

The Montessori Notebook S02E04

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SPEAKERS

Marvin, Simone Davies



Simone Davies 00:11

Hi, everyone, Simone here and welcome back to the podcast. I hope you're all doing really well. Today I'm going to be sharing a conversation with Marvin Reyes. He's the director of its role in nurseries and preschools in Cologne. And he's originally from Nicaragua. And his family moved to the US when he was about 11. And he went to London to study and he's been in Germany for the last 12 years. So I first heard Marvin speak at a Montessori conference in London a couple of years ago. And he was talking about sustainability practices in their nurseries and preschools. And I found it super inspiring. And I've recently been working with him on the earth project with Montessori everywhere. And so I'm delighted that he agreed to talk to us about some of the front projects that they've been doing. But we'll get to that conversation soon. But first, I wanted to talk to you about showing respect to our children. Because I think it's definitely one of the first things that I noticed when I first visited a Montessori classroom almost 20 years ago. I mean, if you've heard me describe that visit before, you'll know that I was so surprised by how respectful the teacher was not just to us, but also to all of the children. And showing respect to our children, I really think is one of the most powerful ways that we can teach our children how to respect themselves, how to respect us, and how to respect other people and the environment. And we're modeling it, and they're picking that up every day. So I made a list of 10 ways that we can show them respect. So I'd start with number one being soft hands, the way we handle them. And like particularly when they're young, we're changing their diaper, we're helping them get dressed, we're lifting them up into a car seat, we're like handling all them all the time. And when we use gentle hands, we're treating them with an

enormous amount of dignity, a word that Gabrielle used in last week's conversation, and an enormous amount of respect. So we can definitely start with soft hands, then number two would be Listen, and really stop and listen to their words, their expressions, their face, their hands, they're giving us a lot of information. So you're listening with your ears and your eyes, I like to say, of course, it's not possible all the time. But as much as possible, stop what we're doing, get to their height, and really listen. And even though that sounds like it can take more time, it can again save more time, because they're likely going to have feel more heard and seen. And then they won't need to nag you for your attention. Number three then is using kind words. And even Yes, when we're setting a limit, because a lot of us didn't grow up with great examples of setting limits in a kind and clear way. So I talk about it a lot in my book, *The Montessori toddler*, because it's like learning a new language from any of us, using less commands less demands and not dismissing their feelings. So let's try and use kind words, even when we need to say I can't let you hit me, or I can't let you do that.



Simone Davies 03:01

Number four, I would say is avoid baby talk. The way that we speak to children can often be quite patronizing. So instead, I want to show them respect by talking to them in a respectful way. I like to tell them what I'm about to do, if I'm new to handle them, or where we're going, we try to give them time to respond. And we use lots of rich vocabulary. And I feel like that's a really respectful thing to do, because instead of saying there's a wolf Wolf, we actually say there's a dog or if we know the name of the dog, oh, there's a Labrador, there's a West Highland terrier. And I'm still using a singsong tone with babies and young toddlers. But it's not in a way that talks down to them. Number five, I like to let them know what we appreciate. So usually when we say like good job, or Good girl, good boy, it doesn't give them a lot of information. And it can kind of be patronizing. And we've talked before, I'm sure about it being extrinsic motivation, instead of building the intrinsic motivation. And we show them we respect them when we instead tell them what we appreciate or what they mastered, like, Oh, you put all the blocks back in the basket ready for the next person. It's it's like giving them feedback instead of that empty praise. Number six, allowed time well, as much as possible, but time for movement, time for conversation time to walk at their own pace. And these are all ways that we show respect like for this speed, what they're interested in and their work, the things that they're busy with rather than early ever looking from our perspective, and what needs to be done and rushing them through their days. And then I would say number seven, include them in daily life. Like we want to in Montessori, let them contribute, let them help take part in family conversations and to make age appropriate choices. They're not going to decide which country we're going to live in, but they can decide which color shirt they might want to wear that day. And they want to feel like part of the family. Everyone then is like

