



FOR MONTESSORI TEACHER EDUCATORS

An excerpt from *Perspectives on Montessori:
Indigenous Inquiry, Teachers, Dialogue, and
Sustainability*

Central Research Question:

“What insights on implementing the Montessori educational concept can experienced practitioners offer to Montessori teachers?”

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The Braid

The braid illustrates how coresearchers ultimately responded to the central research question:

What insights on implementing the Montessori educational concept can experienced practitioners offer to Montessori teachers?

One strand (blue) represents Montessori becoming a way of life and one strand (green) the abilities effective Montessori teachers need to cultivate.

The ribbon (pink) interwoven through the two strands represents the support teachers need from teacher educators and school administrators on the path to becoming effective or able to fully implement the concept.

The website montessorispeaks.com was created to disseminate the research free of charge to the Montessori community at large.

You are encouraged to download and print the excerpts and use them in ways that cultivate dialogue. Downloads are formatted to be printed as a booklet by printing service providers that can be stapled and distributed for a more pleasurable read.

Background

The main research question asked: “What insights on implementing the Montessori educational concept can experienced practitioners offer to Montessori teachers?” To explore the research question, the following two subquestions were asked to small groups of Montessori educators during six different dialogues:

1. What is the essence of Montessori?
2. How would you describe Montessori teachers who are able to implement the Montessori concept effectively?

The six dialogues occurred over a period of five months (July 2016 to December 2016), involved 20 experienced Montessori educators, and were held in five different locations—four in the continental United States, one in the Czech Republic. The participants (considered as coresearchers and elders) represent a collective 770 years of experience in Montessori, have worked with Montessori teachers in 30 countries, have experience in Montessori classrooms that cover all levels of instruction, and hold credentials or diplomas from either AMS (14) and/or AMI (9). Three of the 20 contributors are non-native English speakers. The insights of these elders add to the literature; the dialogues with the elders were held specifically to inform the Montessori community. For more information on the elders (including their names) see Chapter 4 of the research and for the limits of selecting only 20 participants, see **Number and accommodation**, p. 62 of the research.

The research involved gathering responses to the two dialogue questions and communicating them as a collective; direct passages cited from the dialogues are not attributed to

any one participant. The nature of dialogue is to open opportunities to share individual and collective consciousness in a spirit of discovery, free from fragmentation and judgment. Themes and patterns were gleaned from repeated, thoughtful, and manual review of the transcriptions. Fifteen of the coresearchers read and affirmed the analysis and findings.

The intent was not to distill nor ascribe more value to any particular insight. It seemed fitting to include what had been spoken in its essence because it could not be known what thoughts might become meaningful to the reader.

Last, this research intended to deepen understanding of effective teachers and does not profess to cover all aspects that might define and support effective Montessori teachers nor cover completely what the essence of Montessori involves.

The perspectives offered for Question 1 provided the philosophical base established by the coresearchers. Responses to Question 1 also revealed information relevant to the question that followed about teachers who are able to implement the concept effectively.

Summary of findings for Question 1:

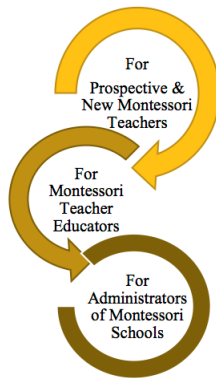
What is the essence of Montessori?

Coresearchers appeared to believe that Montessori essentially becomes a way of knowing, being, and doing that exhibits respect, peacefulness, and love and embraces the interrelatedness of everything. Montessori as a way of life appeared to mean having a viewpoint that values each child for their place in the universe, the importance of community, and learning environments that attend to developmental, physical, and psychological needs. The elders seemed to believe that for Montessori to become a way of life, most people undergo a transformation that leads to viewing the world with a deeper level of consciousness.

A full excerpt of Question 1 findings also is available.

Question 2: How would you describe teachers who are able to implement the Montessori concept effectively?

