduled to begin at 7:30.



Every year the school supports several charities, which are chosen for different reasons. One of our mandates has been to find a charity that has relevance for children, fewer gimmicks (flashy prizes for the amount of money raised, for example), and reduced onus on parents to canvass family and friends for funds.

A few years ago, we found such a charity. The campaigns have been well received, and so once again we are supporting Sleeping Children Around the World!

Sleeping Children Around the World

(or SCAW) raises funds to provide bedkits to the neediest of children in underdeveloped and developing countries.

There are at least two compelling reasons for choosing this charity for our school to support. One is that 100% of every donor dollar reaches a child; because it is run by volunteers, there is **absolutely zero overhead**. The second reason is that we felt it was a cause every child could relate to at some level. Any child can imagine what it would be like to sleep on bare ground with no bed, no covers, and no pyjamas. Thirdly, no sponsor sheets will be sent home!

Instead, all the work will be done at school. We have tried a variety of projects over the past few years. Overall, baked items have been the most successful. This year we are going to incorporate baking with community building! For three weeks, beginning on September 19, small groups of children will be baking every Monday to Thursday morning. One day we might have a few 3 year olds from Mrs. Julie's class working with the first year elementary students. Another day, some of the toddlers might join the 5 year olds in Mrs. Phyllis' class, for example. We will ensure that every child participates at least once. The finished products (cookies!) will be on sale as soon as they come out of the oven. Mmmmm!

If you would like to help, we would appreciate an extra pair of hands each day! A sign up sheet will be posted on the community bulletin board.

As in the past, the elementary class will be taking orders for their popular homemade bread. Watch for the order sheets, or let the office know if you would like to reserve a loaf (or more – they freeze well!)

The theme will be one of thanksgiving, as the campaign will end on October 7, when we have our annual Children's Harvest Luncheon, the Friday of the Thanksgiving weekend.

If you would like to help your child with a project at home to raise funds you are more than welcome to do so. Each bedkit costs \$35.00. Last year the children earned enough money to purchase eleven bedkits!

For more information on SCAW, go to <http://www.scaw.org/about/index.html>.



Have you ever wished you could experience a Montessori classroom the way your child does? Have you ever wanted to know more about the Montessori materials? The Silent Journey is a unique opportunity to learn firsthand just what a Montessori education is all about.

How Did It Begin?

The Silent Journey Workshop was developed in 1978 by the staff at St. Alcuin Montessori School in Dallas, Texas. Their goal was to show how each level of the school is designed to meet the needs of the children's development, and that the environments and materials form a continuum from one level to the next. At the same time they wanted to give parents the opportunity for hands-on experience with the Montessori materials.

I began hearing about The Silent Journey at CCMA (Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators) workshops a few years ago, and was intrigued. When I proposed to our staff last June that we offer this experience to our parents, they immediately saw the value of such an undertaking. This event will replace our traditional October workshop this year.

After completing some reading over the summer, we realized the scope of this undertaking, and that we would need considerable preparation time to ensure that the event be a success. We also realized that as newcomers to this idea, we should ask for help! Happily, as is always the case with CCMA schools, help was forthcoming, with an offer to attend their November "journey" at the Montessori House of Children in London, Ontario.

We have decided, then, that we will schedule our first "Silent Journey" early in the new year. Expect more information in the coming months, as we begin to prepare for our journey!

HOT LUNCH THURSDAYS!

Our special hot lunch days are held on Thursdays (see attached forms). Half-day children are welcome to stay for lunch on those days if they wish. (Toddlers are invited to participate in pasta days.) Parents are asked to pick up by 12:15. There will be no extended care charge for half-day children who stay for hot lunches and *are picked up by this time.*

We need parent volunteers to help out on hot dog days and pasta days; a sign up sheet is posted on the school bulletin board (just inside the door from the parking lot).

*Is this week pizza day or hot dog day?
Check the school website to find out!*

After School Programs

We will be offering two after school programs to begin the fall. Katia Gustafson will be back with her popular pottery classes on Mondays this year, starting on October 3. Mary Clements will offer her After School French program on Wednesdays this term. Please let the office know if you are interested in either program. Registration forms will be available soon.

Elementary Art and Swimming

Donna Redl, of Creative Manor (www.creative-manor.ca) will be returning to provide art lessons for the elementary class every Monday morning this fall. The first lesson will be on Monday September 12.

