

# NEWS LETTER



## WELCOME



Welcome to all the new and returning students of Meher Montessori School.

This is our 47th year of service to the children of the Los Angeles Area.



We look forward to a new school year full of excitement and enthusiasm for learning and discovery.

Adela Muñoz  
Director



**N**urturing and helping each child to develop their full potential through the principals and direction of the Association Montessori Internationale has been our mission from our School's beginning in 1972. AMI was founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1929 to protect and maintain the integrity of her life's work.

Meher Montessori School's dedicated and inspired AMI-credentialed teachers, through their training, prepared environment and Montessori materials, work to instill a lifelong love of learning and creative and critical thinking skills. They also work to build caring self-motivated citizens who respect others and their environment.

We are a community of teachers, parents and students working together – not just for the intellectual development of the child – but also their social, emotional and spiritual development.

The start of the new school year has been bustling with energy and excitement. The classrooms are filled with joyful children happy to be back at school and the new ones are quickly getting adjusted. We look forward to another wonderful and successful school year.



## OUR STAFF

We are very proud of our staff. We have the most experienced and dedicated AMI Montessori teaching staff in the Los Angeles area. Our teaching assistants, day care staff and other support personnel are excellent as well and many have been with our school for more than a decade.



**John Page** is the Founder and Executive Director of our School. He founded the Meher Montessori School in Altadena in 1972. He taught there, as well as administrated, until 1982 when he started an affiliated school in Alhambra. Then for the next 2 years he taught in Alhambra, as well as doing its administrative work, until starting our Monterey Park School in 1984.

He is a graduate of UCLA and the AMI Montessori Institute of Los Angeles. Mr. Page holds an AMI Primary teaching credential from the Montessori Institute of Los Angeles and an AMI Elementary teaching credential from the Montessori Institute of Milwaukee.



**Adela Muñoz**

is our School's Director. She started with the school as a part time substitute teacher in September 1992, became our assistant director in 1993. She became the School's Director in 2004. Adela graduated from the AMI Teacher Training at the AMI Montessori Institute of Los Angeles and holds an AMI Primary Teacher's Diploma. She also completed administrative requirements through UCLA extension.



**Len Mindes**

is our Upper Elementary teacher. Len is an AMI Elementary Teacher, a 1995 graduate of the Washington Montessori Institute. In the summer of 2013 he spent 5 weeks at the Hershey Montessori School in Ohio taking the AMI Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies course. Len led our Middle School for six years. We are excited to have him lead our Upper Elementary. Len also has a B.A. degree in Mathematics from Boston University and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from

Antioch University.



**Annette Mills**

started working at the Meher Montessori School in Monterey Park in 1992 as a part-time P.E. teacher. She completed her required Child Development courses at East Los Angeles College. She assists in both the Primary and Upper Elementary classrooms.



**Allison Tenold**

is from the great state of Washington and is our AMI Montessori Elementary teacher for the Lower Elementary classroom with children from 6-9 years of age. Allison joined us in 2011 as an assistant in both the Upper and Lower Elementary classrooms. In 2013 she completed her Montessori Elementary training at the Montessori Institute of Milwaukee. She holds a Masters in Education from Eastern Washington University and is credentialed to teach in the WA public schools. Allison is passionate about the Montessori philosophy as she was a Montessori child herself.



**Michelle Gonzalez**

(parent of Meher alums Jacqueline & Samantha) joined our staff eleven years ago. She is the assistant in the Lower Elementary class and is also the Upper Elementary Art teacher. Michelle earned her Certificate in Child Development from Rio Hondo College. In addition she recently earned her Holistic Health Counselor Certificate from The Institute for Integrative Nutrition.



**Maria Rivera**

is with us for her eighteenth year. She is a teacher in one of our Primary classrooms. She is a graduate of Western Mindanao State University in the Philippines where she achieved two B.S. degrees. One is in chemistry and the other in elementary education. In addition, she has a Certificate of Specialization in Pre-school Education. Maria graduated from The Montessori Institute of San Diego with her AMI Primary Teacher's Diploma.



**Salena Bayon** is with us for her nineteenth year. She is Mrs. Rivera's teaching assistant. Her daughter Kaya is starting her third year in Mr. Mindes' Upper Elementary class.

with our school for many years as a parent. Her two children, Joon-Woo and Erica are former students. She is a graduate of Ewha Woman's University in Seoul, Korea and received her Child Development Certificate from Patten University.

for the paraprofessional.



