

Rhombus, Reniform and Rembrandt

Edward Fidellow

Your child's education in Montessori is different – so different that it makes you shake your head in wonder and say, “Is this something my child is really learning?” As parents we want our children to excel at reading, writing and math. Yet their Montessori education leads them through strange and esoteric materials. (At least they are foreign to most adults.)

Why would a three year old need to be versed in geometry? Fine, a nice circle, a square and maybe a triangle but what purpose for an isosceles triangle, parallelogram or a rhombus? Then if that is not enough esoteric learning, your child moves on to the botany cabinet. How many three year olds need botany? They are introduced to leaf forms like spatulate, orbiculate, sagitate and reniform. Most of us adults can't even pronounce them let alone know what they are.

If that is not enough diversity in the curriculum, Montessori education then introduces them to the whole world of art. They meet Picasso, Monet and Rembrandt. What in the world was Dr. Montessori thinking? And where is the math and reading?

There is a unique method (no it is not madness) in this approach. Your child is absorbing a tremendous amount of learning and stimuli and beginning to gain the skills of observation and visual discrimination - which is the ability to see differences. The Montessori child is effortlessly gaining a lifetime skill – the ability to see. Yes, we are born with sight but sight is passive where all the images come to us. When we observe, we actively focus our sight. But even focusing our sight does not always let us see what is there. For example, we have all seen pictures that if you look at them long enough the image changes into something else – like the two faces and the goblet or the old woman and the young girl. Skills and even talents need to be trained and refined. A Montessori classroom provides an unending panorama of activities that train and refine the ability “to see”.

Though education is primarily reading and math based, life is about having a clear vision of what is present (and what could be). And though the introduction to geometry (rhombus), botany (reniform) and art (Rembrandt) is rudimentary, it is absolutely foundational to clear-eyed success. For your child everything is new and exciting. To be able to put a name with a form or a shape not only gives great

intellectual satisfaction but is the beginning of power to organize, define and categorize the world that is seen.

Enjoy the voyage of discovery as your child, with bright new eyes, sees the world for the first time. It is this power of visual discrimination that gives strength and focus to the power to read. It is also this power that breaks the world of math into distinguishable pieces with the ability to see patterns and processes.

Montessori truly gives your child the gift of sight!