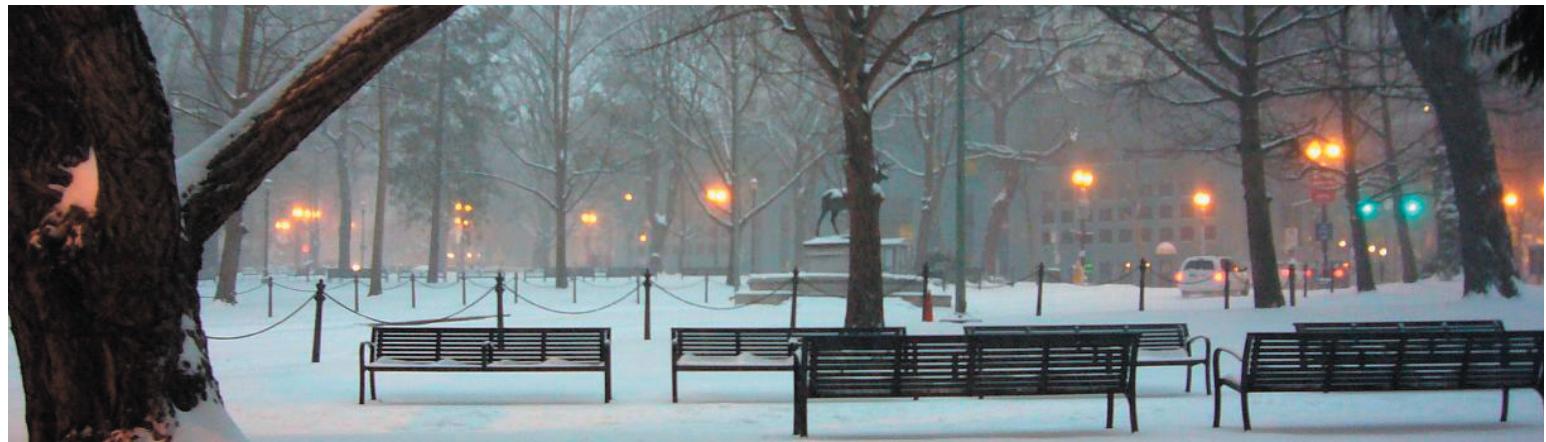


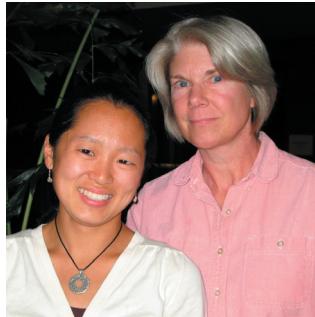
forza vitale!

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Letter from the co-chairs - Lena Wood and Cathy Dorner



Dear OMA Members,

Greetings! It hardly seems possible that it is nearly January, yet here it is, in all its chaotic mid-year glory. Nationally, and globally, it feels like we are at a moment in history that is brimming with a need for change, and ripe with potential for that transformation. It is in this spirit that the OMA board would like to share its thoughts with you on how our year is going and the vision we see for OMA's future.

OMA opened the school year with the traditional and well attended Assistant's workshop, enjoyed an informal social gathering of OMA members for our first Pub Night in October (more to come as the year progresses) and followed in November with Patricia Oriti's fall workshop that has inspired a book group to further "deepen our practice". Yet to come: In January, our first book group will meet to discuss Montessori's book, Education and Peace. There will be another Pub Night and a mini workshop in February on music, a very exciting all day spring workshop in April on Montessori and sustainability and, of course, our beloved Spring Tea in May.

The OMA Board successfully launched a dynamic and updated website to better serve our members. We see great potential in what the website can offer our members as it continues to expand and evolve. OMA has also forged new connections with the Montessori community in Seattle, through the leadership seminar we co-hosted with the Pacific Northwest Montessori Association in December. Several OMA members attended and came away inspired to renew our work of advocacy for Montessori. It is connections like these that attest to the strength and vitality of our community.

The Forza Vitale has a new fresh look and each publication offers our members pedagogy, information, community news and more. Many OMA members express their appreciation for the Forza Vitale and see it as a highlight of membership. However, those of you who have worked on the Forza publication know all too well the many hours necessary to coax articles out of very busy people and then the many more hours to follow of editing and layout. During our tenure so far on the board, we have noticed a steady decline in the number of submissions of all types: long articles, short articles, news items, etc. As a result, the board would like to propose that the Forza Vitale evolve in its form to continue to meet the shifting needs of our membership.

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Letter from the Co-Chairs - continued

Thirty years ago, when OMA was founded, the newsletter served the need for community connection and school news, as well as sharing of ideas for the classroom. The training center was new and the community was young. Thirty years later, OMA is an organization that represents a diverse and strikingly mature Montessori community. The static format of the Forza Vitale, in which readers have no way to interact with each other, no longer seems to be serving its intended purpose.

Many other regional Montessori organizations of our size, such as the Pacific Northwest Montessori Association and the Greater Pittsburgh Montessori Society, no longer have print newsletters, or even regular quarterly newsletters the way we do now. Instead, they have monthly e-news updates, which are sent from their websites to all their members, in addition to being posted on their websites.

We would like to develop an online members-only forum that would fill the place of the newsletter and strengthen the interactive dialogue in our community. This online forum would be more flexible, allowing members to post questions and hear multiple perspectives. It would allow people to get feedback in a timelier manner; and it would fulfill OMA's goal to engage in environmentally sustainable practices. Members could post pictures and upload files. There would also be a place designed for member schools to share their news and community updates, making it instantly available to all our members. Our classifieds section is already up and running online and members have taken advantage of the ability to post their own ads.

It is important to us to still provide a venue for our members to have their work printed in a professional publication, so one possibility that we are considering is to have an annual publication that would be distributed at the Spring Tea. This would be akin to the annual reports published by most non-profit organizations. It would include a summary on OMA's activities for that year, announcements of the OMA awards, and any lengthier articles that members would like to submit.

The OMA board is committed to finishing this year out with the Forza in its current manifestation—three online issues in a downloadable .pdf format. It is very important to us that we receive OMA membership feedback to help guide us in making the Forza Vitale live up to its name. We believe that it can indeed be a vital force for change in our community, but only with the active participation and support of our members.

Please visit our website for a link to an online survey that will help us determine what changes will best help us continue to meet your needs. You can also send your thoughts and suggestions to us directly by either visiting our website or emailing us at officers@oregonmontessori.org.

Wishing you all a wonderful New Year,
Lena Wood and Cathy Dorner
OMA Co-Chairs, 2008-2009

The Ivy School - Update

By Tammy Kennedy, Founder of the Ivy School

We are thrilled to share with you that The Ivy School, our Northeast Portland public Montessori charter school proposal, has been approved by the Oregon State Board of Education by a unanimous vote! This means that Ivy will immediately begin work on the next stage of the project -- opening a public Montessori charter school for the fall of 2009. Ivy welcomes all community and Montessorians to join our design team to build a public Montessori school in Portland. Please e-mail tammy@theivyschool.com to join in.

In the fall of 2009, Ivy will be serving first, second and third grades, with twenty students in each grade level. Each year we'll add additional grade levels according to the Montessori education model, until we eventually

serve two hundred and forty students in first through eighth grades. We have a lot of work ahead of us, and we'll be looking for support and volunteers from our community to make this happen! This is a great time to become involved with a project that will have a positive impact on our community and local public education!

Please spread the word and please keep an eye on your email and our website - <http://www.theivyschool.com> for news, events and opportunities to get involved. It has been a long two years to bring this school to reality. Please join us in volunteering to help with the Ivy task force that is being developed now. We are looking for people for our curriculum, facilities, grant writing, fundraising, and community outreach teams. All efforts are appreciated!



THE PRACTICAL LIFE OF ADOLESCENCE

BY MERRI BAEHR WHIPPS

PRIMARY GUIDE, ADMINISTRATOR, AND PARTICIPANT IN THE NAMTA ORIENTATION TO ADOLESCENCE, 2008

Dr. Montessori wrote about the need for adolescents (12-18 years old) to have hands-on work to do. She described a return to practical life work for this plane of development, from the more intellectual and knowledge-oriented work of elementary. Gardening! Mapping the neighborhood! Building a boat! Cleaning the toilets! Of course the intellect of the adolescent keeps growing, and knowledge work continues. But it is the practical application and real-life context of knowledge and intellect that both inspires the teenager's interest and helps him retain what he has learned.

At this age of metamorphosing into an adult, it is critical that the practical work of the adolescent is connected to the larger society, not just his family or school. The adolescent must see that he has the ability to apply his skills to a real-world situation, to be part of the adult social fabric, and even to be able to make money through his practical life efforts. Making candles and selling them in public! Learning first aid and early childhood development and then babysitting! Evolving one's school into a super-recycling, sustainability-oriented green school! Designing and building the raised-bed gardens! The child is looking to become a social being

in an adult world, to orient to adult behaviors and expectations, and to explore tasks that the community values. When he can belong to a genuine community and contribute to it through his own initiative, the child becomes an adult with dignity and valor.

Looking at the social, community context of what Montessori adolescent programs are doing calls up the mainstream educational buzzword "cooperative learning"; i.e., students working with their peers to accomplish a shared or common goal that requires interdependence among all the group members, and each of whom is responsible for the outcome of the shared goal. To facilitate this, the teacher must know the students well, and the group size must not be larger than 15 or 20. This makes it possible for each student to be involved in negotiation, coordination, outreach, problem solving, and consensus ... practical life skills of a social sort that prepare the student to be successful in the adult world. A nice discussion of research findings about middle school cooperative learning can be found at http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~andyd/mindset/design/clc_rsch.html

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Administrators to Seek New State Regulation

By David Cannon

Administrators from OMA member schools have been discussing the need to revise Oregon's rules governing the certification of childcare programs, which apply to most Montessori schools in the state. Oregon's Child Care Division, which administers the certification program, indicated last year that they are going to be less willing to permit Montessori schools to operate with a higher child/adult ratio than other preschools. For many years, Montessori programs were able to enroll up to 25 children in a 3-6 class with two adults present as long as certain conditions were met. It appears that the State is going to apply a stricter interpretation of those conditions so that many schools would be forced to employ a third adult or to reduce enrollment to 20.

The ratios that govern class size in the Oregon regulations were intended for three and four-year-olds. Classes for children over five years are permitted to enroll a greater number of children per adult. In some states the regulations recognize that mixed age groups that include five-year-olds can operate well with a higher ratio than if the entire class were younger. An approach being seriously considered by our committee of administrators is that Oregon follow the lead of these states and use a formula that takes into account the age spread of the children in determining an appropriate ratio. The committee is also examining ways of allowing higher total numbers of children per class—space permitting—as long as the required child/adult ratio is maintained. This would make possible the kind of large classes that Dr. Montessori and her colleagues had recommended.

The committee is hoping to present recommendations in person to Oregon CCD staff early in 2009. Readers can watch the OMA web site for further developments.

THE PRACTICAL LIFE OF ADOLESCENCE

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Montessori posited a farm / village environment for the adolescent, in part because such a location offers clarity about the practical life needs of the community. She wrote, "There is an opportunity to learn both academically and through actual experience what are the elements of social life". Gardens, animals, barns, fences, woodlots, and resources are all pressing to be addressed when you work on a farm. But is a farm the only place for Montessori adolescents? In a word, No. 98% of Montessori adolescent programs are NOT on a farm, in part because financial and logistical realities make it impossible to plunk every adolescent into the peaceful bosom of nature. But urban solutions also exist because Montessori communities have felt it possible to be in urban environments and still contain the defining elements of Montessori's vision. That vision, as recently outlined by NAMTA, includes:

- Designing the environment based on psychological characteristics and human tendencies of the adolescent
 - Real and meaningful intellectual and physical work
 - Relating to selling what one produces in exchange for money
 - Looking at the connection between the natural and human-built world
 - Cohesion and cooperation of the group through shared practical life and experiencing personal needs in relation to the whole community
 - A full view of the history of humanity as it relates to life's purpose
 - Self expression and artistic occupations
 - The use of place to build a sense of belonging and responsibility
 - Valorization through noble characteristics
 - Experiencing work as meaningful, real, and necessary to the environment
 - Activities offered to challenge many different kinds of skills and aptitudes
 - Organizing experiences and materials that meet the needs of development outside of the classroom.
- (NAMTA handout, Adolescent Orientation, summer 2008, "Unifying Elements of Montessori Adolescent Education Design: Mediating Farm and Urban")

Whether on a farm or in a city, the prepared environment for adolescents can have these elements, most of which are obviously grounded in the real, meaningful, practical work of life.

