



Montessori: The Science behind the Genius

By Angeline Stoll Lillard

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Traditional American schooling is in constant crisis because it is based on two poor models for children's learning: the school as a factory and the child as a blank slate. School reforms repeatedly fail by not learning from the shortcomings of these models.

One hundred years ago, Maria Montessori, the first female physician in Italy, devised a very different method of educating children, based on her observations of how they naturally learn. Does Montessori education provide a viable alternative to traditional schooling? Do Dr. Montessori's theories and practices stand up to the scrutiny of modern-day developmental psychology? Can developmental psychology tell us anything about how and why Montessori methods work?

In *Montessori*, now with a foreword by Renilde Montessori, the youngest grandchild of Maria Montessori, Angeline Stoll Lillard shows that science has finally caught up with Maria Montessori. Lillard presents the research concerning eight insights that are foundations of Montessori education, describing how each of these insights is applied in the Montessori classroom. In reading this book, parents and teachers alike will develop a clear understanding of what happens in a Montessori classroom and, more important, why it happens and why it works. Lillard, however, does much more than explain the scientific basis for Montessori's system: Amid the clamor for evidence-based education, she presents the studies that show how children learn best, makes clear why many traditional practices come up short, and describes an ingenious alternative that works. Everyone interested in education, at all levels and in all forms, will take from this book a wealth of insights. *Montessori* is indispensable reading for anyone interested in what psychologists know about human learning and development, and how to use it to improve teaching effectiveness.

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Editorial Review

Review

"If you want to understand Montessori education in light of current developmental research, you should seize upon this authoritative, interesting book. I highly recommend it for parents, educators, students of education--anyone, in fact, who would like a close-up look at the real needs of the developing child." --Jane M. Healy, Ph.D., Educational Psychologist; author of *Your Child's Growing Mind: Brain Development and Learning from Birth to Adolescence*

"Inspired educational thinkers such as Dewey or Vygotsky only sketched out ways that we might teach young children. Over more than 50 years, Maria Montessori successfully created a radically new teaching system - a system that endures and inspires to this day. Angeline Lillard shows how many of Montessori's practices anticipated some of the latest and best findings in developmental psychology while still others call out for future empirical analysis. Lillard's comprehensive and fascinating assessment gives Montessori the place that she deserves in contemporary debate about how we should best teach children." --Paul L. Harris, Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education

"Lillard has masterfully explored the basic tenets of Montessori education and how they are validated with today's scientific findings. The result is a long-awaited and important contribution that contrasts with traditional education and offers evidence in support of a method that works. A stunning achievement!" --Virginia McHugh Goodwin, Executive Director, Association Montessori Internationale, USA

"This is a really excellent book. The author is unusually well qualified to write it. Angeline Lillard is an internationally renowned researcher in the area of cognitive-developmental psychology, who also has extensive experience and deep knowledge regarding Montessori. The book is not only authoritative and scholarly, it is also very well organized and very clearly written, easily communicable to anyone with an interest in the area. I enjoyed reading it."--John Flavell, Anne T. and Robert M. Bass Professor, Emeritus, School of Humanities and Sciences, Stanford University

"This is a great book. It is beautifully written, and expertly uses the psychological research literature to evaluate Montessori theory and practice. What an original and important contribution." --Carol Dweck, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University

"...a stimulating evaluation of Montessori philosophy and practice, exploring some of the basic principles in relation to modern scientific research...an interesting resource that encourages teachers (from all methods) to reflect on their educational practices. In particular, anyone wanting to take a detailed and critical look at Montessori education would surely benefit from reading this book."--*Montessori International*

"I was impressed by this book, enjoyed reading it, and learned a lot about Montessori's method...Lillard's book has convinced me to pay a visit to our local Montessori school and to seriously consider it as an option for my own child."--R. Keith Sawyer, *PsycCRITIQUES*

"Angeline Lillard may have changed the rules of engagement for debates on educational reform. " --Dennis Schapiro, Editor, *The Public Montessorian*

"This book makes a wonderful case for the genius and enduring contributions of Montessori education and its visionary founder. It can inform readers search to understand Montessori education today." --*Applied Developmental Psychology*

"Angeline Lillard's compelling review of research literature reminds us that Dr. Maria Montessori was a scientist, that Montessori pedagogy is based in empirical fact, and that modern educational research is echoing the developmental principles fundamental to Montessori education. Parents, teachers, and educational researchers are reading this book because it is simply the most sophisticated Montessori commentary of our time." --David Kahn, Executive Director, North American Montessori Teachers' Association

"Dr. Angeline Stoll Lillard has clearly summarized the research that explains why, after 100 years, the Montessori approach to education continues to be a phenomenal worldwide success." --Tim Seldin, President, The Montessori Foundation, and Chair, The International Montessori Council

"Lillard provides a visionary framework for those currently working to advance Montessori education and those committed to furthering school reform initiatives. This is an illuminating, thoughtful, and extremely important book." --Richard A. Ungerer, Executive Director, American Montessori Society

About the Author

Angeline Stoll Lillard received her doctorate in psychology from Stanford University in 1991. She was awarded the Developmental Psychology Division of the American Psychological Association's Outstanding Dissertation Award in 1992 and its Boyd McCandless Award for Distinguished Early Career Contribution in 1999. A Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science, Lillard is currently Professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, where she lives with her husband, two daughters, and four horses.

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