

# WCSD Featured Story



*News Stories from Across Williamsburg County School District  
Provided by the Williamsburg County School District Office of Public Relations*

## ***Interview of Dr. Floyd Creech Montessori Consultant***



### ***Q: What is Montessori learning all about?***

A: The Montessori method places emphasis on the child following their interests in a classroom, that is specially prepared by a trained teacher. There is an emphasis on hands-on learning and real-life skills.

The teacher is very supportive of the child as they learn and seek to help the child learn to be an independent learner. Maria Montessori, an Italian doctor, opened the first Montessori school in Italy in 1907. Since that time, it has spread all over the world. South Carolina has more public Montessori schools than any state in the US.

### ***Q: What are the benefits of a student being in Montessori?***

A: There are four benefits for a student in a Montessori classroom. The first benefit is becoming an independent learner. Instead of waiting for other students in the class to catch up, children can move to lessons that are interesting and beneficial to them. The second benefit is concentration. Children are encouraged to choose and stick with a lesson until it is completed.

Teachers and assistant teachers maintain a learning environment that protects the child from interruptions as they focus on their learning. The third benefit is order. The children are taught to keep the classroom materials in order. If a child drops a lesson on the floor, they are not reprimanded by the teacher but taught how to help clean it up and put it into order. The same order is taught at mealtime when the child is allowed to take care of their personal needs. The final benefit is coordination.

The classroom is full of manipulative materials and active learning lessons. Children are encouraged to direct and coordinate their lessons and to move gracefully and carefully throughout the environment. When active with a lesson, they are taught to carefully handle materials and to move with precision. Montessori taught that when children can use their hands skillfully, they will become precise learners.

### ***Q: What are the myths surrounding Montessori?***

A: Two major misunderstandings surround the Montessori method of teaching and learning. The first is that because children of 2 or 3-grade levels are in a classroom, a teacher cannot meet all of the children's needs.

The second is that children are not capable of arranging their learning independently.

Myth 1: Children of different ages in a classroom create a broader learning environment. Instead of just lessons for one grade, the teacher has lessons for three grades.

Children that are ahead of themselves are not held back. Children who are behind, have additional opportunities to learn what they have missed or do not understand. Teachers are specifically trained to teach lessons that meet the needs of all children individually and in small groups. Children generally are working at a higher level compared to what they would normally be working in school because the lessons are available to them.

Myth 2: Children are very independent when allowed to do their work. The specially prepared environment allows children to be able to see and choose their work and to be able to do it and put it back when finished. The teacher and assistant teacher are available and free to help them when they are off track with their learning and help them to be

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successful. Children generally complete more lessons in a Montessori classroom than they would in another classroom.

**Q: What can parents expect to see when they observe a Montessori classroom?**

A: When visiting a Montessori classroom, parents should expect to see their children working independently on an activity or receiving help from the teacher or assistant teacher. Lessons are generally taught to small groups of children or to individuals. Children also participate in group activities at circle time. The teacher and assistant teacher will be using quiet voices and speaking very respectfully to the children.

Children who work independently are referred to as “normalized”. That means the child is capable to choosing work, concentrating on the work, and being a good social role model in the classroom. Generally, Montessori classrooms are quieter than other classrooms. You will notice an overall quietness and order to the school as a whole. Many times, children are seen working by themselves on floor mats or tables. The classroom should be very organized with materials for language, mathematics, art, science and geography on the shelves throughout the class. Parents may also notice that children are learning to clean up after themselves after they finish working or when they make messes.

**Q: What have you noticed about schools that have used Montessori and standardized test scores?**

Like any education method, standardized test scores are best when a school is led by competent leaders and teachers. In my recent experience, I have found that children attending Montessori schools generally have higher standardized test scores than other students in school. I believe that 4 things contribute to this fact.

First, parents are generally interested in their child’s education and when children are attending a special program like Montessori, the parents are more interested and motivate their children to do well at school. Second, teachers in Montessori schools receive a lot of additional specialized training and support. Teachers generally have about 600 hours of additional training and support in the Montessori method.

Therefore, teachers are better prepared to lead their classrooms. Third, children are happier when they can participate in their learning in a real way, based on their interests. Naturally, a child more interested in their learning is going to perform better on assessments and tests.

Finally, school leaders arrange the school so that learning can take place easily using the Montessori staff. A committed leadership leads to a better school environment.

**Q: How do students respond to Montessori learning vs traditional learning?**

A: Children generally respond very positively to a Montessori classroom environment. Children like adults are very different from each other, so children may respond in different ways which are particular to them. Some children learn the “rules” of the Montessori class very quickly. Others may take more time to learn the basics of independent work. Overall, if the teacher and assistant teacher maintain respect and guidance to the child, they learn.

A popular list found on the internet of the differences between Montessori and traditional is found at [silverliningmontessori.com](http://silverliningmontessori.com) or [ageofmontessori.org](http://ageofmontessori.org). The list is generally as follows:

<u>Montessori</u>	<u>Traditional</u>
• The prepared environment for many ages	• Classroom with materials for one age
• Moving around to learn	• Sitting at a desk
• Time to complete lessons	• Limited time for lessons
• Teacher is a guide to help you become independent	• Teacher is to giver of lessons
• Several grade levels together	• One grade level
• Lessons to adapt to the child’s learning speed	• Lessons that are set at one pace
• Self-esteem based on accomplishments	• Self-esteem based on how well you learn compared to others
• Learning is fun, mistakes are a way to learn	• Mistakes are not good
• Teachers are respectful of every person	• Teachers maintain group order