Just as the practical life of Children's House is categorized into Care of Self, Care of Others and Care of the Environment, the practical life work of adolescence could be described in these terms. As you read through these

beginning suggestions, think back to when you learned these skills yourself:

Care of Self

- Managing one's possessions
- Doing laundry
- Watching diet
- Caring for physical health
- Managing time
- Managing academic responsibilities
- Engaging in intellectual life
- Awareness of safety issues

Care of others

- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Repairing broken items
- Preserving food
- Caring for the sick
- Caring for animals
- Comforting and sharing
- Listening and helping
- Volunteering
- 1st aid and CPR

Care of the Environment

- Monitoring resource use
- Composting
- Recycling
- Maintaining the building and everything in it
- Monitoring water quality and waste treatment systems
- Maintaining gardens and grounds
- Repairing windows, fences, the building
- Changing the oil and rotating the tires on the car
- Balancing the checkbook

Contemporary research asserts that, "Early adolescents succeed more and learn best when they are required to be practitioners of knowledge rather than just receivers of knowledge". (Belair and Freeman, Middle School Journal, 32 (2000). Best practice for middle school students, even outside the Montessori world, now includes a strong focus on applied, contextual learning.

How delightful it would be to see the world's children continue their progression from the functional independence of the Children's House and the intellectual independence of Elementary to the social independence of Adolescence. Of course the adolescent in a Montessori middle school does many other things besides practical life, just as our 3- to 6-year-olds have many curriculum offerings throughout the rest of the room. But Practical Life is the foundation of a sound adolescent experience, a hallmark of the Montessori approach to education for life.

Stimulating Interest Through Rotation

by Polli Soholt

At first glance the Montessori classroom looks like a highly ordered, static environment. When some parents first visit the classroom, they voice concern about the classroom materials remaining the same for the entire three years their child will be in the class. This would be an issue if there were no changes that took place during that three-year period. In fact, many changes occur, some that are visually apparent as the materials change on the shelves, and some that are apparent by observing the children using the materials. The changes in the materials and the use of the materials reflect the development of the individual children as well as the class as a whole. It takes time and energy for the teacher to implement these changes, and good teachers make sure their classes are dynamic places that reflect the work and interests of the children.

The first way to offer variety to the children is through variations and extensions. Many examples of these lessons are offered in training, and they prepare the children indirectly and directly for the work that lies ahead. The trick is that the teacher has to be aware of the needs of the individual children, and give the lessons for variations and extensions accordingly. Variations come in very handy when the child is tired of the initial exercise, but is not ready to move to the next level. Extensions help prepare the children for work further ahead. And both kinds of exercises allow the children to experience the agility of the materials, developing metal agility in the process. Some teachers like to set aside two or three days at a time to give only extensions and variations. They are always amazed at the difference in the classroom atmosphere when these lessons are added to the children's repertoire. Other teachers simply make a point to give one extension or variation lesson every day. However these lessons are worked into the schedule, they are mandatory if we want to use the materials to their fullest potential.

Another way to keep the classroom dynamic is to rotate parts of exercises to re-kindle interest in their use. For example, the shoe-lace in the lacing frame can be replaced with a decorated one. The chalk can be changed from white to colored, or visa versa. The



colored water in the water pouring can be changed to another color. These changes are small, perhaps minute, but they create interest in the materials, and perhaps as important, they encourage the children to be observant. Once these kinds of small surprises begin appearing in the classroom, the children will come in looking for them. Other children will notice them as they walk around the classroom looking for an activity, and the rest of the children will notice them as they take out the exercise. Following is a list of some small changes that can be made in the classroom to create interest:

Practical Life

Change a few buttons in the button sewing

There are many interesting buttons available today. They come in the shape of dinosaurs, light bulbs, cars, flowers, leaves, and geometric shapes. It is best to have a mixture of manish (sew-through) and shank buttons from which the children can choose. Since these specialty buttons are relatively expensive, they can be acquired over a period of a few years.

Change the bar of soap in hand-washing.

The children love the animal, shell, and flower shaped ones available at bath stores.

Change a few items in the opening and closing.

These do not need to be all jars or bottles. Add a pill box, a little purse with a zipper, a box that slides open, etc. Replace the beans in the dry pouring with seeds, pebbles, or shells.

Change the decorations in the snack work.

If the children set their table for individual snack, they love a little decoration to look at while eating. This could be a shell, a rock, a ceramic figurine, or a seasonal decoration.

Change the soapdish at the sink to a large shell.

Change the yarn in the weaving to a different color or to one that has metallic threads running through it.

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Stimulating Interest Through Rotation

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Sensorial

Rotate the items in the mystery bag.

Change the items in the sorting exercise.

The most interest is created if you use natural items in this rotation. The children are curious about various kinds of seeds, rocks, and shells. If you begin the year with items indigenous to your area, they will learn about local natural items. As the year progresses, use items from distant places to create new interest.

Change three or four cards in the matching cards.

One of the best sources of pictures for Sensorial matching cards is postcards. They are inexpensive and easy to collect on many different subjects.

Mathematics

Rotate the ribbons or elastic bands that are used with the spindle box.

Change the objects in the cards and counters game to shells, rocks, or pennies.

It is very important not to confuse the issue by adding toy-like items to this exercise. If there are little cars, for example, it will be impossible for the children to keep their focus on the work.

Change the little slips of paper and items to be counted in the memory game.

If booklets are used, change the kind or color of paper or the covers for the books.

If any pencils are kept in this area, rotate them with decorated pencils.

Language

Rotate two or three cards in the vocabulary card sets.

Change the items for the conversation lesson.

Replace the pencils in all the writing exercises with decorated pencils.

Rotate a few of the items in the lessons containing objects.

These small changes will keep the classroom alive for the children and make it even more interesting to them. Teachers have to put time and energy into making collections of things that can be used for rotation. For example, one trip to a bath shop can supply a classroom with

enough little soaps for the whole year. Collecting seeds, rocks, and shells whenever the opportunity presents itself will keep the teacher from having to buy all these items. In addition, the children and parents will begin saving and collecting things for these rotations as soon as they realize that you are making these changes. Many of these items are not consumable, and once the collection gets started, it can be used in rotation year after year.

The timing and manner with which these changes are made is as important as the changes themselves. It is not in the best interest of the class for all the changes to be made at once. If that happens, too many things will be different, upsetting the sense of order of the class. It is best if these changes take six to eight weeks.

To begin, organize the collected items to be used in rotation in a series of small boxes (shoe boxes or soda flats work well). The things to be rotated can be placed together in a box that is for a particular area of the classroom. Beginning at one end of the area of the classroom, move along the shelf and rotate the items in that area. Each week, an afternoon can be set aside after the children leave to work on this. If the classroom is broken into roughly six to eight areas, one area can be done each week. These areas do not necessarily correspond to the Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, and Mathematics areas, but instead to the location of the items being rotated. If all the things to be changed are placed in a box that corresponds to the six to eight divisions made in the classroom, then time and energy will be saved in doing the rotation.

"These small changes will keep the classroom alive for the children and make it even more interesting to them..."

It is as important not to change all the items in an exercise as it is to not change everything in the classroom at once. For example, if the buttons in the button sewing are being rotated, take out three or four and replace them with new ones. When rotating matching cards, change two or three (singles or pairs) and leave the others for another time. That way the children will still be able to find their favorite set of vocabulary cards. At some time in the year, the teacher will sense the need for totally new sets of cards, and may (for example)

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Stimulating Interest Through Rotation

remove the transportation cards and replace them with fruit or toy cards. Our goal is to spice up what is there while leaving the familiar things available to the children as long as there is a need for them in the class.

The classroom can also change as the year progresses in yet another way. There are some exercises that are for children new to the class, and once their purpose is served, they need to be removed, and perhaps some more challenging work can be added. To leave these items out in the classroom all year invites the children to waste their time with work that is not challenging or stimulating. An example of this kind of activity is the early pouring lessons given to new children. Other exercises are sometimes changed as dictated by the

sequence of the materials presented to the children. An example of this is the mystery bag, which remains on the shelf, but the contents and the way in which it is used change as the class develops.

Although the above described changes may seem small, they bring the classroom to life and allow it to reflect the interests and development that an individual class makes in a year's time.

Polli Soholt holds the AMI Primary (3-6) Diploma as well as a BA in social science. She has 15 years of Montessori teaching experience and 21 years of Montessori administrative experience. She currently teaches at San Jose Montessori School and is editor of Point of Interest, a newsletter on the art and practice of Montessori teaching.

Practical Inspiration from Montessori

by Jeffrey Friedman

As a newly minted Montessori Institute Northwest graduate entering the classroom charged with enthusiasm and drive, the reality of daily life in the Casa is a dimension of training reserved for real-time experience. Like an orchestral conductor, the lead teacher of a Montessori environment guides the constituent parts into synergy. By this I mean acting as liaison with parents and their breadth of needs, working diplomatically with the administration and its structuring of the school, developing the professional marriage with an Assistant who is as key to the heartbeat of an environment as the lead, and maintaining authentic Montessori practice with the children in the midst of so much to do – presenting, observing and interpreting, preparing by practice with the materials, and constantly exercising patience and humility. Be it rookie or veteran, you know what I mean.

By revisiting a few of the succinctly phrased big Montessori ideas specific to children, my backboard for best practice extends into all of these additional facets in being a Montessori guide.

First, "Believe in the child who is not yet there." Now, change it up and "Believe in the Montessori adult who is on the way there." Currently in the second period of my career, the knowledge and experience from living with and employing the pedagogy requires time. Some say it takes ten years to become a master of any trade. That, my friend, is a comforting perspective.

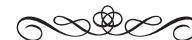
Second, "The child is father of the man." Often used in the Montessori literature, Wordsworth's sentimentality is bound in truth - holding tight to the child as a source of the future gives guidance when choosing words

and actions. This positively affects both the children and adults. Sure, not every choice is perfect, but I am friendly with error, as it is through feedback that improvement is possible.

"Wait while observing."¹ This concrete dictate on observation given by our Founder pervades all aspects of participating in a school community. Given the mandate to stay close, but removed, a Montessorian has the liberty of freedom within limits to moderate oneself, just like the children.

Yet, above all else, Dr. Montessori's focus on preparation of the teacher has been my *joie de vivre*. The greatest gain from working with children has been the daily self-therapy that happens on the cuff and upon reflection. In turn, my practice (that second period) improves, thereby benefiting the children and me as a person. In fact, embodiment of a spiritually transformed Montessori adult has affected my journey into the realm of spirituality.

In the final analysis, by staying close to Montessori theory we can apply it with the exactitude and reverence by which it was designed and for whom it must serve. We all know Montessori is education for life, and that unequivocally extends into living out the best personal lives we can, inside and outside of the Casa.



Jeffrey is a Lead Guide in a new primary class at the Montessori School of Maui. This is his fifth year with Montessori education, having previously worked as an Assistant on Oahu. Last year Jeffrey completed his second Montessori training as part of the 30th Primary Course at the Montessori Institute Northwest. Jeffrey continues to support OMA through his membership and attending events - when in town from Hawaii.

¹ Montessori, Maria. (1965). Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook. New York: Schocken Books Inc. (Originally published in 1914)

Montessorians at Home for Toddlers

by David Cannon

Many years ago I wrote an article for the Forza Vitale about a new Montessori development in Portland, the infant and toddler class. There were two—at Childpeace and SunGarden. I thoroughly enjoyed observing these programs and describing them to the community. They were clearly going to be wonderful places for the fortunate children who participated; as well a great opportunity for parents to learn about child development while the family was still quite young.