working together rather than only being about the kids or only about us or even everyone for themselves. So that's a really beautiful way to show respect. Number eight is finding ways to work with them, rather than threatening them, bribing them or punishing them. So I don't know if you've read any of Africans work. But in unconditional parenting, for example, he describes it as instead of doing something to a child that's like the threatening bribing or punishing them, we're actually finding ways to work with them. So it's instead like saying, Can you help me carry this heavy box inside, rather than if you do come inside right now I'll you know, and we start threatening them in some different way. Number nine, look them in the eye and accept them for who they are. And I always say like, isn't that what we all wish for like that we can be accepted totally for who we are. for ourselves, we don't have to apologize for our uniqueness, but like actually being embraced. So our role as parents and educators and carers is to guide and support them, we might even teach them some new skills, but it's not our job to change who they are. And then the last one is number 10. Let them show us how capable they are. Because if we set things up for them to have success, and we provide lots of hands on learning opportunities that they can master by themselves, then they can have those moments to have that feeling like I did it. And that's going to give them so much confidence. And it's such a respectful way to be with children. But I will give you a bonus one as well. And that is to be a model of honesty to our children. So what I mean is when we tell them the truth, and we don't tell any white lies, they're going to also learn to be honest with us and to trust us too. And I think that's really, really respectful. It can also mean apologizing when we get it wrong. And instead of blaming someone else, you know, I got it wrong. And we've said before, like, what I should have done is or what I should have said is this, and we're modeling apologizing as well. So I'm not saying that this means that the child is allowed to do whatever they want, and that the adults not in charge, we would definitely set a limit when we need to, we're not going to be passive, but we're not going to be aggressive. Either we're going to we're going to be respectfully assertive, something like you know, I'm not going to let you keep eating me, I'm going to put you down, I'm, I'm going to calm down. Or I can't let you hurt your friend, I'm going to sit here in between you. Or it might be that files can break, I'm going to put it up here and we can find somebody else to bang. So you're describing and being very kind and clear without threatening and punishing and those kind of things. So I hope that that's a helpful reminder, I'll link to a blog post where you can print these out to remind yourselves, particularly maybe on those days when we're feeling a little less patient. And now it's time for my conversation with Marvin, we were initially planning to interview him with some of the children from the school. And the children are around four or five years old and not native English speakers. So well, just for fun. We'll let you see how that went first, and then we'll move on to the conversation with Marvin. So keeping it real, folks. And I'll be back after my conversation with Robin to answer another listener question.



Simone Davies 08:05

Hi, everyone. I'm Simone. Nice to meet you all. Hello, where are you joining us from?



08:12

Where do you live



08:15

in Deutschland, which means Germany in English now.



Simone Davies 08:19

And just to introduce you to everyone on the podcast. We are speaking today with Marvin and some students from Vince arola who are in Deutschland are in Germany. And yes, they are in Cologne. So we're going to have a chat today about some of the things that you do at your Montessori School. Do you speak German and English? You can you can tell see more?



08:40

Yeah,



Simone Davies 08:42

German and English. I'm impressed. And we're very interested in learning more about your school because it's a very special school that does some very interesting projects about looking after the earth. And so we're going to talk about some of the recycling projects that you do and a new project that you did as well called trash detectives, so maybe we could start there and you could tell us a little bit about how that project started. And Marvin you could translate if you like if they prefer to talk in German that's no problem at all. So how did it all start? How did you just become trash detectives



09:12

where you guys trash to?



09:16

Remove the heat you're more familiar with the German word which is move that like the passport in the middle



09:31

Alright Boston means I grafting in German passport it was pointed but happier string to baptism by experience.



09:43

You



09:45

confessing



09:48

something, it's something quite special came came our way as well. And this is something that they want. They were looking forward to, to show you. Oh, yes. The end of the day. They did something for some kind of facility. For the Christmas party, is it okay if I hold the camera? So you guys be sure? Yeah. Is that okay for you see my



Simone Davies 10:06

That sounds good. Let's go on to it. And I will be private for the people who are listening on audio.



10:11

All right, we are in the dragons and raccoons group and the dragons and raccoons will show you some of the things that you guys grafted Now, shall we? Alright, then.



Simone Davies 10:25

Okay, so we're going on a tour now marvins picked up the computer, you can see out the windows into the garden. Ah, here's something here on the table that's very big. Look at all of this, it's impulses that are made out of some cardboard, and you're slipping it over your head. And between the two pieces of cardboard and over your arms go to pieces of string to hold the horse on, and then you've even got rains. And this is all from materials that were found in your classroom. Look at that. It's got a tail with some wall hanging down, and the legs are hanging off for a long cardboard tubes. He comes to slay which is red painted red and black with again, cardboard on either side and strings holding it on. And these were all used in the Christmas by they're walking around the classroom,



11:10

what they're doing now what they did in the play was about snakes and years, and they're just performing badly.



Simone Davies 11:23

Thank you very much for showing us look at those. Not to get them off. You have to step out of them. There we go.



11:31

Thank you for showing us.



Simone Davies 11:33

I actually heard that you have a very special supplies shelf called Marlin 2.0, where you collect all of your materials.



11:41

But Marvis 2.0 it's right there. Look at that.



Simone Davies 11:45

So would you like to tell everybody on the podcast what Marlin 2.0 is, it's a special shelf with boxes and things in it. You guys.



11:57

I think Seymour doesn't know what we do here in this corner and what we can find in that cabinet.



Simone Davies 12:03

Yeah, so the opening the cupboard doors and lifting off at the very top, there's a long red rolling pin. This is



12:11

basically a cabinet that was developed to to put all of the recycled stuff in. We've realized at one point that is it can be quite messy when it comes to the creativity corner. So we made this covenant to put all of those messy things in it that way, the room will stay a bit more tidy and organized for the children to find everything they need. As you can see, they know where everything is they find tools, they'll find materials in it. The teachers are entitled to reveal the cabinet every week,



Simone Davies 12:45

he found some glue, and there's more Brussels,



12:47

actually empty glue sticks. Like I said everything that we don't use anymore. We just don't throw it away, we recycle. And we put it somewhere.



