

# Advanced Montessori Workshops

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## Technology in the 21st Century Classroom

### Short description:

Montessorians on the whole sometimes discount the importance of technology. This three-hour workshop looks at how the world has changed under globalization, how children are changing, the new demands of the 21st century workplace, and the important contributions that technology can make—that no other material can make—in a Montessori classroom.

### Detailed description:

The workshop will cover the topic of how technology has changed childhood and the characteristics of the Net Generation, the latest generation to come of age and the first to grow up with digital technology and the Internet. It will also look at the changing nature of the world economy since Globalization 3.0, as described by Thomas Friedman, among others. It will then give a little history of the Internet and some background, and then look at what technology has to offer a Montessori elementary classroom that no other non-digital material has to offer. The workshop will also survey the audience for an indication of how technology is embraced in their school and what their comfort level is with digital technology. The question will be asked why it is (if the survey shows what my experience suggests it will show) that Montessorians don't embrace technology very readily. Materials will include examples of types of websites useful for elementary and middle school students, and ways of integrating technology skills into the curriculum, without having to teach it as a stand-alone subject. The premise of the workshop is that technology for its own sake is a waste of resources in the classroom, and that digital tools are practical life opportunities that can bring the world more easily into the classroom when “going out” is not convenient or possible. Without technology in our classrooms, children will increasingly experience them as detached from their lives.

### Goals and Outcomes:

Participants will feel less overwhelmed by the opportunities offered by technology and the Internet, and begin to see how important technology is for the 21st century Montessori classroom. They will walk away with some specific ways that technology can be implemented seamlessly into the classroom environment without the need for specialists and a huge investment in the latest equipment.

# **Sheep, Cat or Wolf?**

## **What's Your Teaching/Parenting Style?**

### **Short description:**

This will be a two-hour hands-on workshop that encourages teachers, parents and/or administrators to experience, and reflect on, three different teaching styles that are traced back to the three broad trends in contemporary educational philosophy: behaviorism, progressive romanticism, and interactionism.

### **Detailed description:**

Participants will be divided playfully into three groups. Each group will be given the same goal--to learn about the concept of the Platonic Solids. However, the groups will be given different parameters that correspond to the teaching methods or philosophies of the three main approaches to schooling dominant in the industrialized and developing world: behaviorism (traditional schools); romantic-progressivism (Summer Hill or Sudbury Valley Schools or Homeschooling); and interactionism (constructivism and Montessori). Each group will get the same materials: toothpicks and jelly candies with which to complete their group's directive. After this experience, the groups will combine again to debrief their experiences, and to brainstorm the assumptions of each of the different parameters given to their group. These assumptions will be fleshed out with some background information on each of these philosophical approaches to education. In the section on interactionism, constructivism will be contrasted with the Montessori approach. The workshop will conclude with an overview of five principles of good interactionist teaching that are common to constructivists and Montessorians. This workshop gives a "big picture" of where Montessori fits in the world of education generally.

### **Goals and Outcomes:**

Participants will come away with an impressionistic, practically informed, experiential sense of the meaning of each of the three philosophies that means more to them than information read from an educational philosophy text. Teachers will be offered concepts with which they can be more articulately reflective about their own classroom practice. Parents will be able to reflect more widely on their parenting practices.

# Choice and Motivation

## **Short description:**

A key component of early childhood Montessori classrooms, choice is sometimes seen as a luxury by elementary Montessorians that must be sacrificed to accountability and results demanded by parents and administrators. This six-hour workshop will discuss practical ways to structure the elementary classroom and design follow-up activities to promote autonomy, independence and joy in 6-12 year-old students.

## **Detailed description:**

In Montessori philosophy, choice is the engine of motivation, one of the prime elements in an educational structure designed to promote lifelong excitement about learning in children. But in elementary Montessori classrooms in the era of No Child Left Behind, choice has increasingly been sacrificed to the pressures of parents and administrators who are sometimes perceived by teachers to need fast results that can't be guaranteed when children are given the freedom to make decisions about their own learning. The first half of this workshop will be an interactive presentation on the importance of choice as the engine of motivation in Montessori pedagogy, the nature of second period work, and a how-to guide to structuring activity in the elementary classroom to promote autonomy and independent learning. Choice does not have to be an all-or-nothing condition, but is most effective in the elementary setting when it is limited and structured. The afternoon session will apply the principles presented in the morning session to specific presentations across the 6-12 curriculum requested by workshop participants who registered at least two weeks in advance.

## **Goals and Outcomes:**

Participants will come away with a list of practical ways that limited choice can be introduced into elementary Montessori classrooms, and a clearer philosophical understanding of why choice is necessary in classrooms whose primary goal is to encourage the development of independent and joyful learners.

