



Nourishing Creativity

in Montessori Environments

ACTION GUIDE

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KidsTalk

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Creativity has been identified as the top leadership competency of the future by the likes of Daniel Pink, Ken Robinson and Steven Johnson. An IBM survey done with over 1500 CEO's found that future success requires creativity more than anything.

What is creativity?

From Wikipedia: the use of the imagination, or original ideas.

What does creativity need to flourish?

- Creativity needs to be nurtured. This requires an environment where it is safe to ask questions, to explore, to experiment and to make mistakes.
- Creativity needs us to be friendly with error. It requires that we be prepared to be wrong.
- Creativity needs challenges and problems to solve.
- Creativity needs time to generate and express ideas.
- Creativity requires a whole person/whole brain approach.
- Creative folks have the ability to concentrate and block out distractions.
- Creative people see the importance of what they are doing.
- Creative places allow each person to remain an individual with specific gifts while providing safety for expression.
- Creative laboratories embrace the needs and challenges of skill development.
- Those in charge of places where creativity blooms are on guard to

ensure that discouragement or boredom never take root.

- Creative environments must be consciously constructed while promoting fluidity between the mind, the body, the heart and the spirit.

How do our Montessori prepared environments nurture creative thinking?

The Preparation of the Student

Humility, willingness, commitment and devotion to discover, alignment with something greater, capacity for intense focus, drive and enthusiasm to learn and grow no matter the circumstances.

The Incubation of the Wanderer

Needs openness and patience, flexibility and high adaptability, appreciation and gratitude, right brain orientation, and the ability to think like a skeptic.

The Illumination of the Light

Experiences nonlinearity, humility, faith in a higher power, and an inner knowing of something greater than himself.

The Verification of the Scientist

Dedication, linear and left-brain orientation to the situation, contributes skill and knowledge to the task of the creative process.

Four basic elements of a Montessori environment

People, tools, ideas and nature provide sustenance not only to the child, but to the archetypes of Student, Wanderer, Light and Scientist, and thus the creative process.

People in a Montessori Environment

Prepared Montessori adult, other children in the multi-age group

Tools in a Montessori Environment

Montessori materials, time, the environment is prepared for the work of the child

Ideas in a Montessori Environment

Montessori principles that include the following and more—Respect of the child's effort to construct a unique human being, use of the prepared environment, limitation of materials, teacher as link to the child and the world, freedom of choice, development of responsibility, strengthening of independence and concentration (See Chapter 3 in Understanding Montessori.)

Nature in a Montessori Environment

Techniques to connect the child to nature: bringing the outdoors and indoors together and realizing both are important to learning

Summary:

Creative environments must be consciously constructed while promoting fluidity between the mind, the body, the heart and the spirit. These environments provide:

- Safety,
- Challenging problems,
- Time to play with ideas and express those thoughts,
- Engagement of the entire being,
- Opportunities for concentration,
- Meaning,
- Opportunities to be different,
- Antidotes against discouragement and boredom,
- Time for and understanding of skill building.

“Imagination does not become great until man, given the courage and strength, uses it to create. If this does not occur, the imagination addresses itself only to a spirit wandering in emptiness.”

Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*

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Children in properly prepared Montessori environments will not wander around in emptiness.

Using Montessori principles we help our children develop courage and strength which allow them to do the following:

- To risk being creative
- To tackle the hard problems

- To be willing to fail
- To explore new ideas
- To express themselves fearlessly
- To engage with life passionately
- To find meaningful activities
- To be able to focus their attention like a laser beam
- To be different and to love different ways of being
- To have the persistence to build vital skills

Nobody nourishes creativity better than properly prepared Montessori programs.

As parents, teachers, school administrators, and anyone who works with children we need to hold these principles dearly and protect them.

- Respect of the child and the child's work in self-constructing an adult in his or her own time and place.
- We prepare a special learning environment for children that is full of meaningful activities in order to aid this self-construction.
- We offer prepared teachers in our environments, teachers who are professionally trained in Montessori principles, theory, methods and techniques. The adult is the most important part of the child's environment. We should be prepared to fully take on that job.
- We offer a full complement of Montessori materials and use the principle of limiting the materials in order to enhance creativity and other executive function skills.
- We use Montessori techniques that include individual and small group lessons, observation of the child at work, and many more.

- We offer multi-age groupings in accordance to Montessori principles that include planes or stages of development as well as being aware of natural human tendencies and sensitive periods of development.
- We provide an uninterrupted three-hour (or longer) work period.
- We protect the child's freedom to choose meaningful activities within that three-hour work period.

Please use this handout as a type of checklist to make sure your homes, your hearts and your classrooms are nourishing the creativity of our children, our unlimited human potential.

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Art is what we call...the thing an artist does.

It's not the medium or the oil or the price or whether it hangs on a wall or you eat it. What matters, what makes it art, is that the person who made it overcame the resistance, ignored the voice of doubt and made something worth making. Something risky. Something human.

Art is not in the eye of the beholder. It's in the soul of the artist.

Seth Godin