

LMMH

In August of 2010 I walked into a quaint little Montessori school on Bayview Ave to ask if they would take my 3 year old along with her 2 year old sister who wasn't potty trained yet. The owner of the school came out and introduced herself as Mme Anne and told me she could only take her if she was potty trained during the day. She then took me around the school and called an SK student over to show me her work. This child was doing multiplication and division and her workbooks looked like a 6th graders. I immediately went back to her office and told her my daughter would be potty trained by September and gave her a deposit.

Throughout the years at LMMH life has handed us many lemons, I can honestly tell you that Mme Anne and the staff have been there wholeheartedly to help us make lemonade each step of the way. When my first born entered the elementary years we pondered with the thought of moving her out of LMMH. She was so extremely shy and had a hard time making friends and since there were not many students at the time at LMMH we had a few concerns, I'll break them down for you, in case you are having them as well:

1. How would she socially adjust?
2. Could she possibly do well when there was never any homework given?
3. How would she learn English, I mean university will eventually be in English, she needs strong essay writing skills and there is very minimal English taught?
4. Why is my kid in class with older kids and younger kids?
5. How would she become responsible when they could work on whatever they want, would she actually finish her plan or just waste time all day?
6. There is no gymnasium or traditional sports, isn't that weird?

These were my main concerns. Mme Anne at that time was just starting the upper elementary program, she saw the ending when I couldn't and asked me to please just trust her and that she wouldn't let me down. She explained the Montessori curriculum to me over and over but I still had that doubt in my mind - for years! So let me help you understand it a bit if you too have these questions.

1. In terms of socially adjusting, it just ended up working. Both girls did have a few hiccups just like any school aged girls do when it came to friends because there wasn't really a lot of children so during the preteen years this was tough. If one friend was having drama with one of my girls there was really nowhere to run, or any other friend groups to join, they either had to deal with it or move on. Looking back it was a fantastic lesson, this is how the real world works, when you have an issue with a peer you need to deal with it, you can't just run away. Any good relationship needs work and communication to work out and my girls have learned (and are still learning) this great lesson and have formed some special relationships with the right people because of this.
2. The homework question is what a lot of parents don't understand and I went through a period when the homework thing was an issue as well. This especially when they were old enough for electronics. I didn't want them on iPads early on so I had to fill their days with fun activities. This is how my daughter got into competitive gymnastics and then eventually dance. My eldest who is a book worm and didn't like any activities early on fought me tooth and nail in the beginning but she is now a competitive dancer as well, at one of the best dance schools and absolutely lives for dance. Trust that they work hard enough and well enough during school hours and take advantage of the extra time to find a passion they love, this is such an advantage you will only see many years later so don't miss out on this opportunity and use the extra time wisely. This is the time to help them discover a hobby.
3. If you are in the French program (and if you are at LMMH you really should be in it. It's really so much more than French Immersion there is no comparison) and are worried about their English skills and believe there is not enough English, believe me, you are wrong. It's quality over quantity when it comes to English and they will learn it well. My girls both write exceptionally well. Their grammar is great, you would not be able to tell they are FI students. LMMH fosters such strong academics that my girls do well in all subjects. When they were learning a subject that didn't interest them as much, the program was designed that they find a way to make them interested somehow. When my kids were very young I was convinced that they were just brilliant because they came home so excited to learn about the most random things:) I remember my

youngest being excited and begging to learn perimeter. She would come home counting down the days to be able to start that lesson. Today my daughters highest grade is actually in English, the subject I pestered Mme Anne with for years.

4. The different age gaps was a bit scary in the beginning because I grew up in Canada where the norm is that every grade is the same age. It's a little weird now looking back because that would mean that my girls would have been held back and not able to reach their full potential. My girls were quick to want to learn lessons that were above their grade level, especially in math. Also when my youngest was going through her phase where she was taking a lot longer to complete certain subjects, she would have probably been left behind in traditional schools (private or public) instead of given the confidence to continue at her own pace and push forward. Never in your life will you only have relationships and peers that are all the same age as you, or that all think the exact same way as you. I think it's unrealistic to assume all kids of a certain age will all be at the same level. To add to this, I've noticed that my daughter had such confidence to join clubs like the student council in high school, where different age groups, including teachers, (that did not know her may I add) had to vote for her. I believe this confidence comes from being around different age groups at LMMH, as well as how she was respected and treated there by staff and peers.
5. Time management, this was scary at first for someone not understanding the Montessori way. Looking back now I see that they finished their plan because they wanted to learn, they WANTED to finish their plan. You won't really need to push them on this because they work on their own and learn very young to manage their time. They know what's on that plan needs to be complete and they do it on their own. My youngest would do her Math first for years as that was her strength but as she got older she adjusted and started doing the lessons she needed to work harder on first and then left what came easy last. She learned this on her own and with time. When my youngest (who did go through a stage early on where she drifted off and took a lot longer to complete her tasks) was behind on her plan, she was pushed by her peers to catch up. She never didn't want nor care to not finish the work on her plan and what was expected of her. She always had the love for learning and I believe it's strongly because she could learn on her own terms. Since they all work in a team environment all students work together and are likeminded, they all have the same goals and values and are all on the same path. I found this to be true with all the LMMH students throughout the years.
6. The no gymnasium is actually pretty funny when I look back at it because I was actually bummed at one point about this. I played basketball, volleyball and baseball in school when I was younger. I stress "when I was younger" because I've never played since- with the exception of beach volleyball that we play when on vacation, which my girls picked up pretty quickly at around 6 years old. I do wish however I knew how to play tennis and golf well or even ski like my girls. I work in a very male dominant field and it would be great to be able to join my male peers when they are playing tennis or golf or even on their annual ski trips. I am so happy my girls will be able to not only take part in but actually play these types of sports well. At LMMH they learn sports they wouldn't get the privilege of learning at many other schools.

I hope this helps if you are struggling with some of the same questions.

If Mme Anne called us tomorrow and told us she was adding high school to the program, my girls would be there instantly, they would choose this environment over the 3000 kids at their new high school any day, and my eldest is very happy and thriving there in her first year. What you have to make up for on your own socially is so outweighed by the quality of education that I believe your child can not get following the traditional way of learning, and to get that in both French and English is just a no brainer.

I'll leave off my long overdue review with a quote I love by Ignacio Estrada: "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way learn".

Thank you Mme Anne for all your love and dedication to my children over these last 12 years and thank you for keeping your promise to not let me down. I am forever grateful to you and all the LMMH staff. We are going to miss you all so much. xo. Katerina Kondovski