ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES ON MONTESSORI STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study investigates the academic and behavioral challenges faced by Montessori students aged 3 to 6 years, focusing on Primer, Primer A, and Primer B levels at BSR Green Park International School, Thiruppathur, Tamil Nadu, India.

Methodology: A case study method was employed, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyze the impact of innovative teaching methodologies on student performance and well-being. The curriculum, designed by Next Education, emphasized interactive, play-based, and activity-based learning strategies to enhance cognitive, socio-emotional, and motor skills development.

Results: Findings reveal that tailored teaching approaches significantly improved students' academic performance and behavioral adaptability, including digital resources, recap sessions, and real-world examples.

Conclusion: The study highlights the challenges, such as exam anxiety, incomplete homework, and disruptive behaviors, alongside strategies for remediation through teacher-parent collaboration and specialized classroom interventions. The results underline the importance of a structured and nurturing educational environment in fostering holistic development and lifelong learning skills among young children.

Keywords: Adaptive Learning. Personalized Learning. Tailoring Education.

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DESAFIOS ACADÊMICOS E COMPORTAMENTAIS EM ALUNOS MONTESSORI

RESUMO

Objetivo: O estudo investiga os desafios acadêmicos e comportamentais enfrentados por alunos Montessori de 3 a 6 anos, com foco nos níveis Primer, Primer A e Primer B na BSR Green Park International School, Thiruppathur, Tamil Nadu, Índia.

Metodologia: Foi empregado um método de estudo de caso, integrando abordagens qualitativas e quantitativas para analisar o impacto de metodologias de ensino inovadoras no desempenho e no bem-estar dos alunos. O currículo, elaborado pela Next Education, enfatizou estratégias de aprendizagem interativas, lúdicas e baseadas em atividades para melhorar o desenvolvimento de habilidades cognitivas, socioemocionais e motoras.

Resultados: Os resultados revelam que abordagens de ensino personalizadas melhoraram significativamente o desempenho académico e a adaptabilidade comportamental dos alunos, incluindo recursos digitais, sessões de recapitulação e exemplos do mundo real.

Conclusão: O estudo destaca desafios como ansiedade nos exames, trabalhos de casa incompletos e comportamentos perturbadores, juntamente com estratégias de remediação através da colaboração professor-pais e intervenções especializadas em sala de aula. Os resultados sublinham a importância de um ambiente educativo estruturado e estimulante na promoção do desenvolvimento holístico e de competências de aprendizagem ao longo da vida entre as crianças pequenas.

Palavras-chave: Aprendizagem Adaptativa. Aprendizagem Personalizada. Educação sob Medida.

DESAFÍOS ACADÉMICOS Y DE COMPORTAMIENTO EN ESTUDIANTES MONTESSORI

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El estudio investiga los desafíos académicos y de comportamiento que enfrentan los estudiantes Montessori de 3 a 6 años, enfocándose en los niveles Primer, Primer A y Primer B en BSR Green Park International School, Thiruppathur, Tamil Nadu, India.

Metodología: Se utilizó un método de estudio de caso, integrando enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos para analizar el impacto de metodologías de enseñanza innovadoras en el desempeño y el bienestar de los estudiantes. El plan de estudios, diseñado por Next Education, enfatizó estrategias de aprendizaje interactivas,

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lúdicas y basadas en actividades para mejorar el desarrollo de habilidades cognitivas, socioemocionales y motoras.

Resultados: Los resultados revelan que los enfoques de enseñanza personalizados mejoraron significativamente el rendimiento académico y la adaptabilidad del comportamiento de los estudiantes, incluidos recursos digitales, sesiones de recapitulación y ejemplos del mundo real.

Conclusión: El estudio destaca desafíos como la ansiedad ante los exámenes, las tareas incompletas y las conductas disruptivas, junto con estrategias de remediación a través de la colaboración entre maestros y padres e intervenciones especializadas en el aula. Los resultados resaltan la importancia de un entorno educativo estructurado y estimulante para promover el desarrollo holístico y las habilidades de aprendizaje permanente entre los niños pequeños.

Palabras clave: Aprendizaje Adaptativo. Aprendizaje Personalizado. Educación a Medida.