Data that addressed how effective Montessori teachers implement the Montessori concept became allocated into three groupings: for prospective and new teachers, for teacher educators, and for school administrators.



Contributors' thoughts about how teacher educators and school administrators might support effective teachers appeared equally important as the insights provided for prospective and new teachers.

Summary of findings for Prospective and New Teachers

Coresearchers seemed to determine that effective Montessori teachers are those who have trust in children, the Montessori process, and self. Effective teachers seem to cultivate observation skills that require mindfulness and enhance self-awareness so they can take those abilities and create a caring and emotionally supportive psychological place to learn as well as a physical environment that is safe and provides all the materials for learning that is developmentally appropriate for the children/adolescents. Contributors seemed to believe that teachers need to balance their drive for perfection with the ability to discern the less important aspects of the work, letting lesser things go. Finally, coresearchers described the importance of being diligent in developing verbal and written communication skills, including good record-keeping practices.

A full excerpt of Question 2 findings For Prospective and New Teachers also is available.

Summary of findings for School

Administrators

Coresearchers believed “the faculty is [the administrator’s] classroom.” In describing what that means for administrators, elders discussed ways administrators might foster teacher effectiveness. Suggestions included taking time to get to know an applicant, looking for characteristics that signal a joy in learning, and articulating clear expectations to a candidate before hiring becomes finalized. Understanding the demands administrators face and realizing the vested interest administration has in developing new teachers, coresearchers offered suggestions for how administrators might cultivate a new teacher’s desired performance. The elders believed it is important for administrators to understand what the training involves, bridge communications among those working with a teacher in training, recognize the fragility of teachers in the first few years, let new teachers make mistakes, and remain as supportive and encouraging as possible.

Coresearchers emphasized that adults taking the teacher education course need support from a school’s administration. The administrator–teacher relationship benefits when the administrator understands what the teacher education course requires and when there is open communication between “the field consultant, the school administrator, and [even] the classroom lead teacher.”

In terms of support for teachers who already are part of the faculty, the importance of continually providing support and inspiration to new and experienced teachers was emphasized, viewed as imperative to establish a strong

school program. Considering the demands and frustrations of an administrator's position, elders expressed the value of an administrator's continuous self-care to be prepared emotionally and in tune with the Montessori concept philosophically.

A full excerpt of Question 2 findings For School Administrators also is available.

Note: The recorded responses have been consolidated and relay numerous reflections from the transcriptions with select passages represented directly. Short passages taken directly from the transcripts are cited in quotation marks and are not ascribed to a particular elder. Longer direct passages are italicized and are not ascribed to a particular elder. Use of ellipses indicates the need either to reduce a long passage or to omit superfluous phrases or names. Brackets replace pronouns or clarify phrases a reader might not understand.

Insights for Montessori Teacher

Educators

Montessori teacher educators are teachers who serve as instructors in the teacher preparation courses. Seventeen of the 20 coresearchers were teacher educators who had taught prospective teachers and conducted field evaluations for new teachers for many years. Scattered throughout the comments made during the dialogues, thoughts about teacher development and preparation surfaced. The dialogue provoked several to comment directly about how the dialogue itself triggered them to think anew with regard to the process of teacher preparation; one coresearcher shared, “It [the dialogue] has made me think that this is yet another reason why I feel the need to review the way we train teachers.”

Figure 5.4 shows five practices coresearchers believed would foster the development of effective Montessori teachers during teacher preparation.

