

Our Philosophy

What?

During the last year we have been reflecting on what legacy we want Artisans to have for the children and their families who share their lives with us. It has been stimulating, rewarding and enlightening to gather a wide spectrum of views.

We have characterised our philosophy in six words to reflect the legacy we hope to leave.

Inquisitive. Dynamic. Responsible. Grit. Playful. Contented.

We are "Artisans" because we are creators – we are privileged to participate in the lives of children at their most impressionable; laying down foundations of principles and personalities that have been proven time and again to be some of the strongest influences across the whole of life.

Why?

It is extraordinary how many labels a two-year-old can be given; fussy eater, shy, clumsy, delayed speech, clingy, boisterous..... With less than a fortieth of their lives lived these children are being moulded by the tendency of adults to categorise and all the confirmation biases that exist within that. The right early intervention can ignite glorious achievements. The misplaced early intervention can stifle with equal force. We have chosen our philosophy to aspire to characteristics that stretch past typical categories, past childhood and create personalities that can embrace the vagaries and wonders of life in all its magnificent diversity.

Inquisitive

The world is changing faster now than it has at any other point in history. The lives our children lead and will lead are already mind bogglingly different to the childhoods' we had. We can't equip them with knowledge about the future – we don't know it. We can provide them with the skills to make good choices. This means they need to ask questions, difficult questions, questions that contradict the outcome they think they want. We need to teach them to analyse and compare the answers, seek out patterns and contradictions, feel empathy and then use all of this inquisitive harvest to make a good choice.

Dynamic

Choices can go wrong. External factors can be insurmountable obstacles to a particular goal. That's life. Being dynamic means being able to respond in a way that is flexible. It means not being fixated on a single goal with a single path to achieving it but being able to accumulate, percolate and flex with experience to extract from it all that we can learn, to grow (maybe in a new direction) as a result of it and to know that life is not measured by a simple dichotomy of success and failure, but is an organic kaleidoscope of opportunity. Montessori recognised the importance of failure and our response to it over a hundred years ago when she designed materials that can go wrong, but which have a "control of error" that leads the way to trying again. Our response to life and what it offers us is what dictates our emotional and spiritual equilibrium.

Responsibility

The suffix "ibility" means the ability to use the prefix – in this case the ability to respond. Our responses to life are our responsibility. Giving children responsibility is how they learn to recognise and control their responses. If a child breaks a plate at Artisans they help us to tidy it up; in doing so they process and manage their own emotions and the situation. Next time something goes wrong it is not a disaster, it is manageable. If a child buys or makes a gift for a friend, choosing it, maybe paying for it, wrapping it and handing it over, then they get to experience the warmth of altruism, empathy, gratitude and next time they could offer a kind gesture they know it has its own rewards for them and will be happy to do so.

Responsibility takes effort. A toddler's tantrum when the world does not flex to their demands is a very understandable response. But the world never will flex to our demands; we must work, persuade, cajole, entice, compromise throughout life. Learning to be responsible for our response, to be flooded with an overpowering emotion, to be able to reel it back in and dynamically process it into constructive responses, is vital.

Grit

Inquisitiveness, dynamism and responsibility all take grit. They require resilience, tenacity and sensitivity. Grit is what keeps us going when the going gets tough. To be fair children can probably teach us more about this than we can them! Learning to walk, or talk, or make a friend requires grit on a stratospheric scale. Wow children! But we can support them to apply that inner toddler grit to situations they may find less conducive, like putting on shoes or trying again with a puzzle. By embedding this attitude to difficult situations and tasks we prepare the children for their future and give them a chance to blossom with the amazing feeling of achievement that comes from mastering something difficult (and not from something being done for you or repeating something easy).

Playfulness

Playfulness is a real skill because in play we integrate the unexpected, change with it and celebrate what we find, which provides the basis for expert emotional stability. Being able to play is what teaches the tools of managing a world that doesn't follow our command.

Playfulness also makes us liked, precisely because it values the contributions of others and is content with itself. Supporting the children to be playful is equipping them for confident and rewarding relationships. It is a source of immense joy.

Contented

Being contented is not the same as being happy. Happy is a high. It is adrenaline fuelled. It can, physiologically, only last for a limited time. To aspire to be constantly happy is unrealistic, unachievable and therefore likely to guarantee the opposite. Being content is about acceptance, appreciation and gratitude. In discussing this aspect of our philosophy in the last few months we found people are most content when things are at their simplest and that the natural world is a huge influence on and source of contentment. At Artisans we embrace simplicity and nature.

This is what we aspire most of all to provide for the children and families of Artisans - the quiet, gentle joy of contentment in our hectic materialistic world.

How?

Our first aim is to instil this philosophy through individual example. Young children have been non-verbal longer than they have been verbal; as Montessori recognised, and expanded, children learn from watching and doing not from being told. We hope you see these characteristics in us and as we strive to make them deeper and more pertinent we hope you will remind us when we aren't and thank us when we are.

We also aim to show these characteristics through interactions, through being a team, through celebrating each other and all our visitors.

Key to embedding these characteristics for our children is the opportunities we plan for them and each activity created and offered at Artisans is considered for how it will enhance the children's development of these characteristics.

From all of you we would like your own reflections and suggestions so please tell us in person, in writing, on My Montessori Child, on an email, on the phone - whichever way works for you.