1. INTRODUCTION

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Montessori approach has its roots in the work of Maria Montessori (1870–1952), an Italian physician and educator who emphasized children's autonomy, sensory learning, and the prepared environment as pillars of child development. According to Montessori (2007), education should promote freedom with responsibility, allowing children to develop their natural abilities through self-directed learning.

Contemporary research reinforces the benefits of this approach. Lillard (2017) highlights that children educated through the Montessori method demonstrate significant gains in areas such as cognition, social skills, and intrinsic motivation. In addition, Gutek (2004) argues that Montessori philosophy offers a consistent pedagogical alternative to traditional teacher-centered approaches. From the perspective of educational psychology, Piaget's theory of cognitive development and Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development resonate with Montessori practice. While Piaget maintains that children learn through active interaction with their environment, Vygotsky emphasizes that learning is socially mediated—a principle reflected in Montessori's multi-age classrooms and emphasis on collaborative work (Miller, 2005).

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Therefore, the Montessori method should not be seen merely as a pedagogical practice, but as an educational model grounded in a robust theoretical foundation, which includes contributions from developmental psychology, educational neuroscience, and critical pedagogy.

Montessori is a method of education based on self-directed activity, hands-on learning, and collaborative play. Quality preschool programs that develop the whole child through age-appropriate socioemotional and cognitive skill-building hold promise for significantly improving child outcomes (Lillard *et al.*, 2017). According to Government of India (2020) The National Education Policy introduces a new pedagogical and curricular structure, based on early childhood care and education (ECCE), for children aged 3 to 6. This initiative aims to promote overall learning development and well-being. The study shows that over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs before the age of 6, which indicates the critical importance of proper care and stimulation of the brain in the early years to ensure healthy brain development and growth (Government of India, 2020).

One preschool model that involves both child-directed, freely chosen activity and academic content is the Montessori method (Lillard *et al.*, 2017). The Montessori Method is a child-centered approach in which children are viewed as active participants in their development, strongly influenced by natural, dynamic, and self-correcting forces within themselves, opening the way toward growth and learning (Navarra, 2019). In Montessori environments, the early years curriculum is built on sensory exploration, allowing young children to develop manipulative skills, hand-eye coordination, and cognitive problem-solving through practical life and sensory experiences. This early focus on independence and curiosity forms the foundation for future academic learning and creative thinking (Saha; Adhikari, 2023).

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) ideally consists of flexible, multi-faceted, multi-level, play-based, activity-based, and inquiry-based learning. It includes alphabets, languages, numbers, counting, colors, shapes, indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, problem-solving, drawing, painting, and other visual art, crafts, drama, puppetry, music, and movement. It also focuses on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behavior, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork, and cooperation. The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development,

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cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural and artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy (Government of India, 2020).

The research study was carried out in BSR Green Park International School, Thiruppathur, Sivagangai District, Tamil Nadu State, India. The school is approved by the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE) and Education Management Information System (EMIS) from the Central and State Government of Tamil Nadu. The study was focused on Montessori students of age groups of 3 to 6 years. The school followed the curriculum designed by Next Education, which is a comprehensive curriculum solution that empowers the teacher and engages the student. It facilitates better academic planning for the teacher with teacher manuals, assessments, and regular teacher training and seamlessly integrates Next Books with companion components like audiovisuals, simulations, and hands-on activities to engage and delight learners (Next Curriculum, 2022).

According to Next Education (2022) the "play-and-learn" or learn-and-play methodology in pre-primary education ensures a smooth transition to primary education, and lays a foundation for lifelong learning. The Next Play curriculum by Next Education adopts an integrated learning approach to ensure balanced development across five key domains: cognitive, emotional, linguistic, social, and physical. It is envisioned that, before the age of five, every child will move to a "Preparatory Class" or "Balavatika" prior to entering Class 1. This will be guided by an ECCE-qualified teacher. Learning in the Preparatory Class is primarily play-based with a focus on developing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor abilities early literacy and numeracy (Government of India, 2020).

