



# The Montessori Notebook S02E09

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## SPEAKERS

Simone Davies

00:11

Hello, everyone and welcome back to The Montessori Notebook podcast. I'm Simone Davies and this is episode nine of season two. And today's conversation is maybe a little different as we transport ourselves to Nigeria. And we get to see how Montessori looks there. And this conversation is with otaku, prudence Daniels. She's the founder of Moma Hill Montessori, who found Montessori through her children. And as you'll hear, she didn't choose to become a Montessori teacher at all. And she says it just happened. So you'll learn so much to improve as we talk about how they apply Montessori in their home and in her school. And what I love most is how passionate she is about bringing Montessori to a country and to any and every child. And when you listen to her dog, you'll have little doubt that she's going to make that happen. She even says that she brought in friends to her school, to the training. And she'd go up to people in the street to tell them to respect their child, because she's just that passionate. And she does it all with like a big warm heart, a huge smile and a whole lot of grace. But before we get to that conversation, today, I wanted to talk to you about something in Montessori called the three hour work cycle. And something that's not talked about a lot, which is called false fatigue. So I'm wondering if you've heard of it or not. But let's start with the three hour work cycle. You might have heard of this term. And it's used in Montessori classrooms to describe a three hour uninterrupted period of time when the children can do their thing. So during this time, you'll have children choosing the activities they want to work on, as well as the teacher or guide, giving lessons to the children either individually or in their small groups. It means not breaking every 30 minutes, for example, it's for us to change the topic that we're working on, or for children to need to switch what they're doing after a timer goes off that's specified by the adult. And there is this

large block of time allowing children to get into some really deep concentration. So in non Montessori schools, you might just be getting started on something like for example, some research and you're just getting into the flow, and then you have to pack away because it's time for a new subject. But Dr. Montessori had a graph to track the children over this three hour work period. And you can find it in the book *The advanced Montessori method* in volume one. And many teachers have observed the same graph, even 100 years later. So it's quite amazing. So basically, at the beginning, the graph is kind of flat. And as the children are settling in, and they're transitioning from home to class, you know, you meet a friend, you have a chat, you settle into your day, and then after the first half an hour, the graph of their activity gets higher. And as children, they're starting to choose some activities, often easier activities or ones the child is kind of familiar with, then around an hour into the class, in the graph, you'll see a dip, you start to see the children get restless. And really, some need to use the toilet. And this is what's called false fatigue. So in non Montessori settings, you might find that's when the adult starts to want to round up the kids because it's getting louder, and we'll all go sing a song or we take them outside. But in Montessori, we recognize it and we wait it out. And then it's fascinating because children that often settle in for the most challenging work of the day. And on the graph, it goes slowly upwards for a long period, as you see deeper concentration, and more challenging work being chosen. And then in the last part of the work cycle, the graph starts to go down with the label calm serenity, and you observe them starting to finish up their work, things are returning cleaned. And there's this air of quiet satisfaction in the classroom. So this three hour work period, preserving that is most important for the three to six age group and a six to 12 year olds. So rather than having a break, then for recess, or scheduling, Oh, how nice we'll do an art class now or have a dance teacher to come visit or do yoga all together, that would like interrupt this cycle. So instead, we allow this uninterrupted period of work. And you can also if it's available in your school to have that three hour work cycle where the children can flow indoors and outdoors. And I know that's obviously not possible in all places, but it is nice to have

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for my class, you know, for total is is often not as long as three hours. So I see the cycle in my class, which is around two hours, and children come in, they see who's there, then they start to go back to their favorites. And then you notice around an hour in that it's getting noisier, that moment of false fatigue is kicking in where the children start to become loud, or often move to the gross motor area of the class, for example. And then you start seeing my parents who come to my classes because it's a parent child class, and the parents naturally want their children to like calm down or come back and do some quiet work. But I'll come stand next to them and we'll observe together like we might count how many times they're moving backwards and forwards or look at the clock and see how long it is before they amazingly start to wander back off and find something else to focus on. And again, then getting into some of their deepest concentration. Have a session. So we close with a short singing time, which for toddlers is just a useful way for

them to learn that the session is ending, and then the transition to getting ready to go home. So if you are homeschooling, it's something you might want to keep in mind. are you setting a timetable? Or is there time for free choice because it's better rather than us setting the timetable for the child to have this three hour uninterrupted work cycle. But in home, really what happens is not necessarily being a three hour work cycle, but become like an all day work cycle flowing with the rhythm of your family, but with these long periods, unscheduled time for free choice, and this concentration to develop. And even if you aren't homeschooling, you can think of a long periods when your child can get into this flow when they're playing and exploring, or do you have too many scheduled activities that stop these moments of deep concentration and curiosity, or a lot of adult activities like let's bake now, you know, when we're always leading what's going to happen next. And also to allow time for boredom to happen when the children can become super creative. Or, you know, they can make those connections that silence allows. So it's also a good reminder not to panic, when you see those moments of false fatigue, the most I might do is put on some quiet music for myself, or make a cup of tea, which will generally just add to the car in the home and make an observation a recording of what time it starts and how long it lasts rather than jumping in and potentially losing the next part, which will be when they get into that deepest moment of concentration. So that's a little bit about the three hour work cycle and false fatigue. And if you don't have the book I mentioned by Dr. Montessori, then you can Google for the graph. And you'll find it's included in many blog posts on the internet so you can visually see what I was describing to you as well. And now it's time for my conversation with Pru. I'll see you afterwards and I'll be answering another listener question.

