



Montessori FAQs Unplugged:
Should You Montessori Homeschool?

By

Lisa Nolan

Monkey Star Press
www.MonkeyStarPress.com
Petaluma, California

Also by Lisa Nolan

Montessori Unplugged: FAQs About Infants and Toddlers
Montessori Unplugged: Homeschool FAQs for Three to Nine-Year-Olds
Affordable Montessori Activities You Can Make for Infants and Tots

Learn more about Lisa Nolan's books on [Author Central](#).

Montessori FAQs Unplugged: Should You Montessori? by Lisa Nolan

Copyright 2011 by Lisa Nolan
All rights reserved. Published 2011

Published by Monkey Star Press, POB 5343, Petaluma, California, 94955. First edition.
Electronic Edition Published 11/29/2011 by Monkey Star Press.

No part of this ebook may be reproduced or retransmitted in any form or by any means without permission of the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review or article.

Contents

About the Author

1. [Will it be hard to go from traditional schooling to Montessori-style homeschooling?](#)
2. [Question about homeschooling older children and an infant](#)
3. [Question about Montessori schools and special needs](#)
4. [Can you Montessori homeschool your older kids?](#)
5. [Should you try Montessori homeschool and regular preschool?](#)
6. [Whether or not to homeschool your children this year or place them in public school](#)
7. [Socialization question regarding gifted preschooler](#)
8. [Question about elementary Montessori homeschooling](#)
9. [What is the time commitment for making some of the materials?](#)
10. [What do you do if your children make no use of all the great Montessori materials](#)
11. [What is the criteria to be able to call a school "Montessori"?](#)
12. [Should we keep our kids in Montessori school?](#)
13. [Should children spend more time at home or at school?](#)
14. [Will child loose social skills if homeschooled?](#)
15. [Should you take Montessori training or not?](#)
16. [Can I homeschool using Montessori with little training?](#)
17. [Teaching Montessori at home during the summer .](#)
18. [Montessori support groups and using Montessori albums](#)
19. [Is it too late to start Montessori homeschool with a nine-year-old?](#)
20. [If you Montessori homeschool will Montessori elementary schools accept your homeschooling as a proper prerequisite?](#)
21. [Can Montessori elementary homeschooling be the best approach for an only child?](#)

Other Resources of Interest:

["Homeschool or School at Home?"](#): A post from the Montessori Ici blog

["The Schooling Dilemma"](#): A post from the Vibrant Wanderings blog

1. Will it be hard to go from traditional schooling to Montessori-style homeschooling?

Is it going to be hard to go from "traditional" schooling to Montessori-style homeschooling?

My honest answer is you won't know until you try it. Each child (and parent) is different. Because of this, try not to spend too much money up front! Be more careful about how many materials you buy until you know for sure.

Since we have never used Montessori before should we start with your first year elementary program (for 5 to 6-year-olds) for my school age children? Yes, I usually recommend starting with year one if your children have not been in Montessori before. Some homeschoolers who start Montessori elementary at home use other homeschool programs, too. So be open to what other homeschoolers are using at home, and you can always ask me what I think of a particular non-Montessori program.

I am very excited about Montessori-style schooling but a little worried about how hard the transition will be. I strongly suggest joining some of the [Montessori homeschool Yahoo groups](#) to ask other families how they did with the transition, you will get a lot of support!

2. Question about homeschooling older children and an infant

I've been homeschooling since my oldest (now 15) was in kindergarten. I now have eight children, ages 11 months to 15 years. I've always been attracted to the Montessori method and have read many of the books and attended presentations. I always way bogged down, however, by having to deal with all the age groups at once! LOL! How do you keep the baby from eating the beads?

Anyway, I do so want to give this another try, I just don't know which age to start with right now (I have every single possibility here, but of course I need to start SOMEWHERE).

What would you suggest? Right now my older kids are pretty independent, and it's the 3 and 4-yrs that have been most neglected and get into the most trouble (they are just bored while I tend to everyone else, bad momma!), so my inclination would be to start with them, but then how do I work with them and take care of the baby? Whenever you have a sibling under the age of two (in your case an 11 month old), you have to homeschool in an environment that is age appropriate for the infant, that leaves a lot of activities out! (Like the Montessori colored beads.) Or you have to have two separate environments with a gate in between, one for the infant(s) and one for the two to five or six year olds (your 3 and 4s)...