Although there was no difference between groups at the initial test point, over time Montessori children performed better on measures of academic achievement, social understanding, and mastery orientation. They also reported a greater enjoyment of scholastic tasks (Lillard *et al.*, 2017). A key principle is to identify and nurture each students' unique capabilities. By 2026-27, all the students in Grade 3 are expected to achieve foundational literacy and numeracy (Government of India, 2020).

The study focused on the Montessori levels (Primer, Primer A, and Primer B) at BSR Green Park International School, aiming to analyze the academic and

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behavioral challenges of students aged 2.5 to 6 years. A case study method was employed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches for data collection, and specifically targeting students experiencing academic and behavioral difficulties.

According to Verdú *et al.* (2008), adaptive learning systems aim to be more adaptive by building a model of each student's goals, preferences, and level of knowledge and using this model throughout the interaction with the student to adapt to the child's needs. Adaptive learning technologies utilize algorithms and data analytics to tailor educational content and experiences to the unique needs of each student (Chew, 2024). At BSR Green Park teachers placed a high priority on using differentiated instruction and adaptable learning technologies in the classroom, enabling them to effectively tailor educational experiences to each student's individual needs and strengths.

2. METHODOLOGY

The school followed the Next Education curriculum, with textbooks designed to suit the development stages of Montessori students. Next Education emphasizes that children should learn through interactive, engaging, and fun-filled activities. In line with this philosophy, it developed an integrated set of eight colorfully illustrated books, each covering core subjects like English, Number Works, and General Awareness.

The Next Education books are structured to follow a three-step approach: introduction, recognition, and application of new concepts. Each book includes a variety of practice tasks and activities aimed at developing age-appropriate language, cognitive, and motor skills. Additionally, each book features stories and rhymes to encourage children to read, listen, and develop an awareness of the sounds and rhythms of language.

The integrated and interdisciplinary approach of the curriculum supports the development of visual memory and incidental learning in young students. The books combine academic content with creative and playful teaching methods to help children attain high standards in language acquisition, cognitive growth, motor development, as well as social and emotional learning. To further support effective

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teaching, Next Education provides a mentor manual, digital content, and a resource kit, all aimed at transforming classrooms into dynamic and engaging learning environments.

Mentor Manual — According to Iyer *et al*. (2021) the mentor manual offers pedagogical support through detailed day-wise plans for teachers. It includes learning objectives, activities, classroom strategies, teaching tips, assessments, and worksheets to ensure that students achieve the targeted learning outcomes. The manual is accessible on desktops and mobile phones via the Next Mentor app. It serves as a practical tool to guide teachers in conducting effective teaching-learning sessions, making their work more efficient. Well-structured teaching strategies help educators deliver lessons with confidence and clarity, thereby achieving the set goals.

Digital content — Next Education offers a rich blend of over 1,000 audiovisual modules through Teach Next, its award-winning digital learning platform. The content is seamlessly integrated with instructional videos for teachers on conducting fine and gross motor activities (Digital Resources, 2021).

Resource Kit — This kit includes a range of visual aids and hands-on manipulatives designed to facilitate interactive and enjoyable learning experiences for children. It contains tools such as flashcards, beads and strings, stick puppets, lacing boards, and number molds. All items are non-toxic, waterproof, durable, and child-friendly (Next Education, 2021).

According to Iyer et al. (2021) the curriculum is designed for Primer, Primer A, and Primer B levels and includes content in English, Number Works, General Awareness, Stories and Rhymes, and Activities. These subjects are spread across eight monthly books, each with specific learning outcomes that allow teachers to assess student progress effectively. The content is thoughtfully designed to match the developmental level of the students in each group.

English — The English section begins with pre-writing strokes, introducing concepts such as standing lines, sleeping lines, forward slant lines, backward slant lines, right open curves, left open curves, upward open curves, downward open curves, zigzag lines, upward loops, and downward loops. Practice worksheets are included with dotted lines, allowing students to trace and write easily. The section then progresses to the English alphabet, with each letter presented in both

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uppercase and lowercase, accompanied by words and vivid illustrations. After learning each letter aloud, students trace and write the letters as part of a practice session. Every *Primer A* book includes content across English, Number Works, General Awareness, Stories and Rhymes, and Activities, along with recap sessions covering material from the previous book.