Simone Davies 13:01

So the idea is to have definitely an upcycling project and they're starting to learn about consumption. We're asking them



13:07

now if they want to continue talking to you or they want to go outside.



Simone Davies 13:12

What would you like to do? Would you like to keep talking? Or would you like to go outside? That's, that's okay, too. You're welcome to and maybe Marvin can answer some questions. It's been very lovely to get your creativity going.



Simone Davies 13:33

So Marvin, tell us about this trash detectives project that the children came up with and what the results have been from it.



13:40

Well, a little bit of a background about us is that we we like to recycle and upcycle and it's actually one of those things that has been implemented within within our curriculum. So that means that the teachers are entitled to collect things from the kitchen, from the packaging from all the things that we normally would throw away, we would just disinfect them and get them ready for the children. Okay, this is something that we do as as adults. But last year in October, they did the children, the ones that are five, five and a half already, they were quite curious about where all of these things are coming from. And so one child passed by the kitchen they will they will keep on passing by the kitchen and they were realizing that the kitchen was was always collecting these tetra packs together because for the tetra packs is something that we have to take care of. We have to clean them we have to disinfect them otherwise the milk you know it can get really stinky sometimes. And they kept looking at that and they kept coming into the classroom asking why is the kitchen have the all the tetra packs, why don't we get them it was because They weren't, they weren't, they weren't. Somehow they were giving me the feeling that they were trying to understand. We do have the tetra packs here. But for some reason the kitchen has all of them there. So anyways, it started there, by them being aware where, where these things were coming from. So we said, okay, let's do something, then let's collect all of the things I'll get you guys involved and the things that we're doing in the background. It you guys involved in it, so that you guys see how much we produce, how much how much we consume. And so it all started, we talked to them about it, and we thought we had some kind of a brainstorming. And we told them that we were going to think collect trash for two weeks and see how much trash we collect. So we started like that every day, at any time, the children were just going up and down here and they're collecting the things that they thought was was trash, talking to the people responsible talking to the kitchen, talking to Toby as who is responsible for the for all the packages, talking to burn, who is responsible for cooking with the children. And yeah, talking to all of

these people, they were then getting all of these products, or these things that we would normally throw away, we use the special room to put all of this material in it. In at the end of the two weeks, we had a mountain of trash. It was it was incredible. For me it was it was also quite, quite impressive to see to see how much trash we produce. And of course, this was only the trash that we thought could be reused. Because there was also a lot of trash that we can't really reuse not to just fall with or things like that. Um, but yeah, after the two weeks, we're done, then we sat down, we made some kind of a huge circle around the all the trash. And we talked about it. We talked about it for about, I don't know, a long time. And directly, they just started saying, look, we can do this with that. And we can do this with that. And we can do a boat with this. And we can do a robot with this. And we can do that. I'm giving me the feeling that they were already in finding solutions, finding ideas of what to do with all this material. In the end, we decided to do what is it? What is it that the teachers were doing in the background and told them look, now we have to solve it, we have to classify them, we have to put all the cardboard together we have to put all the tetra packs together, giving them also this sense of order in, in organization. So that's what we did. Together with all this was a group of eight, nine children. And together with them then we took all the cardboard and we share that into all the classrooms. And we took all the data packs and we shared it into all the graphs and the classrooms. And we took everything else is just just share that with all the classrooms. That way, then at the end of the day, they were very much aware where all these were coming from. And they knew what was what was happening in the background.



18:27

It was it was it was quite touchy for me to see that because it was it was it was something that we haven't done up until now. And I think it's something that we will do as as as a regular project because so far the teachers we were quite we are quite conscious about it we get special trainings for this and we weren't quite conscious about it it collecting things disinfecting them and making them available for the children. But where these things come from the children weren't really aware of in and now if you ask them a is Trash Trash I asked him at the end of the project is Trash Trash should new in a way that What are you talking about? Trash is not trash?



Simone Davies 19:20

Yeah, it's making the invisible visible for them by involving them in the process. There were more



19:25

children involved in the project. And we also made a video while we were doing the project so we were able to document it in a more graphic way. And so do you think it's good to have trash? That's



19:43

when it's going to trash? To me



19:48

Do you have any ideas of what to do with all this trash? Oh come on.



19:59

Out Where are these things here? What are these? Do you think is a lot of trash? Or a little bit? A lot of trash now? Yeah. And do you think is good too.



Simone Davies 20:13

And you also spoke about how sometimes you go to the waste and storage, you know, plant to actually see what happens with the storage or to go to a recycling plant. Because, again, you put the things in the recycling, but you don't ever see and close the picture of what actually happens to the recycling. So do you want to talk about some of those visits that you've done with the children?