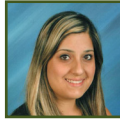
**Nancy Ramirez** is assisting in the Primary classrooms

as well as the Primary and Elementary after school day care. She has twenty three years experience in child care.



**Monica Lopez** began working at Meher in October 2014. She

just completed her AMI primary training and is now the teacher in one of our Primary classrooms. She received her Associate Degree in Social Science from Santa Monica College, and graduated Cal State University Los Angeles in Cultural Anthropology with honors. Prior to working at Meher, she worked for the Boys and Girls Club, and for an after school program of the Alhambra School District. In her free time, she enjoys going to the gym and weight lifting. She also enjoys hiking and being with her family.



**Royann Kulwicksi** joined our staff in 2013 and

is assisting in the Upper Elementary class. She completed her required Child Development course work at Pasadena City College and has a seven year old daughter.



**Elodia (Kookie) Chavez** (parent of Meher alums

Evita & Eli) is the School's Business Administrator. She is in charge of all student records, county required student reports, payroll, and human resources.



**Cynthia Martinez** is an assistant in the Primary classrooms

and also works in our after school Primary day care. Cynthia is a very special staff member because this is her thirty-fifth year of service in our School. She started with us in September 1984 when our Monterey Park facility opened. Besides having completed course work for her Child Development I certificate, she has completed a special course on the Montessori Method



**Linda Joe** (aka Mrs. Yoshida - parent of Meher alums Taylor &

Timothy) is in the office one day a week. She is in charge of the School newsletter and with her graphic arts background also makes class materials for the School. She is currently also teaching the after school Art class.



**Ji Young Suh** is Ms. Lopez' full time teaching assistant. She is starting her sixteenth year at Meher. Ji was

I would like to welcome everyone to the new school year. This is Meher Montessori School's 47th year. Meher is the oldest AMI accredited school in Los Angeles County and we continue to work very hard to provide a special learning experience for your children. We have had a great start to the new year and our new students are adjusting nicely and settling in thanks to the help of our wonderfully dedicated staff who continue to provide a loving and caring environment for our students.

We have a few exciting changes this year. Len Mindes, our former Middle School teacher, is now the lead teacher in our Upper Elementary classroom. He has been preparing exciting lessons over the summer and his class is off to a strong start. In our Primary program, Monica Lopez is now the lead teacher in one of our Primary classrooms. She received her AMI accreditation this past summer from the Montessori Institute of San Diego and will be completing her Masters in Education from Loyola University next summer. Her years of experience as an assistant help make her transition into lead teacher a natural progression. Ji Suh will be assisting her in the classroom.

Our Fall Fundraiser started September 11 and will end October 3. Thank you for your support in this important event. It really aids in our purchasing of AMI approved Montessori material that is very costly.

We will be having a Public Open House on Saturday, October 12th from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. Please share this with friends and family and if anyone you recommend enrolls, you will receive a \$100 credit towards your next tuition payment. Also, a reminder that if you haven't visited our Instagram account yet, please take a moment to do so. It is a great way to see what goes on daily at Meher and also a great share with friends and family. You can find us at [meher\\_montessori\\_schools](https://www.instagram.com/meher_montessori_schools).

We promise to work with you as a partner in your child's journey of discovery and to provide a safe and loving learning environment for your child. In return we ask that you support our work and the other students by having your child here on time. The harmony and rhythm of the classroom is affected by excessive absences and by children arriving late.

I am currently planning some early morning parent social hour events so that you can meet and get to know other Meher families. The first Friday Coffee will be on Friday, October 4 from 7:00-8:30 a.m. in the Church Multi-Purpose room. As always, please feel free to stop by my office any time if you have any question or concerns.

Thank you,  
Adela Muñoz

*"Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but also to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core."*

—Dr. Maria Montessori



Hello everybody! We are back again at Meher for another wonderful year. This year will be full of blessings, excitement, challenges and discoveries. The children will see what they can do and learn more! Ms. Bayon and I are blessed with children who are smart, energetic, love learning are happy and enjoy coming to school. They love to sing and move their bodies and listen to stories during our circle time.

I hope that everybody enjoyed a fun-filled and restful summer vacation. My August break was relaxing and at the same time busy in preparing our house for our fifth grandchild. But as always I am excited to be back at Meher after a month of school break. There is always a feeling of excitement arranging our prepared environment a little differently from last year's arrangement and adding new materials in our Practical Life area. The children come to school excited and happy to learn.

