

I confess that I went to a name private high school. I didn't get a bad education there, but I came away from the experience wanting no further contact with the place or people I knew there. I remember the school as a high pressure, high stakes machine which churned out people adept at using their sharp elbows, socially and in their work, to eviscerate anyone in their path to advancement. It felt like a predatory environment where only the most fit, according to the school's criteria, succeeded. I did not succeed there, I just survived the experience. I remember a high casualty rate among my classmates, people who ran away from school, were expelled, dropped out, or simply were, in the school's euphemism, "not invited back".

Using a proverbial broad tarring brush, based on my harsh high school experience, I came into adulthood with a strong prejudice against private schooling. Friends' positive experiences at other schools challenged and puzzled me. I was even dimly aware that other students at my school mustn't have shared my experience or feelings towards our school.

When longtime friends living in the same town as I sent their children to The Montessori School, I wondered why they did so, thinking of the high local taxes we pay, 90+% to fund our town's school system, and the commensurate high national rating of our town's public schools.

Then, late and unexpectedly, I became the husband to a public school teacher. Seeing up close the energy, passion, intelligence, and creativity which Judith brought to her students and her work, certainly her colleagues also to theirs, left me with no doubt as to my commitment to public education.

Still later and even more unexpectedly, I became father to two sons whose presence rocked my world and utterly changed my views. These boys have been profoundly different people since before their births, each with his distinct strengths and particular needs. I find the extraordinary degree of difference between our sons wonderful as I think it makes possible their sharing the same air in a way which would not occur if they had to compete with each other for it.

Strange and even laughable to think with them so close in age as they are but so different from each other as they are, that many people asked if they were twins! But they so clearly are not identical in their interests--other than soccer and Lego--or in their gifts and their challenges or in how they learn and express themselves.

As Judith and I contemplated our move from Switzerland to the US, friends on both sides of the Atlantic encouraged us to look into Montessori education for our sons. A Swiss friend who studies pedagogy and whose sons are friends of our sons recommended Montessori to us in principle. Our American friends whom I mentioned above and who sent their children to The Montessori School years ago recommended this school in particular.

Lo, in October 2013, our sons and we came to see the school. At first sight, they and we, my principles and prejudice in favor of public education notwithstanding, were moved, at moments to tears by what we saw.

Our introduction to the school, the hospitality of the students who brought us to their classrooms to observe and offered us tea, the open and substantial conversation with the Head of School--more time with the Head in my first hour at our school than I spent with the Headmaster of my school in four years there.

Certainly the school's environment, the tall oaks overhanging the building, open classrooms with large windows bringing sunlight and a view to the garden, the school flows physically out from and back into the outside world, as our children go out from the school to surrounding towns to research questions of interest returning with the answers they find.

I found so telling our observant and wide-seeing older son's comment after our first visit to The Montessori School, in his special, gentle way: "I want to go to school here". I know no more convincing or telling endorsement.

Of course I write of subjective, emotional things, and omit vital subjects such as pedagogy which I, in my second year as a Montessori parent, am fascinated by and I attend many Parent Education workshops and events. While I still struggle to comprehensively understand the pedagogy, I deeply respect the depth of the educational philosophy and see the strong academic opportunities along with the focus on the development of the human being.

I see and feel the vitality of the community, cherish the occasions when our sons allow me to accompany them into the school and I can spend a few moments in the corridors whether heavily trafficked with children preparing for school or quiet and I can hear the sounds and feel the energy of children and their teachers hard at their work. I am so glad that we are here.