



## **LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE** **by Vivienne Singelis**

Children with English as a second language are included in the normal Montessori daily program. The Montessori curriculum serves these children well for a variety of reasons, including:

- Individualized work plans
  - Working at their own pace with no time constraints
  - Self-directed learning, with a wide range of Montessori learning materials
  - No competition
  - No feeling of being left behind
  - No pressure on the child
- Working at their own pace, without stress, is particularly important for the child learning English (or other language) as their 2<sup>nd</sup> language.
- We now know that children learning two or more languages may initially develop more slowly, but that they gradually catch-up; ultimately their bilingualism or trilingualism will be a distinct advantage in our multi-cultural world.
- We learn when we are happy and comfortable—this is particularly so for children learning languages.
- For children, learning languages is largely an absorbent process facilitated by a comfortable environment.
- All-inclusive nature of a Montessori school:
  - Making each child feel as if they belong
  - Strong sense of community and interest in helping each other
  - Children have good sense of emotional well-being as well as feeling that they are supported.
- Mentorship in classrooms—children helping each other and eager to do so.

At Sherwood Montessori, we would work with English learners, in part, by introducing a special classmate mentor for the learner. This could have reciprocal benefits, with the native English speaker also learning the language of the child they are mentoring. For the bilingual child personally, this could also help to enhance the value of their own language.

- The international nature of Montessori schools is a key feature for success with second language learners. The success is tied in with:

- Montessori's wider vision for world peace through 'education for peace'
- Throughout the Montessori curriculum, there is a celebration of:
  - Each individual's uniqueness
  - Diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds
  - Different international festivals