

10/8/08 *Notes from Nirvair*

Montessori education prepares children, not just for the next level of schooling, but for life. One hundred years ago Maria Montessori was ahead of her time in advocating a whole-child approach to education. She realized that you can't separate learning from life. The whole person is involved-- head, hand and heart.

The work of the head-- learning, processing and storing knowledge-- is not isolated from the work of the hand and the work of the heart, there is a deep interconnection. The brain is flesh and blood and like the rest of the body, it benefits from healthy habits to stay fit and maintain optimal performance. It works with the body's senses to collect information by listening, feeling, looking, experiencing, discriminating. It relies on the heart to stay engaged, enthused, to care.

The work of the hand is at the center of Montessori education. It is how learning happens in the Montessori classroom. As the children move about they interact with carefully prepared learning materials and activities which they manipulate, organize, sort, and feel. Each interaction is an investigation, a journey of discovery, to find out what happens next. Montessori recognized that the brain is not an empty vessel which must be filled by the teacher who pours in information-- a kind of plumbing learning. She realized learning is a whole-body process of experiences in the environment. She envisioned a rich school environment which includes opportunities for a wide range of experiences in the core curriculum as well as culture, community, life skills and the arts.

At Khalsa Montessori School we have worked hard to build a beautiful and diverse learning environment to provide all kinds of experiences to enrich the lives of children. We have furnished the classrooms with beautifully designed and crafted learning materials for exploring the core curriculum. We have chosen to invest in a beautiful desert campus because beauty is satisfying to a child's heart and nature teaches us about the world. While most schools are paring the curriculum down to test-driven basics, we have struggled to build our arts programs because the human spirit finds creative expression in music, drama, and visual arts. We teach community values and personal life skills because our children need to be prepared for the world they will inherit which will require creativity, resilience, collaboration, and caring.

We continue to work to refine, improve and expand learning opportunities for the children. Generous donations from the community allow us to offer more than the basics that are covered by fees and state funds. The Arizona tax credit for extracurricular activity fees funds our arts program every year. We depend on your contributions to the extracurricular activity fund to pay for the arts specialists and supplies. Because all contributions are eligible for the tax credit, it is a great way to support Khalsa Montessori School programs and ends up costing you nothing. Anyone who pays taxes in Arizona can claim a tax credit up to \$200 per person (\$400 per married couple) whether or not they have children enrolled.

The extracurricular activities budget is \$50,000 each year. So far this year we have collected less than 10% of the needed funds. We are depending on you to keep these programs safe from budget cuts. Please give generously and invite your relatives, friends and co-workers to give their tax credit donation to Khalsa Montessori School. If your children have enjoyed art, music, choir, violin and drama, please give. Help us to keep offering the programs that nurture the hearts and minds of our children, our future.

Thank You for your Support