

# Islamic Montessori

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THE RIGHT OF  
RETURN AND THE  
PATH OF INTRISTIC  
DISCIPLINE

IN A WORLD OF  
DIFFERENCES, THE  
CHILD IS OUR  
UNITING UNIVERSAL

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### IN A WORLD OF DIFFERENCES, THE CHILD IS OUR UNIVERSAL

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### COSMIC EDUCATION

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# from the editor

Assalamu Alaikum,

Welcome to our third edition of the Islamic Montessori Magazine and our first edition of 2022. After a long break we are happy to release another issue of the Islamic Montessori magazine.

In this issue, we looked at how children are the unifying force that makes cohesion possible in a world full of differences. We explored the big 'WHY' Muslim families should consider Montessori as a method of education. In this issue, we will also discuss why it is important to learn and teach Arabic to your child.

We also briefly look at the development of natural self discipline through focussing on the Universal Human Tendencies that relate to self discipline. Lastly, we shared what cosmic education is and why is it relevant to Muslim children.

I've thoroughly enjoyed putting together this edition - with so many interesting insights and unique perspectives to learn from, I do hope you'll find it inspiring & beneficial.

As always we'd love to hear your feedback and if you're a Muslim Montessori educator and would like to contribute towards our next edition please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Best wishes,

Nusaibah

*Nusaibah*  
Nusaibah Macadam  
EDITOR

# IN A WORLD OF DIFFERENCES, THE CHILD IS OUR UNITING UNIVERSAL

by Emily @em.beres  
Photos by Rumi Montessori

**“As Muslims, our parenting goals extend beyond the dunya, into the akhirah.”**

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Allah SWT charged righteous believers with an obligation to treat orphans generously and justly. Why do orphans require this protection though? Because they are without parents. As Muslims, our parenting goals extend beyond the dunya, into the akhirah. As Montessorians, our parenting goals include preparing our children for their experience here on the dunya. The current state of the dunya, is not ideal for the normal development of human beings. In our world, society spends more money on the destruction of the world than they do on building a healthy future for our children. To secure a healthy future for our children, social reform is needed. Social reform that gives children the recognition, consideration, and respect they deserve as the creators of humanity. A social reform devoted to childhood, in an adult-centric society, requires organization and cohesion.

Religious/ spiritual people, with the goal of peaceful coexistence use a strategy called, inter-faith dialogue. In an inter-faith dialogue, representatives from different faiths recognize commonalities instead of debate differences, to have a positive discussion.



Picture from  
Rumi Montessori

Inter-faith dialogue is not a tool for conversion, it is a tool for peaceful coexistence. The goal, of social reform for children, however, is not about peaceful coexistence between children and adults, the goal is the complete conversion of humanity. A conversion from how humanity currently views children in the public-sphere. Children are not just appendages of their parents, children are human beings, rapidly developing, mind, body, and soul, into the adults of the future. Cordial and peaceful conversations about commonality will not do. Conversion of humanity will require a strong united foundation. Religion is not universally cohesive, therefore its power to unite all of humanity is limited. Islam provides us with guidance on matters pertaining to the akhirah, but perhaps Montessori will provide a solution to this issue of the dunya.

The answer to most Montessori questions is, the child: Who is the teacher? The child. How do I know which materials to introduce and when? The child. Who inspired the Montessori Method? The child. Who needs social reform? The child. Who has the potential to unite humanity? Montessori proposed, “... all humans of every race and every country on earth have children, and the child can become the focus of universal interests and ends.” (Education and Peace, 73). Children are the uniting force that will build a foundation of commonality amongst those fighting for social reform.





Picture from  
Rumi Montessori

The answer to many Montessori questions is, “the child” however when the question is, who can defend the child against society, the answer is, the child’s parent. How can we be advocates for our children, in a world that places more value on military funding than child education? Love. Parents love their children enough to invest in understanding their mental, physical, and spiritual development. Parents love their children enough to defy unrealistic social expectations and be examples of change. Parents love their children enough to unite with other like-minded parents, despite obstacles like religion, culture, and nationality. Parental love pushes beyond individual needs, to consider what is best for the survival of their children. Even on a grassroots level, our influence of parental love can make a difference. We can be examples for other adults in our family and community. Human to human influence is a powerful force, one need not look beyond social media as proof of this.

