

An Education for Peace in a Multilingual Montessori Community

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PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

MONTESSORI · TESOL · MULTILINGUAL LEARNING



INTRODUCTION

A Philosophy Rooted in Peace

My philosophy of education is grounded in one central belief. School should develop whole human beings who can learn well, live with others respectfully, think critically, and contribute to a more just society. In a public Montessori charter setting that serves children from pre-kindergarten three through sixth grade, this mission must honor Montessori principles and also meet public expectations from measurable academic growth. Many of our students are emergent bilingual. For that reason, language access is not an extra support. Language access is essential to equity belonging and achievement.

For me, the purpose of education is peace building through relationships, language and purposeful work. In practice, this may look like students learning to use respectful language to solve a conflict, take turns with materials, listen to a peer's idea, and return to meaningful work with independence and care.

The purpose of education is peace building through relationships, language, and purposeful work.

Language access is not an extra support — it is essential to equity, belonging, and achievement.

Purpose of Education

The purpose of education is to cultivate peace first within the child and then within the community. Maria Montessori wrote the following words: *Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war* (Montessori, 1972). Peace is not a slogan, peace is a set of skills and habits that children can learn and practice. These include self regulation, empathy, responsibility, and the ability to solve conflicts with dignity.

In the early years, from pre-kindergarten three through kindergarten, peace begins with a predictable environment and consistent routines. Peace also begins with grace and courtesy, emotional vocabulary and daily opportunities to practice independence and care for the community. As children grow in grades one through three peace expands into collaboration and perspective taking. During these years, children also need strong language development, so they can explain their thinking, participate in learning conversations and repair harm when mistakes happen. By grades four through six peace includes civic habits. These habits include respectful disagreement, evidence based reasoning, ethical decision-making and agency to improve one's community.

In a multilingual school, this commitment requires support for both belonging and rigorous learning. When students cannot express needs, negotiate meaning or participate fully, isolation and misunderstanding increase. Therefore, the purpose of education must include intentional language development through interaction, scaffolding, and identity, affirming practices that leverage students' full linguistic resources while strengthening academic English (Cummins, 2001; Garcia and Kleifgen, 2018).

Ultimately, education should graduate students who are academically competent, and socially responsible. Students should be able to communicate across differences, think critically and choose actions that build peace.

 Peace is a set of skills and habits that children can learn and practice — including self-regulation, empathy, responsibility, and the ability to solve conflicts with dignity.

Pre-K through Kindergarten

Predictable environments, consistent routines, grace and courtesy, emotional vocabulary, and daily independence.

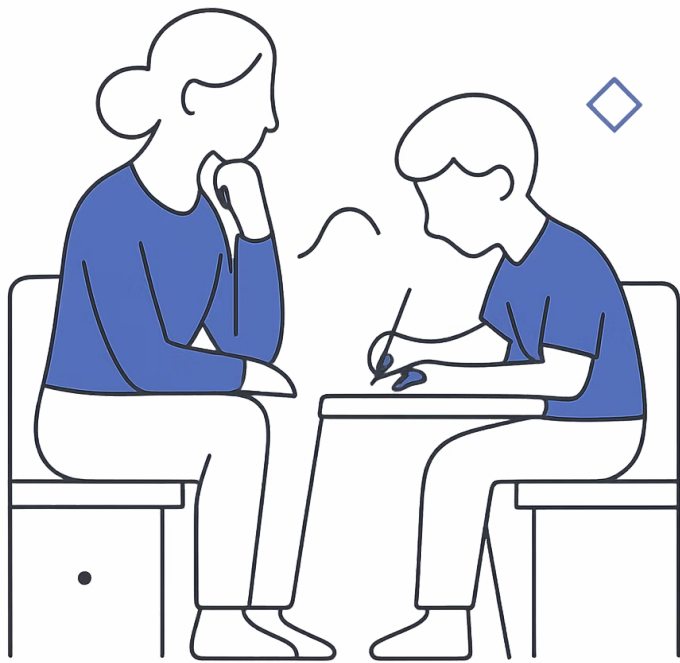
Grades 1 through 3

Collaboration, perspective taking, and strong language development for learning conversations and conflict repair.