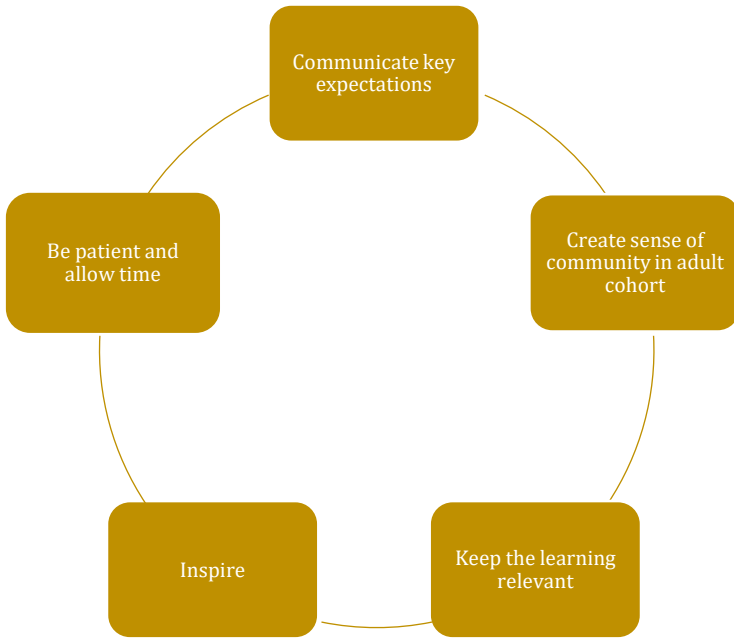


Figure 5.4. Coresearchers in the Montessori perspectives study considered five ways that teacher educators might support the development of effective teachers during the teacher preparation course.

Communicate Key Expectations

Coresearchers acknowledged that Montessori teacher preparation is a complex process that takes time, yet they appeared to recognize the importance of conveying certain key expectations during the teacher preparation course. The expectations elders considered valuable for teacher educators to emphasize to adult learners included (a) discerning salient aspects of the philosophy and methods, (b) being able to keep clear student records and express oneself professionally in written and oral form, and (c) knowing that the first few years are challenging.

Discernment of the Philosophy and Methods

Discernment of the philosophy and methods translated as the need for teacher educators to communicate the main philosophical goal of fostering the whole child to realize her/his full potential. Coresearchers expressed that the primary aim of a teacher involves a teacher's ability to individualize. Montessori educational theory, contributors acknowledged, is rooted in a clear philosophical and methodological base, yet several wondered if distinctions between following the philosophy and applying the methods are made clear enough to adult learners. Some coresearchers raised the issue of distinguishing the ideal theory from realities a teacher likely would experience in the classroom. One elder thought it would be helpful for adults taking the teacher preparation course to be cognizant early on of how much Montessori methods align with most state educational requirements.

Conveying the need to adult learners for having a solid basic philosophical understanding of Montessori theory seemed imperative; one elder noted, "It's something that I feel we don't get enough of in training." In a different dialogue, another contributor pondered the responsibilities for which teacher educators are accountable paralleled with how overwhelming the requirements can feel to the adult learner:

I have wondered if maybe the training, it seems to me like the demands and the way trainers present the expectations for the teachers for the work for the children, for [the teachers'] own development, sometimes [the demands] feel daunting . . . it seems to come across that way, and you were talking about a

balance between yes doing your job and having compassion, you know, for yourself and for the children. Do you feel that this is something that can be addressed more directly in training rather than after people complete their training?

Some coresearchers noted the challenges adult learners could face upon beginning the teacher preparation course and explained that many adult learners who come to the training “are people for whom the definition of teacher is open head, pour in knowledge. They are the products of our traditional system, whether it’s public or private, where it’s very teacher centered, teacher directed.” One contributor who had been a teacher in a conventional school prior to entering a Montessori teacher preparation course explained,

I remember as a trainee having those same feelings of how do you do this? How does this work? You know, I couldn’t see it. I liked the philosophy but I couldn’t see what was actually happening in the classroom as being something that was systematic or had results that you took care of assessing and all these kinda things that you’re so used to, and do it in a totally different way for each child.

Another elder added the need to convey to the adult learners that “Montessori is very individualized . . . if you’re uncomfortable with this, you [might not] want to do this training.”

Several elders reflected on the need to distinguish the ideal from the realities when covering the philosophy and methods; as one said,

In the training you’re getting a classic picture, right? This is an ideal . . . when I’m talking about this approach to the child I’m really talking about, you know, let’s look at the ideal. But

[adult learners/teachers] are not getting enough information about what it feels like and it's really like on a daily basis in the class. They're not getting the lectures tempered.

