

# MONTESSORI MATTERS

MONTESSORI ACADEMY OF LONDON

EXPECT MORE FROM EDUCATION

Issue 13 – June 2016



## 21st century education matters

*A message from Margaret Whitley*

*Business, our future and education*

**"Canadian businesses tend to be leading players in public policy debates, pushing governments to ask hard questions about costs and efficacy... except in K-12 education."**

(Source: *Business Gone Quiet: Why Does Canada's Education Monopoly Continue Unquestioned?* B. Green, B. Dijkema, M. Van Pelt, Cardus Policy Statement, Spring 2016)

The pace of change is faster than ever. Every few weeks there's talk of a new gadget being released or a new app to gather information.

Although it's taken a few generations, we have seen a major shift in our economy. The industrial economy has given way to a knowledge/innovation economy.

Despite this major shift, the concept of school has stayed relatively the same. Education certainly talks about its evolution enough and yes, there has been some tinkering with education "innovation." SMART boards have been introduced (though their efficacy is yet to be proven). There have been increases and decreases in the time spent on certain topics of instruction: less music, home economics and shop and more on computer programming in

an attempt at making Canadian students "trilingual." (How has that worked for French in many parts of Canada?)

But we still stick to "old fashion" ways of teaching: in single-age groups, with subjects separated into silos; with textbooks and tests that state there's only one right answer to most problems. Students must follow a compliance-based system structured on competition and reward.

While this framework continues to be promoted – or at least used – the employers of today and tomorrow, rather oddly, say nothing. I say 'oddly,' because these employers will be the consumers of the conventional education system's "products" – aka graduates. One would think businesses would be more vocal about today's education because they stand to gain – or lose – the most from the education

of our children. Yet they remain conspicuously quiet on education policies.

Cardus, a think tank that conducts independent and original research on North American public life, recently reported "the policy positions of 31 leading business associations across the country (Canada) and found that only one association... offers clear commentary or position on the K-12 education delivery. ... (Instead) the business community is virtually silent on an issue to which governments dedicate more money than any other service, save health." (*Business Gone Quiet*, Cardus, p. 6, Spring 2016)

The purpose of my article is not to speculate on why that is – although that would be very, very interesting to explore. Rather, I'll skip the why, and propose what the business community should be demanding from governments when it comes to education.

With our rapid changes in society and the economy, there are several considerations

*Continued on page 4*



Montessori  
ACADEMY OF LONDON

# Preparing our children for success

*A conversation with education and parenting expert Laura Flores Shaw*

Companies like Google aren't looking for the 'best and brightest,' says Laura Flores Shaw, parenting and education expert over lunch at Montessori Academy of London.

Why on Earth would an education expert say such a thing?! Aren't the 'best and brightest,' well, the BEST people to add to your team? Not necessarily, according to today's employers.

While the business community may be silent on education policy, it's becoming obvious what they want in their workers. Indeed, the most innovative business leaders realize that the "best" people to have on a team are creative, critical thinkers who adapt well and embrace change. Because of the rapid change in this new knowledge economy, employees will need to "re-tool" and re-invent themselves several times during their careers.

Today's employers find that the conventionally educated 'best and brightest' are afraid to fail, Flores Shaw explains. "They lack intellectual humility. What they say needs to get an A grade; this makes it hard for them to collaborate with other people."

Instead, she says the ideal 21st century worker will be driven not by external motivation of being considered the best

(getting a gold star, making the most money, etc.), but to create sustainable success through collaboration. The most successful will adapt easily and think innovatively because they anticipate and understand change; they will be life-long learners and love to try new things.



Three Year One students collaborate to write a book for our library.

Unfortunately, our conventional education model doesn't encourage a love of learning; in fact, some would argue that it extinguishes curiosity. Flores Shaw cites an example of two former students of the Montessori school she once led in California who transitioned to a publicly funded school. She asked their mother how they were doing, and the mother replied that "the light had gone out" in their

eyes. The children's perception of learning "had changed with the move to the conventional system; it imposed a sense of drudgery about learning. That's hard (for children to experience). It's so vital to keep the love of learning alive because if you want people to be motivated and 're-tool,' they need to want to learn!"

Entrenched in that conventional way of thinking about education is a bias that assumes children don't want to work. "That's where we get the idea that children don't like school," Flores Shaw asserts. She goes on to say we often

*Continued on page 4*

On May 19, parenting and education expert **Laura Flores Shaw** visited Montessori Academy of London for a tour of our school during the day and to present "Education for the 21st Century" to our community in the evening. According to the bio, Laura has bachelors and masters degrees in psychology and is currently working towards a doctorate in education, with a specialization in mind, brain, and teaching, at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education. She remains in awe of how much she doesn't know, despite sometimes acting like a know-it-all.



# A parent & professional's perspective

By Kelsey Ramsden

Over the past 8 weeks I have spent time with the CEOs of the largest 100 organizations in Canada, the Minister of Finance, global thought leaders in innovation and creativity, founders of some of the fastest growing start-ups out there and leaders from the likes of Singularity University & the X-Prize. What I have learned is that all of these people have one unifying belief, the 'future' is approaching with a rate of change greater than ever seen before and the change that the world will experience will be like nothing we have seen before, nothing at all like we have seen before. This both excites me tremendously and scares me deeply.

