

March 31, 2011

Dear Parents:

At Spring Valley Montessori School, we take professional development and keeping up to date with current research very seriously. All of our staff members attended important seminars this year: "Developmental Needs of Children" (Fall term) and "Observation and Record Keeping" and "Sensorial Activities Extension" (Winter term).

Last week, I was attending a conference in Chicago on "Brain Research and Learning" for Montessori Teacher trainers. The speaker was Dr. Steven Hughes, a world famous Pediatric Neuro-Psychologist. He talked about the most recent research on brain development and how children learn. According to the research results, the developing brain of the child acquires and retains knowledge through interaction with the environment and the materials in that environment. Motor development and cognitive development are very much interrelated. Apparently, he also observed Montessori classrooms and he said that traditional, sterile environments in public or private schools are non-functional and they do not take into consideration that children develop cognitively differently whereas Montessori environment is stimulating and allows experimental interaction with the environment for children to develop individually to their potential.

He said that Montessori schools are the best places for brain based learning. Montessori philosophy and the environment encourages creativity. In traditional classrooms, instruction and learning process is based on a one-way delivery: teacher to student. In a Montessori classroom, teacher is a guide, a facilitator and the child learns through the interaction with the environment and the materials.

Apparently one of the problems our society has been facing during the last few decades was the lack of or decrease in creativity. He feels sterile school environments are the cause, whereas individuality and creativity are encouraged in Montessori schools all around the world.

Dr. Hughes is also a great admirer of Dr. Montessori. He was a fascinating speaker and confirmed that the contemporary brain research validates and supports the advantages a Montessori environment provides to the children.

*If you are still wondering about the answer to our trivia question: all founders of Amazon, Google and Wikipedia were Montessori children. 😊*

If you would like to know more about Dr. Hughes, you may Google **Dr. Steven Hughes**. He also has some video clips on his website. You can also check out: **goodatdoingthings.com** for Dr. Hughes perspective on Montessori. Also for more videos: **<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faYco1b-IJI>**.

Our best wishes for a colorful and sunny Spring Break,

Gulsevin Kayihan  
Academic Director