

# Five Arguments in Favor of the Montessori Early Childhood Capstone Year

*(Keeping in mind that every child is an individual and thus there are no guaranteed outcomes, here are 5 reasons for your child remaining in Montessori through the capstone year.)*

1. Your child is not yet finished with his Montessori early childhood experience. Various threads of his academic development coalesce in the third year. Your child will engage more expansively with the academic subjects, enlarging his knowledge of both math and language as well as delving more systematically into the cultural and science areas. These works were likely already introduced to him and he engaged with them in ways that were developmentally appropriate for a 3 and 4 year old; and now in his final year, he comes to a more comprehensive understanding of their underlying purpose.

He consolidates that which he has learned thus far, taking it to often surprising levels of abstract comprehension, and as a result can now generalize learning. His confident intrinsic motivation for all future endeavors roots deeply in this capstone year.

*Your child will bring resilience and these problem solving skills to elementary school.*

2. When will your child ever again have the same teacher for three years? She understands the uniqueness of your child, through observation and engagement over time. Your child comes to trust his teacher because he knows her too. Together, they build a cooperative relationship in which the teacher guides your child each step of the way. The Montessori teacher is trained in child development. The miniscule advances in physical, social, emotional and academic growth are responded to with both respect for your child as an individual and the appropriate next lesson. No rushing to cover all the material in one year. Instead, your child's Montessori teacher takes the time to know when to expect more of your child, holding him ever more accountable for his work and his actions as is gradually appropriate. And your child, who trusts and loves his teacher, often exceeds expectations and indeed may exhibit unbridled curiosity and self-efficacy.

3. Your child's socialization takes on a more collaborative bent in the third year. As your child turns 5 and 6 years old, he and his age peers want to work together. They come up with new ideas, solve problems and thus often create amazing testaments to their cooperative ingenuity. This happens for three reasons; they are at the maturity level now to do so, they are familiar with the materials and know how to use them in creative ways, plus they know each other over this longer time. This collaborative work offers numerous opportunities for your child to hone his social skills in working with peers and others. Elementary school will present him with choices such as collaborate vs. collide, bully vs. empathy, in-group vs. out-group, peaceful conflict resolution vs. something else. He'll bring resilience and problem solving skills with him to elementary school.

*His confident intrinsic motivation for all future endeavors roots deeply in this capstone year.*

4. Leadership and benevolence are hallmarks of that third year. From the very first day your child entered her Montessori classroom, she watched the older children with awe. And now that she is one of them herself, she knows what it means to be the experienced one. Leadership comes naturally during this year. Your child may take on roles such as dispute mediator, problem solver, and most significantly, model for the younger children, showing by her actions, "This is how we do it here in this classroom." Your child naturally lends a hand to the younger children, watching out for them, often giving them lessons on the materials and generally manifesting kindness and social grace. Not only does that engender feelings of connection for the young children, it feels pretty good for your child too. How many years down the road in your child's educational journey will it be before she is again the oldest one? A long time for sure. This experience of being the elder, the leader, is one she will not forget. And the confidence she gains in this capstone year may help her navigate the challenges of being the youngest come next year.

*Your child trusts you that she will be here till she matriculates to first grade.*

5. Whether it was explicitly stated or tacitly understood, you made a promise to your child that she would experience the full cycle of her Montessori early childhood years. You promised her time to glean as much as possible from those materials at her own pace, plus time to evolve her sense of self culminating in the consolidation year. Your child trusts you that she will be here till she matriculates to first grade. Even if she can't express it, what do you think your child will feel if you pull her out before she has that complete experience, with its natural and often ritual closure? When you were a freshman in high school, did you not look upon those seniors with awe, knowing one day you'd be one of them? What if your parents had pulled you out in your junior year, what feelings of loss and incompleteness would you have felt?

*When will your child ever again have the same teacher for three years?*

*You chose well when you chose Montessori. Provide your child the gift of time, consolidation and completion by continuing through the capstone year.*

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