In *The Absorbent Mind*, Dr. Maria Montessori wrote:

We do not develop only at university, but we begin our mental growth at birth and pursue it with the greatest intensity during the first three years of life. To this period, *more than to any other*, it is imperative to give active care ... If we follow these rules, ... we will see in the children the builders of our own minds ... who labour indefinitely in joy and happiness, at the work of constructing the greatest marvel of the Universe, the human beings. (*Italics added*)

Today there are seven OMA member schools in and around Portland that offer classes for children too young for primary Montessori. A few others have come and gone. Recognizing the importance of these first three years of development, many schools with a primary program have felt that they would “love to offer a toddler class” or more, but it’s a challenging undertaking, so we still have many fine Montessori centers that begin only after age two-and-a-half. (This age is the threshold point in Oregon for requiring a 4/1 child/adult ratio and other strict regulations.) Recently there has been the important addition of Montessori training in Portland for people wanting to work with the youngest children. The Montessori Institute Northwest and AMI have made Portland one of the few places in the USA where the Assistance to Infancy training is available, and this has been a major stimulus to the increase in the number of classrooms.

In recent years Portland has seen the development of at least four home-based Montessori toddler programs, three of which are currently operating. For some parents it’s the preferred solution to their work-related childcare needs; and for parents not working outside the home it’s an option that offers a wonderful enhancement for both the child and parents. A home-based program

for children as young as 12 months (and sometimes younger) is often more appealing to parents than any center that’s not in someone’s home. For the guides it offers real advantages as well as requiring significant lifestyle changes. I visited the three home-based programs, each of which is doing something a little different.

The Garden School just opened in September 2008 in Northeast Portland near Fremont and MLK Boulevard. Ursula Melvin and her husband have a fairly small home on an attractive block that was purchased not with a school in mind but “because the basement was large enough to store all our river trip gear,” according to Ursula! (Each of them has worked extensively as river guides.) Seven toddlers spend the weekday mornings in Ursula’s living room, dining area, kitchen, front porch, and yard. Adult furniture shares the space with the children’s low tables, chairs, and shelves. Several mornings a week she works with her Montessori partner Kellie Porter-Burks, and she is assisted by Shawn, who occasionally plays his guitar quietly. After the children go home at noon, Ursula cleans the environment and transforms it into her family living area once again. This environment doubles as classroom and home more than the other schools I visited, in part because of the half-day schedule.



As I came up the front steps to The Garden School, three children were on the front porch, two sweeping it and one washing a window. With its attractive new railing of cedar and copper, matching Trex decking, and of course a secure gate, the porch is a perfect covered extension of the living room work area out in the fresh air. A second gate leads from the porch to the side yard where children can feed a couple of hens and gather their eggs, work on a raised garden bed, look at leaves and bugs, and just run.

Indoor activities include those simple and appealing tasks that require control and focus attention so intently. Repetition and concentration are more readily apparent to the observer of a toddler group than at any other level in Montessori. Little puzzles and other manipulative apparatus are frequently done over and over, as are some of the practical life activities. Easily distracted from their work at times, the toddlers are also easily redirected back to

Montessorians at Home for Toddlers...cont'd

it. The toddler guide is always finding ingenious means to allow independence from the adult despite the children's limited skills and social awareness. For example, a water container with a tap is set above a platform made of little bars, sufficient to hold the cup but also permitting extra water to run through into the bucket on the floor below. The child's hands and eyes are free to focus on the tap and the cup, and no one has to be concerned about lots of spilling at this spot.

Toddlers respond to order as well as the primary children do. Chairs are usually pushed under the tables when a child leaves them, materials are usually returned to their place on shelves (or at last half-way there, if a distraction intervenes), water is carried so very, very carefully. Smiles of satisfaction often follow these big tasks. Imitation and modeling are of course all the more powerful at this early age, so the parent sees immediate and continuing acquisition of the many fine examples of language and behavior provided by the guide, the assistant, and the other children. [Full disclosure: I also have a granddaughter attending a toddler program and am observing the results from the parent perspective.]

Ursula grew up in a Montessori home. She is the daughter of Susan Stephenson, who runs the Michael Olaf Co. She and her siblings helped with the business and are of course very familiar with the methods and materials of Montessori, but Ursula took her career in a different direction for a number of years. Trained as an artist, she also worked as a naturalist, outdoor educator and program administrator, and a river guide. Moving to Portland in order to help care for her young niece and nephew, she also reconnected with Montessori when the children were enrolled in the toddler program at Childpeace. It was not long before Ursula enrolled in the A. to I. training at MINW. There she and fellow-trainee Kellie Porter-Burks made plans to work together in a new toddler school to be located at home in Northeast Portland.

Opening a Montessori class at home, no matter how small, takes a lot of preparation. Ursula and her husband wisely showed the facility to an Oregon Childcare Division certifier well ahead of time to be sure they knew all the regulations. Much of the preparation required was in building fences, gates, stairs, etc., to meet particular safety requirements. Indoors, one has to consider toileting,

diaper changing, and a number of other practical needs of the very small child. There is also paperwork to form a business organization and get its legal and financial requirements in order. There's material and furniture to buy and prepare, an area where Ursula was well situated with her relationship to the Michael Olaf Company.

The Garden School may later expand its offering to include afternoons, but Ursula feels she could also continue to fill her quota (maximum is eight) from those families who want a morning-only program. She is also considering whether to have a summer program, depending on the interest from her families.

*A*ll Roads Learning Community is the "oldest" of these three at-home programs, now in its sixth year of operation at the home of Mercedes Castle and her family. Toddlers are the only age-level served at All Roads, but Mercedes offers a full day, with children coming as early as 8:00 a.m. and able to stay as late as 4:30 p.m. There is also a summer program. The school is located at SW 32nd and Vermont, not far from Gabriel Park and both the Hillsdale and Multnomah Village business areas.

A couple of years ago, Mercedes designed and built a large addition to her home to accommodate All Roads. This permitted her family to re-claim their own living areas as well as permitting the school to serve a larger number of children.

With the enrollment now at 16, the class is staffed by four adults including Mercedes. (The State imposes a 4-1 ratio for this age level.) Mercedes feels fortunate to have found and retained the wonderful colleagues she now works with.

On the day I visited, seven children were absent, so the large room felt especially spacious and the group of toddlers especially quiet and peaceful. Snack and lunch are particularly important rituals and challenging opportunities for skill building in toddler programs. At each of the schools I watched the children feed themselves with utensils and small glasses. Placemats include outlines for the plate, glass, and utensils that had been stitched there for the children's benefit. A glass of water gets knocked over, and in true Montessori fashion the adult says little more than a cheerful invitation to get the materials for clean up, and the other children take little note.

Montessorians at Home for Toddlers...cont'd

An attractive arched entry and two arched window-openings connect the classroom with a roomy bathroom, which contains two toilets and all the practical gear connected with learning and practicing bathroom routines. Visual and aural contact between staff in the bathroom and classroom are easily maintained here. As with the other toddler programs, All Roads works with each child to become independent of diapers and learn to use the toilet. Children as young as 13-14 months are often guided to the toilet at appropriate times during the day, even though they may not yet be using it as intended. Most change into real underpants so that progress is possible. Many of the toddlers are well trained by age two, and "diaper-free before age three" is almost universal. Today many parents are surprised to learn that children toilet-train this early without a lot of stress and strain on everyone, and they are grateful to the Montessori program for showing them what young children are really capable of in this and other realms.

Mercedes has a good "library" of selected books for parents of young children that they can borrow from a shelf in the foyer where they arrive and depart each day. Toddler guides often find that parents are more open to spending time investigating new ideas about childrearing when their children are quite young than when they are in the primary and elementary classes.

Cedar Montessori School offers the most extensive program of the three home-based programs featured here. It includes a primary class in addition to the toddler program, and Cedar is beginning an infant community in January 2009. Toddlers and primary children attend from 9:00 to 3:00 each day, and before care is available from 8:00 a.m. and after care until 5:00 p.m. A summer program is also offered.

After receiving her AMI primary diploma in Portland in 2001, Hilary Smith worked at several schools in Oregon and in New Zealand. She was teaching at Portland's Native American Montessori program when that school lost its grant funding in 2006. Hilary and her husband made a quick decision to convert their home near Barbur Blvd. in Southwest Portland to accommodate a primary class. Thus was born Cedar Montessori. Quickly developing an enthusiastic and loyal clientele, Cedar added a toddler class in 2007 and now the infant nido. Hilary herself

has moved from the primary to the toddler class, and Lindy Kedro now directs the primary.

The main level of this ranch house is entirely occupied by school activity all day long. Living room, dining and kitchen areas make up the primary, with its many shelves and materials, so it lacks adult furniture and other typical amenities of a home. Hilary and her husband's personal space is mostly in the finished basement. They feel that the sacrifice of what had been their living quarters is a worthwhile tradeoff for the satisfaction of building this growing Montessori community. Cedar is currently in the process of acquiring the house next door to accommodate the nido and toddler classes as well as residential rental space.

The toddler and primary children mostly arrive at Cedar around 9:00 a.m., each finding a place to sit on the floor of the toddler room for a little talk with Hilary followed by a number of songs together. Toddlers readily imitate the primary children's movements to accompany songs like "Itsy-Bitsy Spider" and "Sunflower." A couple of them leave the group to engage with one of the manipulative materials in the room. Eventually the "big kids" leave to find work in their own

classroom, and the toddlers begin choosing activities either in their room or on the adjacent porch. The bathroom attached to the classroom features a "recessed" little toilet (with only the seat showing), and the assistant is often helping different children there. Hilary recently expanded the toddler environment by opening up an adjacent room that's used mainly for group snacks and lunch. A hearty dish of stuffing was served up to everyone while I visited, and I enjoyed watching all the toddlers use forks to spear what they thought were the best parts and somehow get the food to their mouths. Few needed any prodding to take their used plates and utensils to the washing bins.

In addition to separate deck areas for primary and toddlers, Cedar has a good-sized fenced-in yard for the children, with a solid wood fence for privacy. Outdoor equipment includes the traditional (e.g. slides) and some novel ones. The deck supports a length of 4-inch drain pipe shaped like a sideways "s", so one drops a ball in at the top and waits for it to emerge at the

Today many parents are surprised to learn that children toilet-train this early without a lot of stress and strain on everyone, and they are grateful to the Montessori program for showing them what young children are really capable of in this and other realms.

Montessorians at Home for Toddlers...cont'd

other end, a very popular piece of work for the toddlers while I observed. Another one is attached to the fence across the yard.

When a family enrolls at Cedar, Hilary does a home visit. This makes it more comfortable when the toddlers first see Hilary at her house. It's also a great time, of course, to start talking with parents about routines at home and setting up the home environment.

At each of these three toddler programs, parents are encouraged to learn about early child development and how to facilitate their child's experience at home as well as about what goes on in the school. Parents gen-

erally feel happy to realize they aren't being given a long list of "things to do" to enhance their child's development, but instead learning several basic principles that they can apply in any number of ways reflecting their home and their values. As the well-known Montessori trainer Dr. Silvana Montanaro once said:

"Meditating about all this, I came to the conclusion that instead of giving advice about what should be done, nowadays it is more important to focus on removing obstacles when providing education from birth (and even before!) in order to really champion the cause of all children. What is needed is the awareness of these obstacles that are all concentrated at the very beginning of life...."



Metro Montessori Middleschool - Update

by Merri Baehr Whipps

Childpeace is enthusiastically moving forward with plans to open a Montessori adolescent program this fall, 2009: Metro Montessori Middleschool. We have nineteen 6th-year students this year, and many parents are eager to have a Montessori environment for their children to bridge the years to high school and to successfully navigate through the intense phase of development that characterizes early adolescence. We have also been hearing from families at other west-side Montessori elementary programs with the same desire, and part of our reasoning in giving this age group its own name is to help students from all the Montessori elementary schools feel welcome.

Having attended the NAMTA Adolescent Orientation this summer to aide us in directing this project, I am so completely inspired and motivated to help nurture the Montessori adolescent movement. The NAMTA mentors expressed their strong belief that we are on solid footing and poised to have a successful program. Our Childpeace Board of Trustees has given their stamp of approval to our plans and to their financial support of this component. I hope that you, too, will catch the excitement of having a Montessori option for the elementary graduates on the west side of Portland! Here are a few notes of interest as of this date:

- Metro anticipates starting with 15 students and growing to a 3-year age span with 40 students. A minimum of 90% of the students will be Montessori graduates.
- Metro will begin with 2 teachers who bring a combination of Montessori adolescent experience, Montessori training, and state certification. We have been interviewing teacher applicants from across the nation since May and hope to announce our teaching staff in January.
- Metro will be located in the Childpeace neighborhood (the River District). We have been looking with realtors at appropriate spaces within a few blocks of Childpeace -- facilitating the adolescents' use of our large kitchen, kiln, office tools, extended staff, and work with our younger-aged children. If we do not achieve a critical number of students to finance a lease, we have our large second-floor, windowed mezzanine space at Childpeace to use for the first year before moving off-campus.
- Metro students will connect with nature via the Willamette River, Forest Park, an organic farm in Hillsboro, and various "big trips" built into the school year.

