In recent years, extensive neuroscience research of this age range has proven the importance of providing stimulating resources, opportunities, time, and space for play.

There are endless benefits of introducing Treasure Baskets to babies. They develop concentration, independence, confidence, fine- and gross-motor skills, hand/eye coordination, and logical reasoning. They also encourage language development, communication, social skills, creativity, and imagination.

The purpose of the collection of items in the basket is to offer maximum interest through:

- **Touch** texture, shape, weight
- **Smell** variety of scents
- **Taste** limited scope but possible
- **Sound** ringing, tinkling, banging
- **Sight** color, form, length, shine

By 12 – 18 months, most babies are on the move and are developmentally ready for a further challenge. Heuristic play offers children of 12 months – 3 years the opportunity to play with lots of similar objects, including collections of bangles, bowls, balls, chains, or poms poms. The extensive range of materials offers the child open opportunities to investigate and are laid out in the form of a market.
Heuristic play enhances the child’s social interaction, and they experiment, share, take turns, and consider the needs of others.

In some nursery settings, the treasure basket idea has been expanded into interest baskets, which are usually a collection of similar objects, for example: collections of balls, bangles, or chains. Alongside the interest baskets, the adult may also provide activity cards for the children, if suitable.

In 1988, I founded Paint Pots Montessori Schools and Creative Classes, and my interest in Treasure Baskets grew when I had my first child 17 years ago. The first Paint Pots Treasure Baskets class was introduced a few years later and, to this day, is a cornerstone of what we do. We continue to offer infant classes, creative workshops, and Montessori education for children from birth – 6 years.

The classes are a gentle introduction to parents as they embark on their Montessori journey. I get great enjoyment from working with mothers and babies, and during these unique classes, they are introduced to Treasure Baskets, Heuristic Play and music, with guitar and voice. It is an amazing privilege to see so many families, who initially started attending my baby class and have progressed into one of our schools at Paint Pots.

When introducing music to the babies, they are each given a basket, similar to the Treasure Basket. Each basket initially contains one small egg shaker and builds up with a variety of instruments and props, introduced as the session progresses. The music session finishes with the child having a full basket of props and instruments and everyone singing the goodbye song.

Alongside the creative classes and the Montessori schools, I also offer parenting classes, where the focus is on using creative development to empower parents and enhance their understanding, knowledge, health and well-being. In recent years I founded Heart Montessori and this International consultancy grew out of the experience and knowledge that I gained over two decades of research and practice in Montessori settings. I regularly speak at workshops and training sessions in locations, including Jordan and China. I am very excited to be leading a workshop at the Montessori Foundation’s Annual Conference “Peaceful Classrooms, Peaceful Children, Peaceful Schools” in Florida this November.

For over 17 years, I have introduced Treasure Baskets and Heuristic Play to many families and I believe that my approach achieves an ideal balance between the academic, social, and psychological development of the child and the adult. Whether it’s working in the class with children, parents, or teachers, my aim is to leave an imprint of care and creativity.

Georgina is a presenter at The Montessori Foundation’s 18th Annual International Conference in Sarasota, FL (Nov. 6 – 9).