Ms. Bayon and I welcome back our returning children and their families, also the children that joined us in the summer time and their families. We were blessed this school year with six energetic, terrific, smart and awesome new children! They

are Remi Caldera, Salvador Gallardo, Andrew Ge, Caiden Huerta (Rowan's younger brother), Ellie Wong; all 3 years old, and Brooklyn Wong who is 4 years old. By the third week they are more settled and relaxed. They have come to find the fun things to do and learn in their prepared environment. Now they come in smiling, ready for the day, give their parents a hug and a kiss and wave bye to them with a smile. The reasons for this change are that they have found new friends, feel loved and secure both in daycare and in the classroom.

The older children in our class are polishing their phonics; sounding and writing them in cursive. Most of our graduating children are reading and spelling three to four letter words. In Math, their addition and subtraction process is being polished and answers done by memory. Maps and flag works are the craze of most of the children who are writing cursive and reading. We are reviewing and reminding the children about grace and courtesy, being polite, greeting one another with a hand shake, being able to maintain the habit of pushing their chairs when they stand up and the saying of the magic words of; "thank you" and "you're welcome."

Younger children are working more on the practical life and sensorial exercises. They look up to the ways and behavior of the older children; the older children are models of the younger ones in our classroom.

Ms. Bayon keeps the children in class busy (especially the younger children) with her original art work related to the season and upcoming event or activities in our school. For Fall, she has done a beautiful combination of fall colors painted by the children on a tree they made. They are also punching beautiful colors and shapes of fall leaves. These art works will be displayed on the walls of our staircase going down to our classroom. Ms. Bayon is so organized that she has the habit of preparing art and punching work papers ready for next month. I am blessed to work with her once again this year. Thank you so much Ms. Bayon for your dedicated time spent with our children in class. May your passion working in class and at Meher as always be a light.

These are a few friendly reminders to all our parents; class starts at 8:15 in the morning and ends at 2:30 in the afternoon.

Have a safe and great Fall season to one and all.  
Thank you.

Mrs. Rivera  
Ms. Bayon



***“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.”***

**—Dr. Maria Montessori**



Here's a poem that our children are reciting this month:

**Who has seen the Wind?  
By Christina Rossetti**



**Who has seen the wind,  
neither I nor you.  
But when the leaves hung  
trembling,  
the wind is passing through.  
Who has seen the wind,  
neither you nor I.  
But when the leaves bow down,  
the wind is passing through.**



***Now, what really makes a teacher is love for the human child; for it is love that transforms the social duty of the educator into the higher consciousness of a mission.***

Welcome parents to our 2019-2020 school year. I'm thrilled to be joined by you all.

The school year officially began September 3rd. we had 13 children in the classroom, eager to return to their work and to see all their friends. Some popular activities this month are The Bank Game, The Puzzle Maps, Metal Insets, and sewing.

The following week we welcomed 6 new children into our classroom bring us to 19 total. A big WELCOME to Reagan Ilacqua, Arelynn Lopez, Zayah Marzbani, Immanuel Ng, Orion Perez, and Claire Tsang. They are adjusting wonderfully and quickly. They've been receiving a lot of grace and courtesy lessons. Grace and courtesy shows the child how to 1. care for themselves 2. interact with other children and adults 3. properly handle materials in the classroom and 4. follow the classroom rules.

The older children have helped the younger ones with set up and clean up for lunch, showing them how to wash their hands, and frequently reminding them of our classroom rules. This is one of the reasons Maria Montessori created a curriculum with mixed aged groups: the younger children have someone to look up to, and the older children feel a sense of responsibility.

This is an exciting year for me. The past 2 summers I studied for my Montessori certificate in San Diego at the Montessori Institute of San Diego. It was a great experience. I graduated from the program in July 2019 receiving my 'Primary Diploma'. Next summer, I will receive my Master of Education degree from Loyola Marymount, Maryland. I'm grateful to have my own classroom.

I have the privilege of working alongside Mrs. Suh this year. She is a great asset to our classroom. The children enjoy doing art projects with her and helping her beautify our classroom. She's also been helping our new students adjust and making sure the other children are busy and focused with their work.



Also a big thank you to Ms. Mills. She got our classroom 3 new fish. The children love observing the fish and reporting back to Mrs. Suh or myself on what they see. Children are also responsible for feeding the fish, which is something they love to do. Thank you Ms. Mills

Parents, it is important that your child arrives to school by 8:15 a.m. Our first work cycle begins at that time. The goal of that three-hour cycle is to 1. allow the older children have plenty of time to do jobs that require more time and focus and 2. allow the younger children to build their concentration and focus to be able to work on the longer jobs when they're older. If for any reason you need to drop off your child after 8:15, please allow your child to walk in independently. Please have your child walk down the stairs and carry their lunch bag.