Grades 4 through 6

Civic habits: respectful disagreement, evidence-based reasoning, ethical decision-making, and community agency.

The Role of the Teacher



Education which aims for belonging, dignity, and rigorous growth, depends on more than curriculum. It depends on the posture of the teacher. Across Montessori and Teaching English to Learners of a Second Language (TESOL), there is a shared understanding that learning is constructed through participation, purposeful activity, and guided independence. In both approaches, the teacher is not defined primarily as the person who delivers information; the teacher is defined as the prepared guide who designs conditions for practice, observes closely, and intervenes strategically so learners become increasingly independent and increasingly competent (Montessori, 1967).

This stance requires a break from models of schooling in which authority is measured by how much the teacher talks, how quickly errors are corrected, and how silent students remain.

The teacher is the prepared guide who designs conditions for practice, observes closely, and intervenes strategically so learners become increasingly independent.

Culture shapes whether this shift is possible. Cultural norms concerning hierarchy, respect, and public error can foster classroom environments that inadvertently discourage student participation, even when they possess valuable insights. For multilingual learners, silence frequently does not signify a lack of capability. Rather, it serves as a protective mechanism, molded by prior encounters with correction, humiliation, or imposition of "perfect English" standards. Consequently, the educator's responsibilities encompass establishing psychological safety to encourage productive risk-taking, structuring classroom interactions, and developing rating feedback techniques that preserves student dignity while simultaneously refining linguistic precision (Gibbons, 2015; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Montessori education contributes through its emphasis on the prepared environment and the practice of observation. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) further enhances this by incorporating explicit language objectives, vocabulary routines, sentence frames, and rehearsed talk moves, thereby enabling students to develop academic discourse and participate in meaningful communication aligned to language development expectations (WIDA, 2020).

This posture also addresses a frequent misunderstanding that Montessori lacks literacy because children are not given conventional worksheets. In reality, Montessori literacy depends on faithful implementation of sequenced language lessons. TESOL practices could help ensure that multilingual learners access Montessori language lessons with clarity and confidence by making the language demands visible and teachable. For example, before a movable alphabet or early writing lesson, the teacher can pre-teach two to three key words with pictures, model a sentence aloud, and provide a sentence frame such as "I see a ____" so students rehearse language before working independently.

❏ A credible philosophy is not only what educators believe, but what educators can operationalize through consistent instructional routines, reflective decisions based on student response, and follow-through over time (Haave, 2014).

The Nature of Learning

Building on my belief that the purpose of education is peace, and that the teacher's role is to create the conditions for dignity and participation, I understand learning as a process through which children actively construct meaning in relationship with their environment, their community, and themselves. Learning is not simply the passive reception of information. Rather, it is developmental, social, cultural, and deeply influenced by the conditions in which the learner is asked to grow. In Montessori and TESOL-informed practice, students learned best when they are able to engage purposefully, make meaning from experience, use language in authentic ways, and participate in a community where they feel safe, respected, and intellectually welcomed (Gibbons, 2015; Montessori, 1967; Wong, Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

A learner at peace is not merely quiet, obedient, or still. A learner at peace feels emotionally safe, socially accepted, and free enough to take academic risks without fear of embarrassment or rejection. This is especially important for multilingual learners, whose silence may sometimes be misread as lack of knowledge rather than uncertainty, self protection or response to prior experiences of correction and exclusion (Gibbons, 2015; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Culture also shapes how students and families understand what learning should look like. In some communities, learning by heart is associated with discipline, respect, intellectual formation, and care for the child's future. In such contexts, repetition and recitation may be viewed as serious and honorable forms of learning rather than a shallow practice. This perspective deserves respect. Educators should be careful not to assume that collaborative discussion, open questioning, or discovery-based learning are the only valid signs of engagement. At the same time students also need opportunities to connect remembered knowledge to live experience, discussion, and application. A child may recite a text, rule, or vocabulary list accurately, and still need support in making meaning from it. Therefore, I believe effective education honors the value of memory while also guiding learners toward understanding, transfer, and reflection. This balanced view is especially important in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, where students may come from educational traditions that define participation, respect, and intelligence in different ways (Cummins, 2001; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018).

Experience & Inquiry

Students investigate, test ideas, and build understanding actively rather than mechanically through purposeful exploration.