Swimming lessons for the elementary class will begin on Thursday, September 22. Lessons are held at Aldershot Pool this year, from 1:30 – 2:30, and are scheduled every Thursday until November 24. The students are tested and grouped according to their skill level. Mrs. Barbara needs one parent volunteer to accompany the class each week; a sign up sheet is posted outside her classroom. If you have further questions, please speak to her.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL POLICIES

(From the Parent Handbook)

I. Arrival

- The classrooms are open at 8:45 a.m., and **classes start at 9:00 sharp.**
- Children arriving earlier than 8:45 a.m. must be brought into the school by their caregiver, and taken to the before school programme in the Toddler Room (8:00 – 8:45).
- When bringing your child after 8:45, we request that you respect classroom routines. Please do **not** enter the classroom but say goodbye to your child outside the door. This will allow the children to enter into the classroom on their own, taking responsibility for themselves and their belongings.
- If they require assistance, someone within the environment will offer help. This simple act will encourage grace and courtesy among the children for each other and will also raise your child's self-esteem and self-reliance.
- ***Please be punctual.*** A child who is late disrupts the class and may miss announcements, French or music classes; elementary students might miss group lessons.

II. Dismissal

- Classroom doors will be kept closed at dismissal times. The door will be opened to dismiss a child as their caregiver arrives, and will then be closed again until the next child is dismissed.
- Children will be reminded to use the washroom before circle time at the end of the morning and afternoon. After that time, they will not be allowed to leave the classroom. (If it is absolutely necessary, an adult will accompany them.)
- Each child must be fully dressed before leaving the classroom. The child shakes hands and says goodbye to their teacher or assistant, and is released by that adult directly to the receiving caregiver. Caregivers are asked to respect classroom routines and to wait **outside** the classroom until their child is released to them. If a child attempts to leave without saying goodbye, it is **the caregiver's responsibility** to send the child back to do so.
- Dismissal from Extended Care or playground: When the caregiver arrives, the child shakes hands and says goodbye to the Extended Care provider. ***The caregiver must ensure that the school is aware the child is leaving,*** and is responsible for seeing their child is dressed appropriately and has all their belongings.
- A child will only be released to an adult whose name appears on the Pickup Permission Form submitted by each family. At any time during the year, a family

may add or delete names from their pick up permission forms.

- In the case of any changes in routine, (e.g. parents are away on holiday, or are ill and unable to pick up their children) a note to the school explaining the changes and giving permission for an alternate person to pick up their child is required.
- It is permissible for a parent to give a verbal message to the principal or to their child's teacher if their child is going home with a friend, as long as that person is on their pick up permission list, and the arrangement is confirmed by the friend. *This rule is subject to change at any time.*
- In an emergency, the school will accept a phone call from a parent informing us of a change in plan.
- The school is not responsible for miscommunication between parents and alternate caregivers.
- The school reserves the right to ask for photo I.D. from anyone they do not know by sight.

Arrival and Departure Suggestions

The first few days of school may be filled with a range of emotions for parents and children alike. To help ease the transition, the following are recommendations for parents from R. Reid Wilson, a leading specialist who has been treating anxiety disorders for twenty years.

- Remain calm, matter of fact and firm during routine separations.
- Don't hover, question or reassure excessively.
- Limit reassurance to one or two times.
- Limit check-in visits or phone calls when child is in school.

As with all advice, these suggestions may need to be adapted slightly depending on circumstances. Because many of the children at our school are so young, for example, we are very willing to phone anxious parents during the morning to let them know how their child is coping, especially if the child was upset when the parent left. (Note that this is for the parent's benefit, not the child's! ☺)

The first three recommendations are critical, however. Your child constantly "reads" your emotions. If you hover, question, or constantly reassure your child, they will begin to wonder why you are worried. There must be something to be anxious about! We certainly make exceptions for the first few days of school, but please keep these points in mind.

Ideally, we would like you to either use the drop-off, or say goodbye to your child at the classroom door.

Please do not accompany your child into the classroom. If your child needs assistance hanging up a backpack or taking off their jacket, the teacher or assistant will help.

When you return to collect your child, the classroom doors will be closed. *Please respect the teachers and wait until your child is released to you.* Be assured that staff will be watching to see who has arrived, and will begin dismissing children when they have completed their end of morning routines.