## Using Technology to Engage Learners

### **Short description:**

This two-hour workshop addresses how digital technologies can be used to engage, rather than distract, older elementary and adolescent students in Montessori (and traditional) classrooms. Digital technologies are inherently customizable and interactive, and they have blurred the distinction between producers and consumers in the Information Age. When teachers understand the strengths and limitations of these devices they can shape learning experiences that promote autonomy, authenticity, connection and inquiry.

### **Detailed description:**

Our students are products of the Information Age, an era where the entire opus of human knowledge can be accessed by anyone with a smartphone, tablet or Internet-connected computer. The Internet has changed the old relationships between the producers of knowledge (highly paid and often cloistered scholars, authors and researchers) and consumers (the rest of us) by providing a platform where anyone can publish easily. Excluding digital technologies from the Montessori elementary or adolescent environments, or relegating computers to the periphery simply because they weren't among Dr. Montessori's repertoire of materials, ignores the reality that the Internet is now part of the air most of our students breathe when they are not in the classroom. When the potential and limitations of digital technologies are understood, they can make teachers' lives easier and help facilitate experiences that engage students for the same reasons that traditional Montessori materials have for a century. Children are engaged with activities that respect their autonomy, that are authentic because they matter, that connect them with other individuals or with causes or institutions greater than themselves, and which invite inquiry into intriguing questions or problems. Digital tools and the Internet offer almost inexhaustible opportunities for bringing Montessori upper elementary and adolescent classrooms into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century without compromising the child-centered principles and methods that are at its core.

### **Goals and Outcomes:**

Participants will be invited to consider some broad characteristics that make Montessori classrooms engaging for children. After an audiovisual tour of the many ways in which digital technologies can enhance these characteristics, participants will be inspired to integrate technology into their upper elementary and adolescent classrooms to engage and motivate their young "digital natives."

# Digital Storytelling

## **Short description:**

This three-day workshop will walk participants through the process of creating their own three-minute digital story. Participants will be required to bring their own laptop computer installed with *iMovie '11* or *Final Cut Express* (Apple) or *Premiere* (Windows), along with some concrete ideas for a script and roughly 15-20 digital or paper photos relating to their story idea.

## **Detailed description:**

Computer instruction in Montessori elementary classrooms is too often relegated to keyboarding, word processing, and searching the Internet. However there are many areas in which digital technology can help modernize the Montessori curriculum in ways that no traditional manipulative can do. One of the most engaging and relevant integrates the traditional writing process with the new digital literacy skills in the emerging genre of digital storytelling. Being able to tell one's own story, whatever that story may be, in a multimedia platform is increasingly becoming the updated definition of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century information economy where every student carries around a smartphone capable of video capture and voice recording. Participants in this extended workshop will learn to create a two- to three-minute digital story using *iMovie HD* or *Final Cut Express* (Apple platform) or *Premiere* (Windows platform). This project involves the writing and recording of a voiceover script using *Sound Studio* or *Audacity*, scanning and manipulating digital images using *iPhoto* and *Photoshop Elements*, and the creation of background music using *GarageBand*. These three elements are then combined into a 2-3 minute mini-movie.

## **Goals and Outcomes:**

Participants will come away with their own short digital story and the knowledge of how to repeat the process with students in upper elementary and middle school classrooms equipped with a minimal level of digital technology.

# Conflict Resolution

## **Short description:**

In this three-hour hands-on workshop, participants will learn the basic concepts and skills of conflict resolution for the elementary and middle school classroom.

## **Detailed description:**

The social/emotional curriculum in any classroom—teaching children to relate well as human beings—is generally given little formal emphasis in curriculum documents and standardized tests. However, experienced teachers know that this hidden curriculum is in many ways as important—if not more so—than the academic curriculum. Without an atmosphere of safety and tolerance, children are preoccupied with their more basic questions—who their friends are, and where they belong. Socially stressed children are unwilling to take risks in their learning for fear that they will lose face in front of their peers. Hostility among elementary children is more often than not simply due to a lack of understanding of the basic concepts and skills of peaceful communication. In a series of interactive, fun and engaging games and activities, participants will be introduced to a set of concepts and skills that can provide teachers and students with a basic vocabulary with which to talk about and resolve conflicts as they arise in the classroom. This set of activities follows closely the curriculum developed by *Educators for Social Responsibility* in Cambridge MA for the *Resolving Conflict Creatively Program*. Participants will be introduced to curriculum guides from this publisher that can provide more indepth training for students in the practices of conflict resolution and peer mediation.

## **Goals and Outcomes:**

Participants will come away with a series of user-friendly games and activities which they can use to teach the basic vocabulary and skills of conflict resolution needed to establish the foundations of a peaceable classroom.