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Hi, everyone, Simone here and welcome back to the Montessori notebook podcast. And today I'm really excited to welcome Ochuko Prudence all the way from Nigeria. Thank you so much for joining us today.

07:07

My pleasure. Hello, everyone. This is me Ochuko Prudence Daniels joining Simone from Nigeria, Lagos to be specific. I am a Montessori practitioner, and founder of Moma Hill Montessori school. And I've been very passionate about Montessori and moving on with a Montessori bringing the Montessori to families and communities around me. It's been an awesome experience for me.

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I'm so excited to get to speak to you today because you really do share so much about Montessori not just with your own school, but really trying to get Montessori known in Nigeria and beyond. So I thought it'd be really fun to actually start back to, you know, you finding Montessori

actually, through your own children, I think is that right? What first drew you to enroll them to a Montessori school?

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Okay, so we believe in good education, if you can afford it. So when I was raising my children, we went looking for a school a good school for them, because we wanted a very good place for them, and actually didn't know much about Montessori at that time. that dates back to 2004 to 2006. Yeah. 2006 when my son wanted to be wanted to enroll my son for preschool, you know, so I came across this school, and all they spoke about was it took our child like, sounds good. You know, it was quite pricey at that time. And then I told my husband, if there's anything my parents gave me was good education. And I have to do the same by giving good education to my children. So let's do it. So that's where we started from the first one joined. And then when my baby girl came in 2008, we couldn't wait two years to just, you know, bring her into the same community. And it was so exciting. You know, watching the children grow, work with the Montessori material. And from time to time, the school invited us to have experience with the children, see how they're working. And you know, some parents who go, you mean, they just come to school to pour water or to sweep the floor. I personally, one day, I spoke with the owner of the school and I said, I don't want my children clean in the external environment for other people. I pay for them to be in school. You know, she took one whole hour to educate me on how the developmental needs and the rest of that. So once I understood, I think I go home. Yeah,

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yeah, definitely. And so how long were they in Montessori School for

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for for the whole of preschool and Elementary. Okay, so back here. We don't we don't really have a lot of secondary program. That's the the 12 to 18 Montessori program. So at that point, many The children have to transit to traditional school because then programs who run the 12 to 18. So in recent times, if you if you organizations are beginning to a few training centers are beginning to focus and come up with those kind of programs, but not really. They're not many, and I am not really sure of any that has really kicked off full time yet is like a mix traditional. And then a bit of Montessori.

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Yeah. Interesting. And so in that time when they weren't Montessori School, how do you think you started changing as a parents, you know, becoming a Montessori parent, I guess.

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It was tough. Because our culture, it's almost Well, I would say is a twist, because our culture is anti Montessori in one way. And then it embraces Montessori in another way. I'll put it this way. Here, people like their children to be involved in house chores, is kind of like the culture to include your children in your everyday life. So for me, that's Montessori by default. But then the purpose in this case is different. Because you just want them to learn how to do house chores, how to be responsible, how to help out how not to be lazy, you know. But on the other side, you don't want to give them the freedom to speak freely to you or any adults. Because you tell them to be rude, you don't want to let them have a lot of choices. Because the society we interpreted to be indulgence. So that's why I said it's like a twists of both sides. So it was pretty difficult. I had to go through that journey with my husband steadily. Because once I understood what I was going into, I mean, gradually understood what Montessori meant. I knew that it was something really good. And I began to imagine myself, if I had all the autonomy Montessori gives to a child when I was growing up, I probably would have turned out understanding the questions that I had growing up, I kind of like placed myself in the shoes of those children. Because when a child's paws water or something, and you're sitting with other adults, they're looking at you and say, You guys just sit there and let your child do this. You know, that's, yeah, that's what it's like. But I am grateful to God, I was able to navigate that path. I got into conversation with my children. And today we have great relationships. They trust me so well, they can discuss anything with me, especially my boy. He's 16, he just turned 16. And he's able to share with me whatever it is he's doing his life. You know, we're pals, you know, irrespective of the fact that he's a boy. Yeah. So yeah, I think it was just intentionality, being intentional about raising them in a way that you believe will work, you know, minding what the society dictates was what helped me out

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and what kind of things were you seeing what benefits Did you see like from us? Montessori children?

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Yeah. So, for example, if the discussion is going on about practical life, what do they have to do practical life anyway? And unlike my son, for example, he's getting more responsible because of the practical life work he's doing at school. At age six, seven, he was already looking after his younger sister, who was about two years old. He calls me can I help pack her water? Can I help? You know, he was very resourceful at home. He was very supportive. And emotionally, he was quite stable. And he, up until the time he graduated from the school at age 11.. 10.. 11. He could make his own decisions. And he wasn't influenced by anybody. He will come to me and say, Mommy, you know what, today? My friend said, I should do this. I mean, I just told them, You know, I can't do this, because it's not right to do that. I put in a lot of personal work at home to make this

work. Yeah. Because you can't just rely on the school to raise a child for you independent of your efforts. Yeah. So it was very interesting was very interesting. It was also a learning process for me, because like I said, before, then I didn't know anything about Montessori. So there were times there. They would work on projects, and I'll go online to read about such projects. And I saw much more than the school was offering. So that drove me to engage my children even more at home, like okay, so you can you can work on a project and do this activity as a group, but then we can say, how about we take on this project as a family this weekend, and he knows Oh, yay, let's do it, Mommy, it was really fun, you know, growing up with them.

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Can you give us an example of one of these projects But you decided to keep like extending because work doesn't really finish as soon as you leave the classroom. It's just like, oh, let's just do this as a family.