Number Works — This section focuses on foundational pre-math concepts, starting with understanding "left" and "right" through illustrated examples and corresponding worksheets for practice. It then introduces numbers, each represented with images for better comprehension. After learning each number aloud, students practice tracing and writing it. The section also covers basic shapes and colors. Students are asked to identify specific shapes in images and color them using the specified colors. Each shape and color lesson is accompanied by a rhyme designed to reinforce recognition through singing.

General Awareness — Designed for *Primer A* and *Primer B* students, this section includes personalized activities such as attaching the child's photo and writing their name below it. It also involves identifying gender using pictures and pasting images of favorite things. Students paste pictures in the spaces provided, with corresponding names written below each item to build vocabulary and personal connection.

Stories and Rhymes — Each book includes two stories and two rhymes. These are illustrated with vibrant, engaging images that encourage children to look at the pictures and read the accompanying text. The visual storytelling approach helps to maintain interest and support comprehension.

Activities — At the end of the textbook, activity pages are provided for student practice or evaluation. These pages are detachable and can be removed and submitted to the teacher for review.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

As per the academic calendar designed by Next Education, BSR Green Park International School followed a structured schedule. Teachers were required to use the mentor manual to plan their monthly, weekly, and day-wise learning objectives. Daily classroom sessions were organized into segments such as Circle Time, Large

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Group Time, Playtime, Small Group Time, and Exploring Time. During these sessions, teachers conducted various activities and observed students' development in listening, speaking, social interaction, and fine motor skills.

Each book in the curriculum was to be completed within 24 days. Simultaneously, teachers were expected to use the Teach Next board—an integrated digital classroom solution—for every lesson. This tool was also accessible to students at home, supporting continuous learning beyond the classroom. At the end of each lesson, teachers used resource kits to engage students in interactive and enjoyable activities that reinforced the concepts learned. This structured play approach fostered a learning environment that encouraged both academic growth and holistic development.

The school is well-equipped with modern classrooms and all the necessary teaching and learning resources. Systematic monitoring of teaching and learning processes ensured the achievement of the institution's educational goals.

From October 7 to 10, 2022, Next Education conducted a training program for all teachers at BSR Green Park International School. The training focused on teacher demonstrations and handholding, with the objective of addressing challenges faced during classroom curriculum implementation. Trainers provided detailed guidance on subject integration using the mentor manual, the Teach Next board, and the Learning Management System (LMS). Following the instruction, teachers conducted lesson demonstrations utilizing these resources. The training significantly enhanced teaching and learning practices at the school.

Based on the trainers' feedback, it was noted that "the school does not give any homework whatsoever. So, no practice is being done at home, which results in delays in syllabus completion." Since the school is located in a rural area, many students were not receiving adequate support from their parents to complete homework. To address this challenge, the school introduced a special timetable, scheduling extra classes every Saturday. These sessions aim to provide additional support and individual attention to help improve student performance.

2.2 ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES

In June 2022, the first monthly test was conducted, during which the performance of students requiring special attention was carefully observed. Table 1

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below presents the academic performance of these students in both oral and written assessments across the subjects: English, Math (Number Works), General Awareness, and the Local Language (Tamil). In the table, **"Ab"** stands for *Absent* and **"NA"** indicates *Not Attempted* in the first monthly test.

TABLE 1 Academic performance of students in the month of June 2022

First Month of the Academic Year – June 2022									
Class	Name	English		Number Works		General Awareness		Tamil	
		Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15	Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15	Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15	Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15
Primer	Student A	Ab	Ab	9	13	8	10	10	13
Primer	Student B	10	15	10	15	10	15	Ab	0
Primer A	Student C	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab	Ab
Primer A	Student D	9	13	10	14	10	15	10	14
Primer A	Student E	9	12	9	12	10	14	7	11
Primer B	Student F	10	12	8	13	A	A	8	12
Primer B	Student G	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Primer B	Student H	9	14	9	15	10	14	9	14
Primer B	Student I	9	14	9	14	10	15	9	14

Based on the above academic performance and the observation of behavioral challenges, new strategies were planned and designed in line with adaptive education. According to Verdú *et al*. (2008) adaptive educational systems offer an alternative to traditional teaching and are considered the next generation of e-learning. These systems enhance the learning environment by tailoring instruction to individual learning styles, recognizing that students perceive and process information in diverse ways.

