

Professional Development for Children's House Teachers

Three of our teachers dedicated last Saturday to professional development and attended the Montessori Schools of Massachusetts annual conference. This year's keynote speaker at the conference was Dr. Steve Hughes. He is not a Montessorian by training, but is the Director of the Center for Research on Developmental Education, and a board-certified pediatric neuropsychologist. After learning about the Montessori Method and having his own child in a Montessori school he has noted how beautifully Montessori principles are supported by brain development research.

During his lecture, Dr. Hughes provided a quick overview of children's neurological development. He emphasized how brain development occurs through a child's interaction with his or her environment. Dr. Hughes went on to discuss executive function and the important role it plays in a child's development and learning. The final part of his presentation was about the impact of parenting on a child's self-regulation skills, an important component of executive function, and socialization.

Dr. Hughes discussed four types of parenting as defined by the intersecting levels of warmth/ affection/love and control/direction/firmness. These four types are authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and neglectful. He focused on authoritative and permissive parenting. The authoritative parent has high warmth/affection/love and high control/direction/firmness. A permissive parent has high warmth/affection/love, but low control/direction/firmness. Dr. Hughes spoke of his concern about the current trend of permissive parenting and its focus on immediate happiness and self-esteem. Dr. Hughes shared research that supports authoritative parenting as the parenting model that best supports a child's self-regulation and positive socialization.

Dr. Hughes described the ideal authoritative parents as parents who:

- encourage independence with limits
- expect kids to work independently and to use their own reasoning skills
- encourage children to discuss options
- listen to their kids
- have high expectations for behavior
- provide guidance and reasons with their kids
- discipline consistently and fairly
- express warmth and nurturing
- are flexible
- are role models

Below are links to to presentations by Dr. Hughes. The first link is similar to the presentation some of our teachers attended. The second video focuses on parenting.

Building Better Brains

Parenting in the 21st Century: Tips, Tricks, and Traps

(presentation starts ten minutes in)



And, as Dr Hughes notes, ideally, the adult has a balance of strong warmth/love AND control/firmness in their interactions with children. Cheryl Matthews, the Lead Teacher in the Children's House Birch Room, is the embodiment of that balance. Cheryl is the quintessential Montessori master teacher and she has recently been recognized by **Let's Grow Kids** for these very skills with our students.

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