

Research shows benefits of Montessori Education

A method of schooling that focuses on personal development rather than exams produces more mature, creative and socially adept children, scientists have found. Psychologists in the US found that children at Montessori schools did better than those given a traditional education. Five-year-old Montessori pupils were better prepared for reading and maths, and 12-year-olds wrote "more creative" essays using more sophisticated sentence structures.

Some of the biggest differences were seen in social skills and behaviour. Montessori children displayed a greater sense of "justice and fairness", interacted in an "emotionally positive" way, and were less likely to engage in "rough play" during break times. The schooling system was invented in the early 1900s by Maria Montessori to educate poor children in her native Italy. The method discourages traditional competitive measurements of achievement, such as grades and tests, and instead focuses on the individual progress and development of each child. Children of different ages share the same classes, and are encouraged to collaborate and help each other. Special educational materials are used, and there is an emphasis on "practical life skills".

The researchers, who reported their findings in the journal *Science*, compared children aged three to 12 at a Montessori school in Milwaukee with those at other schools in the same area. Angeline Lillard, from the University of Virginia, who co-led the study, said: "We found significant advantages for the Montessori students. Particularly remarkable are the positive social effects of Montessori education". Although the Montessori children were not regularly tested or graded, they did just as well in spelling, punctuation and grammar exams as those given conventional lessons. Older Montessori pupils were more likely to choose "positive assertive responses" when dealing with unpleasant social situations. They also displayed a "greater sense of community" at school. The scientists concluded: "Montessori education fosters social and academic skills that are equal or superior to those fostered in other types of schools".

The Montessori method has had its criticism. Some parents believe the classroom environment is "too free", while others question Montessori teaching priorities, or the fact that children are not assigned homework.

UNIT 1: EDUCATION

1. Write a summary of the text, including the most important points and USING YOUR OWN WORDS (about 50 words).

2. Decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F) and justify your answer with evidence from the text.

....Teenagers at Montessori schools are better at maths than at writing.

.... Montessori centres on the group development and progress.

.... In Montessori schools they only teach practical skills.

.... Academic skills are superior in traditional schools.

.... There are some downsides to the Montessori methods, such as the fact there is no schoolwork to be done at home.

3. Find synonyms of the following words from the text.

1. Very skilled or proficient at something:
2. Become involved:
3. Showing confidence and forceful personality (adj):
4. Showed:
5. Encourages the development of something: