



Testimonial

Tracking Progress & Transferring to a Non-Montessori Setting

We asked longtime Montessori parent Linda Hauke to call upon her own experiences to answer the following questions:

- *How does the school insure that the children are being exposed to everything they would receive in a public school system?
- *How can parents keep apprised of their child's progress?
- *How difficult is it for the Montessori elementary child to transfer to a non-Montessori school setting?

What follows is Linda's personal response to those survey questions. We thank Linda for sharing her own experiences with us. We can all benefit from her knowledge and perspective.

One of the biggest concerns in choosing to continue Montessori education into the elementary years is how to keep aware of the progress your own child is making. There are new materials and new concerns for the elementary child, but for the parent, the ease of contacting a teacher at any time remains the same. No other educational system offers more accessibility to the people who instruct the child. Parent-Child Nights let the child show what matters to them, and the "Work Completed" folder lets you review, with the child, the many areas of study. And of course, conferences are scheduled whenever desired. Keeping track of progress at the end of the year is made easier by the use of achievement tests, used by most other schools as well, to track the overall growth of each child. These tests also make sure each of the areas taught in public, local schools, is sufficiently covered. The state board of education makes standard criteria for all school in teaching students. Elementary level teachers at New World Montessori School use these standards to ensure that same information is covered. New World also exceeds these minimum levels every year, and encourages parent and child to pursue individual interests.

Unfortunately, in the United States, the Montessori years come to an end all too soon. At the least, every parent wonders about when to make a change, and then how hard it will be. Timing is everything. No one answer works for everyone, but, in general, older children transition easier than younger children. We are fortunate that New World offers an opportunity for children to stay to age 12.

I'm doing this for the fourth time, and it isn't any easier for me, but exactly as the three older children did, this one sees adventure ahead. It's the parents who don't change easily. We only have traditional education to remember.

Montessori children have social skills – meeting new people, experiencing new situations, and helping others – that make the change go more smoothly the older they are. I know because my kids have left Montessori at various ages.

At junior high, everyone changes schools, except for those few K-8 systems still out there. New friends and new expectations are the norm. School work is geared to interaction and Montessori kids definitely know how to interact. A transition at third or fourth grade is a little tricky, depending on the school. If the teachers are open, the change is getting accustomed to doing the same work at the same time, and to less independence. Transition at first grade is the acid test. Some kids like the slower pace and repetitive work of traditional schools, but most are ahead of their classmates, and boredom can be a problem.

It comes as a rude awakening to parents that teachers don't really see each child as an individual and are overwhelmed with paperwork the school district finds crucial.

Children with supportive parents, who know that the challenges of life are varied and endless, do fine, whenever the transition occurs. The first month or two, no matter how old the child, no matter the setting, requires an understanding that all changes are challenges of one kind or another.

I worry more about the parents. We are lucky to find other Montessori alum in the crowd. The teachers don't seem to appreciate the unique, talented individuals we bring them. Those friends Mom and Dad made at parent night are scattered to other schools. There is no Mother's Tea or Dad's Breakfast!

So, if you see me wandering around New World, even though my child felt ready for the next adventure, you'll understand, after 26 years, it's a hard thing to give up the best place I found to learn to parent and become educated.