Repetition & Memory

Repeated exposure, structured language, and routine opportunities to revisit concepts build mastery and confidence.

Context & Belonging

The emotional climate, language demands, and presence of visual support shape what a learner is able to do.

Culture & Identity

Students come from traditions that define participation, respect, and intelligence in different ways — all deserve honor.

The situation in which learning occurs also has a major influence on what a learner is able to do. The same child may respond very differently to the same lesson depending on the emotional climate of the room, the language demands of the task, the presence or absence of visual and oral support, or whether the child feels seen and included. A student who appears disengaged during a whole-group verbal lesson may demonstrate deep understanding when given hands-on materials, sentence frames, peer rehearsal, or time to process language before speaking. Likewise, a child who is confident in one cultural setting, may become silent in another if classroom norms conflict with prior understandings of authority, public performance, or error correction. This is why I do not believe learning can be understood apart from context. The environment, the teacher's posture, the child's linguistic resources, and the child's emotional state, all shaped the learning process (Gibbons, 2015; Montessori, 1967).

In Montessori education this understanding appears clearly in the prepared environment. Children learned through purposeful movement, sensorial exploration, repetition, observation, and increasing independence. The teacher does not force knowledge into the child, but instead prepares conditions in which concentration, curiosity, and self construction can occur (Montessori, 1967). In TESOL this same principle is strengthened through intentional scaffolding that makes language accessible. Students need clear modeling, vocabulary support, meaningful interaction, and structured opportunities to practice academic language so that they can participate fully in rigorous learning. For example, before asking multilingual learners to describe a science observation, a teacher might provide real objects, visual vocabulary cards, and sentence frames such as "I noticed__" or "I predict__ because__". These supports do not reduce rigor; rather, they allow students to engage the lesson more deeply because they can connect language to experience and communicate their thinking with greater confidence.

Ultimately, I believe the nature of learning is human. Learning is shaped by the mind but also by emotion, language, culture, identity, and relationship. Students learn best when they are active participants in meaning-making, and when the classroom protects their dignity while challenging them toward growth.

When students experience belonging, order, predictability, and respect, they are better able to focus, persist, rehearse language, ask questions and integrate new knowledge to existing understanding.

Students learned best through a combination of experience, collaboration, inquiry, guided practice and repetition. No single approach is sufficient on its own. Inquiry and discovery are important because they allow students to investigate, test ideas, and build understanding actively rather than mechanically. At the same time repetition and memorization also have a legitimate place in learning — in both Montessori and TESOL settings, children often need repeated exposure, structured language, routine routines and opportunities to revisit concepts in order to gain mastery.

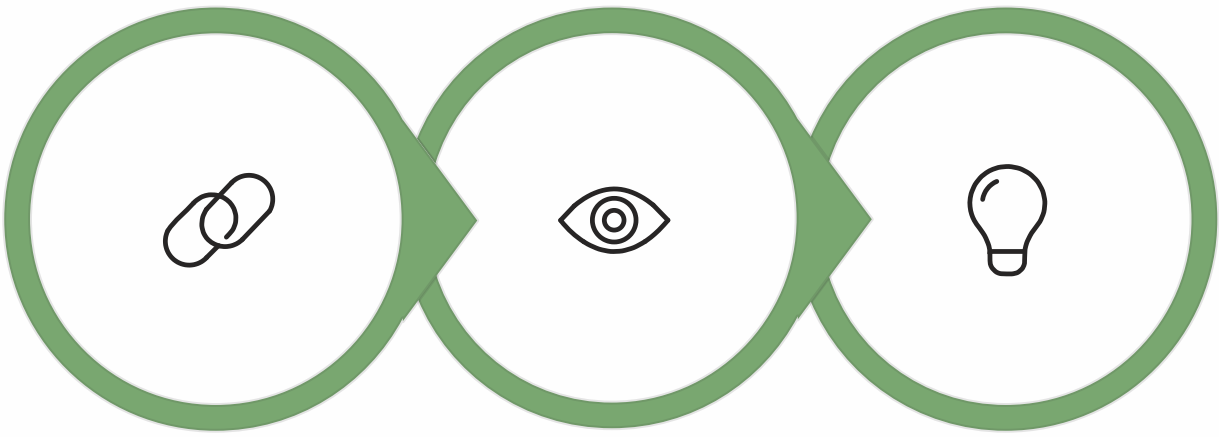
The Curriculum Content



I believe the most valuable curriculum is one that intentionally fosters emotional intelligence while also developing language, academic knowledge, and practical competence. When children learn to identify emotions, regulate frustration, listen to others, and repair relationships, they are better prepared to engage in literacy, collaboration, problem-solving, and the arts. In this sense, emotional intelligence is not separate from the curriculum; it is what helps the rest of learning become meaningful and humane.