You may check our web site, www.childpeace.org, to get dates for the upcoming information events for Metro. You are also welcome to call Merri Baehr Whipps at Childpeace, 503-222-1197, for more information.

Helps to Functional Independence “Toilet Training” in the Children’s House

by
Ginni
Sackett

It is important for all adults (teachers and other care givers) to understand that what is called “toilet training” is a child’s work, not the adult’s work. (We already did it for ourselves! Now it’s this child’s turn.) As always, then, the adult’s role is to assist the child in making a great achievement in self-control.

The overall context in the Children’s House environment is a clear expectation that we all have dry pants at school. ‘Accidents’ do happen, of course, and as with all other natural and logical consequences, simply need to be taken care of – for the sake of everyone’s comfort. This is a natural limit of being in the classroom (like only taking a material from the shelf) and we communicate this expectation / limit the same way we communicate a limit like only taking a material from the shelf – it is lived in the community and sometimes supported verbally, as in “here we all keep our pants dry”, “my pants are dry, are yours?”, and so on.

It is not necessary that toilet training be actively pursued at home or other care situations, although this can be a good time to coordinate among all the caring adults in the child’s life. The time at school provides an opportunity for the child to experience increasing control of bodily functions; often a child naturally extends this experience to other times of the day, since it represents a great leap in personal independence and self-confidence.

Independent Skills to Support Self-Toileting

All of these can be supported in a ‘Montessori’ way in Children’s House; parents can be helped to see how they can support them at home as well.

The child has a general understanding of ‘wet’ and ‘dry’.

This sensorial classification will be used as an external cue regarding toileting: the focus will be that we

all keep our pants dry.

If the child doesn’t have a general understanding of wet and dry, or to reinforce this understanding, create a lesson for ‘Wet and Dry’ that can be given to an individual child or to small groups that include the target child. Wet and Dry are sensorial categories, so this can be offered as a sensorial activity, like ‘Rough and Smooth’ – all you need is a waterproof surface, a bowl or similar container of water and two cloths. With the children observing, wet one cloth, let it drip briefly into the bowl, then wring it out. Let each child feel the cloth and you

name it: this is “wet”. Place it on the waterproof surface. Let each child feel the dry cloth and you name it: this is “dry”. Place it next to the wet cloth. Let the children interact with the cloths through second period type commands (pick up the wet cloth; touch the dry cloth, etc.); finish with a third period question for each (what is this? What is this?) This is not an exercise for the shelf, just an experience you can offer as much as you feel is needed.



The child has opportunities to practice undressing and dressing, especially pulling pants and underpants on and off.

The child has opportunities and gentle, consistent encouragement for hand washing.

The child has opportunities to cultivate ‘friendly’ attitudes towards using the toilet.

This includes presentations on how to flush a toilet, amount of toilet paper to use, etc. as well as familiarity with associated sounds; if there is a rest room fan, the child is aware of and comfortable with its sound; etc.). Along with this friendly attitude, adults help the child make the connection that using the toilet is how we keep our pants dry all day.

Helps to Functional Independence “Toilet Training” in the Children’s House

Process

The child comes to school wearing the thinnest underpants available (or changes into them when he arrives, if he doesn't want to put them on at home the first day or so); parents can bring the child along to purchase these underpants ‘now that he is starting school’, the child can help choose them, and this purchase can be a big event (like getting a bigger bed, etc.) marking a significant rite of passage. The child also wears pull-up pants (like sweat pants) with an elastic band and no fasteners; thin socks; and shoes that slip on and off easily. Each day parents send with the child several extra sets of similar underpants, pants, and socks. Parents can be prepared for extra laundry the first week or so. Parents can also send plastic bags for wet clothes, all in a bag or back pack the child recognizes and can carry easily. When requesting this, be sure to give a written description of the process that will be followed in the classroom.

Every 30-40 minutes during the day one of the adults checks in with the child – “are your pants dry?” (the thin underpants will make this readily apparent, without any embarrassing and invasive ‘checking’). If the pants are still dry, the adult will affirm with comments like “That's great!! Dry pants are comfortable; I like it when my pants are dry”; etc. The child can then be invited to use the toilet to keep them dry; if he declines the suggestion, he can be encouraged to tour the bathroom or the adult and child can discreetly observe a child who is using the rest room, conversing or ‘gossiping’ about the process being modeled; if he accepts the suggestion, the adult assists as needed.

If the child's pants are wet at the check-in, the adult comments, something like “Oh! Your pants are wet, wet pants are uncomfortable, you can change to dry pants right away!”; etc. This can be offered with some sense of urgency – but be sure not to frighten the child. The adult assists in the changing as needed, typically in the restroom, giving more opportunities to get acquainted with our friend the toilet. If there is a ‘major accident’ (which can happen to anyone!), puddles are cleaned up first - the child does as much of this as possible, with adult assistance – just as with any spill in the environment: this is a social focus and clothes are changed after

the environment has been addressed.

Once the child is changed, the adult again extols the virtues of dry pants and how use of the toilet is a way to keep them dry. In all of this, the child is greatly assisted by the modeling of the other children, whom he has seen all along using the restroom comfortably and confidently, as well as seeing other children dealing with accidents (of any kind).

If a number of children are not yet independent with toileting, you can make frequent group excursions to the rest room, with each child taking turns using the toilet.

I have been very successful in the classroom using this type of procedure. If the right tone is set, all shame, stigma and defiance are taken out of this situation. In my experience, it didn't take all that long and most children did in fact carry their newfound independence into other realms of their lives.

It will be important to inform parents clearly about their part in this (the clothing, bags, and laundry part). Parents can also model and encourage our usual friendliness with error. Be ready to keep the parents informed as needed (although the plastic bags going home will be their daily feedback on how the day went); and be prepared to help with support and advice if they want help with doing the same thing at home.

Parents are often concerned that their child will be teased or ridiculed by other children if they are wetting their pants etc. The reality is that children in this age range are usually very sympathetic to toileting accidents – they are still very much of the age to relate to the situation and understand that anyone can get distracted or wait too long before using the toilet. My experience is that the only time a child in the Children's House might attract negative attention from other children is if they are wearing diapers – diapers are associated with being a baby and children especially might react negatively if the child becomes ‘smelly’; then another child might resist being near the child, and can even carry that association into their general attitude towards that child. So if parents do express this concern, describe this and help them realize that the best help they can offer their child in this respect is to assist them in achieving this significant rite of passage in functional independence.

If I were asked to come up with one word to describe the work of the elementary teacher, it would be storyteller. We are the tellers of cosmic stories—stories of how our earth came into existence, stories of how the plants and animals came to flourish, and stories of how humans evolved and developed the rich and complex cultures that we now experience today.

The essayist Terry Tempest Williams writes, “Story bypasses rhetoric and pierces the heart. Story offers a wash of images and emotion that returns us to our highest and deepest selves, where we remember what it means to be human, living in place with our neighbors.”¹

In another essay she writes, “A story allows us to envision the possibility of things. It draws on the power of memory and imagination. It awakens us to our surroundings...Story making comes out of our life experiences.”²

Story telling can be both intimidating and humbling. I was recently in Madison, Wisconsin, doing two weeks of student teaching. I had gathered a group of first year students to present the First Timeline of Human Beings. The timeline itself is very simple—the illustrations are not as complex as the Timeline of Life. This is one of those presentations that is pretty ambiguous—there's no set order of presentation, just a few key elements that we want to address. The details that we share are driven by the children's interest rather than what's in our albums.

Well, about halfway through, there was a child rolling around on the floor, a pair flicking rubber bands at each other and another one looking at the clock. It was a humbling reminder that story telling is not about memorizing what we wrote down in lectures. It is a chance for us to bring alive in the children's imagination an aspect of the past, illuminating it in a way that makes it relevant to their lives today. It was also a reminder that one can never be too prepared with details.

In that vein, Greg Lawrence and Stephanie Ferrate, upper elementary guides at Childpeace Montessori, have put together a new website to share the stories

that we tell in our classrooms. Stephanie says:

“As Montessori teachers, we are encouraged to develop our art of storytelling. As a new teacher, I was overwhelmed by the amount of history, geography, geometry and cultural stories that I needed to tell, and often wished I could collaborate with other upper elementary teachers. During a brainstorm with another colleague, we decided we would start to post our stories online and invite others to share their knowledge with us. We hope that you use this site, add to it, and share it with your teaching friends.”

The following story is one that can be found on the website: <http://www.upperelstories.ning.com>

If you are interested in deepening your work with storytelling, be sure to check out the MINW seminar for elementary guides at the end of January. Elise Huneke Stone will be offering a seminar entitled *Stories that Inspire*.

More information can be found at <http://www.montessori-nw.org>

The Inca
by Stephanie Ferrate

This story is told from the perspective of a bird that flies over Ancient Peru. I use a clay whistle artifact that I collected for my classroom as a prop.

Do you know how old I am? I am SO old that I was around before your parents were born, or before your grandparents. I was around before we had pencils and paper to write with to record our stories. I am so old that I have seen the rise and fall of civilizations. In my time, and probably in your time too, my friends and I enjoyed telling stories. I still do! I have a story for you about a fascinating group of people that lived in the Andes Mountains in the region that today you all call Peru, Ecuador and Chile.

I am a very special bird. You see, my name (the Andean Condor), is named after the mountain ranges for where I live. These people, the Inca, were only here in this harsh, mountainous environment for a few centuries. I was here when the first Inca people settled in the

Cuzco Valley in the 1100's. Although, my friends and I observed that they really didn't get organized into big cities until the first king started to rule in 1438. We used to fly over that mountainous region and look at their intricate cities and plazas and watch their colorful ceremonial dances. We loved to rest on the hanging bridges that spanned deep gorges where you could listen to the sound of llama hooves on the rock face.

We noticed that these people had a king who was pretty important, since he had his own servants that followed him, his own land, and many guards. They all referred to him as "Lord", which is what the word Inca literally means.

These people would always catch our eye when we flew over their palaces because they wore feathers from other birds in our jungle. They drank from golden goblets that would sparkle in the sun. Did you know that these Inca people worshiped the sun? The people believed that the emperor was the direct descendant of the Sun God. So, the people made sure that they obeyed their rulers. The rulers allowed the people to worship other deities, as long as they still worshiped the Sun God.

The Inca people seemed to celebrate their festivals based on the seasons.

The farmers would start planting their maize crops as soon as the dry season was ending in August. As soon as the rainy season arrived, the potatoes and maize would grow and we would have to watch out, since the farmers didn't really like for us to fly near their fields and eat their crops. They would send the boys out with sling shots to keep us away from their food! One time I remember I was innocently taking some thread for my nest from where a woman had been weaving and I heard people shaking rattles at me and shouting for me to leave. I guess the harvest time must have been near, so they may have been worried about me taking their food.

I don't understand why they would be so worried about this because the Inca people were always taken care of. If a family had a son or daughter, the ruler would give them more land so they would have enough to eat. Yet, gradually over time and over many years, I noticed that the people became less and less organized. Their peaceful way of living was threatened, and there began

to be some big problems. Things really began to fall apart after the death of one of their great kings. His two sons began to argue, and oh! How siblings can disagree!

Each son went to gather a large group of people to back him up. When they met, a huge fight ensued. Eventually one fell down, and the other became the new king. Not too long after this, some men I hadn't ever seen showed up. Their faces were pale and became pinker with the sun (except where their long fur covered them). They set up camp near the Inca and sent someone to see the new King. A couple days later, the King and some guards visited their camp. He exchanged a few words with a man wearing a funny hat. Things got very quiet, and then 100 pale men, or even more, jumped out from hiding places and pointed long, shiny, black sticks at the king.



Mounds and mounds of gold began to pile up at the camp. This was brought by the other Inca. And then, the pale men killed the Inca king. For 50 long years, the Inca and pale men fought. It was a sad time for us since we heard a lot of ugly shouting through the hills that used to echo with beautiful sounds of families, animals and everyday sounds of laughter and talking. One day, the pale men killed the last Inca king and his family. That was the end of their empire.