Of course, there are times when you are unable to wait. If you have to leave quickly for an appointment, or because of a sibling who is ill, for example, *please let someone in the office know, and we will go into the classroom for you.*

Morning Drop-Off Reminder

From 8:45-9:00 a.m. you are encouraged to use our drop-off route in the parking lot behind the school. A staff member will be stationed where the pathway meets the parking lot. She will greet your child, and will ensure their safe entry into the school building.

Continue STRAIGHT ON after stopping at the stop sign, and circle through the parking lot to park or stop in the drop-off zone.

If you wish to bring your child into the school, you *must park* your car in a *designated parking space* in the parking lot. The first 7 spots are reserved for Waterdown Montessori School. (You are welcome to park elsewhere if these are all occupied.) The circular driveway in front of the school is reserved for use by Notre Dame.

Please note that there is absolutely NO PARKING in the drop-off zone or along the guardrail AT ANY TIME, and that this rule is strictly enforced. It is also vital that you obey the **10 km/hour** speed limit on the grounds, and that you come to a **full stop** at the stop sign posted just before you enter the parking lot.

When picking up your child at lunch time or after school, please park your car in the parking lot and come into the school. Thank you.

PARKING LOT SAFETY

When walking from the school to a car in the parking lot, please ensure that your children stay close by your side! This is always important, but is particularly crucial at the end of the school day, as this is the same time many of the staff at the Notre Dame Centre are leaving the grounds.

School Hours and Teacher Availability

Please be aware that school starts at 9:00am. Children will be allowed to enter the classroom at 8:45am. Any children arriving before that time *must be taken into the school by the adult who brings them to school* so that we can ensure they are adequately supervised. A staff member will be there to meet them.

Staff will begin to arrive at school soon after 8:00am, and are usually in the school until 4:00pm. Before classes start, and after they end each day, they will be preparing for their students, working with other staff members, and meeting to discuss professional development issues.

They are also happy to meet parents. We always ask that you make an appointment in advance, though, so that a teacher is able to make time for you.

Home and School Communication

From time to time, various notices (such as this newsletter) will be sent home with your child. Teachers will put any material in your child's backpack. *Please send a child-sized backpack with your child every day, and check regularly to see what has been brought home.*

Copies of notices sent home will be posted on the bulletin boards outside the classrooms, so you can check to see if you have received them. Extra copies will be available in the office.

SCHOOL PHOTOS

School pictures will be taken on September 28th this year. Mark your calendar!

VOLUNTEER POLICE CLEARANCE

Thank you to the many new parents who have already filled out the forms needed to obtain their police clearance. Please remember that we will need this form from you if you wish to volunteer in the school during the year.

If you have any questions about this policy, or the procedure, please ask at the office.

SCHOOL BOUNDARIES

We are privileged to be able to have our school in such a beautiful location. Please note that the land immediately adjacent to the school (playground area), is ours to enjoy. Classes are welcome to visit other areas of the grounds ***only when supervised by a staff member.***

The Sisters are gracious landlords, and the maintenance crew has been consistently friendly and agreeable, often going out of their way to help out. We certainly want to maintain our positive relationship with Notre Dame. Please remember, then, that the grounds surrounding the school do not belong to us, and that we are allowed to use them only at the discretion of Notre Dame. ***The cemetery is strictly out of bounds, as is the gazebo near our playground. Trees are not to be climbed, and dogs should be left at home.***

In the past, children have sometimes been allowed to run alone down the path towards the large shed, and were playing unsupervised in that area. There is open water by the treatment plant, (across from the shed), and unused, rusting farm machinery behind the shed. Chemicals are stored in the shed. On the nearby picnic table there are often various objects including old boards with nails. The Sisters want your children to be safe, and so do we! We ask that you supervise your children carefully, and be respectful at all times.

If you wish to visit with friends after school, and let your children play, ***please take them to our playground.***

Thank you.

Remember to bring in your Campbell Soup labels and Canadian Tire money. Every little bit helps.

SCHOLASTIC BOOK ORDERS

Every year Mrs. Barbara and her elementary class take on the job of Scholastic Book Orders. Once a month a flyer will be sent home with your child. Participation is voluntary, of course, but there are often excellent books offered at very reasonable prices. Think ahead to birthdays, Christmas and other special occasions...For every order placed, the school earns a percentage to spend on new books and resources for the classrooms, teachers, and library, so it is a very worthwhile programme for everyone.