Another explained that teachers ultimately must “take from your training whatever needs to be taken from it to offer the children the best possible experience given [the] resources [they have].” The coresearcher elaborated,

There are no silver bullets [answers]. That's where training comes in, that's where understanding the development of the child as childhood, and then the development of this one child that I have in front of me, you know, today in this moment. And then you have to modify, modify, modify. You know... to provide the experience that the child needs. And again it's something that I feel we don't get enough of in training, you know, [the training can be] just very structured.

Another pondered on how to convey the philosophical role of the Montessori teacher:

Our work [as teachers] is really at the periphery. And how do we feed that? Preferably in the best way that respects each child's own natural development and their own timeline which varies so much from child to child. So [the philosophy] really respects that core, that central part that we really can't touch. [Maria] Montessori talks about we really can't touch that part, we only can support it through as you say environments and the way we are with the children.

Moving away from the philosophical understanding, some coresearchers felt it was important to communicate how much the Montessori methods and practices align with expectations often required from state educational agencies. One coresearcher offered,

I think that it would be such a value to the adult learners to get a big old minimum standards book handed to them, at least the components that would relate to their experience in the classroom. Because many times the things that we do already meet and exceed— those are minimum, we do maximum if you will. I think that understanding of your own state's requirements of you as the teacher, the responsible party, I think that would benefit them.

Able to Express Oneself

The elders emphasized basic skills a teacher must have to implement the Montessori concept. These skills included clear and careful record keeping of lessons children had mastered and the importance of being able to express oneself clearly in writing and when speaking with parents and other professionals. Coresearchers recognized that while some Montessori programs are required to assign grades to students, grades alone do not suffice in implementing a Montessori approach. A teacher's ability to record observations, write descriptions of behaviors, and note work a child/adolescent is completing or is attracted to all factor into requisites for the Montessori teacher to communicate. Montessori education openly partners with parents, and the ability to accurately record and thoughtfully articulate a child's tendencies and progress becomes imperative. One contributor gratefully acknowledged that attention to these skills seems to occur in most teacher development programs nowadays:

One of the things that has also helped is the criteria that the teachers have to follow in their own writing. You know, it has to be professional . . . no slang . . . your work will be returned if it is not in this format because expectations have been set from day one . . . this helps prospective teachers know this is real.

First Few Years are Challenging

A final thought elders shared in terms of transmitting key expectations during teacher development programs involved letting adult learners know upfront that the work is demanding. One coresearcher explained, “We are unfolding as Montessorians, and yeah we do have to struggle. And maybe just saying that to new adult learners that, you know, this is not easy.” Another contributor added that adult learners likely would benefit from being told directly that they would need to do more in the first few years: “They will be doing more than just within the confines of their teaching day. [They should be told] otherwise it comes as a surprise to them and they can feel resentful.”

Coresearchers seemed to acknowledge the importance of understanding the philosophy well enough for adult learners to recognize how and when methods should be adapted to meet individual student needs as well as understand how much the Montessori curriculum satisfies state requirements that initially might appear at odds with the Montessori approach. The importance of individualization in the Montessori concept factors into being able to develop the written and verbal abilities required in student evaluations and implicates challenges most teachers would face in the first few years spent in the classroom. The elders seemed to believe that having a clear sense of these expectations during the teacher preparation course could foster a teacher’s ability to implement the concept once the teacher is in a classroom full time.

Create Sense of Community in the Adult Cohort

A sense of community involves each adult learner feeling respected and safe to learn and make mistakes within the group of other learners. Having a sense of community is a vital part of the requisite psychological environment in the classroom with children. The need to create a sense of community among adult learner cohorts was important to coresearchers, who believed that adult learners learn best when they experience that which they are expected to create. One contributor voiced,

I think it's very important to make sure when we do talk about the environment, I think [the] tendency is again well these are the materials for the environment. Equally as important and maybe even more so is that psychological environment, that energy that children feel when they are there. And they feel like they are part of there, that's that community aspect.