Yet, even though the new leaders organized the people in a different way, I could still see traditions of the old way woven in to the new way of being. When I fly over the hills in Peru, I still see some of the same festivals that the Inca people celebrated. We smell the same foods, see some of the same bright colors on their costumes. We still get "shooed" away from their tasty crops. I still like to fly over the abandoned stone cities that still remain today. I like to find ways that the newer people have found ways to remember their ancestors. It reminds me of old times, back in the 1400's, when the Inca flourished. Now people visit these abandoned cities and carry black boxes that flash white lights. They talk about the amazing things that these Inca people did, high up in the mountains of the Andes Mountains.

1 Williams, Terry Tempest. Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert. 2002: 3.

2 Williams, Terry Tempest. Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland. 1984.



Community News



OMA Winter Pub Night!

**February 25, 2009
from 4:30pm onwards**

(you're welcome to stay for dinner!)
All guides, assistants, and
administrators are welcome!

Join the OMA Board for this community event.
Relax, catch up, and meet new Montessorians...

Capitol Coffee House

<http://www.capitolbistro.com/>
6446 SW Capitol Hwy
Portland, OR 97239
(503) 297-1455

For more information, please contact
officers@oregonmontessori.org

Montessori Book Group

Are you interested in a free Montessori discussion/book group? The staff at Providence Montessori are gauging interest in a potential series of free book/article discussion groups for training hours. This would be geared for assistants interested in more training hours, but would be open to anybody in the Montessori community.

If you are interested, please contact Amy Williams, Enrichment Director, at (503) 215-2806 or email at amy.j.williams@providence.org.

In your email, please note your preference for day of the week, the time that would work for you, as well as how many sessions you'd be interested in.

This is a great way to share time and ideas with other like-minded professionals and learn from the collective wisdom of our wonderful OMA community!

Practical Sustainability: Shaping the Future Through our Practice

April 19, 2009, World Forestry Center

Keynote Speaker:
Ginni Sackett, Director of Training, MINW

Come learn about:
Everyday sustainability and resources in Portland
Environmental topics and
developmental appropriateness
Permaculture
and more!

More registration details available in February.
Please email officers@oregonmontessori.org if
you would like to be involved.

News from MINW

January is a busy time at MINW! We hope to see you at our upcoming events. We have something for everyone, from Teacher Coaching sessions, Primary and Elementary workshops, a free talk on Careers in Montessori and the Celebration of Light. Check our website for details:
www.montessori-nw.org.

In 2009 we are celebrating 30 years of the Montessori Institute Northwest. To ring in this special year MINW will be hosting our annual Celebration of Light. During this year's event we hope to bring together our alumni from all 30 years of our courses. The event will honor the founders of the Institute as well as all the many folks who have participated in our courses over the years. There will also be a live and silent auction featuring exciting prizes from local artisans, restaurants, and entertainment venues, as well as fabulous vacation stays at resorts near and far. All are welcome to this special night of celebration!

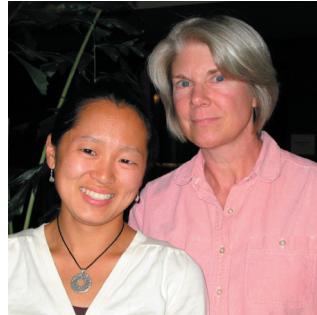
forza vitale!

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Association



Letter from the co-chairs - Lena Wood and Cathy Dorner



Dear OMA Members,

Greetings! Welcome to our spring issue of the Forza Vitale! It's been a refreshing and inspiring spring here with the OMA and we are practically overflowing with ideas and excitement for the coming year!

The theme of this issue is inspired by our Spring Conference, which was held at the World Forestry Center on Saturday April 18th. Entitled Practical Sustainability: Shaping the Future Through Our Practice, we brought together a diverse panel of speakers to help us delve into the interconnections between Montessori and sustainability. In this issue we'll share some of the highlights from our speaker's presentations, which ranged from implementing permaculture in school gardens to developmentally appropriate ways to discuss environmental issues to children.

You'll also find a summary of Dr. Steven Hughes's lecture that we co-sponsored with MINW on April 7th on modern parenting. We were thrilled to see so many parents and Montessorians there for Steve's second visit to Portland! The next day, Steve gave a wake-up call presentation to administrators on some of the pitfalls of Montessori communication with the general public. "Perception is reality," he argued, and the perception of Montessori is mixed at best. We spent the morning brainstorming ideas of how we can connect the Montessori community so that we can all come together to speak with one voice on the merits of a Montessori education. The OMA board and the Administrator's group are in the midst of drafting a full-page color ad that will be printed in the Metro Parent Magazine this June. More details will be mailed to each school.

We hope that we will see all of you at our Spring Tea on Sunday May 3rd. We plan to share more about our accomplishments this year and our goals and plans for the coming year! As always, you can find all the up to date information on OMA events at our website: www.oregonmontessori.org.

All the best,

Lena and Cathy

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Steven Hughes Fixes Your Parenting in 90 Minutes by David Ayer

On Tuesday, April 7th, pediatric neuropsychologist and Montessori parent Dr. Steven Hughes returned to Portland to present ‘Modern Parenting: Tips, Tricks, and Traps’ to a large audience of Montessori educators and parents as well as interested attendees from beyond the Montessori world. Dr. Hughes interesting, engaging, and direct presentation style left us with a lot to think about and specifics to bring back to our interactions with children.

The first part of Dr. Hughes’ talk was an examination of the ‘self-esteem’ movement popularized and implemented in California in the 70s and adopted in educational settings everywhere over the last few decades. Hughes presented clear research findings demonstrating that raising children’s self-esteem for its own sake and by means of praise and positive verbal feedback has no correlation, or even a negative correlation, with children’s achievement and sense of self-worth. Indeed, the main thing that raises a child’s self-esteem (if this is even a desirable goal) is to help him or her learn to work hard and with persistence at difficult tasks and to successfully engage in work that is personally meaningful. (This may explain why Dr. Hughes is a frequent guest at Montessori events.) The sad fact is that most of this research was available before the self-esteem movement even got going. But no-one bothered to look.

The result of the self-esteem movement has been a population of young people who rate higher on self-confidence, but also on narcissism, entitlement, and anxiety, than any group in history. And this result is not merely anecdotal, but measured in published scientific work. “We have succeed in raising a generation of children,” said Hughes, “who are not that much fun to be around.”

How did this happen? Hughes suggests that the self-esteem programs filtered into the popular consciousness as parenting advice which pushed parenting strategies in an unhealthy direction. He presented a well-established analysis of parenting styles psychologists have used for decades: In this view, parenting style can vary across two dimensions: warmth and control. High control, low warmth parenting has the label ‘au-

thoritarian’—think lots of cold, inflexible rules. Low control, low warmth is negligent, which Hughes hoped didn’t apply to anyone in the audience.

Low control, high warmth is permissive, and that term sent an anxious ripple of recognition through the crowd. “Don’t beat yourselves up,” he cautioned us. We’ve been told for decades by professional educators that our children need love, support, and praise—without a lot of attention to limits and natural consequences. The most effective approach, again supported by a good deal of research, is in the high warmth, high control box labeled ‘authoritative.’ Authoritative is different from authoritarian and can be captured in the phrase: ‘the adults are in charge.’

It has become a familiar phrase in some parenting and education circles lately: ‘Children need limits.’ Indeed, there are some signs that the failure of self-esteem promotion has itself begun to enter the popular culture. What’s always refreshing about Dr. Hughes’ presentations is the thoroughly grounded psychological and neurological research he brings to the discussions, while remaining grounded in accessible language and familiar experiences. Just one of many examples was a digitally animated brain scan of gray matter development in children from birth to age six. The image clearly showed the spread of neural activity from the back of the brain, where sensory and motor control are located, towards the frontal lobes, where executive function and decision making take place. The picture makes it clear: executive function is the last area to develop. Recent studies have shown that this area of the brain is still developing well into adolescence (which explains a lot!). The conclusion is clear as well: as Dr. Hughes puts it, “Be your child’s frontal lobes!” Be fair, but firm. Set limits and stick to them. You won’t always be their best friend, but they’ll thank you for it later.



David is the assistant administrator at the Children’s House campus of Sunstone Montessori.

Vancouver Montessori School celebrates fifth anniversary of Honeysuckle Toddler Room!



Happy 5th Anniversary to our Honeysuckle Toddler Community!

by Laurie Adams
AMI Assistants to Infancy Guide

On February 2, 2004, Vancouver Montessori School proudly opened the Honeysuckle Classroom with 6 students; Laurie Adams as the teacher, Lisa Dimmick (Wisteria classroom teacher) and Joshua Jessup (Account Manager) as the assistants. Our goal was to offer a Montessori environment to meet the needs of children ages 1 to 3. The first children enrolled were younger siblings of VMS students and children of staff members. Word of our program quickly spread to the larger Vancouver/Portland community and our enrollment steadily increased. We have never needed to advertise our program, thanks to our many happy families. In August of 2007, Laurie received her AMI Assistants to Infancy teaching certificate. VMS remains the only facility in Clark County with an AMI toddler program. Most of our toddler graduates attend one of our three Children's House classrooms.

Why are we committed to our work with toddlers? When we look into each child's eyes, we see his or her developmental needs and the potential for who they will become. It is very fulfilling to go home at the end of each day and know you are affecting each child's future in a truly meaningful way. The accumulation of every single experience/interaction (positive or negative) in the first three years of

a child's life is the foundation for the person they will mature into—the future student, teenager, adult, parent and grandparent. This is the time when children take in every moment of their day through all of their senses without a filter—meaning they accept without question, judgment or discrimination of right/wrong, good/bad, helpful/hurtful, etc., and it becomes part of them. For their entire life, their basic confidence in themselves, trust in others, beliefs, traditions/customs can be traced back to their childhood experiences from before three years old. There will even be geographic locations (Pacific Northwest, East Coast, etc) and foods they will be homesick for someday because of what they knew before age three. As formative as the first three years are, children do not usually have conscious memories from this stage of their life. All of their experiences become unconscious parts of who the child is, rather than memories to be recalled.

During the last five years, we have had the pleasure to assist 75 children and their families. Many of the current students in the Children's House classrooms are graduates of the Honeysuckle Toddler Community. It is delightful and rewarding to watch them continue to grow and thrive. We are grateful to each family for their confidence and trust in us to care for and guide their child in this sensitive time of childhood. Our toddler community is thriving, and we are eager to serve many, many more children.



Practical Sustainability: Shaping the Future through our Practice

Reproduced here with kind permission from keynote speaker and MINW Director of Training Ginni Sackett is the keynote address from OMA's recent Practical Sustainability conference.

I think we can all agree that this subject is the single most important issue facing modern, technological humans. It is a worthy subject for our attention; a worthy focus for our great work; and a topic for which a Montessori perspective is particularly vital

So, in preparing for this speech, I decided to take a close look at the vision that has prompted this day of reflection and inspiration on Practical Sustainability. So I spent some time pondering the contents of the flyer that promoted this conference. There I found some powerful statements, perspectives, and intentions of the organizers – including the following statement, telling us:

... That this conference ‘will explore the links between the Montessori movement and the more recent development of the sustainability movement’ ...

Also on this flyer is a wonderful quotation attributed to Maria Montessori and found, I discovered, on many Montessori-related websites from around the country. It reads:

The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth.

This is an admirable statement. And it speaks to the heart of ‘Shaping the future through our practice’. But as I pondered this quotation, something about it started to bug me – a little ‘splinter in my mind’, so to speak. Now, I don’t usually take issue with Maria Montessori – to be optimistic, perhaps I’m about to take issue with a translator? But – admirable as this quotation is – I beg to differ with Maria Montessori on one word in this quotation:

I think we can all agree that Yes ‘the land is where are roots are’. The word I question here is in the second sentence – The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth. ... I take issue with the word ‘Taught’.

I beg to differ with the proposition that we must teach our children ‘to feel and live in harmony with the Earth’. I beg to differ with the implication that we can teach our children ‘to feel and live in harmony with the Earth’. In fact, I beg to differ with the syntax of the entire sentence that frames this verb ‘taught’.

I propose, instead, that children can only learn ‘to feel and live in harmony with the Earth’.

