

# Family Connection

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“Imitation is the tool given by nature to children to help them adapt to the particular place where they were born and that enables them to adapt to the customs of their specific environment.”

—Maria Montessori, *The 1946 London Lectures*, p.147

## NORMALIZATION The Child’s Path to Joy and Peace

BY HEATHER WHITE



In her book *The Absorbent Mind*, Maria Montessori (1995, 204) said, “Normalization is the single most important result of our work.”

For parents and caregivers, this statement might seem a bit off-putting at first as one might assume that the goal is for all children to think and act in the same way.

The reality is quite the opposite. Borrowed from the field of anthropology, the term “normalization” means becoming a contributing member of society (Zener 2006). Dr. Montessori used the term to describe the phenomenon she observed when working with children.

Normalization, then, is not something that is done to the child. Rather, it is a spontaneous process through which children develop when engaged in meaningful, purposeful work. When provided the opportunity to learn and explore freely and at their own pace on their own chosen activities for repeated uninterrupted periods, Dr. Montessori observed that children exhibit normalization.

### Characteristics of the Normalized Child

A normalized child will demonstrate a love of work and order. They will show profound concentration and self-discipline. They will enjoy silence and working alone and will simultaneously be drawn to developing community by working with others in a group setting. They will demonstrate independence and initiative. Perhaps most importantly, a normalized child will exude joy and peacefulness.

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## The Role of the Montessori Teacher

Dr. Montessori believed that children were born with this innate capacity to become normalized which should develop freely. She also suggested that the greatest obstacles to these natural instincts are often interference from adults. She emphasized the profound role the Montessori teacher must play in preparing the classroom in such a way as to provide children with activities and motives that will engage them and lead them to self-discovery to meet their individual and ever-changing needs. In this way, the teacher is the dynamic link between the child and their environment, the connection that fosters the development of normalization.

## The Prepared Environment

A multitude of activities are available to the young child working on strengthening their fine motor skills or hand-eye coordination. An entire area of the classroom is arranged to expose the child to rich sensorial experiences. Math and language areas are prepared where children can focus on a specific academic skill.

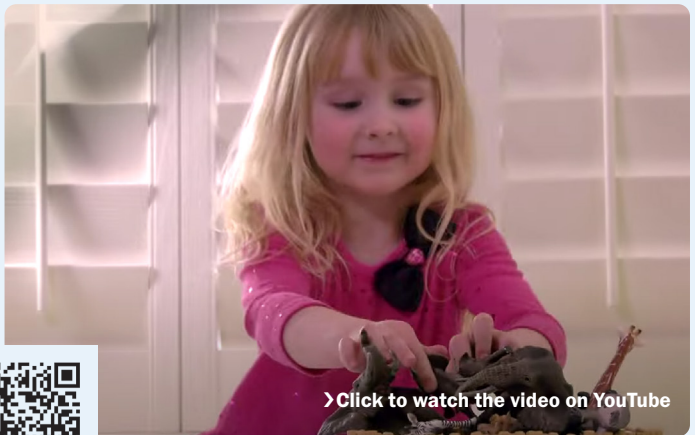
Regardless of the skill the child is attempting to master, the Montessori classroom deliberately offers the right materials at the right time. It is through uninterrupted exploration and engagement with these carefully prepared activities that normalization is brought to life in the child.

According to Maria Montessori, a normalized child is one who is revealing the authentic nature of childhood, one who is realizing their own inner potential, for it is through this process of normalization that a child is able to construct their true personality. It is a path to joy and peace, one that should not only be the goal for education, but for life!

## WHY AUTHENTIC TOYS MATTER schleich® and Montessori: Part 1

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# Global Citizenship

By Heather White

Montessori education helps children to develop the skills necessary to become independent, functioning members of an emerging world community and to help build that community in the future. Global citizenship is, therefore, a foundational tenet in Montessori classrooms.

Global citizenship is the idea that all human beings are a part of a growing world community. It centers on making choices that contribute to making the world a better place. Global citizenship nurtures respect and tolerance for others, allowing students to develop an appreciation for diversity, a sense of empathy, and an openness and acceptance.



## EARLY CHILDHOOD

From a very young age, children should begin to understand that they are part of the human species, a member of society, and a citizen of the world. Through a well-developed history and geography curriculum, an awareness of the world is nurtured that allows children to develop a universal understanding and appreciation of all life on earth. Children read books, listen to music, view artifacts, and learn about cultures from all over the world.

Children begin to understand how their actions impact others in their classroom community through basic grace and courtesy lessons. Concepts as simple as learning to put away an activity when they are finished, so another student can use it, helps a child to understand social norms. The classroom teachers regularly model polite behaviors that students should replicate, such as holding the door open for someone or saying hello. Through these simple daily interactions, children learn how to show kindness to others.

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## ELEMENTARY

Maria Montessori explained that children encounter sensibilities as they move through the elementary grades that make this the most optimal time to introduce all items of culture. As they seek to better understand justice and moral judgment, social relationships, a sense of history and time, a sense of human culture and membership in the human family, and a sense of how the world works, children are eager to learn more about the world, its culture, and their place within it.

In the elementary classroom, students delve deeply into lessons that demonstrate the connectedness of all living things through the presentation of “The Great Lessons.” The Great Lessons are bold, exciting stories that start with the whole (i.e. the universe) and work toward the parts (i.e. individual cultures, life forms, etc.).



becoming active participants in their community.

Adolescents are provided experiences that help them understand their civic duty and help them consider the direct consequences of their actions, empowering them to make positive choices. Opportunities for service and philanthropy provide adolescents with a chance to do good in the world. They might volunteer in local organizations such as animal shelters, libraries, and food banks; organize fundraisers including bake sales; give back to the community through dog walking, car washing, and lawn maintenance services; or donate gently used clothing, books, and toys to charity, local hospitals, or daycare centers.

## A COSMIC TASK

According to Maria Montessori, all human beings have a moral responsibility or a “cosmic task” to protect humankind. By nurturing the core value of global

citizenship, Montessori education helps to prepare children to continue to make a positive difference in the world.

## SECONDARY

Secondary students strengthen and begin to really understand their own moral compass. They are



Next cohort deadline is January 10

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