Another coresearcher inserted, "They have to be able to experience [what they will be doing in their classroom] for themselves so they can take it into their classrooms."

One elder, speaking about how critical the sense of community is in all instructional levels added, "Well in the infant/toddler and secondary [programs] there aren't materials, so the prepared environment is almost totally psychological preparation." Building upon that sentiment, another coresearcher reflected,

When they're in the training situation you know that that sense of community is focused on and helping them understand, well, what makes a classroom a community, you

know? What are those elements of community? And as we've come to talk about it we see it as first of all setting a climate you know . . . it's the climate of being loved, of being accepted, of the teachers in the training programs that they each feel accepted as part of the group. That no one's outside and that there's this feeling of I'm a part.

Contributors seemed to recognize that the experiential learning so key in Montessori philosophy is also important to provide in the teacher education course. Cultivating a sense of community during teacher preparation conveys a vital component of the Montessori classroom. Experiencing a respectful and encouraging learning environment is one example that elders realized all levels of instruction could offer during teacher development.

Keep the Learning Relevant

Coresearchers acknowledged that the Montessori concept is specifically designed to entice and engage students in the learning process by meeting children's developmental needs. Teacher educators, contributors noted, need to be responsive in meeting the needs of their adult learners. Coresearchers shared thoughts about making the learning relevant that included (a) meeting the needs of a changing age demographic of adult learners, (b) the importance of teacher educators staying fresh, having recent experiences in a classroom, and (c) utilizing the experiences of fellow teacher educators.

Changing Demographics

Several coresearchers noted they were beginning to see a change in many adult learners from what they as teacher educators had seen in the past, noting the number of adult learners who are part of the generation often referred to as millennials. One contributor reminded,

And I think if we look at the adults and we follow the child within the adult, just as you said earlier the way we need to step back and do intuitive attention and try and feel the way in which that adult learner wants us to deliver it, I think that's when we're most successful and then that teacher is the most successful teacher. I think we have to, we have to adapt our teaching to the millennials.

This participant had done research for a workshop on recruiting teachers and shared that “by 2025, [millennials] are going to be 75% of our workforce.” That coresearcher added,

“They are so far better equipped to navigate this 21st century world than we could ever begin to believe that we are . . . and we must adapt to their needs.”

Need to Have Current Experience

Keeping the learning relevant, some coresearchers stated, included teacher educators recently having taught in a classroom with the children. Some remarked that, as teacher educators, it felt incumbent to stay current and maintain some hours in a classroom. Several contributors, however, cautioned that too many teacher educators have not taught children for a long time. To become a teacher educator, most teacher preparation centers require a minimum of five years in the classroom. One elder exclaimed,

And my opinion is that there are not enough trainers who have had recent experience in the classroom and that creates a situation . . . you have to have at least five years of teaching. That's not enough. It's just not enough. And so you end up you're 55, 60 years old and you had five years of teaching many years ago, and you're doing a lot of assessment of classes and criticizing but you've forgotten what it's like to do this day by day.

Coresearchers noted that adult learners seem eager to hear real examples, anecdotes of real experiences. While stories can be timeless in terms of lessons they teach, contributors acknowledged that having more current examples adds meaning and credibility during instruction. One elder reflected, "I have to say even though I completely agree that children have universal principles of development . . . the behavior in the times of Maria Montessori and children are different. And the challenge for the teacher today is a little different."

Learning from Fellows

Numerous examples were provided throughout the dialogues for ways of teaching adults effectively. The elders reiterated that training needs to emphasize more understanding of the development of the child because most teachers are not going to be in a perfect setting. One participant who had recently attended a Montessori conference in South Asia shared,

I got to meet a lot of men and women that work with children in dire circumstances. You know they don't have the perfect prepared environment, they don't have the support you know that we [often] have [here], you know even in the public school system, and they have to work with what is available to them. And you cannot just say well, no, sorry, I can't work like this.

