

I just read a new book which you might enjoy. It's called Montessori Madness, by Trevor Eissler. You can find it at [www.montessorimadness.com](http://www.montessorimadness.com). What's great about this book is that it is written by a Montessori parent for other parents who may or may not have already discovered Montessori education for their children. It's easy reading and passionately makes the case for choosing Montessori.

Trevor is a business jet pilot and flight instructor who lives near Austin, Texas. The story begins with Trevor's own experiences as a new father discovering his own children and exploring education options, including homeschooling, as the children grew to preschool age. Trevor and his wife asked a lot of questions and did a lot of reading as they worked out their decisions for their family.

Exploring the homeschool option Trevor was alarmed to discover that there were those who thought that the present school system was actually harmful to education.

"What could be more natural and just plain right, than hearing, 'Good morning, class. Open up your books to page 23. Today we're going to learn about nouns'? Or what about bringing a report card home? Or having a student assigned as the classroom monitor (taking names of those who talk while the teacher is out of the room)? Could there really be anything all that wrong with any of this? Why would anyone want to overturn the system in which we all grew up? What is all the fuss about, I wondered?"

So he researched more and found lots of new voices in education who were advocating not just for incremental reforms such as vouchers, increased funding, updated textbooks, standardization, etc., but a rethinking of teaching methods and our whole approach to education. He points out that taking more measurements and improving student performance on those measures does little to help develop or measure human excellence. How can you measure independence, competence, motivation, curiosity, concentration, insight, wisdom, justice, resourcefulness, courage or originality? Trevor's conclusion--you can't. He worries that single-minded focus on measurable results compromises education because it substitutes achievement on the peripherals, which can be measured, for real achievement, which can't. (Nirvair's comment--This actually reminded me of a conversation I heard on NPR about whether or not officials over-reacted to the recent swine flu. We didn't have a crisis. How do you measure successful prevention strategies? How do you measure something that didn't happen? How do you measure intangibles?)

This path of questioning and research eventually lead Trevor and his wife to a Montessori school. He beautifully describes what it was like to walk into the classroom for the first time. In the remaining chapters Trevor describes the fundamentals of Montessori education, including its unique approach to rewards and punishment, competition, responsibility, freedom, learning, comfort with error, role of the teacher, and community. He realizes that Montessori education is concrete yet profound, as well as fun. It's perfectly natural and revolutionary all at once. He breathes a sigh of relief because he knows that although his children are not at home, they are in the next-best place. I hope you will take a look at Trevor's website, join the discussion, read the book.