Montessori and Forest School Practice

‘Looking Through the lens of a forest school leader’
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Maria Montessori (1870-1952)

Background:

First female doctor in Italy (1896).

Worked with and observed adults and children with additional needs.

Designed learning materials and a classroom environment to promote children’s desire to learn.

Opened first Montessori school for children in 1907 ‘casa de Bambini’.
Montessori Principles

*Prepared environment*

Stimulating child centred, with freedom of movement and choice.

*Active learning*

Hands on experiences with self correcting materials designed by Montessori.

Active and holistic learning: children recognise their own potentials and become capable and cooperative.

*Mixed age groups*

Peer learning important

Children learn at their own pace.
The role of the educator

Keeper of the environment: prepares learning materials.
Introduces children to new work materials.
Sits among the children, observes.
Act as a guide rather than teacher.

Play and discipline

Children should engage in meaningful, purposeful real life activities.
Believed that children develop inner discipline through taking control of their learning, through choices, clear rules and consequences.
Children become disruptive only if they’re bored
The Montessori Curriculum

The curriculum is divided into different areas:

- Practical Life
- Sensorial
- Language
- Maths
- Cultural Arts
Forest Schools and Montessori-what is similar?

Principles

● Child centred.

● Observations.

● Holistic development.

● Focus on children’s choices.

● Mixed-age groups, peer learning.

● Children learn at their own pace

● Practical life skills

● Independence

Environment

Accessible, real materials which promote hands-on, experiential and discovery learning.

Freedom of choice and movement.
Routine

- Structured: free movement, circle time, individual and group activities throughout the day.
- FS: Clear beginning - middle - end.

Educator

- Facilitator to support and scaffold children’s learning and development.
- Presenting materials and modelling how to use them.
- Promoting children’s independence within the environment.
- Reflective educators.
Forest Schools and Montessori—what is Different?

**Forest School**
- Natural woodland environment
- Risk taking
- High adult child ratio
- Family can take part
- Appreciation of local environment

**Montessori**
- Prepared environment
- Self-correcting materials
- Work presented rigidly, left-right
- Concept of normalisation
- Distinct curriculum areas
Despite differences in the building blocks for learning, there is a lot of common ground in the goals of Montessori and Forest School!
thank you!