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Okay, like we would we would, we could take on cooking projects, we could take on sewing projects. Like I remember my son made his shirts once, you know, all we did was to get the pattern and cuts. And then he was able to follow through and actually made a nice t with a color shirt with buttons on it. And I was very proud of him. Yeah, adds about seven or eight. Yeah, I was well, we still have the shirts. And pants. Yeah, we made a shirt on pants. And then we cook. Yeah, we did a lot of cooking activities together.

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Yeah, oh, it's so beautiful. Because actually Montessori is like about connecting with these children. And that connection is what you have laid the foundation for. So that now your son does come to you with whatever's coming up, right?

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Dogs, dogs, when it comes back home, like right now the school program, he's very independent, he does his own Mommy, I'm gonna take care of the family this evening. And he makes real Nigerian food, you know, without he goes online, get the recipes. And then he, he just does it by himself, which is very unlike many Nigerian families where the boy is like the prince who doesn't really do much one that also depends on what the family believe. More work is given to the girl because they believe she's gonna get married, he has a female cook, they do the house chores and cook the food, though the trajectory is changing today. But my son, he's very dynamic. He's very involved in a lot of activities. He can decide to take on a project on his own, and just get

through with it. And then he's pulling the sister along. You know, every time like one time he said, Oh, Mom, you know, I'm going to be responsible for my sister and I academic decisions from now on. I'm going to search for what kind of school I want I want to go to, and I'm going to search for school for her as well. So you don't have to worry. I don't like who's talking. Wow, he's very interesting. Very, very interesting.

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And what do your family and friends think about it? I have you made them into Montessori friends and family or you know, do they think it's different? Do you get a lot of questions?

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Okay, so my phrase, a lot of them believe that I have this parenting going good parenting going for me. The truth is, people make their own decisions. So I tried to introduce quite a number of them into the Montessori school were out at that time. Personally, for example, I have people from church who will gladly give me their children for weeks, say, Oh, I know you will take good care of them. I trust your parenting style. They are in good hands. Sometimes the children come home with me from church and the parents don't even bother, you know, until evening before they come pick them up. And you know, they're not worried because they know that they're in good hands. So we have parents who just trust us and believe that no, this family has got it going for them in terms of parenting. And I think it's all in the work we put in at the earlier stages of raising these children. And like I said, the beauty of growing up with them in this regard.

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Yeah. And so then tell us about your transition to Montessori. So when did you decide that you want to become a Montessori educator?

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I didn't decide if happened. I love that this happened. Okay, so I'm an entrepreneur. And I have got business going for over a decade. And I'm doing well in my business. So at a time when my my son had already left the Montessori community, my daughter had a few more years to go like three, two and a half or so. The school set up a training center, and they were looking to enroll trainees for the training center. And so one of them was visiting us at the end of the year and say, Oh, Mrs. Daniels, I think you're going to love this training. Well, we're getting into training now. And we're listing people for this training, and blah, blah, blah. She was talking about how, you know, beautiful and interesting this train was going to be and I said much as I trust and believe in Montessori. I don't think I have that kind of money to dump into Montessori training that I'm not

going to use later on. You know, but she just laughed about it. And then she left. A few weeks later, the owner of the school calls me and says, Oh, your name came up. Someone said you showed a bit of interest. And I'm willing to let you break your payments. If you're still interested. The truth is, at that time, I didn't need it. Because I'm someone who is hungry for knowledge. So I felt within me, I have my beautiful children, I extend my parenting to a host of other children. And we have Christian comes and the rest of that, so maybe I could just do it, and have that knowledge to be able to help children generally. So I wasn't thinking about it as a career. So when she said I could pay installments, I took it, and I will miss the orientation. So I started with them the day after the orientation. And when I got in week one, week two, week three, our souls, so I was totally transformed. We wept for many times in class, we regretted some of the actions, you know, we see around us, and especially the respectful paths, you know, that you know, respects is what helps the children to blossom from within. It was so transforming that this was it for me. So at that point, from that moment, it was difficult to say now, what am I gonna do? So I was fighting a battle within me to say, Are you going to continue with your business career? Are you going to take this beyond it, you know, so it was so encompassing, it was so was so I don't know what word to use. I was taken, you know. So, from the time of my training, I kept preaching Montessori, I kept telling people about it, we need to change, you know, the way we raise our children, we need to come embrace the Montessori, you know, and I went through the program working so hard that I even fell sick, but I was able to pull through. And at the end of the program, it was now like, now, what are you going to do? So for the next cohorts, I have the school to enlist about five new parents to come join. Yeah, to come join the three Do you see what I've been through is so interesting, you have to come and do this. And so today, I have a group of friends who, you know, we have just bumped into money, sorry, like, I went in, I pulled them in, and they are pulling other people in. So it's like, you pull me in, I pull others. And that's how it's been. And it just kept getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger and bigger. Yeah, so that was how the transition came.

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Yeah. And then I heard that, like, you saw this resourcefulness in your own children, and you wanted it for, like, everyone in Africa and everyone in the world, you know, for Lagos, and then your own school, right?