Parents, please don't hesitate to come talk to me if you would like to

know anything about the classroom or your child. In the morning, I'm available from 7:00 – 8:00 a.m. and in the afternoon from 3:00 – 3:30 p.m.

I look forward to getting to know each of you. Thank you for entrusting the care of your children to us.

Ms. Lopez  
Mrs. Suh



Follow us on **Instagram**  
**meher\_montessori\_schools**

**Class News**

Welcome to the new school year 2019-2020! I am Ms. Tenold and our classroom assistant is Mrs. Gonzalez. We are excited to be here and have each and every one of this year's students. Our special leaders are the oldest members of the class and we have 5 this year. Their names are Rotimi, Violet, Juliet, Julian, and Melissa. These children have all been in the Lower Elementary for

two years and this is their third year. They are so helpful to their teachers and classmates, and are smart, curious learners with different interests

and strengths so together they make a great team! My other returning students are in their second year in our classroom: Arin, Patrick, Christian, Maddison, Luca, Jacob, Azik, Sophia, Julia, Claire, and Paolo. It is exciting to see them grow from one year to the next, both academically and in height for some of them! Making their debut in the Elementary room are my next group of learners: Jake, Zoe, Alejandra, Anasofia, Ava, Jordan, Max, Kyle, Amber, Cylis, and Eleanor! Not to be forgotten are

our September birthday celebrants, Violet and Maddison.

**Curriculum News**

Our read-aloud, which the children are enjoying tremendously, is the fantasy novel *The Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynne Reid Banks. We are exactly halfway through and I plan to finish it this month, reading one chapter a day to the children

**FIRST YEARS WORKING ON MATH**



after recess. Each morning, students enter the classroom, greet their teachers, and write the date in their journal. Then they are allowed to let their curious minds

direct them towards an activity. The oldest members of the class take care of some responsibilities every other day, such as gardening and pet care. Children who need to practice basics such as handwriting or reading the clock do so in the morning with the help of the teacher. After this we meet together in a circle to build community and share what's going on inside or outside the class for all to hear. Then we begin a fundamental piece of a Montessori program the 3 hr.

work period. A child may do 2-3 pieces of work in that time, or he may do 5-6. Some children come to school immediately ready to work, with specific work in mind, and others need time at the beginning of the work cycle to decide what to do. There is a powerful feeling of success and confidence, and it fosters concentration, order, and independence. The focus that is required for immersion into one's lessons takes time, so a child can choose a work, repeat the work many times either themselves or by giving their friends a turn, and they become fully engaged before moving on to the next work on their own terms, when satisfied and ready. Children will receive as much guidance from teachers as necessary.

It's going to be a great year!

Ms. Tenold

► **Public Open House**

On Saturday, October 12, 2019 from 10 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. we will have a Public Open House. Get a \$100 tuition credit if you recommend someone to attend who then registers and enrolls.

► **Halloween Day**

Our annual Halloween celebration will take place on Thursday, October 31st. Each class will have its own party and will join in the costume parade. The Primary children will have their parade from 8:30–8:45 a.m. The Elementary children will have their parade from 8:45–9:00 a.m. The children come to school in their costumes, and will change to regular clothes after the parade.

► **Mom's Club Preschool Fair**

On Saturday, October 5, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Meher will be participating at St. Andrew's Catholic School, 42 Chestnut Street, Pasadena, California 91103

► **Pathfinder Ranch**

The 3rd year children of Ms. Tenold's class and the children of Mr. Mindes' class will be at Pathfinder Ranch November 12–November 15!



**FIRST FRIDAY  
COFFEE MORNING**

To all Meher parents and caregivers - take a moment after drop-off for coffee, tea, snacks and conversation. Meet other parents and staff members.

Friday, October 4th  
7:00 - 8:30 am  
In The Church Multi-Purpose Room  
Parents and Caregivers only please



study geography, history, art and so on. I am so thrilled at the opportunity to engage these eager minds!

### A few things to come

Every year Meher Montessori benefits from the abilities of parents, relatives, and friends who share their talents with the students. This year we are weaving into our biology curriculum a gardening program that Michael Castillo, the uncle of 2018 graduate Enzo Chavez, developed with our Middle School students last year. Also, Ezio Veneziano's mother (Ms. Espinoza) will adapt for the Upper Elementary the Micro-economy class she designed and taught at the Middle School over last two years.