20:31

Yeah, these are these are visits that are that are scheduled within our year plan. We've been doing a couple of projects since since a while already, and we have been able to implement a lot of these visits visits within our daily routine. One of the visits that we one of the field trips, I would say we do is to the sewage treatment plant, which is really, really nearby. I think it's about 30 minutes by bus. And we just go there, to do what to do something very special to know exactly what's happening to the water that we dispose all of the the water that's in the toilet, the water the runs down the sink, the water that we normally throw away, is water that is being collected at one point is water that has to be treated at one point so that we can reuse again, water is one of those things that is very

much important. And we sometimes just take it for granted. And for us was quite special for children to know the actions and reactions of things. If we get the water dirty, then somebody has to put a lot of effort into cleaning. So in this field trip, there is a special sewage treatment plant that has a special program for children. Where they do where they do experiment, one of the experiment is getting a big bowl and they throw all kinds of things in that bowl until the water was super, super dirty. And then they go through they they've got some they got a mini little tank with bacteria there. And then they wonder the children can see how this, how this dirty water is being processed up until it's clean. And then it goes back into the river in having this knowledge, I think is quite important for children. Yeah, just to make them aware of what are the actions and reactions of things. Another field trip that we do is to the recycling plant, the recycling plant, it's it's also another special thing because they also have a special program for children where they allow us to go in and see what happens to all of the recycled cardboard or paper. And now we know that they make a newspaper out of them. And if you ask one of these children, they will probably tell you that Yeah, seitan like they call it in German is being made out of it. Or they will tell you that out of the foods, the wasted food, we make fertilizer, all of these things that they make out of the recycle stuff, we are able to see it a life and children are quite impressed to know where all of these things end up. And I think it's important for them if we if we says we recycle a lot. Let me show you real quick. For example, this, we've got an empty classroom, we've got recycled recycling beans. It was a plastic paper and the rest. Yeah. And we put a lot of effort into recycling everything. But of course it is it is also important for children to know where all of these things end up.



Simone Davies 23:58

Oh, definitely and be aware of the cycle. And we should also say that the children in your school or go up to five or six years old. So there's a younger children, they're not the six to 12 year olds, they're really young children who are learning about the impact on the environment and taking it in with the absorbent mind very naturally. Because if you start actually the young ages, sometimes we wait till they're six to 12 to have these conversations and you're starting they're much younger.



24:22

Exactly. And we also don't don't set a strong focus into wording such as we don't focus on on saying now we're gonna be doing sustainability. Now we're going to be saving the planet or anything like that. We just do things to make it normal. By by just doing we think that they're absorbing all of these things, and they're absorbing the positive things out of them. So it might be that if you ask a child, what do you know about sustainability? They'll

probably won't be able to tell you in words what that is, but they'll probably be able to show you what it is. They do with all of these recycling upcycling and water and how many tissues you use to dry your hands and so on. So on. So they're pretty much absorbing everything like when they sit with their absorbent mind.



Simone Davies 25:13

Yeah, that's beautiful. And actually, I also loved how you use the paper towels to make you add flour and some salt. Is it to make things that you can use it for pepper pepper mash a and as a creative tool? Yeah.



25:27

Yeah, actually, in a after that big project we had, I don't know, maybe three kilograms of recycled paper towels. With it something super, super huge. We had to we had to dry it up quite nicely, because it was really big. It was a big sun. But yeah, we just Magellan just create things that are, once you have adult, you can do whatever, whatever they can imagine. And sometimes you just don't know what's going to come out of their minds, but because they just love to create.



Simone Davies 25:58

Yeah. And so do you have to sanitize the paper towel before you make it into this kind of paper mache? Anything?



26:05

Yet we boil it? Ah, okay. Yeah, directly with that. Just kill all the germs. And that was one of the questions that parents kept asking, what about hygiene? Paper towels? The first thing we tell them? Of course, these are just paper towels, where we dry our hands. No, no, not paper towels, or nothing like that are just for drying hands. But still, we will be one of the most important things of this process of making the paper machine out of this paper towels is to is to put hot water in it. But if you put hot water, you don't really disinfect it. So you have to boil it. We have a big part, where do we just put all the paper towel and boiler for like, five minutes. And that's it. And then we let you let it cool down. And then you put it into a mixer. You may you may get some kind of make you make a dough out of it. Very important is to put salt in it. Because it's gonna prevent it from moving.



Simone Davies 27:09

Yes. Okay. Same with playdough. Yeah, okay, if you make your own playdough.



27:13

Yeah.



Simone Davies 27:14

And the children I you know, do they help in that process, at least collecting the towels and things like that, or is that again, something more that the adults will do behind the scenes?



27:24

It depends. Some children, if they have an idea, they'll know where the paper towel is in the bathroom in groups has a paper towel. And sometimes they will just go in get it most of the times is something that we do in the background as well. But that's something that we're now in the process of finding the best way to get the children involved in this process. Now, after this project, we become it became really, we became really conscious that the children want to be involved in these projects in these processes. So yeah, that's what we're gonna find out now, the best way to cope with the hygiene aspect. Because also, if if they go directly into the bathroom and get the paper towels directly, then they haven't been sanitized yet. Yeah, exactly. So that that's one of the main reasons why most of these things were being done in the background so far. And then being offered to the children once everything was sanitized and disinfected, and so on. But yeah, we're still brainstorming. And we believe that this is not something that's going to end right now. We believe that it's, it's, it's a process, it's going to be a long process.



Simone Davies 28:42

And you've been doing these programs and initiatives for quite a long time since you opened.



