Montessori de Terra Linda has changed considerably since Ashley Howe began attending in the early 1980s. The oak tree she remembers climbing during school is no longer used as a jungle gym, and there are no longer separate upper and lower campuses. Today's students have multiple play structures to navigate, and the split campuses she recalls are now combined in one location. Although the campus has evolved and changed, however, the basic premise of what Ashley remembers enjoying in her time at MdTL remains the same.

Ashley fondly remembers enjoying the freedom of the Montessori classroom. She appreciates having been able to choose her own activities and not having to be confined to working on a project that did not garner her interest. When she was finished reading she knew it was perfectly acceptable to move on to another project or work with different materials so that she could remain engaged. This freedom to make her own decisions about her work projects at her own pace was a highlight of her time at MdTL. She also very much enjoyed the exposure of multiple ages in the classroom, which taught her to feel comfortable with children of different ages. She does not recall feeling intimidated by being the oldest or youngest in the class at any point.

Ashley greatly enjoyed being able to move freely inside and outside of the classroom. She recalls well an adventure in which her class built sandcastles as a group, testing the structure with water hoses. One memory that stands out above many was the time she and her classmates were using scissors to cut leaves off the trees for a project. During this process she somehow received her first haircut-one that included bangs. (Some of her friends really enjoyed using the scissors. A very good sport, Ashley laughs easily about the incident now!)

Because MdTL did not yet have the Upper Elementary program in place when Ashley completed Lower Elementary, she transitioned to the local public elementary school for fourth andfifth grade. While she had a smooth transition on many fronts, she did find it a bit odd to now have a desk in which to store her personal belongings and to be required to sit in one place for the whole day. She laughs about remembering the initial excitement about the transition to public school, where she would have the opportunity to print as opposed to writing in cursive. Though a bit of disappointment crept in when she discovered that the schools were making a renewed push for all students to master cursive, she felt quite comfortable as her new classmates and friends were just beginning to use it, while her cursive writing skills were already proficient.

Ashley continued her education through her local high school. Upon graduating, she attended Cal Poly for her Bachelor's Degree in Recreation Administration. Next she pursued and completed her Master's Degree in Recreation and Leisure Studies from San Francisco State. She has been working as the Recreation Supervisor for the City of Benicia for the past several years. Ashley's continued pursuit of education credits both her energy and determination. As a parent of an MdTL student, I am certain the positive learning environment in which she spent her early years helped foster Ashley's creativity and drive.