

Family Connection

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“The strength of even the smallest children is more than we imagine,
but it must have a free play in order to reveal itself.”

—Maria Montessori, *Discovery of the Child*, page 68



Understanding the Montessori Principle of “Follow the Child”

By Heather White

At the heart of Montessori is the idea of following the child—a simple yet powerful invitation to trust in your child’s natural curiosity, creativity, and drive to grow. At home, parents can embrace this same spirit by observing with wonder, encouraging independence, and celebrating small discoveries as big steps forward. Let’s learn more about “Following the child” and create a circle of support where children feel seen, respected, and empowered to flourish in every aspect of their lives.

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Clarifying “Follow the Child”

Many parents may hesitate at the idea of teachers following the interests of the child during their school day. They might feel that their child needs encouragement—perhaps even a gentle push—to explore new ideas and develop skills. The concern is understandable; after all, parents often want teachers to guide their children through their learning journeys. However, this perspective can overlook the nuanced practice of “following the child” in Montessori education.



When Montessori educators say they “follow the child,” it is crucial to understand what this entails. It does not mean simply watching children make their own decisions without guidance. Instead, it is about deeply knowing each child and using that knowledge to support their social, emotional, and academic development.

We follow the child when we take the time to observe them closely. Each day, each week, and each month, educators sit quietly and watch how children engage with their environment and materials. Through these observations, teachers can discern each child's natural tendencies, interests, and areas of challenge.

This ongoing process informs their practice. We follow the child by taking the information from our observations and using it to adjust our approaches. It is about meeting children where they are and supporting them through the next steps in their learning.



We follow the child when we actively listen to them and guide them in the right direction—whether that involves introducing them to new materials or offering the encouragement they need to step out of their comfort zones. Following the child does not equate to letting them make all their own choices or dictate the structure of their day. Rather, it involves a thoughtful partnership between teacher and student, grounded in mutual respect and understanding.

Honoring a Holistic Approach to Education

The Montessori principle of “follow the child” encapsulates a holistic approach to education that honors each child's individuality. By observing, listening, and providing thoughtful guidance, educators empower children to explore their interests while fostering independence and confidence. Understanding this nuanced practice is crucial for parents and educators alike, as it ultimately enhances the learning experience and nurtures a lifelong love of learning in children.



Nurturing Independence and Confidence: Six Ways to Show Respect to Your Child

BY HEATHER WHITE

Respect is a cornerstone of Montessori philosophy, fostering a nurturing environment where children can thrive. As parents, demonstrating respect towards your child cultivates their self-esteem, independence, and love for learning. Here are some effective ways to show respect in your daily interactions:

1 | Listen Actively

Give your child your full attention when they speak. This not only validates their feelings but also encourages open communication. Get down on their level, using eye contact and nodding to show you are engaged in the conversation.

2 | Acknowledge Their Emotions

Recognize and validate your child's feelings, whether they are happy, sad, or frustrated. Use phrases like "I can see that you are upset," to help them articulate their emotions.

3 | Offering Limited Choices

Empower your child by allowing them to make age-appropriate choices. Whether it's selecting their clothes or choosing a snack, selecting from two or three options at a time fosters a sense of autonomy and respect for their preferences.

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4 | Model Respectful Language

Use polite language and a calm tone, even during disagreements. Children learn from observing how you communicate and resolve conflicts.

5 | Encourage Problem-Solving

When conflicts arise, encourage your child to brainstorm solutions. This approach not only respects their ability to think critically but also helps them develop important problem-solving skills.

6 | Involve Them Meaningfully in Household Tasks

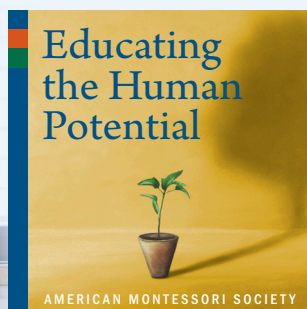
Engage your child in meaningful tasks around the home, such as washing clothes, doing dishes, grocery shopping, or making meals. This not only teaches them valuable life skills but also shows that their contributions are important and respected within the family.

By practicing these respectful behaviors, you create a positive atmosphere where your child feels valued and confident, laying the groundwork for lifelong learning and healthy relationships.



Parenting Inspiration, Rooted in Montessori

Real Conversations to Inspire Lifelong Learning



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Through personal stories and expert insights, each episode offers thoughtful perspectives on parenting, learning, and the lasting impact of Montessori.

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Tune in for expert guidance, real-world experiences, and fresh ideas to support your Montessori parenting journey.

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