

# The Patriot Ledger

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## MONTESSORI STUDENTS STILL GO THEIR OWN WAY –

### 100 years old, nontraditional system has 8 schools in area

By KRISTEN WALSH  
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In Montessori classrooms, learning happens a little differently. Students work on subjects of their choice with many materials that have been around for decades - 10 decades to be exact.

This year is the 100th anniversary of Montessori education, and many schools on the South Shore are celebrating the beginning of the educational philosophy created by Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator.

Montessori believed that children can teach themselves most concepts better than a teacher can.

“Children have an intrinsic desire to work when they’re not striving to achieve a grade, but knowledge,” said Mardie Hinkley, a teacher and parent at the Montessori School of Quincy.

That desire is promoted through a nontraditional style of teaching. Students are encouraged to use all five senses to discover new things. A school’s curriculum does not generally include testing or traditional grades.

Foreign culture, the environment and the idea of becoming a good citizen of the world are all emphasized through creative lesson plans and curriculums.

Arts play a large role in Montessori education.

Bay Farm Academy in Duxbury will put on 32 plays this year.

This past year, students at the Inly Montessori Community School in Scituate participated in a program called “All Roads Lead to Rome,” which allowed them to express themselves artistically in whichever way they chose.

“The whole approach is freedom with structure, and with freedom comes responsibility,” said Liz Knox, a parent and director of communications at the Inly School. “It’s teaching kids to make smart and responsible decisions within their work instead of you telling them what to do.”

Kevin Clark took over as head of school at Bay Farm Academy in June. His two young children will enter the school in the fall.

Clark said he enjoys the reaction parents have when they see for the first time how a classroom works.

“They wish they were educated that way,” he said. “They take a leap of faith into the program for their children.”

A 2006 study by a professor of psychology at the University of Virginia showed that, academically,



**Eliza Austin, 5, of Duxbury with her project on pulleys at the Bay Farm Academy, a Montessori school in Duxbury. (GARY HIGGINS/The Patriot Ledger)**

Montessori students end up in the same place or farther along than non-Montessori children, and that they function better in a community atmosphere.

“Maria Montessori was a brilliant observer of children,” said Angeline Lillard, author of the study, which was published in the journal *Science*. “She noticed what they did, what they reacted to, and made sweeping changes based on small events in the classroom.”

There are about 4,000 Montessori schools in the United States and about 7,000 worldwide. The South Shore has eight, in Duxbury, Hingham, Quincy, Plymouth and Scituate.

All implement the Montessori philosophy in different ways and to varying degrees. Most begin enrolling students as young as 1 year old and continue through the sixth or eighth grade.

“There seems to be a misconception that it’s elitist or exclusionary,” said Hinkley, the teacher at the Montessori School of Quincy. “It’s fallen into our society as a private alternative, but it’s spreading in some areas to public education as well.”

Sandy Kozlowsky, the director of admissions and a former teacher at Bay Farm, says her 7-year-old daughter is in the perfect educational environment.

“Not only is my child receiving a strong education but she is receiving exceptional character development,” she said.

Kozlowsky said independence is one of the main benefits of a Montessori education.

“They (students) are free to make choices, but we’re here to prepare them,” she said. “They have a sense of calm, and they are purposeful. The kids here are happy.”

### **Method’s history**

- Maria Montessori is first female MD in Italy
- Students work in mixed-age classrooms
- Students are motivated to teach themselves
- Classroom materials allow students to use all their senses in exploring a topic

### **Montessori alumni include:**

- Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis
- Sean “P. Diddy” Combs
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nobel winner, literature
- Prince William and Prince Harry
- Anne Frank, author of *The Diary of Anne Frank*

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