School has begun! And with the start of every school year, I am amazed at how much the students have matured on their return from summer break! This year, of course, is a little different, since it is my first year teaching the Upper Elementary class. I have spent a lot of time this first month getting to know my students - their work habits, their interests, their humor, their quirks and foibles. I imagine, the students have, to some extent, done the same getting to know their new teacher!

### A few things seen

What I have observed so far is a group of wildly enthusiastic and active students, excited to continue last year's classroom magazine, to study rocket engines, to read and write fiction, to delve into the perplexities of space-time, and to



# OUR ALTADENA STAFF



**Althea Wildhaber** is our director/teacher at our Altadena

location since 2013. She has worked for Meher Montessori Schools off and on since 2000. She has worked in the Primary classrooms at both the Monterey Park and Altadena schools, as well as before and after school daycare. In addition to completing her required Child Development course, she has also earned an AA in Social Sciences from PCC and a BA from Pacific Oaks College in Human Development with a focus on Early Childhood Education. Althea graduated from The Montessori Institute of San Diego with her AMI Primary Teacher's Diploma.



**Johvana Tinajero** started with us in February 2017 at our

Altadena school as an assistant teacher. She just completed her AMI Primary training and is an accredited Montessori teacher. Her daughter

Julia, has been a student at Meher since she was two and a half. She has her associates degree in Child Development. She has previously worked for the Montebello School District and the Temple City School District.



**Victoria McCray** has been with the Meher Montessori

School since 1986. She completed her Child Development classes at Pasadena City College. Victoria is the assistant teacher in Mrs. Wildhaber's classroom and she also does the day care in the mornings, greeting the children and parents.



**Claudia Sykes** was born and raised in El Salvador, Central

America. Graduated from Colegio Santa Ines with a B.S. in Early Education and Elementary and a B.S. in Special Education from the Universidad Evangelica in El Salvador. She also has a B.S. in Counseling

and Guidance from the University of Louisville in Kentucky. In addition she holds a certification as a AMI Primary Guide from the Montessori Institute of San Diego. There is a deep sense of gratefulness for being part of our little Montessori community where we all work together in unison to serve our children, to serve mankind.

## FUNDRAISER

September 11, 2019 —  
October 3, 2019



## MOM'S CLUB

Saturday,  
October 5, 2019  
10:00 – 1:00

## PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

Saturday,  
October 12, 2019  
10:00 – 2:00



## Welcome to Another Year at Meher!

The first two weeks of the new school year have been busy! We have 30 students enrolled this year, so there is a lot of movement in the rooms.

This year we opened up the layout to a free flowing environment between the small classroom and large classroom. The small classroom has all the Sensorial, Geography and Nature Extension Materials. The large classroom has all the Practical Life, Mathematic, and Language Materials. The children are free to flow from one environment to the other at their leisure. This appears to have fostered more purposeful movement in the overall environment, as the children have to now think about what room the materials they want to work with are located in. The children have adjusted very well to this new layout.

This year we have four graduates. Once again, they are all returning students. This is especially nice because that means we can dive right into the more abstract lessons in the environment. They are our leaders in the classroom with additional responsibilities such as helping younger friends zip-up jackets, tie shoes, put away materials, and

support younger friends in new lessons. This year's graduates are Leona Arkin, Joseph Arnold, Aaliyah Bodis, and Ken Miu.

### Back To School Night

Moving on, I would like to thank the families that attended Back to School Night on Thursday, September 12th. I find that BTSN is an important step in fostering your child's social relationships with his/her peers. Judging from the socialization I observed before and after the meeting, I would say many of the parents felt the same way as well.

For those who did not attend, there are a few points I would like to touch on. Firstly, I briefly went over the importance of Rough and Tumble Play in preschool-age children. Attached is a link to the article I mentioned. I highly recommend reading it, if you haven't already.

[https://www.ucy.ac.cy/nursery/documents/Agrio\\_Pexnidi\\_sta\\_Nipia.pdf](https://www.ucy.ac.cy/nursery/documents/Agrio_Pexnidi_sta_Nipia.pdf)

Secondly, please do not allow any of your children to handle the materials in the classrooms before or after class. Every afternoon, the staff

prepares the environment for the next class day. A prepared environment is essential to your child's success.