Coresearchers believed that adult learners could benefit from practice in what to do in those circumstances. One contributor said, "I think the theory of the areas of work is so important. And we maybe don't either devote enough time to that or we don't weave it into the materials as we're doing it." When that elder recalled what one of her mentors had said, she evoked a creative idea that might be incorporated into a teacher development program. The suggestion involved adult learners creating a lesson from materials not made specifically for Montessori:

She [a mentor] said you can do Montessori without a stick of [human made] material, but you can't do it without material. But you have sticks, you have stones, because the children have to manipulate something. But you can be inventive . . . if you understand the structure of what is the point of this. My most comfortable arena is the 3 to 6 stage . . . I could take those

areas of work and [cover the elements] and you could talk about what is essential for the older child and you could for the younger child, that the child gets from that. And then if you didn't have Montessori materials, you know you could look for things that you could use, that the child could use.

One coresearcher revealed what had been effective when working with adult learners in a classroom in a West African country:

The first time I went and I talked. I did workshops with the teachers after school. Not this time. This time I presented to a small group and then I sat in a classroom and I watched the teacher present to another small group and another, and gave feedback right away. Much better, because they got to see how I did it [in their setting] and then practice it themselves.

Several noted that some adult learners seek ready solutions and expect the teacher educators to provide answers to every circumstance. One elder explained that when an adult learner seems to seek prescribed solutions to a situation, she would say, "It is more intuitive, there is not one solution that applies to all children." This contributor added that she sometimes recommends to the adult learner an exercise that has proved effective:

You can do this, you can read an article by Rudolph Dreikurs and one by Alfie Kohn because they're almost opposite, and find your way with children. It is intuitive. You have to take it all in and you mold it with your personality, and each teacher is different how they will see it.

Another elder shared,

What I tell people is that you have to construct the knowledge yourself. I can't tell you. I can prepare the environment for you

but you have to construct your own perspectives and point of view based on the variety of resources that are here right now.

When the issue of computer and electronic usage during teacher preparation courses arose, one coresearcher shared what she did to model keeping the learning relevant, effective, and meaningful:

I just am remembering this one class a couple years ago and the [adult learners/teachers] were all on their computers taking notes they said, as I was teaching they were taking notes. But I felt like for the first time in a long time I wasn't reaching anybody. And it was an interesting thing because I had them the next week, and I had watched this YouTube of a wonderful composer who said I must see the eyes of my students. And so the next week I said okay you can have your computers on and take notes after my lesson but right now I have to see your eyes . . . And they did [and it worked].

Coresearchers discussed how teacher educators might keep the learning relevant by meeting the needs of today's prospective teachers, maintaining current experiences with children in the classroom and continuing to learn from other teacher educators. In addition to considering effective practices and strategies for teacher educators, elders issued a united refrain about the need to inspire adult learners and to be patient and give them time to learn. These aspects are the last two to be addressed in this section.

Inspire

The topic of inspiring teachers arose in most every dialogue. Inspiring adult learners and cultivating awe and wonder were viewed as one and the same. Coresearchers explained that a sense of awe and wonder is what teacher educators wish for teachers to carry into the classroom of children. One elder remarked, “The best gift we can give a child is just to inspire them with awe and wonder, give them the time, the tools to observe, you know, learning how to learn . . . [Adults] need that too.” Piggybacking off that sentiment, one coresearcher illuminated the need to inspire:

I had a big argument with trainers a year ago who said our purpose is to transform adults in the training course. And I said I don't think it is. And another trainer said if you had told me I was going someplace to be transformed I would have run quickly in the other direction. I don't think the transformation is our job. I think our job is to be as inspiring as we can.

One elder considered the dilemma of inspiring adult learners: “But with adults . . . how is it possible, how to light that light in them? [Montessori] is a different way of thinking.” Another echoed a similar concern:

How do we keep them inspired? How do we keep teachers, you know, excited and wanting to come back to the classroom? How do you do it? We cannot just be expecting them to be this perfect ever-evolving wise beings, you know.