You need a gated off area for your infant in a homeschool room (a room that can be locked when you are not homeschooling). (Your infant should not be able to access the home-school room or school zone as it's called often times when you are not homeschooling.) So you have one room, part of which is gated off for your infant.

I also recommend, if your infant will be happy in one, a baby carrier. Although 11 months is getting close to walking so that might not work... They are great for really young infants when you homeschool older children.

So in terms of which Montessori homeschool programs, start with the youngest, (in your case the Infant Tot program for 0 to 24). Make the activities for the age of your infant (and whatever else you have at home for your infant) and put them in the gated off area. Work in that area for a few days or weeks with your older children in the other half of the room... Then start working on Montessori for your next age group (3 and 4)...

3. Question about Montessori schools and special needs

I have a 4 1/2 year old with special needs.... He attended a Montessori school from the age of 18 months to 3 years. At 2 he changed from full day to half day at the teacher's request. At age 3 he was kicked out of the school.

He has been in early childhood special ed for about a year and a half now, and is coming up to kindergarten next year [in 2011]...

I don't feel very comfortable with the idea of the public school system. I don't know how to come to the right solution for kindergarten. We've considered homeschooling, and other options. I am not sure what the right choice is. I agree that not all Montessori schools (teachers) are prepared to handle a special needs child. It is not the fault of the teacher(s). Unless the Montessori teacher has a background or some family experience with special needs, then chances are the special child will be too much of a challenge.

What I learned is that Montessori classrooms are like a mold for certain types of children (well behaved, independent, cream of the crop...) with few exceptions. Children who don't fit that mold are just that, they don't fit the mold. (Eventually, my special needs child didn't.)

I also learned that not all children do well in a Montessori environment, some children really do better in a traditional, play-based preschool with group activities and the like.

It could be that your special child would do better in a traditional classroom, even a public school Kindergarten (if your child is doing well in his special ed class, chances are he'll do well in a regular Kindergarten class).

You need to go and observe your local public school and get a feel for it, as part of your decision making process. And go and visit the special ed classrooms, too, for older kids.

I was really surprised at how much I liked our local public school and the Kindergarten classrooms! Me! The Montessori teacher! But I saw that it was a much better fit for my child, for what he needed, for what he liked: he needs and likes structure, group activities, and tables set up with various activities, etc.

I did observe a special ed classroom and felt it was too restrictive... and I observed a local Montessori 6-9 charter school and felt it was too "loose" for my son (he needs that structure!).

And did my heart get broken! Oh yes! Not only did I get a child with special needs, but a child who did not fit the Montessori mold! Even at home I see how he just doesn't fit into a Montessori environment! He is who he is! So went through the emotions, sadness, depression, anger, rage... and then I moved on.

I'm happy to say my son loves his school and his friends and his teacher and his aide! He was fine, it was me that had to get over it!

I have a neighbor who worked in a Montessori toddler class for over ten years. She had a son who is almost two. She was sure she would send him to Montessori! But after she observed all the local schools, she loved one school (a church-based school) and knew it was the right match for her son (a rough and tumble kind of kid as she put it). So, again, she based her decision on her observations and did what was best for her child.

She may choose Montessori in the future, but for now she is happy with her non-Montessori school.

As for homeschooling, that should be your plan B. I tell all parents that! Try your local school, first. It is better to pull your child out in the middle of the year (to homeschool) if things

are going badly, than it is to start your child in the middle of the year if homeschool is going badly! So... plan A is local public school, plan B is homeschool.

You can always try some homeschooling over the summer!

As for Montessori, guess who is helping her son learn to read and write using Montessori materials? (And math, too!). My son needs extra help, as is to be expected, so I am able to now use many of the Montessori materials at home to help my son!

So allow yourself to have all the emotions that you have, just don't base your decisions on them! Use your observations and follow your child down his own individual paths!

4. Can you Montessori homeschool your older kids?

I have been reading your website and it has given me some hope. I currently drive my four kids (aged 5, 6, 9 and 10) 160kms a day to a state school. I am very disappointed in the schools curriculum and attitude to education but thought there wasn't much I could do. How would I go with homeschooling after they have spent so much time in a mainstream school (older ones mainly)? Would four kids be too hard to manage? Hope you can shed some more light on this. First I'd like to suggest joining some of the Montessori homeschool Yahoo Groups, you will get a lot of support there!