Lastly, communication is key to helping us best support your child. Please inform me of any changes to your child's home life, this way the staff will have a better understanding of any behavioral changes your child may demonstrate in class. Also, while I am not out on the playground as much as the other staff, please feel free to come and check in with me about your child's day, progress in the classroom, or any concerns you may have. My office hours are typically 7:30-8:15, and 2:30-4:00.

### **Coffee Socials**

As if there were not enough exciting changes happening this year, I have one more to add to the mix. We are going to host PARENT ONLY coffee socials the first Friday of every month. The first one will be Friday, October 4th, from 7:15-8:15am. The Church has been kind enough to let us use the Founder's Room for this monthly event. It is located just outside the double glass doors. I will have coffee, bagels, and orange juice. Please come inside and hang out after you drop your child off in daycare. In an effort to be just a little bit green, this is a BYOM (Bring Your Own Mugs) event.

### **Reminders**

I have a couple of reminders before closing out this month's newsletter. First, please remember that calling the school directly or emailing me is the best way to contact me during school hours. My cell phone number is only in the event that there is a power outage at school, which has been

known to happen in windy Altadena, and I need to contact parents for early pickup.

Secondly, we provide milk and water for snack. If you would like your child to drink nondairy milk instead, please bring single serving containers that your child can independently retrieve from their lunch bags for that day's snack.

Additionally, School Shirt Day is typically the last Friday of the Month. This month it is on Friday, September 27th. If all the children wear their school shirts on this day, we will celebrate with a baking activity in October. The October baking activity will be pumpkin cake.

Finally, please be sure to read the "Altadena News" portion of the newsletter. Sometimes our dates vary from the dates of the Monterey Park Campus. As you can see, our section is in the back of the newsletter, it always is, so we're easy to find. Aside from what is happening in your child's classroom, information on upcoming events and special occasions can be found in the newsletter.

Until Next Month,  
Mrs. Wildhaber  
Miss Tinajero, Miss McCray, Miss Sykes

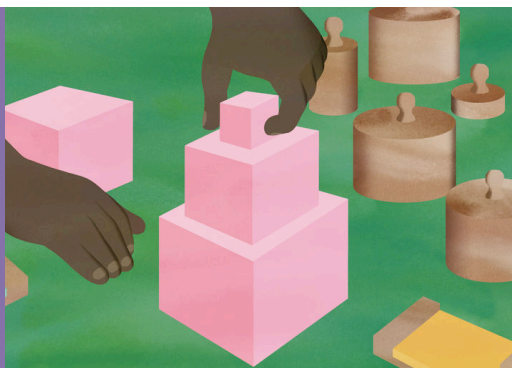


August 20, 2019

## What to Know About Montessori Preschools

The first time I walked into a Montessori preschool classroom six years ago, I thought to myself, *what is this sorcery?* The materials were beautiful but unfamiliar; the room seemed eerily calm considering it held so many 3-year-olds; and the terms the teachers used were new and confusing to me. They're not lessons or activities, they're "work"; and what, pray tell, was that pink tower thing everyone kept talking about?

Now that both of my kids have gone through Montessori preschools, I have a much better understanding of how they work. That's not to say the philosophy is easy to wrap one's head around — and, of course, every school is different. But if you're considering Montessori preschools for your child, or you just want to learn more about them, here are some basics about the history of the philosophy, how well kids learn in Montessori preschools, and what



*They're popular, but how do they differ from conventional nursery schools?*

parents should look for — and avoid — if they're going the Montessori route.

### Montessori's roots

The schools are named after Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician born in 1870, who was fascinated by children and closely observed them. After years of doing so, she developed a theory of human development based on the idea that children instinctively know what they need to learn, and that, when they are surrounded by the right hands-on materials, they can educate themselves independently. "She took this notion that deep inside, we know what we need for our development," explained Angeline Lillard, Ph.D., a developmental psychologist at the University of Virginia who studies Montessori education. Another Montessorian idea is that kids learn by practicing the kinds of "real" activities they see adults doing. For example, in her Montessori classroom my daughter particularly loved pouring water from a teapot into cups.

In 1907, Dr. Montessori opened a school based on these theories in the working-class Rome neighborhood of San Lorenzo, for



children aged 3 to 6. In it, children learned at their own pace, following their own interests, using materials that Dr. Montessori had specially prepared for her classrooms. She allowed the children to have long, uninterrupted work cycles in which they could spend as much time as they wanted on a particular activity — what she called “work” — and then move on to a new choice when they had finished.

