**How do we address praise in a Montessori Classroom?**

As many of you know, rewards and punishments are not employed in Montessori, at least not in the conventional sense. In Montessori, there are no stars or stickers, no tests or judgments. Homework? No, not that either. Everything happens more naturally, and in accordance with the aspirations of the child.

So, how do children know that they are on the right path? They feel it. Each and every day a child measures their own progress, with help from the materials and the assistance of the prepared environment. With no teacher to tell them, “Good Job!” the child desires to accomplish tasks on their own, because they want to. They’re not looking for praise they’re feeling it.

One of the perfect examples of how Montessori avoids the logic of praise is in the utilization of the materials. The materials are design in such a way there is a control of error.

How do Montessori guides respond to praise inspired formulations? By asking children questions, here’s an example, one that we are all faced with. A child finishes a painting and brings you their work, exclaiming, “What do you think? Do you like my painting?” as they hold it up. How would a Montessori teacher respond to this situation? By bringing those questions back towards the child, and sticking to the facts. “Would you like to tell me about it? I see blue and…”

It’s one of the single, most difficult habits to break, offering praise, instead of allowing a child to discover their own confidence. Praise is ingrained in our vocabulary. It’s in our expressions, and everything we do. It’s seemingly always at the tip of our tongue. Yet, what a child needs most is the assurance that they can do it on their own, and for themselves.

**Praise, Rewards, Punishments**

As a matter of fact, telling our children how smart and talented they are can create the opposite of what we want. It can make our children afraid to attempt new things; afraid of failure, afraid they won’t meet everyone’s expectations.

What does the research suggest? When we praise, it’s best for the praise to be related to the effort our children made. For praise to be effective, it also needs to be specific and sincere.

So, how exactly does the research fit with Montessori philosophy?

1. **In Montessori education, there aren’t rewards and punishments.** Maria Montessori believed in the child’s inner need to do productive work. Sensitive periods provide an internal urge and stronger reinforcement than any rewards or praise could do.

**“*The essence of independence is to be able to do something for one’s self. Adults work to finish a task, but the child works in order to grow, and is working to create the adult, the person that is to be.” Maria Montessori***

1. **Montessorians don’t give children lavish praise.** The child’s work is highly valued in Montessori education, and praise that is giving is typically specific praise emphasizing effort. “You really worked hard at that.” “You did that activity four times in a row!”
2. **Montessorians try to give encouragement rather than praise or descriptive rather than evaluative praise.** Instead of saying “You’re a good boy,” a Montessorian might say, “It really helped when you put away all the dishes.”
3. **Montessorians try to help children do things themselves and gain self-confidence.** Many of the Montessori materials have a control of error so that they child can tell immediately if an activity is done correctly. An external source of approval isn’t necessary.
4. **Through Montessori practical life activities, children develop order, concentration, coordination, and independence. Those are all qualities that make children self-confident and capable of listening to their own inner voice.**