This is especially true for multilingual learners. Language should never divide us, because human beings are naturally curious and oriented toward relationships. In my Montessori experience with young children, I have seen that English learners often thrive when the curriculum respects both their emotional safety and their developmental stage. Montessori's understanding of the first plane of development, from birth to age six, describes children as learning through the absorbent mind and through sensitive periods for language, movement, order, and social development (Montessori, 1967; Montessori-AMI, n.d.). This means the curriculum must be intentional, concrete, and responsive to how children actually develop.

The Montessori Three-Period Lesson reflects this developmental logic. In the first period, the child associates language with an object or concept; in the second, the child recognizes it; in the third, the child recalls and names it independently (Montessori-AMI Archives, n.d.). This sequence supports how learning becomes consolidated through experience and repeated activation of neural connections in responsive environments (Center on the Developing Child, 2024). For this reason, I value a curriculum that integrates emotional intelligence, language, practical life, stories, and interdisciplinary exploration in service of peace.



Association

Recognition

Recall

The Three-Period Lesson embodies how learning is consolidated through experience and repeated activation — moving from association to recognition to independent recall.

Student-Centered and Teacher-Centered Education

In my view, the learning environment should be fundamentally student-centered, while still guided by intentional teacher direction. At Breakthrough Montessori, this balance is especially important because children are not simply receiving information; they are developing language, identity, independence, and social understanding within a multilingual learning community. For this reason, I do not see student-centered and teacher-centered approaches as opposites. Rather, effective teaching brings them into purposeful relationships. The child's interests, developmental needs, and readiness should guide the learning process, but the teacher must still prepare the environment, define goals, observe carefully, and provide the scaffolds necessary for students to access rigorous content. This position aligns strongly with both Montessori philosophy and TESOL practice, which recognize that learning is most powerful when it is active, meaningful, and responsive, but never directionless (Gibbons, 2015; Montessori, 1967).

A student-centered environment is essential because children learn best when they can actively construct meaning from experience. Montessori education is built on the idea that the child is an active participant in self-construction, not a passive recipient of instruction (Montessori, 1967). Similarly, TESOL emphasizes that learners develop language most effectively when they can interact with meaningful content, connect new language to prior knowledge, and participate in authentic communication (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

For example, I have observed one teacher prepare the environment, select materials, connect students to lessons, and also observe when to intervene or when to step back. In this observation, the guide or teacher may notice that an English learner is interested in classified cards or a practical life activity but lacks the language to participate fully. A teacher-centered response alone might rely on direct explanation and repetition from the adult. A more balanced Montessori-TESOL approach would instead include a brief, intentional presentation, visual vocabulary, gestures, and perhaps a sentence frame such as "I am pouring" or "This is a leaf," allowing the child to practice language through meaningful engagement.

The most effective learning environment is student-centered in orientation and teacher-guided in design. Students' interests, languages, and developmental needs shape how learning unfolds, but the teacher remains responsible for ensuring access, coherence, and purpose.

Therefore, I believe the most effective learning environment is student-centered in orientation and teacher-guided in design. In this methodology, students' interests, languages, and developmental needs shapes how learning unfolds, but the teacher remains responsible for ensuring access, coherence, and purpose. Montessori and TESOL complement one another powerfully: both affirm that education should honor the learner while also intentionally preparing the conditions in which growth, language, and peace can flourish.

At Breakthrough Montessori, these stages are particularly relevant for English learners, whose needs are not always met through whole-group, teacher-dominated instruction alone. A multilingual child may understand a concept deeply through observation, movement, or manipulation of materials before being able to express that understanding fully in English. In this case, a student-centered approach respects the learner's process and allows understanding to emerge through purposeful activity, peer interaction, visual support, and time.