Dr. Montessori’s school was extremely successful, so she started more, and soon Montessori schools began appearing in other parts of Europe as well as the United States.

## The Montessori classroom

Montessori preschool classrooms usually look quite different from “traditional” preschool classrooms. For one thing, kids ages 3 to 6 all work in the same room, so the younger ones can learn from their elders and the older children can develop a sense of leadership and authority. (When children go through Montessori preschools, they stay with the same teacher over the three years.)

The classrooms also use specifically designed Montessori materials, so you probably won’t see Lego bricks and dress-up corners. (More on that later.) And although children might do certain activities as a large group, they tend to work alone or in very small groups. “Montessori is all about the child — meeting the child where his or her needs are, and having an environment prepared for the child so they can be successful independently and have that opportunity to concentrate on what they need to,” said Hilary Green, director of the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies in Silver Spring, Md.

## How well Montessori kids learn

Research on preschool education can be hard to conduct and interpret, because kids who go to different preschools may differ in various ways, such as by socioeconomic status, which itself affects academic achievement. To get around these differences, in a 2017 study, Dr. Lillard and her colleagues compared educational outcomes among 141 preschoolers who had been randomly chosen via lottery to attend either a Montessori preschool or a traditional preschool. The two groups weren’t academically any different when they started school, but by the end of the three-year study, the kids who had gone through Montessori preschools were more academically advanced and had better social skills than those who went to a traditional school. The Montessori students also reported enjoying school more.

What about kids with special needs, sensory processing issues or conditions such as attention deficit disorder? Some parents have told me they felt Montessori wasn’t a good fit for their kids with learning or behavioral differences. But Dr. Lillard said that Montessori preschools can work well for such students. “Montessori, when it’s done right, adjusts to every child as an individual,” she said. “Every child can learn in their own pace, in their own way.” But it’s crucial to have responsive teachers, Dr. Lillard said, who can help these children understand their needs. Some especially energetic kids, for instance, might need to take regular breaks, and good teachers can help students recognize when they need them and what kind of breaks help them the most.

## Montessori variations

It's important to keep in mind that schools can call themselves "Montessori" even if they aren't. "Anybody can have a picture of a pink tower and call itself Montessori and there's no recourse for that," said Paige Bray, Ed.D., director of the Center for Montessori Studies at the University of Hartford. (The pink tower, if you are wondering, is a sensory-based Montessori work that involves stacking pink cubes of different sizes.)

Some schools might use Montessori materials and approaches but supplement them with more traditionally American materials or classes; my kids' preschool, for instance, incorporated music, art and Spanish classes. Montessori scholars disagree about just how strictly today's preschools should adhere to Dr. Montessori's original principles. The American Montessori Society, a non-profit organization based in New York City, embraces a more modern, supplemented approach. "Things have changed, and there are some new modern things out there that we have access to that weren't available when she was doing this work," said Green, who serves on the society's board of directors. On the other hand, the Association Montessori Internationale, which was founded by Dr. Montessori and is now based in Amsterdam, believes that the schools should adhere closely to her original ideas, in part because they align with unchanging principles of child development.

Some research suggests that the more classic, A.M.I.-aligned Montessori schools are the most academically effective. In a 2012 study, Dr. Lillard compared academic outcomes among kids who went to classic Montessori preschools,

supplemented Montessori preschools and more traditional high-quality preschools. (The schools weren't determined by lottery, but Dr. Lillard tried to match students according to socioeconomic status and other factors.) Those in the classic Montessori preschools, she found, made the biggest gains in math, reading, vocabulary and social problem-solving over the course of the school year. Those in the supplemented and traditional preschools fared about the same as one another.

Montessori tuition varies significantly from school to school, depending on location and whether the program is traditional or supplemented (which can require more teachers, and often a higher cost). The Montessori School of Peoria in Illinois, for example, is \$6,970 per year for a full-day program, whereas the Kingsley Montessori School in Boston is \$30,400. The school day can also vary, but typically starts at 8 or 9 a.m., and goes to noon, for a half day, or 3 p.m., for a full day.

## What to look for — and avoid

How do you know if the preschool you're considering for your child is truly a Montessori school? And how can you discern between classic and supplemented curricula? One of the key trademarks of the Montessori method is the mixed-age classroom, so no matter what, if it's Montessori, you should see kids aged 3 to 6 grouped together. Montessori schools should also have a three-hour block in the morning in which students work uninterrupted with Montessori materials. (If the school you're looking at adheres to these tenets but also lets kids use toys, Lego bricks or other non-Montessori materials, then it may be a supplemented Montessori school.) It's

also important, Green says, for Montessori teachers to have credentials from a program that has been accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education.