Student A: A two-and-a-half-year-old girl whose mother works at the same school. She displays strong separation anxiety and emotional dependency, particularly when she struggles to adjust to the classroom environment in her mother's absence. In such instances, she often refuses to remain in her class, cries persistently, and expresses a strong desire to stay with her mother. When she sees her mother in another classroom, she frequently leaves her assigned space and runs to her for comfort and reassurance.

After receiving consistent attention and encouragement from her class teacher, the student's behavior improved significantly. She began to enjoy her time in the classroom and willingly participated in activities such as playing with building

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blocks and seesaw toys. Her enthusiasm for learning grew, and she became actively involved in classroom tasks guided by the teacher.

She particularly enjoys writing on the board—scribbling letters and joyfully asking the teacher and her classmates to name each alphabet. Embracing a playful role as a teacher, she often pretends to teach other children by writing on the board and sharing what she has learned. Her creativity is especially evident during storytelling sessions, where she captivates the class with expressive gestures and animated storytelling, making her stories a delightful experience for everyone.

This case highlights how personalized learning approaches can effectively address individual student needs and significantly enhance educational outcomes (Chew, 2024).

Student B: A three-year-old student in the classroom exhibited disruptive behaviors, frequently disturbing the entire class and demanding constant attention from the teacher. The child demonstrated concerning habits such as biting other students, fighting, throwing chairs, hiding under tables, climbing on window grills, and even threatening the teacher by pretending to jump. When corrected, the student often avoided accountability by threatening to tell his mother.

To address these challenges, the teacher introduced a variety of engaging activities including drawing, coloring, craftwork, art, dancing, and storytelling. These strategies proved effective in redirecting the child's energy, as he began actively participating and showed noticeable improvement—particularly in reducing the biting behavior for a period of 15 to 20 days.

However, the biting behavior eventually resurfaced. The teacher informed the parents, who requested that the underlying cause be identified. Observations revealed that the child was frequently restless—running around, climbing, and disrupting others. He also displayed strong possessiveness over a particular chair, often leading to quarrels and biting when other students used it. The teacher emphasized to the parents the importance of joint monitoring and consistent behavior reinforcement at both home and school. Through collaborative efforts, the goal is to guide the child toward developing appropriate behaviors and improved self-regulation within the classroom environment. This case underscores the value of differentiated instruction, which involves tailoring teaching methods and content to meet the diverse learning needs of students in the classroom (Chew, 2024).

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Student C: A four-year-old student initially exhibited significant challenges in adapting to the classroom environment. He relied heavily on the teacher to provide dotted lines for tracing letters and numbers, as he struggled to hold a pencil correctly. His attention span during lessons was limited, and he frequently expressed a desire to play, often disrupting the class by hitting other students and pulling them from their chairs. Additionally, he lacked basic self-care skills, such as using the restroom independently. He would often remove his shoes and clothes and wander around the classroom and corridors, indicating a need for structured guidance and support to help him develop essential skills.

The teacher took proactive steps to address these concerns by gently guiding the child's hand to practice writing letters and numbers. She provided consistent reminders to help him dress properly and praised his efforts, offering emotional support—such as hugs—during moments of distress. This continuous encouragement gradually led to noticeable improvements in both his behavior and skill development.

Over time, the student learned to hold a pencil properly, write letters and numbers, and identify basic colors and shapes. He became more attentive in class, began using the restroom independently, and developed the habit of dressing appropriately. Within just two months, he reached key milestones such as reading and writing the letters "A" and "a," counting and writing numbers 1 to 5, and enthusiastically singing the rhyme *"Hi! I am Red!"* from his textbook. These achievements reflect his significant progress and growing adaptation to the structured classroom environment. This case illustrates how adaptive learning technologies and individualized support can significantly enhance student learning outcomes by providing tailored instruction and immediate feedback (Chew, 2024).