28:47

No, we've been doing this since 2012. Okay. And it all started also with a child and

tadpoles. Okay. I'm not sure if you know about this story, but the story made short. One day in 2012, a child came up with a bucket full of tadpoles and he said I've got this tadpoles because my neighbor's gonna throw them away. What do you mean throw them away? So yeah, and, and I thought before they throw them away, I wanted to show it to my friends. Is that okay? Of course that's okay. So, um, yeah, we had the tadpoles in the classroom a couple of weeks. And then we realized that they started to develop and in the game, back legs and they started becoming mini frogs. And it got to a point where they were too big for this bucket where we had them. And so we did a brainstorming of ideas with the children about what to do with that post. When idea came up, off, and it was to build upon for that pause. So we build that pond. And then another child said, but what if it jumps out of the pond? There is nothing around it. There's just cars around it, by the way, we are in the middle of the city and is, yeah, you're so analogize it, but if we do a garden, then maybe they can jump into the flowers. So that would be okay now. So after that we also did a guided around the pond. And just like that one thing led to the other and now we're just doing everything we can to to implement projects concerning sustainability, recycling, upcycling, social. And, of course, by recycling, you also have to look at the aspect of money saving at one point, and so on. So, yeah, it's, it's been a process.



Simone Davies 30:55

Yeah, definitely. And there's the whole idea of reducing the consumption to start with, isn't there? So it's never ending? And we have to keep refining. And I think we're improving, but we need to improve faster.



31:06

Yeah, yeah, I definitely think so.



Simone Davies 31:09

Yeah, um, I also love that in Montessori, we get the children involved in you know, the cooking and the whole process of those kind of things. Do you actually have a vegetable garden there where the children can get things from the garden to cook in the kitchen?



31:23

Yeah. Normally, what grows here quite nicely are potatoes. So there are a lot of potatoes out there, Patrick as well. And carrots, they grow quite nicely. And I can tell you this,

because we've tried a lot of vegetables. We tried to plant a lot of little things in that spot where we have the garden is quite hot, have chataway. So that was also something that we learned along the way that children also learn, okay, plants grow better when they are under the sun, and so on. And so at one point, we realized that those three, four things that are growing quite nicely are those things that we continue and growing. Because after a couple of years, we just realized that those are things that grow the most. Yes, and they are things organic. We don't put any fertilizers or anything. And when those when those things are ready. You'll be surprised how tasty they are.



Simone Davies 32:24

Yeah, home grown with love from the children is extra tasty.



32:28

Yes, yes.



Simone Davies 32:31

And they have like a children. Like you said that one of your teachers cooks with the children every day.



32:37

Yes, I was actually burned just left today today with the banana pancakes. Of course, no, no vegetables are growing right now. So we improvise into cooking and doing other activities that have to do with preparing your own food as well. We focus also quite a lot on cooking regional and seasonal. So so we don't get for example, avocados that come from Peru or things that come from far away. And we try to consume the things that are grown locally. The we have a supplier that supplies us with local food in where smaller small kindergarden. So still okay. Yeah, it first is also quite important to focus on that aspect of, of sustainability.



Simone Davies 33:31

We have a lot of parents who are listening to the podcast and they struggle probably just having one child to get involved with cooking. And so you're managing with many children and setting the table and sitting to have a cozy meal together. Do you want to

talk through what that looks like in a Montessori classroom for those who can't really picture 30 children or sitting down together to have a meal that you know, who are under six years old?



33:53

Or love to show you that this way? Yeah, well, I think I think that that if you look at it as a as a process, as a process would would, would be the best thing. The children here are encouraged to deal with sharp knives and with a with normal plates, not plastic plates, rather normal ceramic plates, and glasses and things like that. And they are being exposed to the world. They're being encouraged to use this materials from the beginning on. So they're quite familiar with it. So a child knows a three and a half four year old child knows exactly where the danger of a sharp knife is. And they know exactly how to hold it properly so they don't get cut. Like I said, this is this is this is a process and I at the beginning of course we were with each one of the children doing individual lessons on how to use Knife properly, how to cut properly, and they get a lot of support at the beginning. In the end, the child is able to do it all along. But yeah, it can be, it can be quite complicated if the child hasn't been exposed to these dangers. So my advice to you, mothers, fathers teachers out there listening is do it with your child, no danger in that just do it with him and explain to him where the dangers are. That way the child will be conscious about.



Simone Davies 35:37

Yeah, and I love seeing children set the table, you know, for their friends, and then they sit together. And I think it's part of being in community as well that the children don't get up and run around, they learn. And there's a mixed age group as well in our Montessori classrooms so that the older ones are modeling how we sit at the table and how we eat at the table. And then maybe the newer child is the one who maybe needs to be brought back occasionally, do you find that sometimes as well.