If you’ve made it through this article and leave feeling newly inspired to reflect inward on the role you play in the effort for social reformation of the child, then there has been progress, but I hope that a part of the path toward achieving the goal has also been illuminated and that Montessorians, despite our differences and egos, will unite because of our children, for our children. For more information on this important Montessori topic, read *The Secret of Childhood, Education and Peace, or Citizen of the World: Key Montessori Readings*.

**“How can we be advocates for our children, in a world that places more value on military funding than child education? Love.”**

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am a stay-at-home-mom, a Muslim revert, Montessori homeschooler and research enthusiast. Though I haven’t had an opportunity to formally explore Montessori, I am enthusiastically reading all that I can on the subject. I am passionate about three subjects: Islam, Montessori, and social evolution. I have degrees in Canadian history and religious studies, once my children are grown, in sha allah I will get Montessori certification and explore a new role in the Montessori community. For now, I am a Montessori parent, which I acknowledge is a unique and special role in the context of the Montessori world goal.

#### GLOSSARY

**Adult-centric/adult centrism:**

*the tendency to view the adult perspective as superior to the child’s perspective.*

**Inter-faith dialogue :**

*the cooperative, constructive, and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs, at both the individual and institutional levels.*



Picture from Rumi Montessori

# WHY MUSLIM FAMILIES SHOULD CONSIDER MONTESSORI EDUCATION?

by Susan Adella  
Photos by Rumi Montessori

Children are like an empty vessel, or Children are like a blank canvas, ready to be drawn or written by their parents.

Sounds familiar?

In its history, conventional education system in the world has two foundations of ideology. The first one is the factory model, and the second one came from the view that children are “empty vessels” known as behaviourist model. These two models are then combined, complementing each other, to form the current conventional education system that we have nowadays.

These characteristics of conventional school usually: class-grouping based on age, moving from one subject to another is when the bell ringing - not when child has already grasped the topic and ready for another lesson - and lack of children-led learning. This model of school regards teachers as the main source of education and their job is to mould the children. Hence, the teachers must give certain

information and control human nature from in front of class. Beside of this, the behaviourist curriculum is based on association between item learned and reward given.

The implication of viewing children as empty vessels where knowledge is being poured into them is that the children do not need to actively learn. Children are the passive objects –whilst children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. Teachers do not need to consider the children’s individual interest in learning. Children as empty vessels means they cannot choose, and teachers must choose what to learn without any input from the children.

But is it true a child born as an empty vessel? Let see, what Prophet Muhammad told us:

﴿ كُلُّ إِنْسَانٍ نَلَدُهُ أُمَّهُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ، فَأَبَوَاهُ

يَهُودَانِهِ أَوْ يَنْصَرَانِهِ أَوْ يَمَجْسَانِهِ

“Every child is born upon Fitra. It is the parents that make him a Jew, Christian or Majusi” (Muslim).

What is fitrah? According to Imam An-Nawawi, fitrah in this hadith refers to Islam. As tadabbur , we know that Islam means submission, and muslim are the people who submit. Therefore, every child is born in the condition of submission. to what? To the will of Allah. How? Through “guidance” that has been set by Allah for their development. We can see every baby will cry as a way to communicate their needs to his parents. They just follow the guidance. this guidance is an innate urge, which means children are not born empty.

Why should Muslim consider Montessori?

Dr Montessori offered an alternative to behaviourist view. This alternative education model is called the constructivist where she sees that children are constructing their own knowledge. Therefore, we cannot simplify them as empty vessels.

**“if we wish to understand man, we must first understand how man has been built”**  
(Montessori, 2012).

Montessori performed direct and close observation to hundreds of children all over the world to understand the children’s nature. She found that children under 2 years old across the globe have the same tendency in their development. They go through a long infancy period and seem helpless, whilst their brain undergoes rapid development. Whilst being helpless, these children slowly become able to crawl, sit, and stand without anyone teaching them how to. Then suddenly when they start talking, they speak as reflected the customs of their kind– with perfect grammar, tense and accent; all of this occurred unconsciously as if following certain guidance. This is what made Dr Montessori believed that children learn and construct themselves by absorbing from their environment and this should be our guidance.

