

# Famous Montessori Students

**JOSHUA BELL** – Grammy award-winning violinist and subject of a Pulitzer prize-winning media story

A world-renowned violinist, Joshua Bell is thoughtful about the role his music plays in society. In a cultural experiment turned Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post story, it is Bell's humility, not his virtuosity, that most inspires. In suspending his fame to explore the true meaning of his work, Bell exhibits Montessori thinking at its best.

[“Pearls Before Breakfast” \(Washington Post article\)](#)

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**JEFF BEZOS** – Amazon founder

Amazon's founder, who proudly cites his Montessori roots, is a study in contradictions: analytical and intuitive, careful and audacious, playful and determined. Critics note his extraordinary ability to learn from others, one hallmark of Montessori education.

[Business Week article](#)

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**DAVID BLAINE** – Illusionist & magician

David Blaine was a four-year old Montessori student when he fell in love with magic. Today he's called “the modern day Houdini” by The New York Times, which says, “He's taken a craft that's been around for hundreds of years and done something unique and fresh with it... [His magic] “operates on an uncommonly personal level.”

[David Blaine profile](#)

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**T BERRY BRAZELTON** – Pediatrician, child psychiatrist, author and Harvard medical school professor emeritus

Dr. Brazelton's positive, child-oriented philosophy of parenting has influenced countless families to raise children who are “confident, caring, and hungry to learn”. Brazelton attended a Montessori school as a child and now supports Montessori philosophy through his lectures and publications.

[The Brazelton Institute](#)

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**JULIA CHILD** – Celebrity chef & author

A student of Mrs Davie's Montessori School in Pasadena California, Ms Child exuded a sense of fun and inspired others to try new things in the kitchen. She credits a Montessori background with her manual dexterity—a key feature of her mastery as a chef—and with the love and joy she found in her work.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**GEORGE CLOONEY** – Academy award-winning actor, director, producer, humanitarian, United Nations messenger of peace

Good pre-school pays off: Harvard economists say kindergartners with great teachers earn more later (and are more likely to attend college and own a home) than others. So what defines “good”? Turns out Montessori's approach—unfolding students, not molding them—guides the most successful teachers. George Clooney? Montessori pre-schooler.

[WHYY story \(audio\)](#)

**SEAN “P Diddy” COMBS** – Grammy award-winning musician, rap recording artist and CEO of Bad Boy Records

The multi-talented hip hop artist Sean “P Diddy” Combs says he feels fortunate to have attended Mount

Vernon Montessori School during his childhood, recalling that, “I feel like I was nurtured into wanting to be somebody special”.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**JOHN and JOAN CUSACK** – Actor and screenwriter, and Academy award-nominated actress, respectively

This sister-brother team, each of whom also has a hefty solo reputation, are not conventional heroes. That the former Montessorians' work is described as “ideosyncratic”, “offbeat” and “fiercely original” is consistent with their belief in “a kind of Joseph Campbell theory of pursuing bliss. Whatever excites you is what you should be doing”.

[Wikipedia profile \(John\)](#)

[Wikipedia profile \(Joan\)](#)

**ANTHONY DOERR** – Author

This internationally-acclaimed American author was once a Montessori student of Post Oak's Head of School, John Long. The sense of wonder that infuses his luminous, precisely-crafted prose is evidence of the gifts, and the love of nature, that were nurtured in him from childhood.

[Am I Still Here? \(video\)](#)

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**PETER DRUCKER** – Author, Management consultant, “social ecologist”, awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Peter Drucker, once a Montessori child, is one of the most influential management gurus in history. His work focuses on human relationships as opposed to numbers-crunching; his books are filled with lessons on how organizations can bring out the best in people, and how workers can find dignity and community in their work.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**ERIK ERIKSON** – Psychologist & author

The Danish-German-American psychologist and psychoanalyst known for his theory on human social development, Erikson may be most famous for coining the phrase “identity crisis”. He found Montessori ideas so compelling that he studied them as an adult, acquiring a Montessori teaching certificate but never teaching in a classroom.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**DAKOTA FANNING** – Actor

This youngest-ever Screen Actors Award nominee, history's youngest Academy member, recalls: "I learned to read at two...in a Montessori school where they teach you to read really, really young." Montessori kids are not technically taught to read (reading skills just emerge in the right environment, we think), but they work at their own pace in age-diverse groups—not in curriculum-dictated lockstep with same-age peers. For Fanning, autonomy led to early achievement throughout her life.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**ANNE FRANK** – Memoirist & author

Anne Frank's famous diary is a natural extension of her school experience. She—like all Montessori students—learned to cultivate observation skills and record her thoughts in a journal early on. *Diary of a Young Girl* has been translated into 67 languages and is one of the best loved books in the world today.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**KATHARINE GRAHAM** – Pulitzer prize-winning author and Former owner & editor of the Washington Post