36:03

Maybe if it's a child who has just started, was really who's still learning the rules. But everybody else knows that if we start eating lunch at 12, then they come back from, from outside, wash their hands, everybody knows that they should wash their hands. Everybody knows that they should only get one paper towel to dry their hands, then everybody sits down, they grab their own cups and put their cups next to their friends or to whomever they want to sit down with. And they know that if, if the lunches are up until 1230, then

the teacher will ring a bell and they know that they will just stay seated talking to their peers next to them. But we rarely have children that are standing up and down, going back and forth, perhaps has a lot to do with the role modeling that we do in the Montessori setting, that we as a teacher sit down with the children. For us, it's quite important that children know that if we are encouraging them to do something that we should do as well, because we are the role models. And if the child sees that we are sitting down that we are eating properly with a fork of knives, they will they will more likely do what we are doing is what they call perhaps you can call it gregorious tendency or perhaps. Yeah, just the role modeling?



Simone Davies 37:28

No, definitely. And I think a lot of nurseries and places don't actually sit down and eat with the children. So they're not seeing that it's actually a time when you can communicate and have conversation and that you're modeling all of the grace and courtesies about Oh, can you pass me the water so that I can pull myself a glass of water and there's so much they can learn through meal process? It's not just to have the child fed, there's actually so much that they're learning in that time.



37:50

Yeah, another important aspect of that would also be a that, for us, it's important that the children serve themselves. First important that the child knows and gets to know himself and to see, okay, how hungry am I now? How much food will I put on my plate. And they will know that the amount of food they'll put on their plate is the amount of food that they'll eat. Otherwise, you might run into the problem that if the teacher would serve the food to the child and probably fill up their plate, and probably the child will only eat a quarter of that food and then the rest is going to have to be thrown away. And now we're recycled back to sustainability on that as well that we don't throw any any food away. So that's why it's important that children just serve themselves to see how much they want to eat, and then serve themselves again. Of course developing fine motor skills in dependency skills. The same with the water, how much water do I need? Somebody else needs water here is the job for you. And so so it's every table, the tables are set up like this. This is one of the tables.



Simone Davies 39:01

That is four tables that are together and some chairs around it. And again, yeah, that's eight children sitting together.



39:08

Yeah. And then there's always one adult in each table. Yeah.



Simone Davies 39:15

Thank you. I think that'd be really helpful. And I also I read that you have a beam Meadow that the children can visit as well with beekeepers and things like this.



39:24

Yeah, that is that's a that's a long life project. We want our competition where we were granted a piece of land in the nearby area in the competition was one because the project is about bees while bees preservation. So what we do there with the children is recreate bee hotels.



Simone Davies 39:51

Sounds sweet, but I know



39:53

Yeah, yeah, it's just amazing. We have walls of the hotels is great. Because also the children get to see the lifecycle of a bee. And they also see that one day, maybe the whole of that little pipe is open, and the next day is closed already, because there is already an egg in it. I'm not sure if you know the lifecycle of a bee. But



Simone Davies 40:19

we want to hear the whole lifecycle tell us?



40:22

Well, normally a B hotel are lots of little, let's say little pipes, they can be Yeah, it can be. Normally we do them out of bamboo sticks, which are quite hollow. And we Yeah, we we make no different sizes of I think many, many of the listeners have seen a be there before. So it's, yeah, it can be in different sizes, different things. Bottom line is that a, b would go into the bamboo Hall will lay the egg in it, and then would seal it with some kind of a clay

that they make. Okay, and then, and then they, they lay another egg in it, and then they seal it again until the pipe is closed. At one point when the when the egg is ready, then the egg is just just hatches and starts eating that. That sort of cradle. It starts making its way out. And and that is also quite interesting for the children to see. Okay, yesterday, there was a hole in it that the bamboo was hollow, and today is closed. And in one week. It's already open the beaconing out already. It's It's a beautiful process to see. Yeah. And sometimes we find these on flowers as well. Yeah,



Simone Davies 41:59

you are helping the bee population, definitely, I'm sure. And these children, I like to call them Junior explorers. And you have some programs where you have nature days, and they take the things that they've made like their boats to the river. Do you want to tell us a little bit about some of those nature days and where you get to? Because if you're in the middle of the city, how do you get there?



42:18

Yeah. Yeah, this is also something that has been implemented within the daily routine and the year schedule. So twice a month, and we go to the forest. And luckily, we're quite lucky because the forest is more or less nearby. It's around about 15 kilometers from here, we can take the public transportation is around about seven stations, do we get them? So we will walk to the train station, get on train, get off on the forest and walk, just explore the forest. And sometimes we do different activities, such as collecting leaves, collecting data, things, the seasonal things, or we will just experiment. And many times, I'm sure you heard Maximilian saying that he built the boat. Yes. So he already asked me when we're going to go to the river and throw the boat in it. Yeah, so I gotta hurry up and see if I can organize something like that. Right now we Corona, it's a bit more complicated because now we're not allowed to get on to public transportations with children. So we have to use our own fan, we're on transport where we can only transport six children at a time. Instead of now instead of doing it twice a month, we're doing it once a month, because just because we have to go back and forth many times and do it in, in in, in three days, actually, rather than in one day. But yeah, forests visit to the forests are quite important to us. Luckily, there is a little creek at the forest where we just let the boats go.