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Even before the school, I did do a bit of consulting for individual families, like I get, you know, I discovered that whenever I'm out, I just look out for little children and how they're being treated. You know, and it was just eating me up, I see parents, and I just get, you know, you know, how you, you're minding your business, and someone comes to you and just interrupts he was like, he was that bad. I just go to people and say, oh, and just let the child be, you know, don't don't stop the

child from doing what you're doing. All you need to do is just ensure they're safe, you know, just got around them, but let them be themselves. So I find myself doing that much more than, you know, getting defined to my, my work. So I got a few people in my my office where I do interior design. I then created a room a Montessori room, where I had children come in on weekends to just play and work with me. So I had about six children who are coming and going, you know, like that. And I felt Oh, this is and then because we were told in the training school that Montessori transformation in children is not going to be automatic is going to take some time. You know, but when I started that program in my office in two weeks, parents were coming back to say, oh, what did you do to my children, they change completely, they respect you, you know, if I want them to behave, I just say I'm going to report you to Mrs. Daniels and then they just you know they so love you. What is it you're doing that we don't know about? You know, so that for me was really enriching and I wanted to give more. Yeah. So how I actually got into the school proper was in the in the first month of 2020. I wanted to relook as my business has a few branches. So I wanted one of the outlets like a showroom to be relocated because we had parking parking problem and because the facility was on the road docile affecting Where's, so I wanted to move the place to something, some better environment. So I took a staff with me and I just drove around the community to say, Okay, I'm looking for a new place. Let's just see if there are any, so we can contact somebody to help us. And that was how I saw this facility. And I just said to myself, this is not an interior design facility. This is a school. And am I ready to run a school right now? No. But I got drawn in, I found myself going into the facility to inspect it, I found myself making the calls, I found myself asking questions. And even though at that time, I didn't have the money to set up the school. The first person I spoke with just encouraged me, so we know you do well, you love children, you, you have it going for you when it comes to, you know, educate everyone I spoke to had this positive feedback on how I was gonna do well, as a school owner. You know what, that was not it for me. What was it for me was the numerous children that life I was going to impact their lives. If I could venture into this. Did I tell you, I also did apply for a few jobs abroad, which we got talking and I said, Oh, I could just go to summer, and come back work with children like camps and all of those, you know, but there was this deep conviction within me that said, No, Africa needs you. If you can impact 10 children in the diaspora, you will impact 100 1000 1 million in Africa. And that was it for me, I was totally convinced. And that was how I started making preparation. I put all the phones that I had, I physically worked like, I was going to, you know, like I was preparing my exit from life. Like no reservation, I put everything in physically work. And I made all the furniture in the school, designing them by myself and getting the access to just come work on them a supervised so it was really it was like a voracious passion that was eating me up. And before I knew it, the school was ready.

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And the timing was just in time for COVID. Right?

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Yes, yes, I started preparing from like February, I paid for the place, I think at the end of February. And when it was March, I was making, drawing my plans and making all the necessary moves. And then April came, it was a lockdown. So I couldn't do anything. I went online. So I started a school online. And so working with children online, especially, you know, I already had a future when I was working with. So I say giving lessons on zoom. And, you know, I made my first online class during the COVID. And then I engaged community, parents, families, individual families, on their own. That's how we just started. And it was kind of scary, I must say it was it was really scary. It wasn't like I put everything in plan for my business to shut down or for my business to transit into other management. I just bumped into the school not making provision for all of these things. And when it was time to open. I just because remember, I went through training 10 months of Montessori training was, you know, good enough time to be away from the business. You know how they say if you can leave your business for six months, and it survives, then you're doing something really good. So during the training, I believe that, yes, I could win my business off me. So I didn't think my business was gonna fold up. I just went focusing on the school more. And then it just started happening. And then when it was time to bring in children, I just borrowed children from friends and family and say, Hey, come, we have a school, bring your children. And that's how we started the first few children bring their children and quite a number of them brought their children we had like 11 children. That was how really we started. He was so beautiful. And I was seeing myself in new like you're floating in the air. I can't believe I'm doing this. Am I crazy or something? You know, but I just kept going deeper and deeper and deeper. And even I couldn't afford the Montessori materials at first. So we're still buying Montessori materials because it's an it's an ongoing thing. It's when I look back, it's really beautiful. Now we have a beautiful community. We have children in there in all levels. 023. We have children three to six. We have children, six to 12 as well and it's really beautiful. The transformation. You know how This children just cling to school and don't want to go home. Here. A number of times children don't like to go to school because of their attachment to their parents. Yeah. But when they come to our school, when they hear their parents have come to pick them, they go hide in Oh, no, I can they wait, please, I don't want to go yet. And that's for us. He just saw beautiful. Yeah,

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that's the best testimonial if the children don't want to leave. And so talking of these children, like what kind of things do you know is that you just think like, this is so incredible, this Montessori approach those Montessori moments that take your breath away? Can you think of any that come to mind?

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Yes, quite a lot. Like, we have this program where we have a school wide dance every Tuesday.

And I noticed a particular child wouldn't join in the dance. You know, so one day I I went close to him, and I said, I'm surprised you're not joining us is anything the problem? And he said, No, I'm just shy, you know, so I probe a little further, and the boy just burst into tears. You know, so I got worried, like, Did I say something? You know, Did I offend you somehow, I could take it back. I mean, because this is a seven year old. So he was quite expressive. So I said to him that we're just doing this as a community to bond with one another. Nobody's going to, you know, capture you or name call you that you can't dance. You just, you know, work with us as a team, because he has schoolwear like family where the school family where the community at the school. So I had a little conversation with him. And then he went into his class sub, the little bit. And then he came back, the dance was still going on. He was peeping. So I just let him be, before the end of that 40 minutes dance. He was already tapping his foot and shaking his head gradually, like that. And then before maybe 10 minutes before it closed, he came into the mist, and then he was dancing. So he came to me after the dancer say weeping and said, You know what, Miss Daniels? I haven't ever been in on the stage before, in terms of attention focusing on me or people, you know, looking at me dancing. So I really felt this was a huge one, you know, that touched me. And I said, in this place, we are all family where community, so just feel free. Do you know the next time we had that does the following week that boy was the best dancer. He could actually dance. But he was just limited by his for his beliefs, and maybe his experiences and then couldn't express himself in terms of why do I have to do this? Or who can help me out of what I believe because he didn't believe he could do it. But he had skills. He had a lot of beautiful dancing skills today. He's even the one that says Oh, it's time for dance. Let's go dancing, you know. So that for me was very humbling.

