

# Transition From Montessori to Traditional Schools

## How Will My Child Adjust?



One of the biggest concerns we hear from parents is: How will my child do when he/she moves to a traditional school setting? Since WMS is not a complete PreK-12 Montessori program, transitioning is something the majority of Montessori kids will have to accomplish at some point in their school careers.

While all children respond to transitions differently, the simple answer is that your child will do just fine. From the earliest ages, Montessori schools focus on helping children develop a high degree of self-motivation, coping skills for dealing with new situations, and a strong sense of respect and responsibility, all skills that will serve them well in a public school setting.

Most parents' concerns are focused on two primary areas: academics and socialization. A few parents who have made the transition have said their child was bored at first, and ready to move onto the next concept before the rest of the class. They wonder why everyone in the class needs to do the same thing at the same time. But most have said their children adapted well to their new setting fairly quickly, making new friends, and succeeding within the definition of success understood in their new school.

Research seems to back up this anecdotal evidence. A longitudinal research study supported by AMI tracked 400 students in Milwaukee. Half the students received only public school education from kindergarten to graduation; the other half attended Montessori schools through 5th grade before transitioning into the public school system. The two groups were carefully matched in terms of gender, ethnicity and family financial status. At the end of the study, which was conducted between 1997-2007, test scores and GPAs were compared.

Perhaps it won't come as a surprise to Montessori advocates that the children who had received

Preschool – Grade 5 Montessori education not only outperformed the other student group in math and science test scores, but also graduated with higher GPAs. The conclusion of the study was that early Montessori education had a long-term impact on later public school performance. At the very least, students transitioned excellently on an academic level.

In terms of socialization, the fact is that leaving a familiar classroom or school behind will likely cause feelings of sadness for students of any age. When they leave a Montessori school, children will miss their teachers and classmates, as well as the buildings, playgrounds and materials they knew so well. The new environment already has a social structure in place, which presents a challenge as the child works to figure out where he or she fits in.

However, from the time they were toddlers, Montessori-educated children have learned the core values of respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment. Their mixed-age-group classrooms have allowed them to interact with a more diverse social circle than most other kids their age. And they have been encouraged to interact peacefully with others using conflict resolution and social interaction strategies. Research studies have also shown that Montessori students demonstrate a greater sense of fairness and justice, and are more likely to choose positive responses for dealing with social dilemmas. These skills serve them extremely well as they move into their new classrooms and begin making new friends.

In the majority of situations, the children make a healthy and eventually happy transition from Montessori to traditional schools. That being said, parents need to do their part by carefully investigating schooling options. Each family will have to make the decision that's best for their child, and be ready to give them some extra support as they make the transition.