Simone Davies 44:07

It sounds like they getting such a rich education that's very holistic and all those things as well. And I read as well that from one of these forest visits, they came up with the idea of a

super Robo, something that would collect trash. Yeah. and separate the rubbish out.



44:23

Yes, yes. Actually, this project was done in Auckland in one of our other settings. Okay, this roller has three different settings in we have implemented this, all of these sustainability aspects in within our curriculum. And the children in this urban setting had the idea of Yeah, of building a robot that will just clean the streets for them. I thought it was really full, because the robot is quite huge and they wanted it to be big. They said because the streets are big right? Huh. So they built something yet a big robot they call they even called somebody, somebody would help them to weld everything. So a professional, that will also help him in this setting in his clothes to do an engineer, a factory. So they also call some engineers to come and help him build the robot. It was a it was a whole process. And this, this project also won a state prize. They won the first prize was quite nice. The children were super proud.



Simone Davies 45:39

Yeah, I'm sure I mean, and I love that it's not just a one day project, they have a lot of research that they need to do they get help, which is also like going out of the classroom into the community to, you know, get advice from people. And so they're learning Oh, if we don't know how to do something, we go and find out. And that's what we love, you know, showing our Montessori children.



45:59

Yeah,



Simone Davies 46:01

I also found it really fun to have a look at some of the themes that you have in your classrooms during the year. And like you start the school year, with the theme that's like, I'm in school, now we're a class, and you spend a couple of months I guess, getting to know each other in the community. Would you like to talk to that?



46:19

Yeah, we have a reception class program. And this is a, this has now been done as a as a

separate group. Very important is, especially now in Corona, we started implementing technology, and we're using a couple of applications to help us with that. And for us was quite important for German at the beginning of the reception class to know where they are and what they are in terms of what classroom and what kind of preparation they're going to be getting in this classroom before they go to school.



46:52

Okay.



46:54

Right now, they normally pick different projects throughout the year. And right now they're doing horses projects, I would love to go out and show you some murals that they they just did last week, and it was learning all about the horses. And the teacher is quite creative there as well, because then she tries to implement mathematic aspects and literacy aspects of pretty much you can you can implement everything in within this project now. Yeah, of course, sometimes parents are concerned. For example, yeah, horse project, but it's not really doesn't have anything to do with literacy or mathematics. Right? My child learning and the mathematics, I mean, aren't any numbers then. So. So we have to, we have to explain parents quite, quite carefully, quite a lot about what is it that the child is getting from these projects, that most of the times, it's not just about learning about literacy or mathematics, but also about social skills, social emotional skills in getting to know your environment? No.



Simone Davies 48:08

Yeah, absolutely. So I love that about the interdisciplinary nature of subjects, you know, it's very hard to isolate maths from the rest of the world, you know, you can be counting the number of legs of a horse, or how fast or measuring the length and there's many opportunities that are built into a topic area. And then there's language around it, there's always vocabulary in the parts of the horse. And, you know, anyway, there's so many opportunities for learning. So it's fun to educate parents along the way. And so that they understand what the children are benefiting from that process. And we found



48:42

our also a nice tool was called seesaw where we have included the parents in this project,

because of the same reason that sometimes they get a bit lost on what is my child learning. So we have granted them access to this to this application, we would do the project here in the kindergarden and we upload it onto this onto this application or platform, and parents are able to see directly from home, what is it that the children are doing? And sometimes children will also take some kind of a homework at home, not from our side, rather from their side saying, well, I want to I want to do this at home. And so they will just continue what they were doing in the kindergarden and they will just continue doing it at home. And automatically parents are involved in it. So involving parents is quite important for us as well. And education has to be teamwork thing.



Simone Davies 49:37

Definitely. I mean, I think it's so important. And we're realizing more and more in COVID times how much the parents also need to be on board. And hopefully they're also including many of these sustainability ideas in their own homes as well. So as we come into the end, is there anything else that you'd like to talk about any of the other projects have been Sorolla or some of the other things that you do? Are we covered most things,



Marvin 50:02

there are. Yeah, I will say there are a lot of things that we're still doing. But one of the most important things that I think everybody should take home is that aspects of sustainability can be implemented in the delivered in. And we have been getting lots and lots of benefits from it. And the gentlemen have gotten to a point where they do see those things as normal. And the amount of creativity and imagination that children would get by being exposed to all of these abstract material, I would say, It's incredible. You can see that if a child sees a tetra pack or a piece of cardboard, you can almost see how their brain is going around into finding ideas and solutions, or are ways to use this thing into and convert it into something different. So I can only say that aspects of sustainability can be implemented in the daily routine, and is working out quite well for us.



Simone Davies 51:10

Yeah, and the children's creativity is also being sparked from a very simple, natural process. So that's beautiful. Marvin, we really appreciate your time. Thank you so much for joining us. And I know that you want to get back to the children and get out to the river and float those boats. So thank you again.



51:27

Thank you. Thank you.