Homeschooling works great for some families, not so great for others, and you won't know if it works for your family until you try it.

For that reason, and because of the cost, I suggest beginning your homeschooling in the summer. In the meantime, you can start making and buying materials and stay on a monthly budget! Don't over spend!

Starting in the summer gives you advantages, you'll have plenty of time to make and buy materials, some homeschoolers use both Montessori and non- Montessori materials, so be open to other homeschool programs.

Also, if homeschooling does not work out for your family over the summer, you can still keep them enrolled in school for the fall. And if you homeschool over the summer, you'll have less pressure because it is summer after all! You can do a lot of activities outside, and so forth.

5. Should you try Montessori homeschool and regular preschool?

My daughter is 3 years old. She went to one half year of preschool, and now we are in the summer break. I have her already enrolled for next year. I was thinking of trying the montessori homeschool program AND regular preschool (which is more traditionally based) which is only two days a week for 2 1/2 hours each day, to see which she prefers or which is helping her most, then when she is 5 and ready for kindergarten we can make a discussion together about which road to take.

I regret sending her to public school, but my hubby is against homeschooling. My daughter is so artistic and creative and that I know wont be fostered. I also hate fighting with my hubby about it. How do you rise past that and how do you put together your defense speech for why you have chosen it and how it can be just as beneficial but in a different way? I don't usually recommend Montessori at home when a child is at a non-Montessori school. It is too contradictory for the child. However...

You can offer some of the Montessori materials and activities, and be "loose" about the home environment, as a compromise. In other words, you will want to be consistent (at home) with the preschool, even though they are not Montessori. Every preschool is different, so I can't say much more about that.

You should also look into Waldorf activities, as well as any local Waldorf schools.

I'm assuming there are no Montessori schools around or they are too expensive?

As far as not wanting to put your child in public school, it is hard to argue against it when your child has not started it yet, so you may have to wait and see how it goes when your daughter starts Kindergarten.

I was surprised at how much I liked our local public school (my son started it in the fall)! But I kept an open mind the past two years (should I send my son to our local charter Montessori elementary school? should I keep him in the special needs program? or send him to public school?). It was a huge decision! I know it will be for you, too!

At least you know you have Montessori homeschool as a backup plan if your local public school does not work out for your daughter (this happens to many of my clients who come to me after the fact).

So if you want to try Montessori at home, be very loose about it since your child is (and has been in) a non-Montessori school.

6. Whether or not to homeschool your children this year or place them in public school

I am trying to decide whether or not to homeschool my kids this year. We recently moved and there is a possibility that we may not be in our new location for a full school year. I have considered homeschooling in the past and have still not yet made the leap to do it. My children [ages 9 and 6] have previously attended a public school. Is it possible to make a transition to homeschooling and to a montessori based method, given that their education in the past has been more conventional? This is what I usually suggest in a situation such as yours, have a Plan A and a Plan B.

I feel your Plan A should be your local public school, which starts next month for you! even though you might not be there the whole school year. If that plan fails, then try Montessori and homeschooling (a combination of traditional and Montessori activities since your children are older).

It is easier and better for children to start in the beginning of the school year when everyone else starts, than it is to start late in the school year.

For example, let's say you try to homeschool first and find in a few months it does not work out, you'd then have to put your children in school in the middle of the year--then maybe take them out when you move...Better to put them in school now, and pull them out if things don't work out in a few months or if you move.

7. Socialization question regarding gifted preschooler

I would consider it a blessing to homeschool Grace [age three and gifted] but I have this one question about socialization. Would sending her to a traditional preschool two and a half days a week be a problem [and homeschooling her the other days]. Can I still help Grace reach her highest potential at home? I do agree with you that socialization is important at the preschool age so children learn the basics of sharing, taking turns, sitting at circle, eating together at snack, learning how to make friends, etc.

I also agree that smart children need to be challenged in the classroom!

If you have plans to send her to public school Kindergarten in a few years, then the option of advancing her at home with Montessori homeschooling would compound your problem of having a very bright child who would get bored in public school (and who may not have had enough socialization at home--who could lack social skills).

If you plan on homeschooling her through her elementary years, then there is less concern of homeschooling her now. So ask yourself how long you'd plan on homeschooling her!

