



The Bay Academy

Growing brave young adults to be skilled, tenacious, independent thinkers making a significant and sensitive contribution to society.

26th October 2023

Dear Parents,

Spirit of Montessori continues in the High School



I never had any exposure to Montessori teaching before I arrived at The Bay Academy. However, for those who have a sharp memory, you may recall an article I wrote concerning my initial exposure to Montessori teaching when I first arrived at the school. That within an hour, I was a complete convert. In my past High School teaching, I had always propagated the concept of experiential learning. Teaching Geography using mini wind tunnels for hurricane studies, shaker tables for earthquakes and stream table simulators for river studies were typical of my approaches. These were outstanding and enabled Geography laboratories to be established in various schools. Little did I know, at the time, that my approach supported the Montessori method.

There are 6 core beliefs that constitute the Montessori method:

1. All children have “absorbent minds”
2. All children pass through “sensitive periods”
3. All children want to learn
4. All children learn through play/work
5. All children pass through stages of development
6. All children want to be independent

I just wish to focus on points 1, 3 and 4. In a High School meeting recently, I asked the teachers to celebrate their “best practices”. That is, describe teaching methods they felt the students enjoyed and experienced enhanced learning. In this manner, the teachers as a team would listen to others celebrating their teaching and in so doing, encourage each other to seek out new innovative teaching strategies. These discussions would also foster collaborative teaching approaches across different subjects.

In summary, it was an outstanding meeting with teachers visibly excited as they outlined their methodologies.

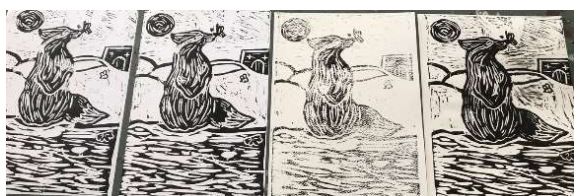
In Grade 7, the students had recently developed electric quiz boxes. These projects encouraged the students to understand electrical circuits, and they had great fun making up the wiring diagrams. When connecting the question with the right answer, lights flashed and buzzers sounded when the correct circuits were completed.



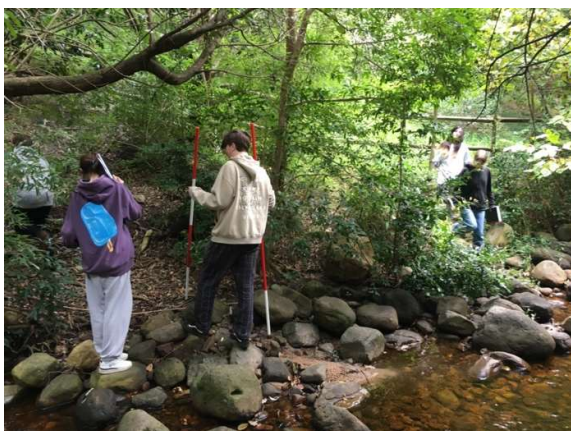
In English, the students have done transactional writing. They learned how language can be used in travel writing to appeal to an audience. In addition, students took on the role of presenting a myth or a legend to the class to deepen their understanding of cultural stories.

In Afrikaans and Spanish, there are plans to take the students on an excursion to a local restaurant. Here they will conduct the entire meal in their 2nd Language. There is also talk of a “paella versus potjiekos” competition between the students who either study Afrikaans or Spanish.

In Art, the students have been sculpting and using linocut to print their creations.



In Mathematics, they have been using interactive quizzes and using instruments to highlight their learning. In Geography, senior students have been conducting extensive fieldwork.



In Business Studies, the students have been busy with a product launch. This has involved a survey, then design and finally advertising of the product in front of a panel of adjudicators.

In Drama, students have been performing puppet concerts, writing and editing their own stop-motion video material and creating radio dramas. In History, podcasts have been created.


Physics has seen students creating lava lamps, manufacturing magnets to study magnetic fields and studying gravitational forces.



Environmental Management has seen students starting to work on simulators that illustrate the effects of volcanoes, earthquakes and tropical cyclones. The effects of these natural disasters are graphed on their severity and impact.

In Biology and Chemistry, students have completed dissections and studied exciting chemical reactions.





These recent examples of High School teaching highlight the nurturing of the 3 Montessori pillars that I mentioned earlier.

That is, every child has a learning absorbent mind and learns well through the method of play.

It has been a privilege to have been invited by the teachers to witness these teaching experiences. The students and teachers jointly shared the excitement of the methodology. I have no doubt that these positive practices will enhance the growing diligent work ethic that is prevalent in the school. This in turn, will translate into students recording even better examination results.

I will end off by expressing my appreciation to the High School teachers for so enthusiastically “thinking out of the box” with their teaching. I also wish to thank our Montessori School for laying the foundation for students who have progressed to the High School campus. The students are so receptive to this style of teaching and their inherent curiosity to be lifelong learners.

Kind regards

John Alexander

Principal