If you want a Montessori link for that re-vision, here it is: learning is the work of the learner, and learning can only happen through experience – the experience of the learner. And learning through experience is so profound that today we even hear this phrased as ‘children become the experiences they have’. Learning? ... Becoming? ... (sounds like) Embodiment? ... Incarnation? ... Sounds familiar? The learner becomes, embodies, incarnates whatever he or she experiences in the world ... The learner learns through experience.

Maria Montessori knew that.

Practitioners of Montessori education know that.

Anyone who has ever learned anything at all – knows that. No one ever teaches anybody anything. And certainly, no one (however hard we try) ever succeeds in commanding anybody to learn anything. True teachers are those who offer the opportunities, the experiences, through which the learner learns.

So if I’m begging to differ with Maria Montessori, let me paraphrase for her – and while I’m at it, I’m going to revise that syntax. I’m going to change the structure of this sentence out of its passive, yet commanding, voice. I want to re-shape this sentence and its message, and I want to put the responsibility implied by this message actively where it belongs: on us.

We – the adults who welcome and care for our children on this Earth – we must become the agents, the subjects of this sentence. And as the agents in this change, we the adults must offer to children the experiences through which they can learn to ‘feel and live in harmony with the Earth’.

In that paraphrase, in that re-vision, in that grammatical and practical re-orientation of this sentence – lies our strongest ‘link between the Montessori movement and the sustainability movement’.

We have, in our Montessori perspective, the essential principles to unite children positively with sustainability – to shape the future through our practice of comprehensive, holistic childhood education. Because the whole practice – the whole intention – of Montessori-inspired education is to provide children access to the experiences they need to grow and develop, access to the experiences that will support any learning they are going to achieve. If our children are going to learn ‘to feel and live in harmony with the Earth’ – then we must be the ones to weave the experiences for this feeling, the experiences for living in

Practical Sustainability Keynote Address *continued....*

harmony with the Earth, into the entirety of children's growth and development, into the entirety of children's lives.

Experiences that connect children with sustainability cannot be compartmentalized into units of curriculum. Experiences that connect children with sustainability cannot be contained into manageable units of time in a day, or a week, or a year. And they cannot be the exclusive province of a specialist in sustainability – for that would imply that only 'special' people feel in harmony with the Earth, only 'special' people live in harmony with the Earth. In fact, I would propose that these experiences cannot be compressed into moments of 'formal' education at all.

True educational experience – experience through which children learn how to be humans on this planet – does not happen in a vacuum or in time-based increments. True educational experience happens in living, breathing, holistic, and timeless environments. Children of any age do not turn their learning on and off, they do not turn their growth and development on and off, to accommodate the days and hours of formal education. Children grow and develop, children learn, 24/7 – and this 24/7 learning occurs in the constant domain of all of the environments our children inhabit. Because of that, all of the adults in all of the environments our children inhabit are the subjects of this revised sentence: all of us must unite to offer children the experiences through which they can and will learn to 'feel and live in harmony with the Earth'.

Reaching this point, I suddenly realized I wasn't done – another thought began to nag me, another thought began to take shape as I continued to ponder Montessori's statement. I'm still not content – now, I'm going to take issue with my own re-vision of the sentence; I'm going to take issue with its image of children learning to feel and live in harmony with the Earth.

Because the implication of the sentence now is that this learning by the children would be the learning of something new, the learning of a new idea; that children need a new way of seeing the world, a new way of being on this Earth – that feeling and living in harmony with the Earth is somehow alien to their regular way of being, that their regular way of being has to be replaced by a newly-fashioned existence.

The history of our Montessori movement tells us that this is not true. To think this way is to fall into a trap which Maria Montessori warned us about. She frequently reminded us that we cannot understand children in adult terms, that we cannot apply our adult ways, our adult reasoning, our adult experiences to interpret children and their ways of being. When we imagine that children have to learn how to feel and live in harmony with the Earth, we are doing just what she warned us against – we are actually projecting an adult dilemma onto children, we are projecting our own tragic loss onto our children.

We adults – remember us? the subject of my revised sentence? We the adults: we are the ones who have to learn a new idea. We the adults are the ones who need to see the world in a new way. We are the ones who need to be taught, who need to create a new way of being on the Earth. Because – the evidence is clear – we are the ones who do not feel and live in harmony with the Earth.

Our children? Our children are born feeling and living in harmony with the Earth. It is their natural way of being – and once it was our way of being as well. Feeling and living in harmony with the Earth is the birthright of all humans – and if a human of any age does not follow this way of being, it is because that birthright has been stolen; it is because that birthright has been lost; it is because that birthright has been 'experienced' out of us.

So perhaps the true revision of this sentence should begin with – We the adults must stop teaching our children not to feel and live in harmony with the Earth. We the adults must stop offering our children experiences through which they learn not to feel and live in harmony with the Earth.

It's a thought, isn't it?

Sustainability might be a new idea for us modern, technological humans. But sustainability is not a new idea for the young child – sustainability lies at the very core of a young child's being. No one is more in harmony with the laws, the limits, or the possibilities of nature than a new-born child. The child constantly, 'naturally' and joyfully, follows the laws, the limits, and the possibilities of nature.

But remember? 'Children become the experiences they have'.

We became the experiences we had. And our children right now are 24/7 becoming the experiences they have in their environments. They become, embody, incarnate the attitudes, the beliefs, the intentions, and the practices that surround them in all of their environments.

Who controls the environments? Whose work is it to create those environments? Ours. We, the adults, will shape the future through the experiences we offer our children now, through the experiences they find today, through the attitudes, the beliefs, the intentions, and the practices which will become the flesh and spirit of our ever-watchful, ever-learning children.

Where will we begin this work? Well, we can begin in each moment of choice we exert in the only arena that we control – the environments that we create. This business of creating environments, this is the work Maria Montessori identified as, apparently, the right and proper work of human adults. Our work, she recognized for us, is to build the environment. Actually, it is to build a second environment – onto the first environment, which is nature. Because of this apparent historic task of human beings, this planet now (for better or worse) consists of two environ-

Practical Sustainability Keynote Address *continued....*

ments: the first or primary environment of nature and a second environment that we humans have built using the resources and conditions of nature.

Nature is a closed yet highly sustainable environment – proven through eons of formation and evolution. All life forms exist within this domain of nature – here, each type finds and adapts nature's resources and conditions to sustain life on this planet. All life forms also find laws and limits within the environment of nature. And all life forms conform (whether they like it or not) to the laws and limits built into the environment of nature.

Sustainability is not new – sustainability is not something to be discovered or invented. Sustainability is how the environment of nature operates – sustainability is the law of nature. As the journalist Paul Hawken has reported in his book *Blessed Unrest*: “Nature never throws anything away because there is no away”.

We humans are a part of this environment of nature – we too are a life form sustaining life within the resources and conditions of the natural environment.

But Montessori noted, that we humans have raised this life in nature to a whole new dynamic level. We humans have built a second environment onto the primary environment of nature. Montessori called it the ‘Supra-nature’. We take what we find in nature and we re-fashion it into the world that is our culture, the world that is our technology; nature re-fashioned to our needs, our survival, and our desires. The supra-nature is the world we humans inhabit; it is intrinsically artificial although everything in it has its origins, however remotely, in the real world of nature. We have built this supra-nature to such a level of density and constancy that most of us never really step into the primary domain of un-altered nature for most of our lives.

This is our work, this is what humans do – we complete the environment for ourselves. We take the resources and conditions of the natural environment and adapt them, re-fashion them into the supra-nature so that we can live. As a little exercise in understanding just how far this has gone, to understand what Maria Montessori meant by the supra-nature – just imagine right now that everything that is the product of human labor were removed from this space.

Interesting – yes? We are now standing on the Earth unadorned, unsheltered, and basically unoccupied; and quite a few of us can't see or hear very well either. Soon, we'll be hungry and thirsty – and we'll have to go find something edible growing near by that we can digest and then some liquid that will hydrate our bodies. That satisfied (for the moment) we will be at the mercy of whatever conditions our particular part of nature provides. Actually, most of us will not be here at all. Actually, our chances of survival – and for us humans, survival also seems to include

chances for purpose and for meaning – will be fairly limited, limited by the laws and limits of the natural environment as we find it in out time and place.

It's okay that we build the supra-nature. We wouldn't be here otherwise. It's just that we've gotten very carried away by and with ourselves. It's not an accident that part of the supra-nature always seems to include cautionary tales about humans that get carried away by and with ourselves and our – shall I say, Promethean? – abilities to make nature work for us. We have forgotten that our supra-nature is not the original real world; we have deluded ourselves into forgetting that there are laws and limits in that original real world and that these laws and limits continue to operate, no matter how dense and how constant the supra-nature becomes. We pretend that there is an ‘away’ that we can fill with the discards and by-products of the supra-nature. The ultimate Promethean tragedy is approaching – but our present crisis is also an opportunity not to be missed. Here in this crisis of sustainability lies the motivation, the need, and the new desire for us to change.

It is not solely our children who must learn to feel and live in harmony with the Earth. It is the supra-nature – our adult work – which must be re-aligned to feel and live in harmony with the Earth, its laws and its limits.

And so, I have one more issue with this idea of what our children must learn and do. To say that our children must learn how to feel and live in harmony with the Earth is to put the burden on them – and they are blameless in this Promethean tragedy. They cannot affect the crisis in the supra-nature until they are adults. But if we fail to immerse them in the experiences which will sustain their birthright to feel and live in harmony with the Earth – then they will become just like us and continue the tragic illusion that we can live and work outside the laws and limits of nature.

Every moment, we make the choices of the experiences to build into the supra-nature for our children.

I heard a piece on the radio yesterday morning, noting the 10th anniversary of ‘Sponge Bob Square Pants’ – which has proven to be a phenomenally successful element of the supra-nature. Is ‘Sponge Bob Square Pants’ – delightful though it may seem as a near-state-of-altered-consciousness for adults – Is ‘Sponge Bob Square Pants’ truly how we want our toddlers and young children to experience the natural Earth that they are supposed to feel and live in harmony with?

In the 1930's, in *The Secret of Childhood*, Maria Montessori boldly declared that the complexity and intensity of modern life had reached such proportions that the bulk of child-rearing had come to consist of protecting children from dangers built into the supra-nature; dangers that adults had deliberately built into the supra-nature. What would she say today?

Practical Sustainability Keynote Address *continued....*

Child-rearing as protection of children from the dangers in the supra-nature. We have built a world that is lethal for our children and, ultimately, lethal for ourselves. How many of these ‘dangers’ also represent dangers to the primary environment of nature as well? I would venture to guess that we could make a case that if it’s bad for our children it’s probably bad for nature as well.

Brute force, greed, and violence have been institutionalized and built into a flawed supra-nature. But they are not inevitable. Brute force, greed, and violence are the products of choices made by ordinary humans beings going about their work of building the supra-nature.

Maria Montessori believed and preached that the child will be our salvation – not because of what children will do for us, but because of what we adults can and will do when we unite for the sake of our children. This Promethean tragedy, this opportunistic crisis, is finally putting our attention where it belongs: in choosing how to use the resources and conditions of nature to build a supra-nature that sustains life, a supra-nature that matches the sustainability which is the law of the natural world.

We are not alien to the natural world – although we have alienated ourselves temporarily from it. Sustainability is not a new idea. But sustainability has historically been rejected by societies of humans across vast areas of this planet. Sustainability is something most of us humans have lost – sustainability is something waiting for most of us humans to re-discover – to build into our supra-nature. Sustainability is not something we have to graft onto our supra-nature. Sustainability is something we need to restore to our supra-nature and to ourselves.

Fortunately, we are not alone and we are not without models. Historically, many humans on this planet also created and thrived in sustainable supra-natures. There is wisdom in Prometheus, not just tragedy. There are many allies for us to find – and many allies waiting to find us, the Montessori movement. Unfortunately, many of these models are lost to the modern world – themselves intended or un-intended victims of flawed supra-natures acting from brute force, greed and violence.

It will take wisdom, and compassionate humility, to envision and design a re-aligned supra-nature. Only the children of humanity can provide stable ground for the changes needed to drive us (kicking and screaming perhaps) to do the right thing by nature and the supra-nature. We already hear the words for this all around us – but we must elevate this new-found concern for our posterity, for the world we are leaving our children, elevate this from lip-service to real service.

Another thought from the journalist Paul Hawken echoes this: He tells us that: “Living within the biological constraints of the earth may be the most civilized activity a person can pursue,

because it enables our successors to do the same”.

