
Notes from the Director

Jan 9, 2019

Dear Parents,

A few presents I planned for the children arrived for my classroom over the winter break. So today I was busy giving lessons on these beautiful new Montessori materials. One activity looked a lot like the familiar 100 board found in Montessori primary classrooms. In that activity, children lay out 1-inch square tiles as they count from 1 to 100 on a square board. So the children in my 3rd grade math class immediately recognized this 100 board and were eager, yes eager, to find out how it was different from the one they knew and loved from primary.

Upon a closer look at the 100 square tiles, one could immediately notice that the numerals weren't the ones we're used to seeing but were the Roman numerals, first row 1 to 10, second row 11 to 20 and so on to 100. My third grade math group took turns putting in the correct square, finding it first and then placing it on the grid. The Roman numerals i, ii, and iii were easy so were iv, v, and vi, showing a bit more of the sequence. We got down to L and someone asked, "Where's 50?" and then, "Oh that must be 50," she gleefully announced.

Then the classroom bell rang, indicating we were to stop look and listen to the bell ringer. "Lunch time!" the ringer called out. "Oh," said Ben, "this is so much fun, I don't want to quit." Wait, let's re-do that again, "Oh," said Ben, this is so much fun, I don't want to quit." Then he added that he would just stay there until he finished the roman numerals before joining his class for lunch. And in my little voice inside of me I heard myself say, "Pay attention, look, observe the child." I asked myself, "What was so exciting for the child?" I wondered, was it that the materials were brand new, almost untouched by human hands? Were they appealing to the eye? Was discovering the pattern in the written form of each numeral what enticed the child? Maybe, but maybe this was just part of the genius of Maria Montessori. She put activities in the children's classrooms that children liked to handle. Remember, if the activity didn't invite the child, she wouldn't select it. The materials needed to be just right for every child. They needed to be inviting and interesting to the children.

So what do we educators and parents learn from this? And that's simple. Be a temptress. Bring interesting materials to the child and let him/her handle them, hold them, and even caress them. This is called the love of learning and we all have it until some one or some school destroys it.

More later,
Janice Mattina
Founding Head