It excites the innovator, creative and curious part of me that loves to see opportunities unfold. It scares the parent in me that looks upon our children and wonders how we best provide them with the knowledge and experience to be well positioned for this kind of future.

From my experience as a Founder, my traditional MBA training and my access to deep and rich conversations with people who are involved in many of the frontiers of our time I reflect on two things (1) What is success? (2) How can I provide our children with access to those things that will help them attain that success? The answer to number one will vary for everyone, but *en masse* I would expect we all want similar things for our children with respect to supportive communities, love, family, a sustainable future and the financial resources to afford them the kind of life they desire, in addition to many more things. So, how do we provide our children with access to the things that will help them attain success in this future?

There are a few key components I believe will be essential:

- (A) Ability to adapt
- (B) Strong convictions held loosely
- (C) Deep connection to self

Adaptation requires an "opportunity mindset"; that we can and will learn anything we are curious enough about.

Strong convictions held loosely means we believe deeply in the things we do but are willing to adjust our opinions based on new information.

Deep connection to self in that one knows what drives them, what are challenges to overcome and how to self-regulate. Having a combination of these things will put our children in a place of possibility for an increasingly uncertain future.

In my role as a business mentor, I see similarities in those who seek personal and professional success in that each of them take adaptation not so much as change, but as evolution. The most successful people I meet are happiest when they are faced with challenges to assumptions, beliefs and the status quo. These people feel stable in themselves, have strong convictions, are curious and adaptive, which of course allows them to lead not only themselves but their businesses or careers with an appropriate balance between data and



Care to join the conversation? Connect with Kelsey: [kelsey@kelseyramsden.com](mailto:kelsey@kelseyramsden.com) and Tweet @kelseyRamsden

intuition. Often times, they just 'know' what they want to learn or places they want to be...they go there and learn that and eventually the world catches up with them. It's like that Gretzky and puck story we always hear: that Wayne goes to where the puck is going to be before it gets there.

I wish I could say that when we chose Montessori I had done all manner of research and stress tested the various options for our children's education. I did not. I happened to be driving down Oxford and saw a sign for an info session. Margaret led us through an experience I still remember to this day. We went home talking about how Montessori was so different but made so much sense. It was only then that I dove into Google like I was after a treasure at the bottom of the ocean of information. As it turned out, many of the fundamental principles of what I believe are what will set our children up to be where the puck is going are embedded in the Montessori education. The beautiful thing is that they are not taught them, they experience each of them and such learning is truly the thing that makes an impression.

I hope that our children find success and are exceptional. To be exceptional, they must be an exception to the rule. I believe that the Montessori education they are receiving will allow them to be and do just that. •



## *Business, our future and education — continued from page 1*

that need to be a part of the education framework of tomorrow:

- Today's students have to reinvent themselves many times and therefore need to love learning and be lifelong learners. (Source: *The Montessori White Papers Vol. I*, "Education for the 21st Century Economy," Mauricio A. Flores, JD)
- People who are skilled in innovation will be exponentially more successful. (Source: "Education for the 21st Century," M. Flores)
- Creative thinking and development will become paramount for survival in the knowledge economy. (Source: *The Montessori White Papers Vol. I*, "Montessori and Creativity," Laura Flores Shaw, MS)
- Darwin's theory has been modified: it is no longer "survival of the fittest," but survival by adaptation and collaboration. The old model that leans on competition is outdated. Competitiveness should be reframed to be sustainability.

These are some of the key qualities that our children will need to not only thrive but also to be the type of employees that will help our organizations thrive.

But how do we get to this model? It has to be a complete shift in thinking about education, this new vision does not come from tinkering around the edges of the present format.

Fortunately, a model does exist that reflects this new framework, and it is even proven in its efficacy. It is the traditional Montessori approach to education, something Montessori Academy is always striving toward.

The Montessori educational approach is about creativity, life-long learning, self-construction, developing knowledge frameworks, emphasis on expectations and a true focus on who each student is, what they bring to the world and how they have a responsibility to contribute.

As a present employer this is what I would want in anyone that works for our school or any other organization that is making meaningful contributions to our world. •

## *Preparing our children for success — continued from page 2*

inadvertently encourage that mindset when we say things like, "Aren't you excited for summer? Thank goodness school is over." We assume children don't like learning.

Flores Shaw says education should encourage curiosity, self-regulated learning, creativity and resiliency; and there's a general rule for being resilient through bad experiences: "for every negative experience you should have five positive experiences. It's kind of like that for educating children; it's not always going to be joyful, but if you provide them 'flow' experiences (deep concentration on something 'intrinsically

interesting,' as defined by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi), they can deal with some of their frustrations."

In an economy that will demand that people re-invent themselves several times in one career, the ability to be resilient, creative and constantly curious will be essential for success. Fortunately, Montessori education supports many of those qualities.

Learn more about how Montessori supports the skills children will need for success in Flores Shaw's *The Montessori White Papers*, available through her website, [www.laurafloresshaw.com](http://www.laurafloresshaw.com) •



Montessori  
ACADEMY OF LONDON

711 Waterloo St. London, Ontario, N6A 3W1 • Tel: 519-433-9121 Fax: 519-433-8941  
info@montessori.on.ca • www.montessori.on.ca