A contributor in another dialogue expressed these thoughts: “Sometimes I think we have to ask, be very direct and ask them [the adult learners] okay what is it that does excite you? Where do you feel inspired?” Another elder

commented, discussing the benefits of journaling and fostering connections with nature:

*It is important for the adult learners to reflect on their own experiences which can be done through writing which encourages them to see themselves as authors and to learn more about who am I and what is important. I remember Richard Louv, author of *The Last Child in the Woods*, who spoke at a Montessori conference discussing the serious issue of nature deficit disorder which must be an essential awareness of each teacher and needs to be stressed with the adult learners. Mr. Louv was asked to address a small Congressional committee. He noticed that the group who appeared quite bored when he was discussing his research came alive when he started talking about finding frogs when he was young. It is finding something that can touch the person and it is always nature . . . I think that being connected to nature is one sure way to touch the spirit of the children and 'enthuse them to their inmost core' as Maria Montessori said. I love Rachel Carson and her whole message about keeping alive the sense of wonder. Adults need this connection with nature too.*

Be Patient and Allow Time

According to the elders, the need to inspire adult learners during their teacher preparation work is coupled with the need to be patient with the adults and give them time. As noted,

Teachers are as different as children are and have more burdens that they bring to the table. I think a lot of it is letting go, the teachers learning to let go of patterns. You know, children come pretty open, but [teachers must] learn to let go and see it in a different way.

Elders explained that the length of time for Montessori adult teacher preparation classroom instruction varies. Some programs concentrate classroom instruction over extended periods of time for two summers; other courses are spread out over the course of a school year, usually five days a week for half days. A few programs meet adult learner needs by offering classroom hours on extended weekends over the course of two to four years.

Coresearchers seemed to believe that the longer adult learners have supervised student classroom time, the better. Teacher preparation courses vary in the required amount of time adults spend in a classroom with children. Some adult learners have mentors while they are in the classroom for four weeks, eight weeks, or nine months. Regardless of the time configurations, one contributor justified the overall time required by Montessori teacher development programs:

If we're going to get people that are aware and mindful of their profession I think [time with children in the classroom] is one of the best ways that I can think of. It's very labor intensive of course but as humans I don't know how else we can do it.

Elders recognized that being patient with adult learners as they traverse understanding of what often is a new way of educating involves giving adults plenty of time, and for that reason believed the time intensive preparation requirements serve that purpose. As one noted when discussing teacher development,

And I think that there is really a need in our training programs to have the, what do I wanna say, opportunity for those new teachers to really understand what it means to go through that transformation. You just don't all of a sudden change how you've thought all your life. And you know it's not just learning about Montessori and the materials but it's learning about how do you learn to respect yourself? How do you learn to see yourself and watch yourself and make changes that need to be made? . . . I don't know that [adults] always have that opportunity to learn how to go inside and learn to observe self as well as to observe out beyond, and that we really need to be able to bring that to them as part of what they're going through, because we continue to go through it all the way to the end I think.

Several contributors reflected on the fact that the Montessori concept expects teachers to be patient with their students and allow their students time to complete work, so adult learners should be given the same if these budding teachers are to be able to implement the concept fully. One coresearcher elaborated,

I think they have to be willing to be patient not only with the children . . . they have to be patient with themselves because they can't learn it all at once. They're gonna be learning right along with the children, and Montessori's just that way.

Another participant reflected on the need for patience by teacher educators during the adult preparation: “[It] requires a lot of patience to watch everybody unfold and support them through that long journey . . . and we just need to go into it with an open heart and help as we can.”

One elder acknowledged that patience and time are not always enough:

We can train them how to teach Montessori but we can't train that essence . . . They can develop it. Some of them have it, some have the little flame burning. That little flame is burning and you stoke the flame, and as you stoke the flame sometimes you miss it and after half a year, one year of teaching, you say the flame was there, I've been stoking it like crazy, but nothing's happening. So this is not a match. That doesn't make [the adult learner] wrong, that doesn't make me wrong, let's part ways because you'd be happier doing something else. And that has happened to me certainly.