Finally – deep in our Montessori perspective – there is one more great gift for us: a gift and a truth that forges our strongest link between the Montessori movement and nature’s way of sustainability.

From her study of childhood for more than 40 years, aided by her many collaborators all over this beautiful planet of ours – Maria Montessori discovered that feeling and living in harmony with the Earth is actually the natural way of human nature; ... discovered that when the conditions are right, when the learning experiences are there, children naturally become the attitudes, the beliefs, the intentions, and the practices of a sustainability far beyond any we could design, imagine or even model.

The universal child whose birthright of growth and development is protected and nurtured develops a stewardship and a care for the Earth and for all of the Earth’s communities which astonishes and amazes any who are privileged to witness it. Quite simply put – it is human nature to feel and live in harmony with the Earth.

This is the message that is the Montessori movement’s greatest contribution to the newly-discovered sustainability movement:

- Brute force, greed and violence are not human nature.
- Brute force, greed and violence are the result when human nature is thwarted in childhood.
- Brute force, greed and violence are the result when human nature is not nurtured.
- Brute force, greed and violence are the result when children find only the experiences of brute force, greed and violence available for their becoming.

We do not need to teach our children sustainability.

We need to re-align the supra-nature. We need to correct the flaw in the supra-nature that deprives children of the natural human qualities which are their birthright. We need a re-alignment, a course correction, that will immerse children in the experiences they need to fulfill their birthright of sustainability in nature and stewardship in the supra-nature; experiences that will make sustainability and stewardship unquestioned and enlightened hallmarks of human life and human work.

Then, the future enlightened adults created by our children out of their incarnated childhood experiences will complete the work we have begun.

The power of choice – ready to be applied in every environment our children inhabit – is in our hands, in our minds, and in our hearts. The power of choice is ready and willing to be applied in our commitment to all children and in our dedication to shape the harmonious future of the Earth through our practice today and everyday.

Harbor learns to recycle and Aspen, too!

by Stevie S. Burden

I recently moved back to the Oregon Coast and have the great fortune of living very close to my grandchildren. When my husband and I returned to the coast and were remodeling on our family home, I decided to set up an extensive recycling center in a closet (under the stairs) in my kitchen. Knowing that I would be spending a lot of time my young grandkids, I decided to make the recycling closet kid-friendly. I made large labels for each of my recycling bins. I made each one of the labels with a different color ink; tin cans are in red, plastic is blue, glass is green, and deposit cans are in purple. My grandson, Harbor, is now 3 years old and learning at an amazing rate. I envisioned teaching Harbor to recycle by using this color coded system since he already knew his colors. In addition to the color coded bins we also have bins for greyboard, plastic film, and newspaper.

Since the recycling center is located behind a spring loaded door that opens like magic he found it especially appealing. Whenever he would go in I would tell him it was the recycling closet. He was enthralled with the space. I asked him if he wanted to help me recycle. He thought this was the greatest thing ever! We quickly worked into a rhythm where I would hand him an empty yogurt container or a tin can and tell him which bin to put it in by color.

I started by saying, "That's a tin can and it goes into the red bin." In no time at all he began to tell me which color bin the soda cans went into. I began to make a point of collecting anything recyclable on the end of the kitchen counter where he could reach it when he came to the house. He would take it into the recycling closet and I would tell him where to put it. Together we sorted all of the recycling and, although occasionally he still needed to be reminded that everything has to go into the right bin, he really caught on quickly.

He just loved the whole sorting process. He became very enthusiastic about it and since then there have been many rounds of applause, high fives, and "good job" for a margarine container making it into the blue bin. We don't use much glass and he thought that the green bin didn't get enough action and let me know about it. Now I save up glass for when he's here so he can put something in the green bin and for a while his favorite new word was 'greyboard'. After a very short period, two or

three months at the most, Harbor's sophistication advanced to the point that he needed virtually no guidance with ordinary recycling.

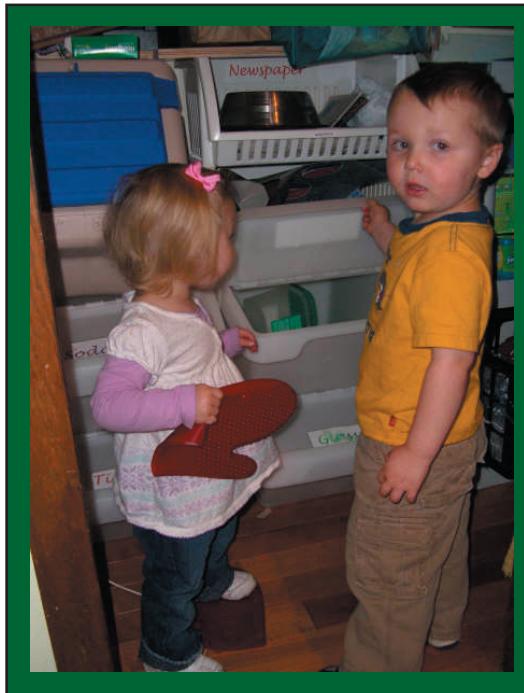
It has been such a great family experience, with lots of laughter and positive reinforcement for everyone. We live in Oregon where all soda cans and beer bottles have a deposit on them. They are separated and returned to the grocery store instead of the recycling center. We don't drink much beer around our house so we don't generate many deposit bottles. But one day

Harbor and his Dad (and sister Aspen) were visiting and my son tried to put a bottle in the purple bin with the soda cans. Harbor stopped him by holding his hand up like a traffic cop and saying "Nooo Dad that goes in the green bin!" That was the end of that, he carefully took the bottle from his Dad and put it into the right bin. We'll work on the whole idea of multiple purple bin items later.

Once it became clear that Harbor had the sorting skill well integrated, I decided that it was time for him to see what we did with the recycling when the bins got full. I planned a trip to "Cart'm", our local recycling center. We are fortunate that we have this award-winning recycling center very near where we live. It has been built by the community over the last 15 years and is beloved. Recycling here went from a truck trailer with bins inside to a huge recycling center and transfer station where you can take just about everything. It has a large building that houses a thrift store and cardboard crusher. Outside there is a long row of dumpsters hold most household recyclables; glass, tin cans, plastic, etc.

In anticipation of our trip to Cart'm, I lined up brown paper bags outside the closet and put some of the different types of recycling in each bag. When Harbor came over I worked with him to take the items remaining in the various bins out and put them in the bags. This was really new for him. Taking things out of the closet instead of putting them in took a couple of repetitions before he got into the swing of it. He grasped the process quickly and helped me fill all of the bags.

Once Harbor and I had filled all of the bags, I loaded them into my truck along with a step stool and off we went to recycle.



Harbor and Aspen show us how it's done!

Harbor learns to recycle and Aspen, too!

continued...

When we got to Cart'm I put each of the bags in front of the appropriate dumpster and then unloaded Harbor and his stool. We took the stool to the first dumpster; Harbor climbed up the steps and I handed him a bag of tin cans. At first he wasn't sure what to do so I showed him. He looked at me with the biggest smile I've ever seen. He took the bag and immediately emptied it into the dumpster laughing the whole time. When he was done with the first dumpster I took him and his stool to the second one and repeated the process. By the time we got to the third one he was dragging his stool and me laughing so hard that it made everyone else laugh too. He told anyone who would listen that he was recycling with such joy you couldn't help but smile with him. There was a total of eight bins, plus the newspaper. He was having so much fun that by the time we got to the newspaper, people were giving him their recycling to throw into the bin.

My son called me a few days after the trip to Cart'm and said, "7:15"

"7:15 what?" I asked.

"7:15am is the first time Harbor asked me where to put the recycling!"

Since then my son has set up a recycling spot at his house. The trips to Cart'm have become a family affair and everyone gets involved - including Aspen, who is 18 months old. Now when she comes into the kitchen with Harbor and wants her own recycling. It is so amazing to watch her follow her big brother into the recycling closet with a soda can in hand, while he lifts the lid and shows her which bin it goes in. To me, this is the kind of early skill building with our children and grandchildren that will create true long term environmental sustainability.

Stevie S Burden is a resident of the town Wheeler on the north Oregon Coast. Between trips to Cart'm (cartm.org), Stevie spends her time as a substance abuse treatment and prevention specialist. She is mother to Corinne and Jacob; grandmother to Harbor and Aspen and one more granddaughter which Corinne will be having in June.

The Alternative to Infinite: offering affluent children an experience of want

by Sally Coulter

Many people in America live in a culture of plenty. The supermarket shelves are always stocked. Clean water always flows abundantly from our faucets. Empty toilet paper rolls are replaced with full ones, old clothes replaced with new. We have organized our lives to be without need, without want; a world of constant resupply and unending resources.

The consequence of our seemingly infinite supply lines on the child's growing mind is a firm belief that resources don't run out. There will always be more food, more water, more clothes, more of what we need. Through the vagaries of economics, the majority of our students are from affluent families, and the impression of unending plenty is a strong one. In fact, the child will incarnate this 'truth' as we have presented it to him, and he will live as though his needs can be infinitely met. Why should he not?

Offering children an alternative experience of the flow of resources in and out of their lives is one of the most profound gifts an adult can provide, affecting not only the child, but the society and the environment in which they live. This experience of finite supply will also have long-lasting consequences for our ability to sustain our lives on this planet. There are many ways that the Montessori guide, at all levels, can offer children a way to understand resource manage-

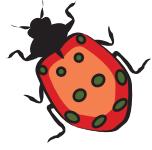
ment and learn the necessity for conservation. Here are three basic ideas that can be easily be built upon:

Don't immediately replace broken objects: if an object breaks, allow it to remain unreplaced for a week or so. The "magic cupboard" that produces new dishes, pitchers and bowls only reinforces the idea of unending resupply.

Tell stories about the origin of objects and supplies: Where do the cotton balls come from? By describing the planting, growing and harvesting of cotton, the processing of the cotton, the factory workers who help to make the cotton balls, the packaging and distribution, and the selling of the cotton balls at the store, the children start to get a sense for the mechanics of supply chains, thus avoiding the dreaded "Milk comes from the store" scenario.

Have a limited supply on hand, and allow it to run out: Maybe today there are only three bananas available for banana slicing. Maybe that's all there will be for the next few days; children will have to temporarily go without.

Allowing want to gently exist in your classroom will balance the impression of unending plenty that many children receive in the rest of their lives.



Sustainability Resources



Potential Partners/Sources for Sustainability Initiatives

Compiled by Dilafruz Williams, Ph.D.

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Bureau of Environmental Services - Watershed Stewardship Project
<http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?c=43077>

Children and Nature Awareness Month - Oregon
<http://www.childrenandnature.org/getinvolved/submit/awarenessmonth/>

Ecotrust
<http://www.ecotrust.org/>

Farm to School
http://www.ecotrust.org/press/f2s_hb2800_priority_20090403.html
<http://www.farmtoschool.org/state-home.php?id=47>

Friends of Outdoor School
<http://www.mesd.k12.or.us/foundation/>

Healthy Waters Institute
<http://www.thefreshwatertrust.org/who-we-are/staff>

Place-Based Network - Gregory Smith
gasmith@lclark.edu

Metro - Sustainable Living; Nature in Neighborhoods
<http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by.web/id=24199>

Neighborhood Associations (varies)



No Child Left Inside
http://www.cbf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=act_sub_actioncenter_federal_NCLB

No Oregon Child Left Inside
http://www.eeao.org/adv_background.aspx

Northwest Earth Institute
<http://www.nwei.org/>

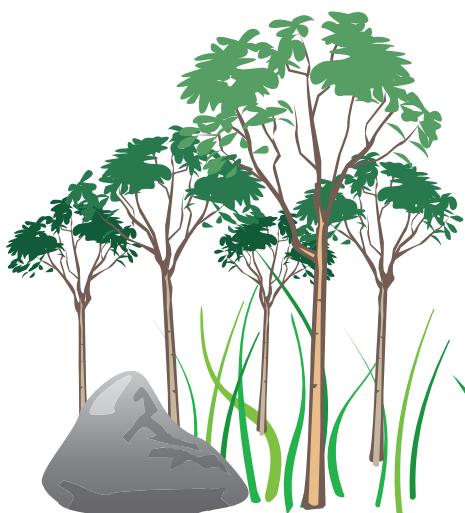
Northwest Neighborhood Energy
www.n2e.org or http://n2e.org/attachments/N2E_Newsletter_Vol_1_032309_PDF.pdf

