



**Maria Montessori**  
**by Isabella Sophia Cicalo**

“Education is the best weapon for peace.”(1) A quote from Maria Montessori. Maria Montessori was a physician and educator with a bloodline full of Italian ancestry. On August 31st, 1870, Maria was born into the lower class in Chiaravalle, her hometown. Even though this brought a barrier for Maria, she overcame it with her parents through education. Education was big for the Montessori family, as her mother, Renilde Stoppani, loved how education brought forth a whole lifetime of opportunities. Maria became a bright student, and by the age of 13, she entered engineering school to prepare for her grand future.(2) Even though she entered school to become an engineer, she switched midway and graduated from medical school, becoming one of the first women Italian physicians.

With this change, she graduated with honors in this male-dominated field and showed how determined she was to surpass the stereotype. Furthermore, she continued her studies at the University of Rome, finishing in 2 years and becoming the first woman to ever study at this university and the first female doctor in Italy. By 1896, she represented women further by addressing her concerns of the wage gap between women and men at the time to Congress, stating, “It is only the upper classes that have a prejudice against women leading a useful existence.” (3)

Now, Maria’s contribution goes beyond her speaking out for equality and justice. While she studied in school, she began to learn how the approach towards learning certain subjects was not suitable for every child. Instead, she began to research and create a method that is used in over 20,000 schools today: the Montessori approach. This approach allowed students to learn through student-led and self-guided lessons, allowing each student to learn at their own pace of learning, faster or slower. It also allows students to connect with their teacher and ask meaningful questions throughout their learning to establish independence while still getting some help from



their peers around them.(4) A study conducted called Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging showed how out of a group of 134 students, the non-white preschoolers performed significantly higher in cognitive and social interactional tests, proving how this approach that was set in European countries benefits each child in the long term.(5)

Following this, these schools were open to providing education to neglected and uneducated children, further breaking through and being brought to the United States in 1911. Maria finally ventured to the United States in 1913 to see her accomplishments and to lecture in different capitals. The big difference between the Montessori schools in the United States was that it was primarily for upper-class children, which took away some purpose of the school. With this, these schools began to fade in the 1950s, which was devastating, but Nancy McCormick Rambusch began to save these schools for Maria's sake. The big boom of these schools began once again in 1960 and followed through to even today.

Her breakthrough in education has brought a new method, awareness, and determination for the future in the way children learn and equality between both men and women. Her Italian heritage has changed society positively throughout history, fundamentally helping how people approach education and laying a foundation for the way children were meant to learn. Education has changed for the better all over the globe, bringing happiness to parents of children who make milestones quicker than they have ever imagined! And like Maria said, "As we observe children, we see the vitality of their spirit, the maximum effort put forth in all they do, the intuition, attention, and focus they bring to all life's events, and the sheer joy they experience in living."(6)



### ***Bibliography Footnotes***

1 Association Montessori Internationale. (2024a, February). *Requirements*. Montessori Resources for Schools, Teachers, Families and Parents. <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/History-of-Montessori/Who-Was-Maria-Montessori/Maria-Montessori-Quotes>

2 Association Montessori Internationale. (2024). Who was Maria Montessori? <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/History-of-Montessori/Who-Was-Maria-Montessori>

3 *Biography of maria montessori*. Association Montessori Internationale. (n.d.). <https://montessori-ami.org/resource-library/facts/biography-maria-montessori>

4 *What is montessori education?*. What Is Montessori Education. (2024). <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/What-Is-Montessori#:~:text=Montessori%20education%20is%20student%20led,knowledge%2C%20understanding%2C%20and%20respect.>

5 Ph.D., A. E. (2024). *What does research tell us about montessori?*. Montessori Foundation | MFA | IMC. <https://www.montessori.org/what-does-research-tell-us-aboutmontessori/#:~:text=Their%20study%20of%20134%20non,as%20Dusual%E2%80%9D%20preschool%20programs%2C>

6 Association Montessori Internationale. (2024a, February). *Requirements*. Montessori Resources for Schools, Teachers, Families and Parents. <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/History-of-Montessori/Who-Was-Maria-Montessori/Maria-Montessori-Quotes>