 Student-centered learning does not mean that the teacher steps back completely. On the contrary, intentional teacher guidance is necessary if students are to access language, content, and participation equitably.

TESOL reminds us that language learners benefit from explicit modeling, structured interaction, vocabulary development, and scaffolding that makes academic tasks comprehensible without reducing their rigor (Gibbons, 2015). Montessori also depends on strong teacher intentionality, even when that guidance appears quiet or indirect.

Methods of Instruction

The most effective methods of instruction are those that respond to the learner rather than impose a single model of teaching on every child. In a proper educational institution, instructional methodology should be selected with careful attention to developmental level, language profile, cultural background, readiness, and specific learning needs. For this reason, I do not believe that effective teaching can be reduced to a rigid preference for hands-on, inquiry-based, lecture-driven, collaborative, or technology-integrated instruction in isolation. Rather, sound pedagogy requires the disciplined ability to choose, combine, and adapt methods in ways that make learning both accessible and meaningful for particular students and groups of students. In culturally and linguistically diverse environments, especially those that include emergent bilingual learners and students with special needs, instructional effectiveness depends on responsiveness, not uniformity (Gibbons, 2015; García & Kleifgen, 2018).



Hands-On & Sensorial

Especially powerful in the early years and inclusive settings. Children connect abstract ideas to concrete experience through movement, manipulation, repetition, and sensorial contact. Montessori (1967) emphasized that children construct knowledge through purposeful interaction with the environment.



Inquiry-Based Learning

Students learn more deeply when invited to notice, question, compare, predict, and discover patterns. Inquiry fosters intellectual agency. However, inquiry is most effective when well scaffolded — sentence frames, partner talk, and guided rehearsal ensure multilingual learners can participate fully (Gibbons, 2015; WIDA, 2020).



Collaborative Instruction

Learning is social. Students develop understanding through dialogue, imitation, co-construction, and shared problem-solving. Collaboration must be culturally responsive — not all students come from traditions that reward public discussion. Protected turn-taking and emotionally safe routines preserve dignity and access (Cummins, 2001).



Direct Instruction

Lecture-driven instruction retains a legitimate but limited role. Students benefit from clarity, precise vocabulary, and well-structured explanations. The problem is not direct instruction itself, but overreliance on it. The teacher explains in order to release, models in order to empower, and guides toward autonomy (Montessori, 1967; Gibbons, 2015).

Technology-Integrated Instruction

Technology-integrated instruction can also be effective when used intentionally and critically. Technology should not replace human interaction, observation, or concrete learning experiences, particularly in early childhood settings. However, it can strengthen instruction when it expands access, supports differentiation, reinforces practice, or enables students to engage with language and content in multimodal ways. For example, digital tools may support vocabulary development, listening practice, formative assessment, and individualized review. Still, technology is pedagogically valuable only when it serves the learner and the learning goal; it should not be used merely because it is available. A responsive educator evaluates whether a technological tool enhances comprehension, participation, and independence rather than distracts from them.

❏ Ultimately, the most effective methods of instruction are adaptive, culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate, and grounded in close observation of the learner. It is not about choosing one method for everyone; it is about choosing wisely for someone.

In practice, this means that one student may need sensorial materials and repetition, another may thrive through structured collaboration, another may benefit from explicit modeling before independent work, and another may require visual and linguistic scaffolds in order to enter inquiry successfully. Effective instruction therefore involves both pedagogical flexibility and professional discernment. In this way, methods of instruction become an ethical expression of educational philosophy: they honor differences, protect dignity, and create real conditions for learning.

Assessment, Peace, and the Whole Child

A Montessori–TESOL Philosophy of Measuring Student Progress

Student progress and understanding should be measured in ways that honor the whole child, not only the child’s ability to perform on demand in a narrow testing moment. My belief is that assessment must begin with observation, relationship, and context. A child’s growth is not captured fully by a score alone. It is seen in the way the child approaches work, sustains attention, uses language, solves problems, recovers from mistakes, collaborates with others, and gradually moves from dependence toward purposeful independence. In a Montessori-informed setting such as Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School, this means that progress is first understood through close daily observation of the child within the prepared environment. Montessori (1949/1967) emphasized that the teacher must carefully observe the child in order to understand development, readiness, and the conditions that allow learning to unfold. In this view, assessment is not separate from teaching; it is part of the adult’s disciplined attention to the child.