Books are normally sent home with your child when they arrive (usually about two to three weeks after the order is placed), so if you wish the books to be a surprise, please let us know when you place your order, and we will make sure that they are given directly to you.

We receive many different flyers. You will receive one, targeting your child's age group. If you would like to see other flyers, please speak to the office, or to Mrs. Barbara. French books are also available - please let us know if you are interested.

QSP / Reader's Digest Fundraiser

Apart from our "event" fundraisers, Waterdown Montessori School offers a few other smaller fundraising programs. We have several that we repeat every year, because they are "tried and true" and well received.

If something appeals to you, great - if not, simply ignore it!

A package from "QSP Reader's Digest" is included with this newsletter. This package contains a catalogue bursting with an incredible range of magazine subscriptions that will appeal to a wide variety of tastes. You can find children's magazines, parenting magazines, news magazines, and specialty magazines (woodworking, horseback riding, pets, gardening, crafts...). There are Canadian magazines, historical magazines, teen magazines, and traditional offerings such as Reader's Digest and Time, for example. Have fun browsing!

A magazine subscription makes an excellent birthday or Christmas present for a hard to please someone, or someone who lives far away. Everyone loves to receive mail! Prices are often better than in the stores, and the school will receive a portion of the sales.

Lunch Time

(From “Tomorrow’s Child” magazine)

In our school the children bring lunches from home and there are no facilities to warm up the food. I find my choices of menu very limited and boring. Sometimes my son doesn’t even eat it, and most of it comes home, or he tells me he threw it away. Can you offer any advice to make lunch more interesting? Oh, and by the way, we are a ‘nut-free’ school and the children can’t have peanut butter, my child’s favorite.

This is a common question and a common concern. Many parents want their child’s teachers to ensure that their child eats his lunch. It is often the first thing that parents discuss with their children at pick up time: “Did you eat all your lunch?”

First of all, children need far smaller portions of food than many parents think. A whole sandwich and an entire piece of fruit for a three-year-old may be simply too much quantity. Much of the pre-packaged food available for children’s lunches is simply a poor quantity for children this age. Many of our children eat only half of a container of yogurt or fruit cocktail. We end up throwing the rest away.

Please do not be upset when the food you send with your child is not finished. Use that food as a snack on the way home or before dinner. Pediatricians assure us that children will eat when they are hungry and drink when they are thirsty. Asking them to do otherwise is encouraging overeating and teaching unhealthy eating habits that can lead to health problems down the road. With obesity at an epidemic level in the United States and many other places in the world, we need to be certain that we are sending positive food messages to our children.

In the Montessori environment we ask children to listen to their bodies, their minds, and their hearts. They choose work that will enrich them intellectually, friends that will help them to grow, and food that will nourish their bodies. We have to believe that given a variety of healthy foods, each child will learn to eat a balanced diet. It is our job to provide the choice of food that will help them grow. It is the child’s job to choose from within them.

In packing a lunch consider options, portion and learning opportunities. A healthy lunch should include food from each food group, protein, grain, fruit and vegetable and dairy. Teachers use this as a time to discuss the food groups. “Sam, what did you bring today from the grain group?” In my classroom, we ask children to eat their protein first as a way of ensuring that they are not filling up on empty calories. This teaches children to identify the source of protein and recognize its importance. Avoid processed foods as they often contain a lot of fat, salt, and nitrates. Prepackaged lunches available through the grocery store are well liked by children, but a poor choice nutritionally. Make these a rare treat – if offering them at all. We do not want children come to crave a diet of unhealthy high fat, high salt food.

Protein can come in the form of cubed meat and/or cheese, yogurt, beans, hummus, etc. Even though peanut butter is not permitted in your school, sunflower seed butter is delicious and a good substitute for many children. ***(Sue notes: Please tell your child’s teacher if you are sending a product that might be mistaken for peanut butter!!)*** Include a small amount of fruit in a container with a reclosable lid. The small size works perfectly for this age group. That way leftover food can be taken home and consumed later. We find that fruit and vegetables cut into bite sized pieces are often better received than a whole apple or pear. Our children often enjoy the leftovers from last night’s family dinner. Broccoli, peas, and carrots are favorites in my class. Children enjoy them just as well cold.

