

INSIDE MONTESSORI

Discussion guide for college students

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Chapter 1: The Purpose of Education

1. Why, according to some Montessori educators, is education in crisis?
2. What are some of the conflicting ideas of what education is for? What is the alternative vision presented by Montessori educators and advocates?
3. What do you think it might mean that Montessori offers a “complete developmental package,” according to neuroscientist Steve Hughes? How is this different than what traditional schools might offer?

Chapter 2: Maria Montessori

1. What are some of the values that Montessori educators highlight about the method?
2. What was context of the original Casa dei Bambini, and what were some of the surprising things Maria Montessori and others discovered in this school?
3. How does Montessori education vary around the world? How is it similar? What is the global reach of Montessori education?
4. Consider: Education curricula is generally very country specific. Why do you think this method has had such a global influence?

Chapter 3: Lumin Education, Dallas, Texas

1. How does early childhood policy compare with the realities of children’s brain development?
2. How does Lumin start earlier with children? What has been the impact in the East Dallas neighborhood?
3. What kinds of activities are the children in Lumin’s program involved with? Why do you think these activities are impactful?
4. According to Lumin educator Charo Alarcon, what are the four core Montessori elements? Why are they important to the development of the child?
5. Consider: What might be involved with expanding Lumin’s 0-3 childhood model more broadly?

Chapter 4: Montessori Partners Serving All Children, St. Paul, Minnesota

1. What is the model of Montessori partners, and how do they partner with communities in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area?
2. What were obstacles for community members participating in training? How did Montessori Partners develop a solution? What might this suggest about solutions to diversify the teacher pipeline, for Montessori and all schools?
3. Consider: How is the Montessori model adaptable to community-specific programs focused on a particular ethnic/immigrant sub-group?

Chapter 5: City Garden Montessori School, St. Louis, Missouri

1. How is City Garden as an institution working to advance anti-bias anti-racist (ABAR) education?
2. How is ABAR combined with Montessori education? How is this different from the approaches you have seen in some of the earlier segments?
3. Consider: Read this [article about City Garden Montessori](#) in the *Christian Science Monitor*. What are some of the opportunities and challenges of being a public school supporting children in a particular zip code?

Chapter 6: Lake Country, Minneapolis, Minnesota

1. How does having two campuses at Lake Country Montessori facilitate qualities/needs unique to adolescents?
2. How does Lake Country's farm campus support students, and what are the benefits of combination of manual and intellectual education?
3. What do students learn from the experiential component, like the bicycle and camping trip?
4. Consider: Could/how might this adolescent model be adapted to a public school context?

Chapter 7: Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1. How is Montessori adapted to Macdowell Montessori's high school program?
2. How are some of the elements of the farm-based model adapted to a city context?
3. What has been the impact of Montessori across the Milwaukee school district?
4. What kinds of district and state policy supports are needed to support Montessori in a large district?

Chapter 8: Education has a Future

1. Consider: What did you know about Montessori before watching Inside Montessori? How does this documentary add to/change your perspective? What questions do you have?
2. The Montessori private school sector is 4 to 5 times larger than the public sector. Why do you think the filmmakers focused many of their stories on public Montessori?

Resources

Debs, M. (2019). [Diverse Families, Desirable Schools: Public Montessori in the Era of School Choice](#). Cambridge, MA, Harvard Education Press.

Lillard, A. (2016). [Montessori: The science behind the genius \(3rd edition\)](#). Oxford, UK, Oxford University Press.

Lillard, A. S., et al. (2017). "[Montessori preschool elevates and equalizes child outcomes: A longitudinal study](#)." *Frontiers in psychology* **8**(1783): 1-19.

Taggart, J., et al. (2017). "[The real thing: preschoolers prefer actual activities to pretend ones](#)." *Developmental science* **21**(3).