Crisis forced Katherine Graham to assume control of the Washington Post. Her confidence faltered but—remembering that what matters is how people learn, not what they know—Graham said, "The Montessori method, learning by doing, once again became my stock in trade." Her reign at the highly-regarded paper lasted more than two decades.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**FRIEDENSREICH HUNDERTWASSER** – Viennese artist & architect

This world-renowned Austrian painter and architect attended a Montessori school in Vienna, which influenced both his affinity for vibrant colors and his love of nature. He collected pebbles and pressed flowers as a child, demonstrating an early interest in small, precious things—which later manifested itself in his work.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**HELEN HUNT** – Academy award-winning actor

Helen Hunt, winner of some big time honors (Oscar, Emmy, and Golden Globe all one year—a feat nearly unmatched in history) is one cool Montessorian. Which makes her observation all the more interesting: "If there's a message, it's that the unlovable and unattractive parts of ourselves should be embraced. The only real currency between people is what happens when they're not cool."

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**HELEN KELLER** – Political activist, author, lecturer, awarded the presidential medal of freedom, one of Gallup's most widely admired people of the 20th century

Maria Montessori said that if, deaf and blind, Helen Keller became "a woman and writer of exceptional culture, who better than she proves the potency of [the Montessori] method?" In her tribute to Montessori, Helen's teacher observes, "Only through freedom can people develop self control, self dependence, willpower and initiative. This is the lesson Helen's education has for the world."

[Anne Sullivan's tribute to Montessori](#)

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**BEYONCE KNOWLES** – Singer, songwriter, actress and fashion designer, 16-time Grammy award-winner

In Houston, at St. Mary of the Purification Montessori, Beyoncé's talents first emerged. In a school that valued both art and academics, a top student and world-class performer was born. Today Beyoncé has been nominated for more Grammys than anyone in history and is one of pop music's most highly-regarded figures.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**YO YO MA** – United Nations Peace Ambassador, winner of 15 Grammy Awards, Presidential Medal of Freedom & National Medal of the Arts

A child prodigy cellist and Montessori student, Yo Yo Ma learned to early to follow his own interests and think outside traditional definitions. Today, critics call his artistic style "omnivorous" in reference to his versatility, his notably eclectic repertoire and his musical iconoclasm.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ** – Nobel prize-winning author

Marquez said his Montessori education gave him "the desire to kiss literature" and states, "I do not believe there is a method better than Montessori for making children sensitive to the beauties of the world and awakening their curiosity regarding the secrets of life."

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**HM QUEEN NOOR of JORDAN** – U.N. Advisor, humanitarian activist, memoirist and wife of the late King Hussein of Jordan

Her Majesty Queen Noor is an international public servant and an outspoken voice on issues of world peace and justice. Her orientation toward peace directly reflects Maria Montessori's—herself a three-time Nobel Peace Prize Nominee whose "education for peace" philosophy underpins our approach.

[King Hussein Foundation profile](#)

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS** – Former first lady and Doubleday editor

As a child, the former First Lady attended Miss Chapin's School for Girls in Manhattan. Miss Chapin was a pioneer in education for girls; she attended Dr. Montessori's New York lectures in the 1930s and enthusiastically included Montessori methods in her classrooms.

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**SERGEY BRIN & LARRY PAGE** – Google founders

"You can't understand Google," says *Wired*, "unless you know [its founders] were Montessori kids... In a Montessori school, you paint because you have something to express or you just want to... not because the teacher said so. This is baked into Larry and Sergey... it's how their brains were programmed early on."

[Wired article](#)

[Wall St Journal article](#)

[Breakthrough Learning in the Digital Age \(video\)](#)

[Barbara Walters interview \(video\)](#)

**DEVI SRIDHAR** – Youngest-ever American Rhodes scholar, author, oxford research fellow, oxford lecturer on global health politics  
At 18, Devi Sridhar (a former Montessorian) spoke five languages, played both tennis and the violin expertly, and co-wrote a book on Indian mythology. In 2002 she became the youngest Rhodes Scholar in the program's 100-year history. Interested in health as a young person, she now directs CEG's global health governance project.

[Devi Sridhar profile](#)

**TAYLOR SWIFT** – Grammy Award-winning singer/songwriter

Taylor Swift, country music's youngest-ever Entertainer of the Year, attended Alvernia Montessori School in Berks County Pa. The singer is widely described as "the product of homegrown values"; New York Times calls her "one of pop's finest songwriters, country music's foremost pragmatist, and more in touch with her inner life than most adults".

[Wikipedia profile](#)

**WILL WRIGHT** – Video game pioneer, creator of the Sims

The videogame innovator says Montessori was the "imagination amplifier" that prepared him for creating The Sims, Sim City, Spore and Super Mario Brothers. "SimCity comes right out of Montessori... It's all about learning on your own terms."