Student D: A four-year-old student from the Primer A class initially displayed a very quiet demeanor in the classroom. He diligently followed all of the teacher's instructions and consistently completed his homework on time. Despite his compliance, he frequently cried and expressed a desire to go home. His attendance was also irregular due to transportation issues. After about a week, he began interacting with his peers, though the crying persisted—indicating a need for emotional support and a sense of security.

Recognizing this, the teacher offered him special attention, addressing his emotional needs while fostering a safe and nurturing classroom environment. Within

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a month, the student showed remarkable progress. He became more engaged with both the teacher and his classmates, and his crying episodes ceased altogether. However, it was observed that he occasionally resorted to fighting with peers if he felt ignored, underscoring the need for consistent emotional support and attention.

Over time, he developed a cheerful and confident demeanor, often smiling and actively participating in classroom activities. His academic performance improved significantly; he answered questions confidently and continued to complete his homework on time. This transformation highlights the powerful impact of emotional support, individual attention, and positive reinforcement on a child's behavioral and academic development.

Student E: A four-year-old student enrolled in the Primer A class exhibited consistent distress during her initial days, frequently crying and insisting on staying with her brother, who was in the Primer B class. For the first week, she was allowed to remain in his classroom for comfort and emotional security. Gradually, she was transitioned back to the Primer A class, although she continued to run to her brother's class during breaks. Over the course of two to three weeks, she adapted to the new arrangement, stopped visiting the Primer B classroom, and began engaging more comfortably with her classmates.

Academically, the student initially faced challenges with learning. She required dotted lines to trace when asked to write letters such as capital 'A' or lowercase 'a.' However, with consistent support, encouragement, and guidance from her teacher, she demonstrated significant improvement. After a month, she was able to write all the letters independently, marking a notable milestone in her academic development.

Student F: A four-year-old student enrolled in the Primer A class, he is a lively and energetic child who enjoys playing but demonstrates average academic performance. He shows a strong emotional attachment to his teacher, often choosing to sit close to her during lessons. After a one-month absence due to health issues, he found it difficult to readjust to the school environment, displaying behaviors similar to those of a newly admitted student. His close bond with family members— particularly his older sister in Grade 4—and frequent expressions of wanting to go home reflect his need for emotional security and comfort.

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To support the student in overcoming his anxieties, the teacher adopted a nurturing approach, offering hugs and using encouraging words to help him feel more at ease. This strategy has proven effective in redirecting his attention and promoting active classroom participation. With regular attendance and consistent emotional support, the student shows potential for academic improvement, as he demonstrates adaptability and resilience when provided with a comforting and structured learning environment.

Student G: A five-year-old student, she exhibited a unique behavioral pattern, as she would not openly communicate her problems with her class teacher or even her parents. Instead, she often expressed her emotions through frequent crying and repeatedly insisting on going home with her father. Her parents were required to pack an extra set of clothes in her backpack, as she frequently urinated in class. Despite having her basic needs met at school, her crying continued, often resulting in her parents being called to take her home. As a result, her attendance was significantly irregular.

Following several discussions with her parents, it was revealed that her behavioral changes stemmed from feelings of neglect and a lack of attention after the birth of a younger sibling. Although she struggled to express her emotions to adults at school or home, she felt somewhat comfortable sharing her feelings with her grandmother. Despite these emotional challenges, she played well with her classmates and had a healthy social circle of friends.

Academically, the student's performance was notably poor, primarily due to her inconsistent attendance. Her limited classroom presence made it difficult for her to keep pace with lessons and activities. While she showed strong potential in social interaction, her emotional struggles and frequent absences hindered her learning progress. This case highlights that, although social engagement can positively influence memorization, it does not necessarily foster higher-order thinking skills or deeper learning without consistent academic participation.

Student H: A 5-year-old in the Primer B class, this student demonstrates exceptional academic potential and quickly grasps subject concepts during lessons. However, she initially struggled to complete homework regularly and often showed signs of envy when her peers were praised for their diligence. This competitive nature motivated her to complete tasks quickly, but it also highlighted the need for

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consistent encouragement and a structured approach to her studies. Early on, she exhibited difficulty retaining concepts and displayed a noticeable fear of exams, which led to lower marks during assessments.