Simone Davies 51:42

So sustainability can also be a lot of fun, right? I'll definitely put links to Marvel's website and to some of the videos showing some of the projects in the show notes so that you can check them out. And now it's time for our listening question. And today's question is from Yves Marie. It's a long one but I'm going to read it all out as it's something I kind of get asked a lot about these kinds of situations. So it says I two and a half year old son attends a lovely ami Montessori school full time here in Canada and my husband and I try our best to follow the Montessori method our home although we were both raised in a very different way. His teachers report that our little guy is easy and affable at school. But at home he has lately started to push up on limits very strongly. Although I understand this is exactly what he should be doing. I often don't know what to do after I feel like I appropriately responded to his behavior and he persists into, for example, the first nice warm day of spring on our commute home from school. I was walking and pulling him in his wagon as usual. We saw another family eating ice cream cones. He started asking me for ice cream repeating the request more and more urgently, I pulled the wagon off the sidewalk crouched down to his level and look him in the eye. I calmly explained that I understood that he wanted ice cream ice cream was delicious. And I wished we could have some to but today we weren't going to have ice cream. I couldn't buy him ice cream today. This was true. I hadn't bought my wallet, which was hard, because I understood that he wanted some very much today was not the date have ice cream today was that families turned eat ice cream. And it would be our turn to have ice cream on a different day. Today we were going to the park. I felt like we'd connected and we understood but as soon as we started walking again, he resumed yelling and repeating his demand for ice cream. So what to do in this instance, ignoring him didn't feel very respectful. But I was at a loss how else to move on and ended up diverting him with the slide when we arrived at the playground. This is an example of something that is happening a lot. I feel like I'm communicating that I understand his wishes explain the limit and validate his feelings toward the limit. But then when he continues to test that limit, which I understand what's the best way to respond? So every thanks for your question. I think that how you responded to his disappointment was appropriate. You know, you didn't deny his feelings or moralize about how we don't get to eat ice cream every day or give a big lecture. It was quite a long explanation. But it depends on the child. Okay. And it sounds like you were trying to see his perspective, and he still wasn't happy about it. So the only other thing is maybe I've talked before about having a notebook. So if it's something that you'd be happy to do another day, you could also write it down. So you remember to come back

for ice cream, and you can cross it off once it's done. And the reason we do this is like it just feels super important when you write it down on a piece of paper. So they can feel really acknowledged. And then also when we cross it out, they're learning that we mean what we say. Then afterwards, the only thing I'd say is that I'm also okay. When they're sad about it still, you know, we are a safe place for them to let out their big feelings. And if there's time and space, I'd find some way to sit and ask if he wants to be held or not. And sit with him as he feel sad. I mean, we aren't giving into him, we're just simply saying we're a safe space, even when you feel sad or angry or disappointed. And rather than distracting him as much as possible. I'd let him to get it all out. Because otherwise what often happens is like the next thing happens, and there'll be in tears over that. And then the next little thing will make them you know, get upset again. So I'd rather let them get it all out of their system and where they're at They help the processor with a total of, for example, you often like hear them, like laid out this big sigh, and then you'll know they're pretty much calm again. But if you have to be somewhere it as much as possible, keep moving forward and keep acknowledging their feelings. It's not always practical to stop everything. So we're doing our best to manage like both getting where we need to go and our child's feelings at the same time. And then they are going to be some of those days, when we go to have had enough ourselves after five or 10 minutes like, and then we also need to be aware of our own limits. Otherwise, if we go past them, we'll end up getting angry and snapping. And then it's better to say like, usually I've got patients, but today, it's nearly all gone. We're going to keep going to the playground, and I hope you feel better soon. And if within most of the time on these occasions, we're gonna have to know that we're doing the best we can. And our child's gonna know that too. So it's okay when I get sad. In fact, I think it's when we show up in these moments that they learned that we love them at their best and at their worst. So it Marie, I hope that helps. And I just wanted to remind you all that it's just a few days left until the Montessori baby book officially launches on the 11th of May. So I hope you'll be able to join us at one of our book events and I'll put a link to that in the show notes. And if you're hearing this on before the 10th of may Don't forget you can upload your order details and received some beautiful digital bonuses. And because they digital, you can be anywhere in the world to receive them. It's being organized by the publisher. So just to warn you if you miss it up is up as they say in Dutch, which translates roughly to like gone is gone. But basically like just to let you know there's a strict cut



Simone Davies 56:36

off. It's just a pre orders who've submitted the details before the 10th of May. And if you do miss out, just remember you still get to get the book, which I hope will bring you lots of comfort and peace and Montessori wisdom for applying Montessori with babies. And that's it for today. Thank you so much for joining me lovely to chat with you all and I'll be

back next week with another episode of The Montessori notebook podcast. Bye, everyone. Thanks for joining me for the Montessori notebook podcast. The podcast was edited by Luke Davies from Filmprov media and podcast are by here, mine. To find out more about me and my online courses visit the Montessori notebook.com. Follow me on Instagram at the Montessori notebook for pick up a copy of my book The Montessori toddler for its new pre call the Montessori baby from your local bookstore. Amazon are where books are sold. They're also available as ebooks, audiobooks and have been translated into over 20 languages. I'll be back in a week with more Montessori inspiration. And in the meantime, perhaps she'll join me in spreading some more peace and positivity around the world.