You can also go and visit the public school and take a tour, if you haven't already, to help you with your decision, and ask them how they handle very bright or gifted children: some public schools have special programs for gifted children that typically start in third grade.

It is true that homeschoolers face the issue of socialization, and if you have a very social child (like I do) then this gives you the answer to your question: keep her in preschool and then send her to public school. Having just said that, gifted children often lack social skills and need extra help making friends, etc., which they can get at school.

If you keep her in preschool, she will grow socially, but she won't grow so much academically--which is OK if she's going to a public school.

If she stays home and is homeschooled, you will need to sign her up for different group activities for her socialization (music, dance, soccer, swimming, etc.).

8. Question about elementary Montessori homeschooling

If I start a homeschool Montessori elementary program, how will my son ever benefit from the peer interaction he gains so much from at the Montessori school? Oh, the big decisions we make for our children's education! I can sympathize!

Here's what I usually tell moms who face the "whether to homeschool" question, try it and see if it works for you and your (older) child, and have a plan B in case it does not work out (in your case, plan B might be public school).

As for school socialization, you will lose that for your child, but you'll gain the continuation of Montessori (at home). And since that will be the case, you'll need to sign him up for extra curricular after school activities like soccer, music, etc. Some people who homeschool try to socialize with each other--so, depending on where you live, that may be a possibility.

Is it possible for me to work ~ 3/4 or maybe Part Time AND support Montessori homeschooling? Can you homeschool and work part time? You can't answer that question until you try! It may work out, but it may not. This is why you need a plan B--and if that is your local public school, make sure you take a tour of the school and get the enrollment paper work to have on hand to submit.

How much TIME would class time need to be? Typically elementary is two to three hours in the morning, with a group time and an outside time, then lunch, and more work after lunch... and they do one subject each day--it is not broken up like public school (math Monday, natural sciences Tuesday, etc.).

9. What is the time commitment for making some of the materials?

You mention the need for making some of my own materials and wonder what sort of time commitment is honestly involved with this. I know, from our [Montessori] co-op that the materials are very specific and are very expensive to buy. With all three at home with me in just a week, I need to be able to focus on them and not making materials. I'd love to hear your thoughts and am very impressed with what you've done. This is the one drawback for many homeschoolers: making and affording the Montessori elementary materials. Either you have to spend money on the materials or a lot of time and energy making them! Most homeschoolers try a little of both, they make some materials and buy some materials.

One area of affordable materials are the Montessori PDFs that you buy and print out--you don't have to make them, and they don't cost a fortune. Many eBay Montessori sellers have PDF materials...

Some homeschoolers doing 6-9 Montessori spend time over the summer making and buying their materials... but with three kids, you'd need some childcare or day camp or summer camp (which does not come cheap these days--especially for three!).

10. What do you do if your children make no use of all the great Montessori materials

I've been homeschooling for about 5 years now with more traditional methods, mainly Charlotte Mason... with four young children, would find it bliss to achieve the self-directed learning as described in Montessori Today.... If I change back to the Montessori approach, what [do I if my children] make no use of all the great [Montessori] materials...? I can envision myself running around the room, leaping from one child to the next in trying to get them involved in something, and running myself ragged instead of being simply an observer and a facilitator.

In a nutshell, the best advice I give parents with this (potential) issue is to start with a few activities in subjects that your children LOVE.

And you do the activities they do not like down the road (some older children, for example, hate writing so a parent would not start with any writing activities). A favorite subject is science for some kids so one area you might want to start with are the science experiments! Or let's say you are going to do counting activities, use objects for counting that your child cannot resist!

If your children are engaged in activities and subjects that they love, your goal to be "an observer and a facilitator" (a great description of a Montessori teacher by the way!) should come to fruition!

11. What is the criteria to be able to call a school "Montessori"?

There is a Montessori, or at least named Montessori, child care center here in my city and I was wondering what the criteria is to be able [to] label a school as Montessori. The people are nice enough, but I don't believe they are up to Montessori standards nor is the facility. Please let me know ASAP if you know of any guidance that can help me look into their operation a bit further. I have two year old son that I may just want to home school now if their facility is substandard. Unfortunately, anyone can open a school and call it Montessori!

Ask if the teachers are Montessori trained, where they got their training. Also ask if the school is accredited by the American Montessori Association.