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I love actually how you incorporate like you were talking about the dance like all the culture, the Nigerian culture in your classroom, because I heard you say like, there is no limit of bound to the education of culture. And you include your culture in so many different ways. So I would love for you to share some of those with us as well.

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Okay, so we have in, especially in preschool, we have the moon, we have the musical aspect where we incorporate our local musical instruments like the Gong Gong, that's what we call the Gong Gong, that's the talking drum, they put it on the shoulder, and just with a stick, and it's goes with certain kinds of music and dance is really interesting. The children I find, are very drawn to that activity. And they just like to go there. And drama. We also have a lot of traditional wares displayed in the cultural areas in the classroom where they can learn so they go home to ask their parents about what they've learned at school. We saw this in school, we work with this in school, what is it, you know, and the parents come to give us feedback that they really like the fact that

the children are incorporated into the culture that we do a lot of storytelling as well. We tell folks stories about our culture during circles. And at lunchtime. You know, we also try to incorporate the eating in the culture like people eating the local food in general and free to bring their food to school their meals to school. So when they bring their meal, we try to create that local ambience or presentation of the foods so they understand that this is the way we do it in our culture, and it's really fun. It's interesting

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and even languages as well because you often have bilingual or trilingual you Classes don't yet Right,

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right, right. So what we do because Montessori says the language is like super, is super imposed. Now, we we scaffold the language for the child. So our launch time, we are free to speak the language because we don't have traditional like direct choices that are key language people professionals. So what we do is one of the parents, the parents, let us know what language they are interested in. So at that time the children get exposed to that kind of language, for example, we speak Yoruba, we speak Igbo. At the moment, we don't speak Hausa. But we have Yoruba, Igbo, especially when they're having like a, a team activity. So they get to hear the language, the greeting and how to greet traditionally,

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so you're learning the local dialects, and then speaking English and the rest of us. Yeah, yes. And also like the art, and that kind of thing is also included, like, did it lots of self expression, and you talk about how you dress and those kinds of things are also part of the culture that are in the classroom road?

36:12

Gosh, right. That's right. Yeah. So they get involved in like we have, we even have dolls that they dress up locally. You know, how people dress. So they do some of those. And like I said, we have the traditional outfits where they can, you know, see, on what occasion people wear these outfits. And what do they mean? Yeah, so that's part of the culture that we incorporate in the classroom as well.

36:44

And I know becoming a Montessori parent yourself through your children, you have said to me that you worked closely with the parents, because to get them on board with the Montessori approach, you need them to be partners. And so you've put a lot of time into helping parents. And I'm curious about what kinds of things you've done to help the parents understand what you're doing in the school, and how they're maybe you're starting to incorporate at home.

37:07

Okay, so because we have a still a small community, I do a lot of one on one engagement with our parents. Once in a while we have the group communication, parents communication session, but I do a lot of one on one with parents because every child is unique. And then from time to time, we update them on what level this child is, what will save their development at that time, and the kind of things they should help with at home. Even at the point of onboarding families, we have a conversation with them, where we let them know that we're not looking for families who want to just donate their children in a daycare so they can have time to go to their work and do other stuff out there. We want partners who believe in what we do. So there's this question I always ask my parents. What, what does Montessori mean to you? And what do you know about Montessori? And why do you think is a good faith for your child. So based on the responses, we're able to give a little bit of enlightenment, especially on their first tour, and get them to understand what we do. So if it's something they want, and then we take it out from there to begin to say, so this is what we expect you to do from the home front. We don't beat children, we respect them. We, we provide we we make environments suitable for them to succeed at the task. And we we serve on support their independence, and we give them examples of how to do these things based on the age of the child. So it's been very rewarding, because we have parents who drive about two hours to bring their children to my community. And for me, that is really, that is humbling. Like, I mean, there are 1000s and millions of school before you get to us. So why drive two hours to bring a two and a half year old to my community. So that's very humbling for me and I don't take it for granted. It's always pushes me to do more how how, how else can I do this better? What more do I need to do to serve these children better and what are we not getting right? You know, so those for me, give me the kind of push that I need, you know, to not to give up on the Montessori pedagogy because one thing I must mention though here, a lot of people who practice Montessori do not go through with it. And that's because parents do not easily do not eat Really just assets, the pedagogy. You know, when you compare the remedy culture twist I was speaking about earlier, when you mesh that is a bit contradicting, so a lot of parents do not want. So and as a school owner, you want to enroll as many so that your community will grow, you're able to sustain the business of the school and all of that. But for me, that is not the core, I just believe if we have the right families, and then the results are happening, this family will bring another family they will become the ambassadors of the community, and then our community will begin to grow. So we have challenges with