Ultimately, whether it's classic or supplemented Montessori, or not Montessori at all, the best preschool for your child is one that feels good and right. Do the students seem happy and relaxed? Does the classroom atmosphere feel positive and conducive to learning, and do the teachers seem warm and responsive? Parenting so often requires trusting your gut — and finding the right preschool for your kid should tap into those instincts, too.

*Melinda Wenner Moyer is a mom of two and a science journalist who writes for Slate, Mother Jones, Scientific American and O, The Oprah Magazine, among other publications.*

**REMEMBER  
SCHOOL SHIRT DAYS  
ARE EVERY LAST  
FRIDAY OF THE MONTH**



## LIBRARY NEWS

### The Meher Library Opens Again!

This year Mrs. Diaz, Mrs. Moore and Mrs. Marquez will continue to keep Meher Library open after School on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3 pm for students who wish to browse, relax, and enhance their reading interests.

They are joined this year by Mrs. Gonzalez, who will taking Lower Elementary students, as well as Upper Elementary upon request, to visit the Library during regular School hours to check out books.

All our Librarians wish you a wonderful School year. As one student said to me recently "Please get the best books possible for us!" -- a hearty endorsement of our Library's place in their lives as they look forward to new reading.

Mrs. Diaz  
Mrs. Moore  
Mrs. Marquez  
Mrs. Gonzalez



Humans and Technology  
by Tanya Basu

September 11, 2019

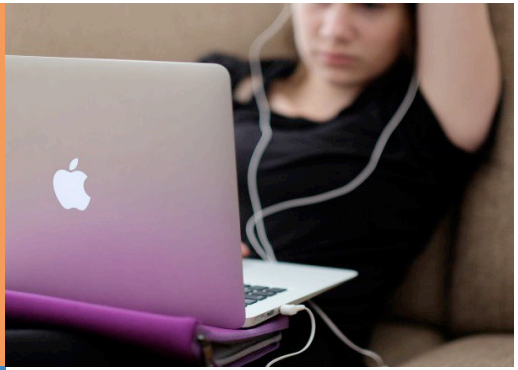
## *Teens are anxious and depressed after three hours a day on social media*

A study published today in the journal *JAMA Psychiatry* suggests that teenagers who spend more than three hours a day on social media are more likely to develop mental health problems including depression, anxiety, aggression, and antisocial behavior.

**The study:** Nearly 6,600 12- to 15-year-old Americans self-reported how much time they spent per day on social media, as well as whether they had any mental health problems. The researchers found that three hours of social media correlated with higher rates of mental health issues, even after adjusting for a history of such problems.

**How teens absorb social media:** The effects of social-media consumption on teens manifest in two main ways, according to the study's authors: internally (depression and anxiety, for example) and externally (aggressive behavior or antisocial behavior). The latter were essentially nonexistent among teens who reported that they didn't use social media.

**But this is old news ... right?** Researchers have long struggled with understanding how social media, screen time, and other forms of



personal technology affect child and adolescent brain development. Much of that is because that technology develops faster than it can be studied. It also doesn't help that researchers have come to conflicting conclusions. For example, this study from last month at the University of California, Irvine, suggested that there was no link between tech time and mental health. Social media, however, might be different: this study published earlier this year found a worrying link between social-media use and social-media addiction.

**Social media is changing faster than we know how to understand it.** The information was self-reported, which means the study is a pretty imprecise tool—the teens in the study might actually use social media more than they say they do, or their mental health issues might differ in type or severity from what they reported. But it's difficult to get an objective look at these kinds of things, especially as the services people use proliferate. Teens today are way less likely to use Facebook and more likely to flip through TikTok. They're also using social media differently, Snapchatting or Instagram DMing pals text-message style, which could explain why some teens are on social media so much in the first place.

**Everything in moderation:** Kira Riehm, a PhD student at Johns Hopkins and the lead author of the study, says the three-hour cutoff shouldn't be taken as a concrete rule. "I think this may be more of an artifact of the analyses than a meaningful cutoff," she says. "I don't know if, on its own, this means that much. Future studies could track, in real time, the amount of time spent on social media use, which would provide more precision in estimating some sort of cutoff." It's the study's broader point that Riehm says is worth remembering: excessive time on social media doesn't help people's mental state.