Some Montessori schools have non-Montessori materials and or activities, especially in daycare (after regular school hours for kids who stay late) and that is OK and quite common. But you want a school with credited (trained) Montessori staff (usually the assistant teacher is not or is in the process of getting training).

Ask to have an observation to see if you think your child will be happy there, do the children play and work nicely together, and do they themselves look happy. And does the teacher look happy--or burnt out?

12. Should we keep our kids in Montessori school?

Hi there, I have 3 daughters ages 5, 3 and 5 months. My 5 year old is in her 3rd year at a Montessori school and the 3 year old has started her first year. I am planning to homeschool next year. I was wondering what your thoughts were on keeping her in the Lower Elementary program one day a week as a homeschooler which the school is open too. Yes, because she is older, she can handle the variation in that type of schedule. However, typically when children go to school part of the time, it affects their social life in that the children who are there every day make close friendships and bond with each other, so it may be difficult for your child to do this if she's only there one day a week. So have other opportunities for her to make and have friends!

Also, what about the 3 year old? Should I let her go through 1 or 2 more years of pre-school before she begins homeschooling? It is different for a 3 year old, they are very, very, very sensitive to changes! So make as few, if any, changes as possible! And it is hard, too, when they start making friends only to be taken out of the classroom the following year and to not have developed those much needed social skills! If you can keep her through the third year this is ideal as in the third year the five and six year olds get to be the leaders in the classroom and this is so beneficial both in their self esteem, confidence, academics, and of course social skills.

13. Should children spend more time at home or at school?

My thought has always been that young children should spend a great deal of time with their parents, but the children seem like they want to be there [at school]. What is your opinion? I feel (and from my 20 years of teaching) that what is excessive is a toddler or a three year old being in school from 8-6 PM each day, although many start out that way since infancy and grow accustomed to always being at school during the day, all day, but it is still hard. Many single mothers just don't have a choice, my mother was that way...

Going to school each day is best when it is the same time and there are no changes (you drop off your child at the same time each day and pick him up at the same time each day). It is when the routine changes that young ones have trouble because of their "sensitive period for order"!

And time spent with parents is best when the routine stays the same (boring for adults, I know). They like the same story being read, the same song being sung, their favorite dish, the same cartoon over and over... that is what is MOST important. Don't change that.

A typical routine for a young one can be 8:30 to 2:30 or 3:00 PM, five days a week. This is fine!

Children who come 2 or 3 days a week begin to miss out on social development and getting lessons from the teachers compared to kids who come five days a week. The same is true for kids who go half day and are approaching the age of 3... it is best for them to start coming full day, especially if they love school! But staying until 5 or 6 is hard.

14. Will my child lose social skills if homeschooled?

My daughter is a very social child and I worry that although she says she wants to homeschool... she'll lose a lot by being out of frequent interaction with her peers. This a valid concern, it is best to consult the homeschool message boards and talk with other parents who homeschool and who face this issue, as well as the homeschool associations both national and local (we have one for California). There are books, too, that talk about how to remedy this issue, but it can be remedied.

However, I like to point out that how many children (including ourselves!) learned social skills at school? Or got over shyness at school? Some children had few, if any, friends in school unless they themselves "fit the mold".

Other places to go and learn how to be social: the neighborhood park, pool, community center, family volunteer opportunities, neighbors, children's theater workshops or classes, etc.

So don't let the social issue stop you, just do your homework, and most likely you'll have to put more time into it than if she were at a regular school.

15. Should you take Montessori training or not?

I am a mother of a 3.5 year old daughter and I want desperately for her to learn through the teachings and philosophies of Marie Montessori. I would love to have her attend our local school but just cannot afford the tuition. I can, however, afford one of the distance learning courses that I have researched for teacher certification (not interested in teaching in a school though) and was willing to do so to teach my daughter until I found your site.

I am very interested in what you have to offer as an alternative to my original idea and I would appreciate your expert and honest opinion as to what I should do to afford my daughter the best education possible.

Should a mother who is willing to invest the time and money attend a distance learning course? Or would it be truly beneficial for us to utilize your experience and expertise in this field? I am not without an education as my background is in Child Psychology (B.A) and Librarian Science (Masters degree).