To address these challenges, her teacher implemented innovative strategies, including recap sessions and engaging, curriculum-aligned activities. These methods not only reinforced her understanding of key concepts but also boosted her confidence in recalling them. Over time, this targeted approach significantly improved her learning and memory skills, helping her overcome exam anxiety and achieve strong results in assessments. This case underscores the value of tailored teaching techniques in supporting both academic development and emotional well-being.

Student I: A 5-year-old in the Primer B class, this student is known for his quiet and calm demeanor. From the beginning of the academic year, he has consistently excelled in assessments, demonstrating both intelligence and diligence. His strong listening skills allow him to follow the teacher's instructions precisely and complete tasks with accuracy and care. Recognizing his potential, the teacher regularly praised his efforts, which motivated him to complete activities with increased speed and precision.

As his confidence grew, the teacher gave him opportunities to take on additional responsibilities, such as monitoring the class and assisting slower learners. These roles helped him develop leadership qualities, along with a sense of responsibility and teamwork. He also began showing a keen interest in expanding his academic skills, particularly in learning mathematical tables and constructing basic sentences. His progress reflects not only academic excellence but also the development of important social and leadership skills, setting a positive example for his peers.

Monthly assessments were conducted to track student performance, and results showed steady academic improvement across the class. The Montessori method of learning—central to this educational environment—fosters a genuine love for learning. Advocates highlight its many benefits, including resilience, responsibility, self-confidence, teamwork, problem-solving abilities, and the cultivation of both creative and scientific thinking—all of which are vital in today's

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world (Navarra, 2019). Table 2 below shows the performance of students in the fourth month.

TABLE 2: Academic performance of students in September 2022

Class	Name	English		Number Works		General Awareness		Tamil	
		Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15	Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15	Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15	Oral Out of 10	Written Out of 15
Primer	Student A	10	14	10	15	10	15	10	14
Primer	Student B	10	15	10	14	10	15	10	14
Primer A	Student C	9	15	9	13	10	15	10	14
Primer A	Student D	9	15	10	15	Ab	Ab	10	14
Primer A	Student E	7	14	7	12	10	13	8	12
Primer B	Student F	8	15	8	15	10	15	9	13
Primer B	Student G	7	Ab	6	Ab	8	7	6	Ab
Primer B	Student H	9	14	10	15	8	13	10	15
Primer B	Student I	10	15	10	15	10	15	10	15

Table header spans: "Fourth Month of the Academic Year – September 2022"

In alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the National Mission initiated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development aims for all primary schools to achieve Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) by the year 2025 (Government of India, 2020). The academic performance table illustrates the steady improvement in students' oral and written abilities. It was noted that students with irregular attendance often exhibited behavioral challenges and struggled academically.

To address this, the school cultivated a culture of learning within the classroom that fostered both academic progress and positive behavioral change. Such a culture provides students—particularly those with unmet emotional needs in their personal environments—an opportunity to transition from feeling like a "nobody" to becoming a "somebody," as their emotional and developmental needs are met through meaningful relationships within a supportive learning community (Weeks, 2012).

The teachers at BSR Green Park International School played a crucial role in this transformation. Through consistent attention, encouragement, engaging activities, care, and guidance, they created an environment where students not only improved academically but also experienced remarkable behavioral and emotional growth.

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3. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the vital role of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in promoting the holistic development of children aged 3 to 6 years. The in-depth analysis of academic and behavioral challenges faced by Montessori students at BSR Green Park International School highlights the effectiveness of tailored, interactive, and play-based teaching methodologies. The integration of digital tools, real-life contexts, and structured, hands-on activities was found to significantly enhance cognitive, socio-emotional, and fine motor development, while simultaneously addressing the unique needs of individual learners.

The case studies further illustrate the transformative power of teacher interventions and strong parent-teacher collaboration in mitigating issues such as exam anxiety, incomplete homework, and disruptive behaviors. By cultivating a nurturing and inclusive learning environment, the school enabled students to overcome developmental hurdles, acquire essential life skills, and make measurable academic progress.

Ultimately, the findings reaffirm the critical value of innovative, responsive, and child-centered educational practices in laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning, emotional resilience, and personal growth in early learners.

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