40:44

trainers who want to combine traditional work with the Montessori work by saying, Oh, we are Africans, you have to let these children know that there's discipline. And that's the part that really gets me shaking, like no discipline, you know how Montessori speak about obedience, you know that when the child trusts you, obedience comes naturally. So first, you have to help the child to succeed at those areas. And then when the child is having difficulty, as a teacher, what I've learned is sit back and ask yourself, What am I not doing right in seven, this child to be able to bring him to a place of self regulation, or independence, you know, and he's really been working, we've had challenges with engaging people who came into Montessori wanting to train and grow in a Montessori, but their attitude is contradicting the Montessori, you know, when you turn away, they're doing something else. But when you watch when you are there, they tend to, so I let them know that it has to come from within, it's either you have it, or you don't have it. And when you have it, you only compliment it by all of the training and all of the personnel, software development and support that you get to make you a better guide, not enforcing the traditional ways of doing things on the on the children because they don't they don't like it. A lot of times when a child begins to frown at a particular guide, and you know, something is going on, you know, he wants to dig into what exactly is and you know, children, they can't pretend they will always express themselves freely. So that has been our guide. And it has helped us to be able to shape our children guide relationship. And it's beautiful.

42:49

And it's so important that you're getting the parents on board because we are as a parent, the child's first teacher, and so you know, they're learning so much from us, do you want to speak to that?

42:58

I think that as parents, walking the talk, not just talking, it's what matters. I think that being a good example, to these children, is the best thing that we can do as parents, you know, guiding them on our daily lives, especially when it comes to our conversation. We don't talk deti in front of our children and expect their own speech to be graceful and beautiful. No. And in relation to other adults, many times we forget the presence of our children. It's something we need to be conscious about so that we're careful what things we say so that the children who are observing and absorbing as well can be enriched by the beautiful conversation that, you know, we we have in their presence.

43:50

Yeah, it's such an important role being a model I say it's an enormous opportunity always but also an enormous responsibility. In Montessori, we love talking about how you know we don't need screens for children to learn things that we'd rather you know them learn through their hands and the connection you know that what the child hands down is the mind remembers, and I'd love you to talk about how you see that happening in your classroom in your home things like that as well. So that we can you know, get to know Ansari deeper and the beautiful methodology that is

44:22

okay, just like Dr. Montessori said that there is nothing that goes into the intellect that doesn't pass through the hands. The hands is a link to the intellectual capacity, the child who walks with the hands and expands the intellectual capacity as a young child. So I think for me the earlier we practice this without children the better because it helps them to bridge that gap of having to experience having not to experience rather than leave them to imagination. Allow them experience, the torch, the water, all of the sensory oil, and the hands on activity that comes with brain development. So for us, Okay, first, as a parent, like I expressed earlier, I do everything with my children we cook together come together, work together, we do everything at home together as a small community. And for me that has enriched and helped us to bond better, they are not distance away from me, because we always walk together, doing stuff together, I'm never too busy to respond to them, if they need my attention or something, and want to create something, we sit on the floor and work with one another. But then at the school is a different ballgame. Because children come from different families. And you cannot really have control over what happens in the various homes. So like, what we do is engaged parents to let them know that screen like we don't have screens at my school, so children don't have the opportunity to I know a lot of schools who, like show dance and children dance, when we dance, we hear the music, we don't have to watch, you know, the dance. But then some children come into the school addicted to their parents phones. So whenever they see phones, that jumping out for it. So I have developed a way of giving grace and cutsie lessons around having little tablets and phones, and for now is working, you know, for our children. I don't know how you know, that is in every home. But for now we've gotten feedback from about three families that is actually working. So we demonstrate the screen as being something for the adults. And then we pass it, we just pass it and say oh, I'm a child, I don't need this. So they pass it to the next adults that is available. And it's been really beautiful. You know, just something we thought about to help our children wean off the mobile phones, because that's the them. That's the biggest challenge we actually have with our very young ones. Today, a lot of parents, they pacify their children with their screen their phones and mobile gadgets so that they don't stress them maybe on a journey, and stuff like that. So we started educating them on getting practical activities that they can work with painting, building blocks, sensorial activities, things that they can do with their hands. And I think we're getting there gradually.

47:52

Yeah, it's so lovely to hear that one, you take away that problem and to give them some solutions instead, you know, so instead of just saying, Take away the mobile phones, you're actually helping parents to see their value in the hands on education as well that you're offering and they can take into their homes, which I think is really valuable. Because you've also said that, you know, science is like discovering and play is science, right? So bringing out the children the best through play. And when we have a concrete experience, then there resonance can flourish. You see children during the imagination, then for practical, real life experience, right?

48:25

That's right. That's right. So they, like they imagine No, during the play time, a lot is going on that you cannot teach a child just like Montessori said, You can't teach your child to be kind, you know, but we see that in our community every time even with special children. We see that displayed, they want to be kind, they want to help out one another. So the community enables them to be able to make that judgment that this person needs help. You see a two year old handing a tissue to somebody who's, you know, crying or runny nose or something. It's so beautiful when you see that because when the Montessori environment, everything is everything has its place. And so once the children get the hang of the community and higher functions, they just flow in and they work within it effortlessly. And that's the beauty that we see in orienting them you know, once they come in, especially coming in from traditional engage traditional schools and communities into our own different Montessori environments. So it's really it's really beautiful when you see the children demonstrating using their hands even giving another child a lesson on how not to or how to do you know certain activities is usually very sweet and beautiful to behold.