**“Our first teacher, therefore, will be the child himself, or rather vital urge with the cosmic laws that leads him unconsciously. Not what we call the child’s will, but the mysterious will that direct his formation- this must be our guide”** (Montessori, 2007).

As a believer, and by understanding the hadith from Rasulullah saw above, I believe that children are born with capability, and they submit to the “innate urge” that Allah has set for them in constructing knowledge, character, belief, and other factors to shape them as a human. This is their nature. Our job as parents or educator are not to “mould” them into something that we want, instead to guide this innate urge in their process of construction so eventually they can fulfill their role as Allah creation.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Adella is an AMI certified Montessori Guide for ages 3-6. She enjoys her role as a mum of three and working with children in one of Montessori children’s house in Melbourne.

**“Our first teacher, therefore, will be the child himself, or rather vital urge with the cosmic laws that leads him unconsciously. Not what we call the child’s will, but the mysterious will that direct his formation- this must be our guide”**



**“It is interesting to notice that where life is simple and natural and where the children participate in the adult’s life, they are calm and happy.”**

**MARIA MONTESSORI**







Picture from  
Rumi Montessori

# EMPOWERING YOURSELF AND YOUR CHILD THROUGH ARABIC

by Hanae Elena Chelly  
Photos by Rumi Montessori

As Muslims, a lot of things unite us as an Ummah. The first thing we have in common is that we are all connected through Allah Al-Khaliq, our creator, and His words in the Quran. The Quran was revealed in Arabic and thus Arabic is naturally part of our life; from the Quran, we recite in prayer or outside of prayer, the hadith we read to learn about the sunnah of our Prophet, the duas we utter to Allah in search of His mercy and help, the common phrases we use daily. Arabic is present daily in every Muslim's life.

Our relationship with Arabic however differs from one Muslim to another. Some might have grown up with it being used as a communication tool, some might only use it to read the Quran and some others have made it a mission to learn and teach Arabic.

Now, as parents and educators, we want our children, our students to be equipped with the best tools to navigate this life on earth. To me Arabic is one of the greatest gifts we can ever offer to the next generation, it's a heritage that will change and transform their lives as well as ours.

Why? Because knowing Arabic will not only open the doors of sound Islamic knowledge and prevent us from deviating from the truth but it will also enlighten the hearts through deeply connecting to the meaning of Allah's words. It is also a unique opportunity for us as Muslims to make Fusha our lingua franca and thus to come together as one united & connected Ummah.

But how can we as parents, and often non-Arabic speakers, and educators make sure we can grant our children such a gift?

Maria Montessori gave us clear indications on how to proceed thanks to her observation and work, now backed by the latest findings in neuroscience. She described children as capable 'to absorb

language from their environment and easily learn how to speak, read and write if the language in its various forms is present in their environment during the period of the Absorbent Mind (Montessori, 1949).

This absorbent mind she describes is what we need to focus our attention on when it comes to learning and especially learning a language. The early years represent the optimal period for the child's brain ability to retain and reuse the information he is exposed to through his experiences as well as for his Fitra or inborn natural disposition to learn languages in an easy and effortless way.

How can we then make the most of this period and not let our children miss out on this favourable opportunity?

Learning a language requires following a progression that aligns with the child's development as Maria Montessori clearly outlined in her work.

What does this progression look like?

### **Stage 1: Language Acquisition**

In the case of Arabic and many other languages we are using nowadays, acquiring a language fully is based on developing 4 main skills, namely Listening, Speaking, Writing & Reading.

This translates into exposing your child to the language in all its forms to not only acquire vocabulary but truly absorb the various specificities of the language such as pronunciation, grammar and intonations.

### **Stage 2: Learning the Code or alphabet**

A written language is a set of symbols to code any spoken language. And thus to unlock the power of written words, one needs to be familiar with the system's particular uses.

Knowing the different letter shapes and sounds through connecting it to meaningful experiences is what will unlock the next stages of learning the language.

### **Stage 3: Coding or writing**

The first step to using the code is actually writing, as a child needs to understand the process of word formation before he can start deciphering.

