

# Research for Teachers

## The evidence for Montessori teaching methods

published: Wed Mar 16 11:36:14 GMT 2011

---

- [Overview](#)
- [Study](#)
- [Case studies](#)
- [Further reading](#)
- [Appraisal](#)

### How and why do Montessori methods work?

Around a hundred years ago, Maria Montessori (1870-1952) devised a method of educating children that was radically different to the traditional method of her time. Her approach continues to inspire many teachers today. Montessori based her theory and classroom practices on observations and trial and error in her own classrooms. But is there a more scientific evidence base to support her methods?

This TLA research summary explores the findings of a book that set out to examine recent psychological research in support of Montessori's methods. It provides evidence that shows how and why Montessori methods work. The book is:

Lillard, A. S. (2005; updated 2007) *Montessori: the science behind the genius*, Oxford University Press, Oxford  
In the book, Lillard (an American professor of psychology with extensive first-hand experience of Montessori education) identified and explored eight principles of Montessori education supported by research and showed how these principles are applied in Montessori classrooms. She shows how Montessori's vision anticipated many twentieth century developments in child psychology and education.

This research summary presents each of the eight principles of Montessori education Lillard identified in turn. It explores how the principles translate into practice in Montessori classrooms and outlines some of the research evidence Lillard found in support of them. We provide further illustrations of some of the classroom practices Montessori advocated through a selection of case studies of research carried out by primary and secondary teachers.

While Montessori methods are usually associated with early years, any teachers (including primary and secondary teachers) interested in reading what psychology research says about learning and development and how to use it to improve teaching effectiveness will find this research summary helpful for their practice.

[Back to top](#)

---