

Standing the Test of Time

Montessori and I go way back. As a student at the Child's Work Center in Norwalk, the predecessor of our current school, Montessori played a pivotal role in shaping my early education. I am fiercely proud of my Montessori education and the opportunities it has afforded me. I carry with me beautiful memories of my time at The Child's Work Center.

When asked, as a former Montessori student, which Montessori material held significance for me during my early years, the Dressing Frames immediately popped into my head. If you are not familiar with Dressing Frames, they are a set of wooden frames of material in Primary Classrooms that serve to teach the child practical life applications of buttoning, zippering and tying. Why did I think of the humble Dressing Frames? At first, I didn't know. Was it because they occupied a special place on the wall next to the largest most inviting, sunny work space in the whole room? Was it because they fit so wonderfully in my little hands when I pulled them from the wall? The simple answer is that they were a chance to practice something of importance to me at that time; getting dressed. The more complex answer didn't reveal itself to me until later in my adult life.

Anyone who knows me well is aware that I love textiles and getting dressed in the morning! I enjoy studying how fabrics move, the color they embody and how they are combined. Clothing is an

extension of how we express ourselves while providing us with body awareness and the self-confidence we need to face each day. On a personal level, fashion represents a passion that I find myself returning to again and again.

Fast forward to the moment I chose Montessori as an education for my children, and the Dressing Frames took on a



whole new meaning. Suddenly, I wasn't the one struggling to perfect my fine motor skills—it was my sons. Every Montessori parent knows it is a thing of beauty when their toddler or primary child puts on his or her coat for the first time by themselves; it is even more special when they can complete the finishing touches of pulling up the zipper or buttoning the coat. The intrinsic satisfaction they get from being able to dress themselves is at the heart of the dressing frame lessons. Furthermore, the joy children feel at real-

izing their independence is magical.

When I became a member of the Board of Trustees, the lessons in the classroom took on a more philosophical bent. It became clear that every child at Montessori (or elsewhere) ought to have the right to feel good about themselves via skills that teach self-worth and independence. Feeling the joy of independence that comes with getting dressed on one's own is an essential part of every child's growth.

That's one of the many special things about Montessori: the materials and the lessons taught stand the test of time. All these years later, the dressing frames and their lesson continue to benefit my life, those of my children and all the children in our school. In their own way, those materials unlocked the door to celebrating my own individuality for years to come. All Montessori materials provide children with the opportunity to think constructively and creatively.

These materials help children express themselves as individuals and also comprehend that they are part of a greater community as they make their way in the world. Whether used in our School 50 years ago, or in the present day, Montessori materials are still relevant. And, they will continue to be germane and have the power to "fashion" future generations in ways beyond our imagination. 🌍

—Amy Serrano, Parent and Montessori School Alumna