This step requires preparation of the hand through activities to strengthen the muscles and dexterity of the hand and thus in the early stage, it is recommended to use a movable alphabet to allow the child to grasp the concept of word formation.

**“This work needs to be progressive to allow for enough stimulation, one that doesn't discourage the child nor keep him stagnant in his learning.”**



## Stage 4: Decoding or reading.

All previous stages pave the way to make reading a joyful and easy task by allowing the child to connect words with meaning.

This work needs to be progressive to allow for enough stimulation, one that doesn't discourage the child nor keep him stagnant in his learning.

But to truly be able to successfully take on this honourable mission of teaching our children the language of the Quran, the preparation of the adult needs to come first, a transformational preparation that will change not only the way you approach language learning but that will also get you closer to Allah and strengthen your faith bi'idhni'Alla ta'ala.

**"Our care of the children should be governed not by the desire to 'make them learn things', but by the endeavor always to keep burning within them the light which is called intelligence."** (Maria Montessori, 1964)

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hanae Elena Chelly is a language enthusiast, passionate about child development and learning. She is a polyglot, raising her two children in a multilingual environment with Arabic, Tunisian dialect, French, English and Spanish. In her mission to share knowledge and insights with other Muslim families she initiated the Raising Righteous Muslims Online Summit and has now started Arabic Nest where she works to empower non-Arabic speakers and Muslim families to teach Arabic following their child's development using the Montessori approach.

Instagram @arabic\_nest

## GLOSSARY

### Fusha

*Classical or standard form of the Arabic language as found in the Quran and news and official documents and literature and opposed to dialects, unique to specific regions.*

### Lingua franca

*a language used for communication between groups of people who speak different languages.*



Picture from  
Rumi Montessori



Picture from  
Rumi Montessori

# THE RIGHT OF RETURN & THE PATH OF INTRISTIC DISCIPLINE

by Halima  
Photos by Rumi Montessori

The Right of Return of the refugee is an emotive and powerful idea; being exiled from your home, and the need to be given the right to go back there. I would like to use this as a metaphor when talking about this subject of “discipline” of the child. Our place of return in fact as adults is where we can begin to understand our needs and perhaps grow our own intrinsic discipline and it is exactly the place that we need to guide the child from. This is the fitra or primordial nature; the birth right of every one of us and unlike a physical place, the primordial nature cannot be taken away from us.

When we have a child or become a guide of children, the opportunity then is to return to our own primordial nature through understanding not only the child’s nature and needs but the Universal Needs or Tendencies of the human being and understanding that this envelopes not just the child but also ourselves and in fact every human being. . When we understand our universal needs, only then can we support the child on a path of intrinsic discipline.

## Our Potential

As a child we were already born with everything we needed to

grow, to learn, to know, to choose - all we needed was the right physical and human environment. The difference between the human child and any other form of creation is that a child has unlimited potential, the ability to adapt to become a speaker of any language, a prince or a thief, an acrobat or a couch potato. It is essential to know that this unlimited potential and adaptability does not differentiate and so we can see the need to create an appropriate environment. We quite literally “become” our environment through our unique ability to absorb everything from both the



the physical and human environment.

### **The Need to Attach**

Why the human environment? Because our first and most important need is to attach to and mimic another human being and we cannot survive or thrive without this attachment. This is the starting point; a real connection or attachment to the guide or parent. The word discipline comes from the same word as disciple and the disciple is the one that follows through love.

### **The Need for Order & Autonomy**

Once the attachment is established we can consider what the other needs are that relate to discipline. Two of these needs are the need for order and autonomy. Here then order is not something being imposed upon the child in the form of limits or external discipline but rather the universal need for freedom is given, so that the child can choose in an ordered environment, and then it follows that the child will incline naturally to order. So the child should have freedom to choose and never be forced and the environment should offer purposeful choices.

### **The Presentation of Self Discipline**

When we then think about the presentation or the way we demonstrate any activity or behavior, we recall that the child is absorbing everything we do and that by being fully present ourselves when we are demonstrating anything, we create an attraction in ourselves and naturally pull the child in. So presence and then slow, intentional movements and the child will imprint all that you have done. This is really a demonstration of self discipline.