However, I feel that I do not have the knowledge and experience that a Montessori professional who has been in the field for years has obtained. No matter what "certifications" I earn I will never get the years of experience that you or anyone else who has been teaching this method has obtained in time to benefit my daughter. I am sorry to be so long-winded in my message but I truly want the best for our daughter and would value an expert opinion.

Should I save my money and use your program? Or should I take the time to educate myself to teach if I have no intentions of ever working in a traditional school? Thank you for your e-mail, know that a lot of moms are in your position, but cannot afford any Montessori training--If I were to get Montessori training today I don't know that I could afford it!

I have been doing this since 1998 and have helped a lot of families and educators worldwide--I don't do it for the money, it's not a lot anyway.... And I feel that in the ten plus years since I started, there are enough resources for Montessori homeschool on the Internet, including mine, to enable you to do it at home, without the training. And it's not the Montessori training, but the experience doing it (be it at home or in a class) that is valuable.

You could take a \$4000 training course, and still be at a loss when you are ready to apply it. And Montessori training is really only valuable in that you would be working in Montessori school with an experienced teacher!

And since that is not your intention, it is not of value--does that make sense?

And yes, my members are lucky in that they have someone (me) with 20 plus years of experience (and my director had 25 years of experience--that's 45 years total, and I'm not even including our co-teacher Lauren who taught at our school for over ten years!).

My advice is to first try it with the resources you have at hand, books you can read on Montessori, websites you can visit, Yahoo Groups you can join, the Montessori List Serv, there is SO MUCH out there, now! And if you so choose, my site as well.

I think of what mechanic guy friends tell you when you have trouble with your car, start with the least expensive solution and work up from there! Not at the other end! If this were 1998, when I first started, I would have said, take the training! Back then, there were very few Montessori homeschool resources, let alone, affordable materials; now, even that has changed!

Hope this helps in your decision--it is the experience of doing it (even if it is at home with your child) that is valuable--no training can change that!

16. Can I homeschool using Montessori with little training?

Can a homeschool mother with little training like me expect get from point zero to the Montessori method in a reasonable amount of time? You are going in the right direction, just thinking about it and looking at all your options is a plus and you should stop and pat yourself in the back! You are not losing time! What you want to do at the preschool and Kindergarten age is indirect preparation, through hands-on experiences.

If you can afford Montessori preschool for the next two years, that is good choice, and volunteering will also give your more understanding and experience!

In the mean time, the most important thing to do, and it will only take you a few days, is change your home environment. In Montessori, be it a classroom or home, the environment comes first. Then, and only then, after it is rearranged in "Montessori fashion" you can add some Montessori lessons/materials for home schooling or after schooling, including your outside environment.

17. Teaching Montessori at home during the summer

I had a question about teaching Montessori lessons at home during the summer. My 5 year old son goes to a traditional Montessori school during the school year, but there is no summer program offered. I have heard from some parents that I should not do Montessori lessons in the summer as it will interfere with schooling when he starts again in fall. I am not sure I feel this is true, as he is already asking when can I go back to school. What is your opinion? Not having school during the summer is hard on younger children! They like the routine and consistency.

As far as doing Montessori at home, I would contact the teachers and ask them what you can do with him at home, it does not have to be the Montessori materials. If he is reading, than reading a book each day is great, but it has to be a book that he can read successfully (an easy one). If he is writing, perhaps he could learn to keep a simple journal.

Art projects are great for fine motor... maybe buy some new floor puzzles in subjects he loves...

I think if you want to have some of the Montessori materials for him to use over the summer, you want to work closely with his teacher... and she or he might not agree to that. Our school was open during the summer so it was not an issue. And if a parent came to us and said, what can I do with my child over vacation, our director would offer up suggestions.

One area you might want to explore over the summer is science and do the Montessori science experiments. I doubt it would interfere with his classroom instruction in the fall. Other areas are botany and zoology: plant seeds, get an ant farm... fun, concrete activities that enhance his learning.

I'd shy away from the Montessori language and math... leave that up to the teacher(s), unless they give you specifics. You can also ask them if he can have a workbook over the summer and which one(s) they recommend. We used Primary Phonics workbooks. You can also think about having an outdoor learning environment, and buy *The Outdoor Classroom: A "prepared environment"* for the outdoor area of your school by Mary Boden.