At the same time, I do not believe that trusting the child means refusing all measurements. Trusting the child means believing that learning is often deeper, slower, and more complex than a single test can show. It also means recognizing that schools have responsibilities beyond philosophy alone. In public education, and especially in a public charter school context, educators must respond to accountability requirements and demonstrate student progress in ways that systems can recognize.

My belief regarding standardized testing and other quantitative measures is therefore balanced. I do not reject them entirely, because they can provide useful information. Tools such as i-Ready, for example, can help identify trends, skill gaps, and patterns across groups of students. They can be especially helpful in a school like Breakthrough, where educators want to ensure that multilingual learners, students with varying readiness levels, and children needing additional support are not overlooked. Quantitative data can help educators notice who may need intervention, enrichment, or closer observation. It can also help schools communicate with families, administrators, and external agencies in a language that policy systems understand. From this perspective, assessment data can contribute to equity when it is used to identify needs early and respond with care rather than wait for failure to become entrenched (Heritage, 2010).

⚠ Standardized assessments must remain servants, not masters. They should inform instruction, not control it. They should raise questions, not settle them. A child may test poorly because of anxiety, language processing demands, unfamiliar phrasing, cultural mismatch, fatigue, timing, or fear of failure.

This is particularly important for young children and multilingual learners, whose understanding may exceed what they can produce quickly in a formal testing format. In those moments, the test may measure stress tolerance, linguistic decoding, or compliance more than true understanding. Kohn (2000) argued that overreliance on standardized testing can narrow curriculum and distort the purposes of education. Similarly, Wong Fillmore and Snow (2000) showed that language demands shape how multilingual learners access academic tasks, which means assessment results must be interpreted with caution when language proficiency and content knowledge are developing simultaneously. Quantitative measures therefore must always be read alongside qualitative evidence such as observation notes, work samples, classroom participation, oral language, and teacher judgment.

Children’s emotional experience of testing matters deeply to me. Too often, adults discuss assessment as though it were neutral, but children feel it in their bodies. Testing can bring silence, pressure, comparison, and self-doubt. A child may begin to believe that being asked to “show what you know” means being placed under scrutiny rather than being invited into discovery. For some children, especially those who are sensitive, perfectionistic, still developing English, or carrying previous academic frustration, testing can feel exposing rather than empowering. It can unsettle the peace that should support learning. Montessori education is rooted in respect for the child’s dignity, inner order, and natural development (Montessori, 1949/1967). Noddings (2013) also reminds us that education must remain grounded in care, relationship, and ethical regard for the learner. If education is to be rooted in peace, then assessment must also protect the child’s sense of safety and worth.

I believe assessment should be introduced with great care, especially in early childhood and Montessori settings. It can be framed almost as a form of practical life: something children learn how to do calmly, gradually, and with preparation. Just as we teach a child how to carry a tray, roll a mat, or complete a sequence with confidence, we can teach the child how to approach moments of formal demonstration without fear. This means normalizing the experience, explaining it simply, reducing drama around it, and preserving the child’s dignity throughout the process. Testing should not be introduced as judgment. It should be introduced as one more way of showing growth, one more school routine to practice, and one more opportunity for adults to understand how to support the child better. This does not erase the limitations of testing, but it does make the experience more humane and developmentally respectful. In this sense, even a formal assessment can be presented in a peaceful, respectful way.

Formative Assessment The heart of responsive teaching. Happens during learning — observation, conferencing, checking for understanding, listening to children explain their thinking, reviewing work in progress, tracking language use, and noticing how children respond to feedback. In a Montessori classroom, formative assessment happens constantly.	Summative Assessment Happens after a period of learning and captures what a student can demonstrate at a given point in time. May include end-of-unit tasks, benchmark assessments, progress-monitoring checkpoints, or standardized tools such as i-Ready. Useful when schools pause, synthesize, and plan next steps.
Informal Assessment Occurs naturally within the life of the classroom — listening to a child retell a story, watching how the child uses a material, noting whether the child can apply a concept independently. Often the most authentic because they emerge from real activity rather than artificial testing conditions.	Formal Assessment More structured, following a set format at scheduled times, often producing scores or standardized data. Appropriate for accountability, screening, progress monitoring, placement decisions, or broader instructional planning. Should be used with restraint and always accompanied by a strong understanding of the child as a person.