### **The Path of Intrinsic Discipline**

Through attachment and freedom the child will then repeat the activity and begin to limit their actions in order to mimic what they have seen you do. This is the beginning of intrinsic

discipline; willfully limiting behavior in order to achieve a purposeful task. Purposeful activity gives a sense of function which motivates the child to do more, which cultivates refinement in limiting action.

### **Natural Obedience**

When the child continues to follow the guide who is moving with precision and care they are naturally inclined to obedience; to follow through love. This is the master-disciple relationship which is in line with the needs of the child.



Picture from  
Rumi Montessori

Intrinsic Discipline does not mean the absence of extrinsic limits set by caring adults but when giving limits we must understand the child's stage of development and apply external boundaries that are fair, kind, consistent and appropriately firm. These external boundaries support the child as the learn limits but real discipline can only be intrinsic and can only start with an adult in touch with their own universal needs and developing and presenting their own intrinsic discipline from a place of return.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Halima started working with children in her teens through music and movement classes, in privates schools, clubs and nurseries and always leaned towards promoting creative expression. She was naturally drawn to the scientific pedagogy of Maria Montessori, feeling that it served the child's natural development and was very much in line with a prophetic understanding of the universal nature of man. She has worked as a Montessori guide, manager and education manager and continues to be inspired by the human beings she lives and works with every day. Sometimes she feels a poem or a story and lets it express itself and sometimes when there is a pause in the day, she plays the drum and sings a little; poorly but enthusiastically.

**“This is the beginning of intrinsic discipline; wilfully limiting behavior in order to achieve a purposeful task”**



Picture from  
Rumi Montessori



**“The child gives us a beautiful lesson – that in order to form and maintain our intelligence, we must use our hands.**

*Maria Montessori*





# COSMIC EDUCATION

BY  
NUSAIBAH  
MACADAM

Cosmic education has been an aspect of the Montessori method that has fascinated me from the beginning of my journey as an educator. It is Dr Montessori's cosmic vision that makes Montessori so compatible for us as Muslim parents and educators. As Muslim Montessori educators it is essential we have a firm understanding of Dr Montessori's cosmic vision and how it is compatible with prophetic teachings and meets the key principles of Islamic education.

## DEFINITION OF 'COSMIC'?

This may be the first time you hear the word 'cosmic' or 'cosmos', it may sound unfamiliar and even more so when mentioned in the context of Islamic education. However, cosmic education is essentially prophetic in its nature, not only is the cosmos an essential consideration in our faith, but Allah mentions the cosmos numerous times in the Quran.

The word 'cosmos' comes from the early Greek word 'Kosmos' meaning 'harmony' or 'order'. The cosmos is defined as the 'world or universe regarded as an orderly, harmonious system'. Cosmos also means 'of belonging to or relating to the universe'. Cosmology refers to 'the scientific study of the

universe as a unified whole'. In short, the word 'cosmic' means anything relating to (or coming from) the universe and the natural processes that occur within it.

## The cosmos in the Quran

The arabic word for cosmos is **علامة** (sign), **علامة** (mark), which comes from the root word **علم** and **عالم** (knowledge). From these root words, we can see that the word cosmos has a deeper meaning in the context of the Quran.

## Allah Created the universe with a Specific Purpose

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ  
ضُورًا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا

"Not without purpose did We create heaven and earth and all between!!" (Quran 38:27)

The cosmos was not created by chance or coincidence, but Allah **جل جلاله** created it with exact knowledge and intention. If you look at this world and examine it deeply, it is obvious that there is a deeper meaning and purpose behind all that we see around us. It is clear, that each thing we see, hear, feel or experience has a definite purpose that it is created for and exists to fulfil it. There is also divine plan, which Allah **جل جلاله** put in place, through which this beautiful earth continues to exist. The wind



Picture from Rumi Montessori



that blows, it does not do so out of its own will, it is Allah who gave it the laws to blow, and as the wind blows through the land, it carries with it the seeds of plants spreading life. Everything that exists plays a part in this divine plan, making its contribution for good of the whole. They all do so in absolute submission to Allah and what he has decreed for them.