Oregon Green Schools
<http://www.oregongreenschools.org/index.cfm>

Pacific University
<http://www.pacificu.edu/sustainability/>

Place-based Education Network
<http://www.clearingmagazine.org/>

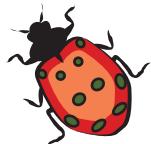
Portland Public Schools is Green
<http://www.facilities.pps.k12.or.us/docs/pg/10516>



Portland Public School District - Sustainability Policy
<http://www.pps.k12.or.us/directives-c/pol-reg/3/30/082.php>

Portland State University - Center for Sustainable Processes and Practices
<http://www.ecowiki.pdx.edu/office-of-sustainability.html>

Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative
<http://sustainableschools.org/>



University of Portland
<http://orgs.up.edu/climatechange/index.php?q=node/41>



WISE OWL
<http://www.wisedesign.org/>

Books and Publications related to Sustainability

The Universe Story
- by Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry

Earth Child 2000
- Katherine Sheehan and Mary Waidner

The Tipping Point
- by Malcolm Gladwell

Into the Field: A guide to locally focused teaching
- by Claire Walker Leslie, John Tallmadge and Tom Wessels

Growing up Green
- by David Hutchison

Fields of Plenty: A Farmer's Journey in Search of Real Food and the People Who Grow It
- by Michael Ableman

The Rediscovery of North America
- by Barry Lopez

Ecological Design
- by Sim Van Der Ryn and Stuart Cohen

Blessed Unrest
- Paul Hawken

The Truth about Organic Gardening
- Jeff Gillman

Voluntary Simplicity
- Duane Elgin



A Child's Garden
- Molly Dannenmaier

Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World
- David W. Orr

Gardening in the Pacific Northwest
- Carol W. Hall and Norman E. Hall

Silent Spring
- Rachel Carson

Beyond Ecophobia
- Daniel Sobel

Hunting for Hope
- by Scott Russell Sanders

Orion Magazine





Community News



SAVE THE DATE!

OMA ASSISTANTS' WORKSHOP

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Location to be announced (check website)

Join us at this cornerstone of OMA's workshop offerings! Over the years, hundreds of assistants have benefited from the information, advice and practical methods that both assist and deepen their practice. Presented by experienced Montessori speakers, guides, assistants and administrators, this workshop is not-to-be-missed for the assistant desiring a deeper understanding of Montessori as it relates to the assistant's work.



News from MINW

Spring at the Montessori Institute Northwest has brought a flurry of activity. In April, MINW hosted Dr. Steven Hughes for a public lecture on "Modern Parenting" held at the Crowne Plaza hotel. We had a full house with parents, teachers, and administrators from near and far.

The following day, Dr. Hughes broke down our previous ideas about how we market Montessori education in his presentation "Talking Straight about Montessori Education." Over 60 administrators from schools all over the West coast attended. This event was a great opportunity for Montessorians to gather and share ideas about the present and future of how people view Montessori Education from the inside and out. MINW sends thanks to everyone who helped make these events a success!

With summer on the horizon MINW is readying to start our Primary Summer Course on June 24th. Enrolments are strong, and we are excited to be able to offer this course to those who are unable to take the academic year course (September to May).

CONGRATULATIONS to the 2009 OMA Award Recipients!

The OMA Board is thrilled to announce the recipients of the Annual Awards for 2009:

Yvonne Silva, of Morningstar Montessori, and **Shirley Harmon**, of Whole Child Montessori, are jointly awarded the Susie Huston Memorial Award for Teaching.

Merri Baehr-Whipps, admissions director and Middle School Coordinator at Childpeace Montessori, is the recipient of the Outstanding Dedication Award.

Thanks to all who attended the annual OMA Spring Tea on Sunday, May 3rd to witness these worthy nominees receiving their awards! Congratulations again to these dedicated professionals for helping to advance Montessori in Oregon!

We will also be graduating the second Assistants to Infancy Course of MINW in August, sending a new batch of Infant/Toddler Guides out into the world.

Our Introduction to Montessori Theory and Practice (sometimes called the Assistant's Workshop) will be offered this year by Sarah Werner Andrews from August 3-14. This course is open to everyone who is interested in an in-depth introduction to Montessori. In the past, we have had assistants, parents and administrators attend, as well as those who are just curious about Montessori. Registration is now open for both the Primary course and Introductory course. Visit our website for more details: www.montessori-nw.org.



The friendly MINW staff

Three Levels of Obedience

By Maren Schmidt

Sometimes when I am working on the computer, I feel like a three-year-old. At least, I think I feel like a three-year-old. I try to do some function that I haven't done in a while, and I look at the computer screen wondering how I did it. When I am utterly confused, I'll phone one of my daughters and ask, "How do I...?" Fortunately for me, they always laugh and say, "Oh, Momma!"

What does this have to do with a three-year old? A three-year-old is having new experiences, learning new skills and working on self-mastery of those skills, just like I do on the computer. Some days they can do something on their own, and other days they need assistance. This is because learning occurs in three stages, as follows:

At the first stage, we can do an activity with assistance.

At the second stage, we can do an activity when we are asked to do it.

At the third stage, we can do the activity independently and are fully aware of when it needs to be done.

In the example of my computer skills, trying to learn how to double-line format was a challenge. The first time, I had to be shown the series of steps. First stage. Then I could do it when someone reminded me of the steps. Second stage. I am proud to report that I can now do it with no assistance and no reminders. Third stage, or independence.

As we learn new skills, we go back and forth between stages one and two. What leads us to independence is repeating the activity with additional instruction. This independence allows us to obey a command or request.

Obey. We tend to think that it means, "to carry out a command without question." The word obey comes from the Latin *oboediere*, meaning "to listen or to hear". To obey, we listen and then make a choice to follow the command. If we hear a command from someone we trust, we will usually choose to carry out the command, if we know how to do it and have no conflicting information. We can also follow a command out of fear. To the casual observer it might appear in both instances that the command has been followed without question.

For the participants in an activity, command giver/command follower, teacher/student or parent/child, the dynamics of fear and trust create a relationship. To build a relationship based on trust, it is critical to understand the skills necessary to accomplish a command.

Most three-year-olds have a strong desire to please the adults in their lives and are willing to do what we ask. What children lack are the experience and the skill. We can look at their ability to obey or level of obedience in this way:

First Level: will | no experience | no skill

Second Level: will | experience | no skill

Third Level: will | experience | skill

In a trusting relationship, the child is eager to learn new activities. Remembering all the steps in an activity is difficult, and children need to be shown many times. Because they

are keen to learn, children are always watching others, which is a reason to be a good example.

To master a skill, children need to repeat an activity perhaps hundreds of times. Children need the opportunity to do activities uninterrupted with the freedom to make mistakes without being corrected during the activity. The exception to this is when there is immediate danger to the child or property. Observing a child's "mistakes" and "messes" gives us a clue of what needs to be retaught. Also, being interrupted or not being allowed to finish an activity can be the cause of frustration that may be expressed as a temper tantrum.

So we teach and re-teach as the child moves between levels one and two, and then one beautiful day, the child is working at the third level of obedience.

Let's take an example of making a bed. At the first level, the child is shown how to make a bed. The child shows willingness by trying to make the bed the next morning. The bedspread is hanging too low on one side and there are lumps. Being friendly with error, the adult simply states, "You made the bed by yourself."

The next day the child forgets to make the bed. The adult gives another demonstration, wordlessly looking at both sides of the spread to make sure they are even. The next day the child makes the bed. The fourth day the child forgets to make the bed. The adult reminds the child, and the child goes cheerfully to make the bed. If the child protests, the adult simply smiles and says "Let's do it together," knowing that the child may have forgotten how to do it.

After a few days the child can make the bed with just a verbal reminder. At some point, weeks, months or years, the child will reach the third level and make the bed perfectly without any reminders. (Parents of teenagers are allowed to roll their eyes if still waiting on this third level of obedience.)

All of us learn faster and better in a trusting relationship. Trust is developed by offering assistance in a clear, concise and kind manner. The adult doesn't ask the child to do something that is too difficult or belittle the child for not being able to do it. The adult remembers that it takes many re-teachings to get to the second level of obedience and much practice to arrive at the third level.

The adult needs to observe the child's will, skill and experience levels before asking them to do something. We can offer assistance to the child, keeping in mind "any unnecessary help is a hindrance."

For the three- to six-year-old, these levels of skill, experience and obedience are changing daily. As adults, we need to remain "friendly with error" as the child's experience and memory propel them to the third level of obedience, an obedience built on a relationship of trust and mutual respect.

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Steven Hughes Fixes Your Parenting in 90 Minutes

By David Ayer

On Tuesday, April 7th, 2009, pediatric neuropsychologist and Montessori parent Dr. Steven Hughes returned to Portland to present 'Modern Parenting: Tips, Tricks, and Traps' to a large audience of Montessori educators and parents as well as interested attendees from beyond the Montessori world. Dr. Hughes interesting, engaging, and direct presentation style left us with a lot to think about and specifics to bring back to our interactions with children.

The first part of Dr. Hughes' talk was an examination of the 'self-esteem' movement popularized and implemented in California in the 70s and adopted in educational settings everywhere over the last few decades. Hughes presented clear research findings demonstrating that raising children's self-esteem for its own sake and by means of praise and positive verbal feedback has no correlation, or even a negative correlation, with children's achievement and sense of self-worth.

Indeed, the main thing that raises a child's self-esteem (if this is even a desirable goal) is to help him or her learn to work hard and with persistence at difficult tasks and to successfully engage in work that is personally meaningful. (This may explain why Dr. Hughes is a frequent guest at Montessori events.) The sad fact is that most of this research was available before the self-esteem movement even got going. But no one bothered to look.

The result of the self-esteem movement has been a population of young people who rate higher on self-confidence, but also on narcissism, entitlement, and anxiety, than any group in history. And this result is not merely anecdotal, but measured in published scientific work. "We have succeeded in raising a generation of children," said Hughes, "who are not that much fun to be around."

How did this happen? Hughes suggests that the self-esteem programs filtered into the popular consciousness as parenting advice which pushed parenting strategies in an unhealthy direction. He presented a well-established analysis of parenting styles psychologists have used for decades.

In this view, parenting style can vary across two dimensions: warmth and control. High control, low warmth parenting has the label 'authoritarian'-think lots of cold, inflexible rules. Low control, low warmth is negligent, which Hughes hoped didn't apply to anyone in the audience. Low control, high warmth is permissive, a term that sent an anxious ripple of recognition through the crowd.

"Don't beat yourselves up," he cautioned us. We've been told for decades by professional educators that our children need love, support, and praise-without a lot of attention to limits and natural consequences. The most effective approach,

again supported by a good deal of research, is in the high warmth, high control box labeled 'authoritative.' Authoritative is different from authoritarian and can be captured in the phrase: 'the adults are in charge.'

It has become a familiar phrase in some parenting and education circles lately: 'Children need limits.' Indeed, there are some signs that the failure of self-esteem promotion has itself begun to enter the popular culture.

What's always refreshing about Dr. Hughes' presentations is the thoroughly grounded psychological and neurological research he brings to the discussions, while remaining grounded in accessible language and familiar experiences. Just one of many examples was a digitally animated brain scan of gray matter development in children from birth to age six. The image clearly showed the spread of neural activity from the back of the brain, where sensory and motor control are located, towards the frontal lobes, where executive function and decision making take place. The picture makes it clear: executive function is the last area to develop. Recent studies have shown that this area of the brain is still developing well into adolescence (which explains a lot!).

The conclusion is clear as well: as Dr. Hughes puts it, "Be your child's frontal lobes!" Be fair, but firm. Set limits and stick to them. You won't always be their best friend, but they'll thank you for it later.

*Dr. Hughes talk was part of Montessori Institute Northwest's lecture series.
Kathleen Lloyd speaks in April 2010 on self-regulation.*

About David Ayer: David discovered Montessori through his daughter, Virginia, who attended Whole Child Montessori School, and his wife, Elise, who was teaching in the upper elementary at Montessori School of Beaverton. He earned his primary diploma at the Montessori Institute Northwest in 1995. David taught at Vancouver Montessori School before starting the Montessori Adolescent Project Northwest with Elise. He continued his Montessori adolescent work at the Hershey Montessori Farm School and the Franciscan Montessori Earth School before joining Sunstone Montessori School as Assistant Director.

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