

Julia Child, Will Wright and more famous Montessori alumni

A collage of famous Montessori school alumni.

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"Montessori taught me the joy of discovery." — Will Wright, computer game designer and original designer of "The Sims"

Since Montessori schools have been around for over 100 years, there are plenty of adults around who were in Montessori schools as children. Now and then I'll meet someone, and when they learn I'm a Montessori teacher, they'll say, "I went to a Montessori school when I was little!" Whether it was only for preschool or right through elementary, they will usually recall rich memories of using the materials like the pink tower, test tube division or the trinomial cube.

So it comes as no surprise that there are plenty of famous people who attended Montessori schools. When I say you are among the people who can change the world, I'm not exaggerating. I have the evidence to muse your souls. Enjoy, get inspired and inspire! Here's the short list:

Anne Frank

Anne Frank is remembered around the world for her diary, "Het Achterhuis," which speaks about her adolescence in German-occupied Amsterdam in World War II. Anne was born to an upper-class Jewish family in Frankfurt before moving to Amsterdam. Her family selected a small Montessori school for Anne to attend where she was remembered as an ordinary student, but with the ability to draw more from her experiences than the average student — a typical Montessorian characteristic. Anne showed aptitude for reading and writing at an early age.

Larry Page and Sergey Brin

Google, the Internet search engine, was co-founded by Larry Page and Sergey Brin. They have been friends since childhood. When asked if the reason for their success was the fact that their parents were both college professors they said "no" — it was their going to a Montessori school, where they learned to be self-directed and self-starters. They said that their Montessori education allowed them to learn to think for themselves and gave them freedom to pursue their own interests.

President Woodrow Wilson

Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States of America had a Montessori classroom installed in the basement of the White House during his term of office for staff to send their children to. His own daughter trained as a Montessori teacher. Margaret Wilson was on the committee that brought Dr. Maria Montessori to the United States in 1915.

Will Wright

This American computer game designer was educated at a local Montessori school, where he enjoyed its emphasis on creativity, problem-solving and self-motivation. Wright admitted to having been inspired to create certain elements of "SimCity" from his experiences in the school.

Jeffrey P. Bezos

As a preschooler, Jeffrey Bezos displayed an unmatched single-mindedness. According to his mother, the young Bezos got so engrossed in the details of activities at his Montessori school that his teachers had to pick him up in his chair to move him to new tasks. It's a trait that goes a long way toward explaining why the company he founded, Amazon, has survived to become the most dominant retailer on the Internet.

Julia Child

Julia Child was sent to a local Montessori school at age 4 run by May and Augusta Davies, who had studied directly with Maria Montessori. In her book, "Julia Child & Company," she credits her Montessori experience with her love of working with her hands. Julia Child exemplifies creativity, initiative and self-confidence.

Jacqueline Onassis

Jacqueline Onassis, the wife of the 35th president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, attended a Montessori school in her early years. She was later married to the Greek shipping tycoon, Aristotle Onassis, and achieved a successful career as a book editor.

Prince William and Prince Harry

Both princes are members of the English Royal Family, and both were educated in the Montessori philosophy.

Katherine Graham

The owner/editor of The Washington Post attended a Montessori preschool where the newspaper owner first learned to read and write, instilling a love of the written word that would stay with her her whole life.

There is no doubt that Montessori education has influenced many people, famous or not, who have grown to see the world in a new way and to follow their own lead. Nobel Laureate in Literature and former Montessori student Gabriel Garcia Marquez eloquently described Montessori's influence: "I do not believe there is a method better than Montessori for making children sensitive to the beauties of the world and awakening their curiosity regarding the secrets of life."

Well said, Mr. Marquez.