

Alumni Parent Shares His Family's Story

By Dan Winter

What about transition?

Like many parents, we were simply looking for a place for our child to stay where we thought she would be well cared for. We didn't know much of anything about the Montessori philosophy. We fell in love with the beautiful building, surroundings, and the teachers and decided it was a good place to start. My daughter Isabel started at RPMS in August of 2001 in the young child program. We slowly learned and began to understand the Montessori philosophy. When Isabel transitioned to the children's house area we marveled at all she could do, all she was learning. It was at that point we started to think about what would be next. Things were going great at RPMS, but were we really going to stay for that third year of children's house? How would Isabel transition into her new school if she missed that Kindergarten year? Is the three year cycle in Montessori really that important? We still didn't know what we were going to do. It was a very difficult decision. On the advice of Ms. Nancy Horabik, we stayed. We stayed, but we still worried. How will Isabel transition to her new school in first grade? The Extended Day year went by fast. We learned why the third year of the cycle was so important, how everything really came together in that year. It wasn't until near the end that we even thought about staying for the Elementary Program. It was an incredibly difficult decision. How could we know what was right? Isabel stayed for the Elementary Program, and still we worried about the transition, after all, RPMS doesn't go on forever, we were definitely going to have to make a change, and it was coming soon. We worried and worried about how it would work. How would a child who has been "sheltered" from the big cruel world of public school ever adapt to sitting at a desk, being in a room with 25 other kids? Surely she wouldn't be able to handle that. It would be too much for her.



Well guess what! IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL! I promise you. Kids are very adaptable. Montessori kids are even MORE adaptable. One of the great things about Montessori is that the program isn't only about academics. Our kids become well rounded young people, they learn to solve conflict, how to use their words, to solve problems and how to be responsible for their own learning. And from my experience, the longer they are in Montessori, the more well rounded, and better prepared they will be to transition into their next stage of life.

In the fall of 2004 our second daughter Zoe started in the young child classroom.



When Isabel graduated from the third grade program in May of 2008 we made the very difficult decision to move Zoe to public school after her graduation from the Children's House Program. Since we live in Evansville, the prospect of having our girls in two schools 30 minutes apart didn't work for us. It was for that reason that Zoe had to make the transition to public school in first grade while

Isabel did it in fourth grade. Was there a difference? Isabel had a much quicker transition adapting to a traditional public school setting than Zoe did. But both went relatively well. I think Isabel's ease in transition was definitely related to her additional years learning in the Montessori environment.

Today I am happy to report that both girls are doing exceptionally well in their



new surroundings. Zoe is now a third grader at Theodore Robinson Intermediate School, and Isabel has started Middle School at JC McKenna in Evansville, WI. Both of our girls owe a lot of their academic and life successes to their time at RPMS.



My advice to other parents is to talk to your child's teacher, learn more about the Montessori philosophy, and learn about the three year cycle. Talk to parents who have been through the Extended Day and Elementary Programs. And lastly, follow what you know will be best for your child.

Dan Winter