We have a ‘no-candy’ policy and send the candy home if it comes in accidentally. We ask that junk food be a small part of the child’s diet, but parents do send cookies, marshmallows, fruit roll ups and other empty-calorie foods. Children are reminded to eat these last.

Involve your child in planning, shopping for and packing the food for his lunch. Refer to the food by groups. “What fruit would you like this week? Oh look, grapes are on sale at our grocery store.” Looking at choices on the grid may help you think of foods that you may not have considered. Vary the foods you offer and perhaps even create a special family tradition by providing a special ‘try-something-new lunch’ one day of the week.

Don’t be afraid to ask other parents what works for them. It is fun to discuss how some of these foods come from different places in the world. Children are fascinated with the study of the continents and they enjoy sampling different foods.

Ask what they have seen others eat that they might like to try. Vary cold lunches and hot lunches. A wide mouth thermos is great for sending soup or leftovers.

Some parents also provide occasional, or even daily, notes in their child's lunch. This is a nice way to encourage learning to read as well as reminding the child that you are thinking of her during the day.

Best of luck in your quest for the perfect school lunch! Let us know what works for you!

Cathie Perolman is an experienced Montessori guide at the 3-6 level. She is a Montessori teacher educator and publisher of educational materials.

Harvard Business Review

Montessori Builds Innovators

Andrew McAfee

9:56 AM Monday July 25, 2011

There are strident disagreements these days over every aspect of American educational policy, except for one. Everyone thinks it would be great if we could better teach students how to innovate.

So shouldn't we be paying a great deal of attention to the educational method that produced, among others, Larry Page, Sergei Brin, Jeff Bezos, Jimmy Wales, Peter Drucker, Julia Child, David Blaine, and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs? They were all students in Montessori schools. According to a [Wall Street Journal article by Peter Sims](#), there's a "Montessori Mafia" among the creative elite. So maybe there's something to the method Italian physician Maria Montessori came up with around the turn of the 20th century.

The cornerstones of this method, [according to Wales's brainchild Wikipedia](#), are:

- mixed-age classrooms, with classrooms for children aged 2½-or-3 to 6 by far the most common,
- student choice of activity from within a prescribed range of options,
- uninterrupted blocks of work time,
- a Constructivist or "discovery" model, in which students learn concepts from working with materials, rather than by direct instruction, and
- specialized educational materials developed by Montessori and her collaborators.

That list rings true to me. I was a Montessori student in northwestern Indiana from a very early age through third grade, which was as high as the school went at that time. The teachers were an earnest group of the biggest hippies that could be found in small-town Hoosierland in the 1970s, and they gave us a lot of room to explore stuff that we found interesting.

For me this included the [beads](#) Maria and her colleagues came up with to teach us about numbers. No matter how young you are, after you see five beads on a wire next to 25 arranged in a square and 125 in a cube, you have a grasp of 5^2 and 5^3 that doesn't leave you. And after you hold the five-cube in one hand and the ten-cube in another, the power of taking something to the third power becomes very real. One is eight times as heavy as the other!

The parents of Larry, Sergei, Jimmy, Jeff, and all the others gave their kids good genes and nurtured them in many other ways beyond sending them to Montessori (I know that's true in my case). But [research indicates that Montessori methods work even for disadvantaged kids](#) who are randomly selected to attend (although this might not be the best idea for [dental school](#)). And as far as I can tell from my quick glance at the studies, Montessori kids don't do worse than their more classically educated peers on standardized tests. So why do we spend so much time on rote learning and teaching to the test?

When I got too old for my Montessori school and went to public school in fourth grade, I felt like I'd been sent to the Gulag. *I have to sit in this desk? All day? We're going to divide the day into hour-long chunks and do only one thing during each chunk? Am I on Candid Camera? Am I Job?*

I'm really glad to learn that Montessori methods are [entering public schools](#). And I look forward to more research on the benefits and drawbacks of this educational approach. Until it convinces me otherwise, I'm going to continue to believe in Montessori and recommend it to parents.

The main thing I learned there is that the world is a really interesting place, and one that should be explored. Can there be any better foundation for an innovator in training?