My belief regarding formative and summative assessments is that both are necessary, but they serve different purposes and should not be confused. Formative assessment is the heart of responsive teaching. It happens during learning, not after learning is over. It includes observation, conferencing, checking for understanding, listening to children explain their thinking, reviewing work in progress, tracking language use, and noticing how children respond to feedback. In a Montessori classroom, formative assessment happens constantly. A guide observes whether a child can match sounds, build words with the movable alphabet, classify objects, follow multi-step directions, or use increasingly precise vocabulary during work and conversation. At Breakthrough, formative assessment might also include classroom observations in Transparent Classroom, skill snapshots, teacher notes, oral language checks, and small-group monitoring. Black and Wiliam (1998) demonstrated that formative assessment has strong effects on learning because it allows teachers to adjust instruction responsively and helps students understand the next steps in their development. In multilingual settings, Gibbons (2015) further supports the importance of ongoing scaffolding and language-sensitive observation so that assessment becomes part of meaningful instruction rather than an interruption to it.

Summative assessment, by contrast, happens after a period of learning and is meant to capture what a student can demonstrate at a given point in time. This may include end-of-unit tasks, benchmark assessments, progress-monitoring checkpoints, or standardized tools such as i-Ready. Summative assessments can be useful when they help schools pause, synthesize, and plan next steps. But I do not believe they should dominate classroom life, especially with young children. When summative assessment becomes the center of the educational experience, learning narrows, curiosity shrinks, and children may begin performing for approval rather than engaging in meaningful work. Popham (2017) noted that summative assessment has a legitimate role in evaluating outcomes, but it becomes harmful when misused as the primary driver of daily instruction. Summative measures should therefore be limited, purposeful, and interpreted with humility.

Informal and formal assessments also both have value. Informal assessments occur naturally within the life of the classroom. They may be as simple as listening to a child retell a story, watching how the child uses a material, noting whether the child can apply a concept independently, or observing the child’s participation in group discussion. These assessments are often the most authentic because they emerge from real activity rather than artificial testing conditions. They are especially important in Montessori education, where so much of learning is revealed through action, repetition, concentration, and self-correction (Montessori, 1949/1967). They are also essential for multilingual learners, whose developing language may be more accurately understood in context-rich, supported interactions than in isolated testing situations (Gibbons, 2015).

Formal assessments are more structured. They typically follow a set format, occur at scheduled times, and may produce scores or standardized data. These are often required by schools, networks, districts, or state accountability systems. I believe formal assessments are appropriate when they are needed for accountability, screening, progress monitoring, placement decisions, or broader instructional planning. But they should be used with restraint and always accompanied by a strong understanding of the child as a person. A formal score without context can mislead. An informal observation without documentation can also be insufficient. Good assessment practice therefore requires both human attentiveness and institutional responsibility. In a public Montessori charter setting, this means educators must learn to hold two commitments at once: fidelity to child development and responsiveness to external expectations.

Assessment should answer not only “What score did the child receive?” but also “Who is this child becoming?” “What conditions help this child succeed?” “What does this child understand but not yet express easily?” and “How can the school remain accountable without violating the child’s dignity?”

Ultimately, my philosophy is that student progress should be measured through a layered approach. We should begin with the child in context: observation, relationship, work habits, language, and independence. We should add formative evidence that helps us adjust teaching thoughtfully. We should use summative and standardized tools when needed, but without letting them become the sole definition of achievement. In a school like Breakthrough Montessori Public Charter School, this balanced approach is especially important because the school lives at the intersection of Montessori philosophy, multilingual education, public accountability, and the moral responsibility to keep learning peaceful and dignified. Freire (1970/2000) reminds educators that education must humanize rather than reduce learners to objects of measurement. That principle is deeply important to me when thinking about assessment.