18. Montessori support groups, using Montessori albums

You have used your Montessori albums in your teaching, is that generally what a Montessori teacher does, develop their own albums and then teach from them? Yes, while at the same time, observing the child, and learning from those observations!

I just don't know exactly how I would space all the information out, I dont have a lot of montessori basics here. So I need like montessori for dummies type of information. And how that information would cover a whole month (at least the first months), and how I would set up the environment, and how I would go about explaining the whole choice thing to her. What materials are absolutely necessary, etc. It can be very overwhelming at the 6 to 9 stage of Montessori homeschooling, especially if you have not done 3 to 6 Montessori homeschooling. Sometimes you just have to jump in and learn as you go, which is the case for new Montessori trained teachers. I like your idea of a Montessori for Dummies! I wish I could write it! But at some point, one has to put the books and reading away, shut off the computer, and get started. It is scary! You are not alone! Join some of the Montessori Yahoo groups as I think you need an online support group! Many homeschoolers join them!

19. Is it too late to start Montessori homeschool with a nine-year-old?

I gladly stumbled upon your site and am strongly considering homeschooling next year. I have been reading a lot on the internet about Montessori and am quite intrigued. I am pretty convinced that my 5 year old would thrive in this environment. She is slated to start kinder in the fall. Her brother is currently in 3rd grade and we have had him in a "homeschooling school" for 2 years and 2 years at public. Not fully happy with either and now I think I know why... traditional philosophies?

I hold a secondary teaching degree in social science and I am trying to wrap my head around how to teach a lot of "foundation" stuff using the Montessori approach. I really want my kids to think outside of the box and follow their passions. Is this methodology the way I need to explore? Is creativity innate or is it fostered? Is it too late to start with my 9 old? I know the feeling! I think about the best educational choices for my son due to his Down syndrome, all the time!

I think you can begin Montessori homeschooling at any age, and the 6-9 curriculum offers a lot of choices for math, language, science, and so forth, that are superior to traditional approaches. The "foundation" will be different since you are started a little (or a lot late), and this is not uncommon. I always tell homeschoolers getting a late start (using Montessori) not to dwell on it! You want your children to love learning, that should always be your bottom line!

I really want my kids to think outside of the box and follow their passions. I believe Montessori is based in this premise!

Is this methodology the way I need to explore? Yes, and others, too.

Is creativity innate or is it fostered? It is both! What many homeschoolers do is use Montessori along with OTHER homeschool curriculum... and you may want to consider this for your nine-year-old. Many homeschoolers are attracted to Montessori 6-9 but are Creationist, so will only use Montessori math and language; or they are OK with the Montessori sciences but cannot afford the math materials or find them too much for them so they will use another home-school math program...

So I guess I'm saying it doesn't have to be all or nothing; and you can be open to whatever you find "out there" for your children, including Montessori.

20. If you Montessori homeschool will Montessori elementary schools accept your homeschooling as a proper prerequisite?

I run an in home family daycare in Canada. I am planning on homeschooling my two daughters, as well as offering Montessori preschool to the children I care for.

I have a question that I don't know if you would have the answer for or not...if I homeschool my children, and the other children, and then when they start Elementary, and they wish to go to a Montessori school, will the school accept my homeschooling as a proper prerequisite? Some elementary Montessori schools are flexible about their enrollment because they sometimes have children who leave mid year or do not continue on to the next year and they need to keep their classes full.

It will also depend on your child and how well they do during the interview (typically you visit the class with your child and he or she interacts with the teacher and the materials). That will be most important. Second, can the child read phonetically? Knows their numbers? And so forth.

A child who went to a Montessori preschool (and this is more common than you'd think) may not be able to read at all because of their previous teacher. Or the child may not show independence during the visit (stays shyly be the mother). So if your child shows confidence, can read phonetically, and acts independent but also follows directions, then I'd say you have a very good chance (and if they have an opening).

When you contact the school for a visit, don't emphasize homeschool as much as you do the fact that your child knows their numbers, can read, is independent and WELL SOCIALIZED (gets along with others, makes friends, takes turns, etc.). You can teach your child to be social when you go to the park by watching them and interacting with them and SHOWING them how to take turns, how to ask for a turn, how to wait for a turn, say please and thank you, etc.

