

THE MONTESSORI POTENTIAL
How to Foster Independence, Respect, and Joy in Every Child,
by Paula Lillard Preschlack

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR MONTESSORI ADMINISTRATORS

Introduction

1. How did you become a school leader? How did you find Montessori?

2. Has learning about Montessori's approach of education changed your view of children as learners? How?

3. Have you ever witnessed some of the eight traits the author mentions on page 11? What traits do you see in the students in your school? Can you give an example/anecdote?

Chapter One

4. This chapter is about Montessori's educational response to the way children develop through four distinct stages. Has learning about the progression of these four planes of childhood helped you as an administrator to better understand and support the different classroom levels in your school (i.e. Primary vs. Elementary with their separate needs and characteristics)?

Chapter Two

5. Paula talks about the importance of preparing the physical classroom on pages 50-61 and the adult spaces on pages 61-78. How might you prepare office spaces, hallways, and entrance ways of your school for the adults and the children with Montessori values in mind? Do you think this could improve your school's atmosphere for the community? What are two specific goals you have?

6. Has reading this book helped you as a leader to support your teachers differently? How?

7. What do you think of Montessori's idea of teachers going through a transformation in their training to see and treat children differently? Do you notice that teachers with formal Montessori training approach their work with students differently, compared to those without? What qualities do you witness?

8. On pages 81-88 Paula briefly explains Montessori's curriculum. How does your school grapple with the question of covering all subjects for all students? Do you agree with Paula that having the complete curriculum that Maria Montessori, Mario and the AMI Pedagogical Committee designed, matters to the outcomes with children? If so, what do you think are the possible benefits? Why do you feel the way you do?

Chapter Three

9. What story about Forest Bluff School stood out the most for you? In what ways do you believe your school is similar or different? (Invariably you have some strengths that FB School does not have; please share an area for improvement and also an achievement you are proud of).

10. What about the author's description of collaborating as a team to solve problems, appeals to you? (See pages 104-109). Have you ever had positive experiences by leading this way? What was the outcome?

11. Do you offer Continuing Education events at your school for parents? If so, which have been the most productive ones, and why do you think so? Was there an idea in this book that you'd like to try in the future? Do you now have another idea to try? (See p. 109-123).

Chapter Four

12. Do you find that you have to “defend” or explain Montessori to parents or other educators? What language has this book given you that might be helpful (if any)?
13. What do you think about the variety of perspectives on Montessori that the author describes on pages 126-130.
14. Is the issue Paula describes of Montessori having no definition for the public and no regulation one that you can compare to something else? Do you see this lack of clarity for the public as a problem? Could reading this book, in your opinion, help with the issue, or not? Why?
15. On pages 144-150, Paula suggests looking for respect, concentration and joy to determine if a Montessori classroom is functioning well. Do you have your own criteria you look for in Montessori classrooms? What are they and how do they manifest in the children’s behaviors?
16. Did you learn something new in this chapter? What was it?

Chapter Five

17. What in this chapter was helpful information for you?
18. Do you agree that public Montessori can be done well? Why or why not?
19. Do you have something to add to the author’s list of challenges, characteristics or solutions for public Montessori programs?

20. If you are in a private Montessori school, do you think that supporting public Montessori programs to flourish your area will affect your enrollment negatively? Is there any way in which being supportive could actually help your own school by spreading the reputation of Montessori education? What actions could your school take to be supportive and yet maintain healthy enrollment at your private school (with its unique characteristics and strengths)?

21. If you are working for a public school, how would partnering with local private Montessori schools benefit you, your teachers, and your families? Are there ways you can work together to spread information, awareness of, and enthusiasm for, Montessori education?

Chapter Six

22. What do you think is the most important thing a parent can do for their child at home? How do you encourage parents to do this now?

23. What section (or point) of this chapter do you think is *currently* the most urgent for the parents at your particular school to read about and embrace?

Conclusion

24. There is a lot of talk these days about “reinventing” or “recreating” education in the United States. Do you believe that Montessori speaks to this conversation? How do you see Montessori providing answers for the problems in education today?

25. On page 226, Paula writes: “The Montessori approach is firmly based in profound respect for each child’s task of forming himself or herself. This respect for the child’s self formation is perhaps the most differentiating characteristic of the Montessori approach.” When you look at other progressive educational approaches, do you see this

differentiation between them and Montessori? What clues are evidence?

26. Please share your overall reflection on this book. Will you recommend it? Why or why not?

Thank you for reading! I hope this book discussion with fellow school leaders helped you dive into this book, and has inspired and refreshed your very important work! Thank you for everything you do for the children and families you serve.