Coresearchers believed, however, that most of the time, being patient with adult learners and allowing them time to absorb the concept proves successful. Some equated trust in adult learners as tantamount to the trust expected of teachers to be patient with and trust their students' desire to learn and grow. One contributor submitted,

But I think trusting and letting, not opening up and pouring in but trusting the kids to construct themselves, and I would say the same with teachers to construct themselves. You know, all summer I've been watching these people evolve who would say no way would I do that, [allow a student to] take a test again. You know, '[The students] get a grade the first time.' To now saying, oh well our purpose is for them to know the information. So now I can name three people who've made that

shift, you know, and I haven't told them how they should believe. We've just provided enough dialogue and enough examples for them to evolve into that finding on their own.

That elder explained further,

And it [doesn't always] happen in one summer either. I mean there are certain things that are, but . . . the biggest difference [is usually after the adults have been in the classroom with the children] you know, it's like oh yeah . . . now I hold a different perspective on that.

Two more examples were shared during a dialogue, which illustrate the importance of being patient and allowing time for adults to interact with their peers (spacing separates speakers):

I was noticing today you know we only did one book today with [the adult learners], but there was lots of time for them to dialogue in small groups over their chapter and figure out how they were gonna present it and to talk to each other in that networking. And I did mention they learn as much on the off times as they do when we're all together in their little pockets of asking questions and developing friendships and whatever, and the same with the [other level of adult learners]. They have all day to process information and they get it again and again.

So that gift of time that's not so crammed full of things, and I know it's a thing that people don't like coming long days but I think it's the gift we give them that they have that time for all that processing and asking questions and coming back the next day and you know trying it out a little differently. And you know they did, [the adult learners] did lessons on Saturday, and they did each the same lesson three times. You know they did it with one small group and got feedback, cut half their

talking which all of them had to do. Did it again. But you have to take time for all of that and we give children time to have a pace, and I think adults need that same sense of time even though we're in a hurry and we wanna do it quickly and get all the information in a short period of time.

The insights coresearchers offered for Montessori teacher educators addressed the importance of patiently giving adult learners time to process and unfold as learners themselves and the role inspiration plays in support of a teacher's development. Making the learning relevant to adults included being responsive to changing demographics of adult learners, maintaining current experience with children in the classroom, and openly seeking discussions with fellow educators to foster continual learning of effective instruction strategies.

Coresearchers seemed to believe in the importance of creating a sense of community among the cohorts to replicate the sense of community they want teachers to create in their classrooms. The importance of providing adult learners with clear and realistic expectations involves making acute judgments about which core philosophical basics to emphasize, raising the need to express oneself effectively in written and oral communications, and recognizing the demands of the job are challenging, especially in the first few years in the classroom.

Overall, coresearchers acknowledged that creating the psychological environment during the teacher preparation course that mirrors the student classroom psychological environment that teachers are tasked to create is optimal.

Finally, in closing the complete chapter presentation of the findings, I shared one coresearcher's thoughts that seemed to offer sage insights to all three groups— prospective and new teachers, teacher educators, and school administrators:

Montessori described to us an educational philosophy and, in great detail, an educational practice. But describing Montessori as an educational approach only, which we almost always do, gives her short shrift. She described a path of human development from birth to maturity with the goal of living in an interdependent, peaceful world. This is the vision that excites our teachers, but also sets impossibly high standards for performance. Teachers I have worked with who achieved the highest realization of Montessori teaching combined great technical proficiency always undergirded by a strong understanding of the needs and tendencies and the psychological characteristics, all wrapped in a steely pragmatism toward the needs of the children before them. The finest teachers never fully implement Dr. Montessori's philosophy. This is not a pessimistic statement or disparaging in any way of the extraordinary efforts our teachers make every day. But we tend to cling to abstractions and miss the wonder of the grainy, messy delightful complexity always present right in front of us. The best teachers stay clear-eyed, in the moment, and deeply rooted in universal principles of human development.