And you will want your child to have group skills (they can interact in a group situation like an art project--taking turns with the glue, waiting for their turn with the markers, or story time--sit and listen, raise your hand, etc.). Libraries are a great opportunity for group skills when they have story time for kids! And art projects at fairs, parades, community events, etc.

Where ever you go you are teaching your child!

21. Can Montessori elementary homeschooling be the best approach for an only child?

I'm at a crossroads with Montessori education for my son. I've been homeschooling my son with a Montessori approach since he was 2 years old (self taught mom via you and others on the web) and we've been loving every minute of it. He's five years old now. I've been searching for a long time for others in my area who homeschool Montessori as well because I know that elementary moves into more collaborative work, but to no avail.

My son is an only child and I worry that our homeschool environment will quickly change from an advantage to a disadvantage if I can't find others to share it so I've been looking at Montessori elementary schools in our area. I have found a wonderful school but it's \$14,000.00 a year--yikes! We can do it if I go back to work (if I can find something to accommodate picking him up from school, early release days, etc.). A decision will need to be made in April for the next school year and I'm really torn.

We have a wonderful little life at home together, but I don't want it to turn into a disservice for him. He's desperate to be around other kids.

Can elementary homeschooling really be a Montessori approach for an only child? I'm so torn. Yes, it is a big decision! Personally, I could not homeschool my son (not just because he has Down syndrome and needs a lot of speech, etc.) because he is a very social child and needs to be around other children... however Montessori preschool did not work out for him, so he now goes to a wonderful neighborhood public school (one of the hardest decisions I made was taking him out of Montessori at age 4 1/2)... so I sympathize with you!

I always tell parents to have a Plan A and a Plan B! Try one plan to see how it goes. The best Plan A is your local school (be it public school, or private Montessori). It is better to start your child in his local school in the fall, and if it doesn't work out (including financially) you can pull him out and homeschool him as your Plan B.

It is much harder to try and enroll your child in the middle of the year at any school!

So let's say you were homeschooling into the fall (and winter) of 2011, and you found it was not working out (maybe the issue is social and no peer groups, etc.) you'd then have to try and enroll him at a local school in the spring 2012! It would be much harder for him (and maybe there is no spot open at the local Montessori school).

Have you visited your local public school? It wouldn't hurt to visit, even if it makes you more sure of doing Montessori.

When I visited our local public school in 2009 and 2010, I was pleasantly surprised (I also visited our local Montessori charter school and a special ed class). It wasn't until I went to all three schools that I was sure which was the best choice.

It's true that homeschooling one child leaves issues with peer groups and social interactions, but if your child is not very social, it is less of an issue, however you can still try out local venues like gymnastics, soccer, karate... and so forth.

I also recommend joining some of the Montessori and homeschool Yahoo groups and ask other families how they handle this issue!



About the Author

Lisa Nolan is also an author, a stay-at-home and work-at-home mom, a webmaster, and a blogger. She is also a trained and certified Montessori teacher. She has taught Montessori in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1986. You can visit her blog at [Confessions of a Montessori mom](#).

She took her Montessori primary training in 1986 at The Maria Montessori School of the Golden Gate in San Francisco with the late headmistress, Ursula Thrush. She then took her Montessori lower elementary training 1988 at The Maria Montessori School of the Golden Gate in San Francisco through the University Extension, University of California Berkeley. She received an MA from San Francisco State University.

After her son was born with Down syndrome in 2004, Lisa Nolan has used Montessori concepts and principles for his education since his birth.

She has been involved and committed to the field of early childhood education since 1982 when, as a college student, she interned at a local Head Start preschool. This experience gave her more joy than any job she ever had (at the ripe age of 20).

A few years later, remembering that experience, she began working as a teacher's assistant at a local preschool. One year later she was hired as an assistant in the toddler classroom at a Montessori school. She took her Montessori primary training at the same time (and later her lower elementary Montessori training).

In 1993, while in graduate school, she founded and directed a children's theater program at the Marsh, a local theater in San Francisco, developing matinees and classes for young children.

In 1998, she took her teaching experience and Montessori training to the Internet and created a website, [Montessori for the Earth](#), that offered Montessori resources, links, forums, and distance learning to parents, teachers, and homeschoolers. During the years that followed, she left the field of early childhood education several times, only to return again because no other field gives her such joy and satisfaction.

You can reach Lisa Nolan through her website: [LisaNolan.com](#).