Everything in the universe is a sign pointing to the existence of Allah. Throughout the Quran, Allah reminds man that the universe is full of signs for man to examine, it is through these signs that man will reach a firm belief in Allah.

﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُوقِنِينَ﴾  
 ﴿وَفِي أَنفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ﴾

**‘On earth are Signs for those whose Faith is certain. And also in yourselves. Will you not then see?’**  
 (Quran 51:20-21)

It is as if each thing in the cosmos carries a special message, a signpost, calling man and pointing man to see the signs of Allah in all the universe around us. The entire universe and all knowledge encompassed within it, is then a proof of the existence of an All Powerful creator, Allah.

**Dr Montessori’s cosmic vision**

Dr Montessori concern for the child was more than just to help them achieve academic excellence, or even to merely unlock potential.



Picture from Rumi Montessori

As a devout Christian with a strong belief in God Dr Montessori was well aware that there is a deeper meaning to our existence beyond the material and superficial. Dr Montessori recognised, that as humans, we have a purpose to fulfil on this earth. She saw education as a way to aid man in his life on earth, to prepare him to fulfil his cosmic purpose. It is through her careful observations of the child, of the environment, and the universe as a whole, that she came to her understanding of the cosmos. It is therefore not surprising that many of Dr Montessori discoveries mirror the prophetic knowledge of the cosmos. Since Dr Montessori regarded our purpose in life as the most important aspect of the human being, her educational

method focuses on supporting the human being in developing all their faculties in a way that is in line with Gods given plan, so that the child can grow into an adult who recognises their role and purpose in the cosmos, and is prepared to fulfil it.

Dr Montessori’s cosmic vision forms the backbone of the Montessori method as applied from birth through to adulthood. Grazzini described Dr Montessori’s cosmic vision as;

**“It is this vision of an indivisible unity made up of energy, of sky, of rocks, of water, of life, of humans as adults and humans as children that lends a sense of the cosmic to Montessori’s thinking. This cosmic sense pervades all of Montessori’s work, both her thinking and her educational approach for all of the different planes and stages of**



Picture from  
Rumi Montessori

**all of the different planes and stages of stages of development of the human being: from birth without violence to the Infant Community, to the Casa dei Bambini, to the elementary school, to the Erdkinder community for adolescents... Quite clearly, then, this cosmic vision belongs by right to the whole of the Montessori movement: it is indeed the key which gives us a shared direction and a common goal in our work."**

Dr Montessori's cosmic vision is relevant to all stages of human development and provides the backbone for all the work we do as Montessori educators. At each stage of development this cosmic vision is at the forefront of her work. However, it is in the second plane of development from 6 - 12 years, where Allah gifted the child with special interests and sensitivities which make him drawn to exploring the cosmos and for this reason Dr Montessori designed the 'cosmic curriculum'. According to Dr Montessori, the cosmic curriculum is the presentation of the universe as an ordered system to the mind of the older child to explore with his reason and imagination. It provides a grand and spectacular view of the universe as an interconnected web of life.

When cosmic education is offered to the elementary child in the correct way, according to prophetic teachings, it not only awakens within the child awe, wonder, admiration, but also a sense gratitude for Allah The Creator. While on the apparent level, cosmic education provides the child with the opportunity to study the cosmos, gaining extensive knowledge about how the world works, for Muslim educators the central aim of cosmic education is much deeper. Through cosmic education the reality of the universe will become apparent to the child, and as he explores the universe, it will affirm his tawheed and turn him to Allah with love and gratitude.

*This article is an excerpt from the book 'Cosmic Education from the Prophetic Perspective' where Nusaibah examines cosmic education in depth and presents the five great lessons from an Islamic perspective (due to be published late 2022). If you would like to know more about cosmic education you can join Nusaibah's online course, for more details <https://tinyurl.com/montessoricosmic>*

**"...cosmic curriculum is the presentation of the universe as an ordered system to the mind of the older child to explore with his reason and imagination."**



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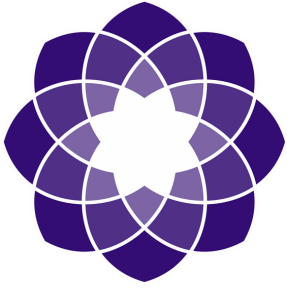
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