49:56

Oh, there's so much going on isn't there there's like so many layers and wants to So there's like the beautiful materials, but there's so much that goes on as part of this community that, like you said, You can't teach it to them. They're just absorbing and picking up from being kind and having kindness in their culture. And also, one of the things that we say in Montessori is that we can learn from, you know, mistakes, and we have a friendly, you know, relationship with errors. So, can you talk about how mistakes are part of this learning process for children, okay, so

50:26

about making mistakes, a lots lies on the adults, especially your facial expression, because children, they only mirror what they see. And so when you're fond of frowning at their mistake, they're going to do the same to their peers as well. So what what is going on the conversation

we're having around the adults within the adults in the school, is to embrace the child's mistake, with so much hope and confidence and encouragement to say, Oh, you can try that again, or you want to work with it another time. And then the children receive hope there was there was something that happened sometimes from about two weeks ago, a child was trying to carry material. And then the, the breakable piece just fell and smashed. You know, and the guys, thank God I was there, the guide, froze, I was, you know, going to just drag that thing. So I held her back, and I said, hang on, and then I said to her, get the child to step back, and ensure safety, and then we can clean up. So the child went by himself to get the broom and brush to get the pieces of the floor. And you know, so when we were reflecting at the end of that day, the guide said to me that, wow, that she was so intrigued, by the way, my expression did not change, you know, even though that had happened, and how I was able to make eye contact to reach out to her to hold on, on jumping in at that time, and all of that, you know, so a lot depends on the adult when it comes to mistake, for example, when a child is working, and is not getting it right, just allow the child to explore. And the only time you need to intervene is when probably they're damaging the material or when the child is getting frustrated, then you can offer some rest bites to say, Oh, I can show you this another time? Or would you like to work with something else? And I see the children always look out for these supports when they are that crossroad. But we must let them you know, explore and exhausts what they have before. You know, we tend to interrupt or we shouldn't even interrupt from what I know about Montessori walk. So mistakes are part of the learning. Because you know how Montessori has the control of error in every material. So when you sit back the child on their own, would discover that, oh, it's not right. And then they tweak it, they get to do it again, because the material itself has told them that this is not the way you know, so we will not allow that to blossom. Because in doing that, that's where the learning really is.

53:30

Yeah, I mean, first people who actually don't know the control of error. For example, with a cylinder block, there's only each cylinder can only fit into one space. So if the child puts a smaller one into one of the bigger holes, when they get to the end, and they've got a big piece left that doesn't fit into any of them, they have to realize, Oh, I got this wrong. Which one do I need to take out to actually correct it myself. So that's the control of error built into so many of the Montessori materials or having a control card where the child can check to see if they got it right rather than us having to say you got it right or wrong and have us coming to having to check it. So even though we don't have tests in the Montessori approach, we have this control of error that's always giving them feedback on whether it's correct, and they want to keep trying until they get it right. Right.

54:11

Right. And we must guard against that frustration that will prevent the child from going back to

that activity. You know, I'd say I've also observed that sometimes when the child is, you know, getting really frustrated, as a teacher, when I think guides Montessori guide where you reflect, you are able to tell that maybe this is not the child is not ready for this activity, and then you can step them back on something that is, you know, Montessori has a way of doing so many prerequisite side like I call it vertical side, you do this activity before you saw the success or the prerequisite activity will have the chance to succeed in the next one. So it's always a cue to the adults to be able to know which direction to go. The chat and to help them succeed at what tasks they embark on.

55:04

Yeah, we're setting up for success, which is amazing. Just keeps building on each layer. And I know that one thing you're really passionate about is making Montessori accessible to as many people as possible. And you have like a scholarship program at your school and you do a lot of work like TV interviews on Nigerian TV and things like that. I'd love to hear about some of the scholarship things you're doing and the opportunities that people are getting from those.

55:29

Okay, so we launched our first scholarship, called the mama Spark, in December last year, and we got a few subscribers, where we are able to enroll children who ordinarily cannot afford to come to our community to enjoy the learnings. And being part of our community. It was just something born out of passion to be able to reach out to more children, you know, with what we do. And it's really been very humbling, although we were pushing it gradually, we're hoping that will get much more bigger than that, I'm looking out to a situation where we have like the whole of my country, killed in Somali sorry, program, like, you have the charter in public schools, where they can, you know, get some benefits from the Montessori program nationally without having to pay huge amounts of money. You know what, in our own little space, we're doing this to help the handful that we can help at the moment, we're just getting into the first phase of enrollment, we have scholarship for two for children, and then support for two other children. And we're expecting payment for one more. So once that is done, we're able to at least about five new children in the next academic session to participate in what Montessori holds for them is just something that we need to drive to help the average Nigerian child who cannot afford to come to the Montessori. 100 and more families who have come to preview our school, and to see if they could be part of the program. But they cannot afford to be part even though our school is priced at about a quarter of the value that's, you know, it gives. So that tells you the level of the level of gap that we did how huge a gap we need to we need to cover. So if we have like maybe 100 over 100 120 150. And we can't boast of a quarter of that, to have enlisted, even though all of them speak positively, oh, I would love this program for my child. They just can't afford it. So that is why we launched the moment spark and is slow at the moment. But we hope to push for more funding for families to

enjoy the Montessori pedagogy because for me, my calling to Montessori is more of the African child needs this. And 10 1520 years from now, Africa should be different. I was reading about the failed states in recent this just this week, and my heart bleeds like Oh, if this programs were implemented years back, maybe it will be more selfless. Maybe it will be more considerate of one another. Maybe it will be more community driven, you know, maybe our leadership style will be different. And the leadership style actually comes from who we really are as individuals when we are being raised as children, you know, how many sorry, talks about the creation, the construction of man, as a child, you know, so that's kind of like my call. If we start in our own little way now, some years down the line, we would have helped to shape and construct the lives of these beautiful ones who will lead a better African economy that African world in down we are seeing today. So that's where it really comes from. And we are where we're passionate about getting everybody on board even though that's not that's not possible at the moment. But I know that wherever we've started from is going to keep growing from there.