ANDREW MCAFEE

The Last Minute RESP

Posted By Mike Holman On May 16, 2011

Most new parents think about setting up an Registered Educational Savings Plan (RESP) when their child is born. However, between 2 am feedings, lining up daycare and a general lack of money, it's very easy to put the RESP idea on the backburner and forget about it.

The great thing about RESPs is that they are flexible enough that you can start one when your child is older and still get most, if not all of the free government grants.

Here are a couple of suggestions on when to start an RESP account for an older child and still get a decent amount of grants.

Start an RESP during the year your child turns 10

If you start contributing to an RESP account during the year your child turns 10, they can still receive the lifetime maximum RESP grant amount of \$7,200.

To accomplish this – Contribute \$1,000 in the year when the child turns 10 years old. Then contribute \$5000 per year up to and including the year when the child turns 17 years of age. This will give you the maximum \$7,200 grants for that child.

If you are eligible for additional grants based on income, the lifetime grant limit can be reached even if the RESP isn't started until the year the child turns 11 years of age.

Additional grants are included in the \$7,200 lifetime grant limit, which means you can contribute a bit less than the first example and still get the full grant amount.

If your net family income is between \$41,544 and \$83,088, you can contribute \$4,250 in the year when the child turns 11 and \$5,000 for the next six years to get the maximum grant.

If your net family income is \$41,544 or less, you can contribute \$2,500 in the year when the child turns 11 and \$5,000 for the next six years and still get the maximum grant.

The very last minute RESP

If your child is starting to talk about taking driving lessons next year and you still haven't started an RESP account, it might not be too late. This last minute strategy involves contributing in the years when the child turns 15, 16 and 17 to get the maximum allowable grant.

At this point you should have a decent idea if the child will be able to use the money, so there is less risk that you will have to collapse the account if they don't attend post-secondary education.

If you are eligible for the basic 20% RESP grant, contributing \$5,000 per year for the years where the child is turning 15,16 and 17 will give you a total of \$3,000 of RESP grants. Your RESP account will be worth \$18,000 plus any earnings when the child is ready for school.

If you are eligible for the 10% additional grant, the total grants will be \$3,150. If you are eligible for the 20% additional grant, the total grants will be \$3,300. To find out if you are eligible for additional grants, see the article RESP – Additional Grants Eligibility. This is a pretty good deal.

What about contributing in the last year or two of eligibility? Unfortunately, if you haven't started the RESP by the year the child turns 15, they won't be eligible for any grants in the last two years. Here are the RESP grant eligibility rules for 15, 16 and 17 years old.

It helps to start early – even a small contribution is a great way to start. Dan Bortolotti of the Canadian Couch Potato blog and his wife are currently contributing \$5,000 per year for both of their high-school aged kids in order get the maximum RESP grant amount before it is too late.

Dan was only 24 years of age when he had his first child. He and his wife decided to start an RESP and contribute \$60 per month because that was all they could spare at the time. He says:

Over the years, we kept gradually increasing the monthly contribution. It was only the last few years that we cranked up the contributions in order to get the maximum amount of RESP grants (\$7,200 per child).

His advice to new parents:

Start early and contribute what you can, even if it is a small amount. Try to increase the contributions every couple of years. Later on when the kids are older, call the CRA RESP phone line 1-800-267-3100 and ask how much contribution room is available. Use this information to calculate how much you have to contribute to max out the RESP grant.

He also suggests temporarily lowering your RRSP contributions in order max out the RESP. You can make up your RRSP contributions later on, but there is a time limit on the RESP contribution room.

Dan also says:

You can save for both your retirement and your kids educational plans, but not necessarily at the same time. Reducing RRSP contributions for a few years frees up cash that allows us to get all the available RESP grants.

Conclusion

Ideally RESP accounts should be established when the child is young in order to capture the most growth from your investments. It is possible however to start an RESP when the child is older and still reap many benefits from the program.

Article taken from Money Smarts Blog - <http://www.moneysmartsblog.com>

URL to article: <http://www.moneysmartsblog.com/the-last-minute-resp/>

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Tuesday, September 20, 2011

9:00 a.m.

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Please join other parents/caregivers in the French room for some fresh hot coffee and treats along with the opportunity to get to know one another, engage in some informal chat and discuss WMS current events and latest newsletter.

You are welcome to bring your small children.

Hope to see you there!

****The focus will be on the informal chat!****