I believe assessment should answer not only, “What score did the child receive?” but also, “Who is this child becoming?” “What conditions help this child succeed?” “What does this child understand but not yet express easily?” and “How can the school remain accountable without violating the child’s dignity?” When assessment is rooted in peace, it does not shame, rush, or reduce children. It observes carefully, responds wisely, and measures growth in ways that preserve hope. That is the kind of assessment system I believe in: one that is academically responsible, developmentally informed, emotionally humane, and faithful to the child.

Values and Ethics



Values and ethics are essential to educational practice because they shape how teachers understand dignity, fairness, inclusion, authority, and the purposes of learning. Ethical education must be grounded in equity, care, respect for diversity, and a commitment to helping every child experience belonging, curiosity, and intellectual growth. A love of learning is also an ethical responsibility because students should not only be taught to complete tasks, but also encouraged to wonder, explore, and see themselves as capable learners.

At the same time, values and ethics are often closely connected to culture. What is considered respectful, responsible, or appropriate in one context may be expressed differently in another. Through experiences in different educational and social environments, it becomes clear that values are never lived in an abstract way; they are embodied through language, family expectations, community practices, and social norms.

For example, in Senegal, respect for elders, communal responsibility, and the social visibility of the child within a larger human network are often strongly emphasized. This does not make one culture more ethical than another. Rather, it reminds educators that ethics cannot be reduced to a narrow or culturally isolated definition. In today's globalized world, teachers increasingly encounter the "global child," a child shaped by more than one language, worldview, and set of cultural expectations within the home, school, and neighborhood. For this reason, ethics in education must be spacious enough to welcome complexity while remaining grounded in clear human principles. In the classroom, this means creating practices that honor students' cultural identities while also helping them build curiosity, independence, and respectful relationships with others.



Equity & Dignity

Ethical education must be grounded in equity, care, respect for diversity, and a commitment to helping every child experience belonging, curiosity, and intellectual growth.



Cultural Responsiveness

Ethics in education must be spacious enough to welcome complexity. The "global child" is shaped by more than one language, worldview, and set of cultural expectations.



Peace as Unifying Principle

Peace speaks across differences because it depends on dignity, dialogue, justice, and mutual recognition. Montessori described education as the pathway to lasting peace (Montessori, 1972).

In navigating this complexity, a unifying ethical principle is necessary, and this is where peace becomes central. Peace speaks across differences because it depends on dignity, dialogue, justice, and mutual recognition. Montessori (1972) described education as the pathway to lasting peace, while scholars in multilingual education remind educators that inclusion, linguistic responsiveness, and identity-affirming practice are ethical responsibilities, not optional gestures (Cummins, 2001; Garcia & Kleifgen, 2018; Noddings, 2013). Ultimately, ethical education should prepare children not only to succeed academically, but also to live responsibly, think humanely, and encounter others with respect.



Love of Learning

Students should not only be taught to complete tasks, but also encouraged to wonder, explore, and see themselves as capable learners. This is itself an ethical responsibility.

Education as a Form of Hope

My philosophy of education is grounded in the conviction that education should form whole human beings who are capable of learning deeply, living ethically, communicating across differences, and contributing to a more peaceful world. Through my Philosophy of Education paper, I have argued that peace is not an abstract ideal added on top of schooling. It is the thread that gives meaning to the work of teaching and learning. Peace appears in the purpose of education, in the posture of the teacher, in the conditions that support learning, in the curriculum children encounter, in the methods used to guide them, in the ways student progress is assessed, and in the ethical commitments that shape school life.

In a multilingual Montessori context such as Breakthrough Montessori, this philosophy carries particular urgency. Many children are learning not only academic content, but also how to belong, how to express themselves across languages, and how to build relationships in a diverse community. For that reason, education must protect dignity while providing rigor. It must honor development while ensuring access. It must remain intellectually serious without becoming emotionally harsh. Montessori and TESOL, when brought into a thoughtful relationship, offer a powerful response to this challenge. Both recognize that children learn best when they are respected, observed carefully, engaged meaningfully, and supported toward independence through intentional structures and humane guidance.

Ultimately, education should help children become more fully human. A good school does more than deliver content; it cultivates self-knowledge, empathy, responsibility, language, curiosity, and the courage to live with others in justice and peace.

If education can do this, then it becomes more than instruction. It becomes a form of hope.

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