59:44

Well, I'm sure that everyone who's heard this conversation today. It definitely has faith that Ochuko is going to make a big difference in getting Montessori into the charter, you know, so that every child gets Montessori, that experience and yeah, it changes For the better in the world around us, it's amazing. So now that we're coming to the end of the conversation is there anything that we didn't get to speak about that you'd like to touch on is bringing you joy right now that you'd like to share? Uh, well,

1:00:13

I'm happy. That's true. This school as well. When gets into enlists enlist adults, we're getting to be able to channel adults towards the Montessori pedagogy. So I can say that one gain that the country or my nation has as a positive point from the existence of our school is more adults getting into Montessori because we now have a program where we're able to support ordinary guides, I mean, non Montessori guides who are interested after do review and select selection, we're able to give them the kind of backing for them to work on an A Montessori certificate. So even if they do not remain with us as a school to work with us, that is plus one, train our one guide who got into the country and make a difference in the lives of children all around the communities. Yeah, so that's for me, it's very exciting and fulfilling because it takes a transformer adults to be able to do this Montessori work and we need more transform adults to succeed at Montessori, like when we started last year, it was not as easy as it is now. I was the only one who was certificated in Montessori. But now we have like about three, you know, of us growing and learning and a few more in training and helping the community to grow and become stronger.

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And in such a short period of time that you've been open. So there's going to be many more families that come through your school, as well as you know, the Montessori in your own home and in your friends that come all of the children that come through your home that we touched as well. So thank you so much for sharing your story with us today. And I hope to see you soon. Yeah, it's my pleasure. Thank you for inviting me. So I hope you've enjoyed getting an insight into a Montessori life in Nigeria. And I find the similarities and the differences always fascinating. And it also challenges us to incorporate our own culture intentionally in our homes. So you can find Pru at Moma Hill Montessori, I'll put a link in the show notes so you can find her. And now it's time for our listener question. And our question is from crystal and crystal asks, How can parents work with Montessori schools when kids are hitting when upset? Do you give feedback on the spot and how to deal with consequences. So I don't have so many details for this question. But whether it's at home or at school, it's ideal if we can be on the same page. So if heating is going on, it can be useful to have a meeting with the parents and the school to come together to make sure everyone has a similar approach. And I can't speak for all schools. But with hitting, I generally move myself between the two children with my body. And I might say something like, Oh, it's my job to keep everyone safe. I'm can't let you hit them. So I'm actually physically being like a body guard to protect the two children and separating them. And then if that child is still heating at me, I might then offer a cushion or something soft that they can bang on instead. And sometimes we might need to move the child like if they're in danger of hurting themselves, or someone else or the environment. So if we do need to move them, then I'll do it as kindly and clearly as possible. And I feel like it's my job in that moment to help the child come back to calm and provide a safe place, and a safe space for them to do that. Now, often at the same time, I'm helping the person who was hit. So I check in like, are you okay? I might say something like, Oh, you look sad. And when they've come down, you can tell them it hurts when you hit me, would you like some help to tell them that. And so it might take some time. But once everyone is calm again, then I do find that super important for the child who was hitting to make amends. So it shows care for the classmate. And also gives them the opportunity to be forgiven, because otherwise they'll end up carrying that as shame or guilt. So if it's a young child, I might help them find a way to make it up to the other person. So I might say, their arms quite red, should we get a wet cloth for them? Or would you like to get them a tissue for their nose? And I might need to model this, you know, caring for the other child. And over time, they are learning how to make it up to someone. And then there's a whole observation piece, if it's an ongoing hitting phase, so we can look at things like they're all development so and their language development, can they express their needs? We can observe the environment. Is there a bottleneck somewhere where the child is getting cornered? Or what caused them to hit, maybe someone even took something off them and they need help with some words to say something like it will be available soon. Does it happen at certain moments in the day before mealtime or during transition moments, so it can be difficult for some children. And then based on the observations, you can see what we can change as adults, maybe how we're reacting to them, and what we can change in the environment. Oh,

really looking at what needs of this child might not be being met. Because we're not actually trying to say the child is a bully, but as they say, always, like all behavior is communicating something. So it's our job to be the detective to help each child. In my book, *The Montessori Toddler*, there is a list of things you can observe if a child's hitting, biting or throwing, which could also be useful. And I know hitting isn't nice, and it can take some time for them to be able to articulate for themselves. But I just want to say like hang in there and continue to be this kind and clear guide, either in your role as a parent or a teacher. So I hope that's helpful everyone and that's it for today. If you enjoyed this episode, please share it with a friend and give the podcast a rating or review on your podcast player. And I'll be back next Friday with another episode of the podcast. Till then everyone have a thanks for joining me for the Montessori notebook

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The podcast was edited by Luke Davies from Filmprov media and podcast art by Hiyoko Imai. To find out more about me and my online courses visit the Montessori notebook comm follow me on Instagram at the Montessori notebook for pick up a copy of my book *The Montessori Toddler* for its new prequel, *The Montessori Baby* from your local bookstore, Amazon or where books are sold. They're also available as ebooks, audio books, and have been translated into over 20 languages. I'll be back in a week with more Montessori inspiration. And in the meantime, perhaps you'll join me in spreading some more peace and positivity around the world.