

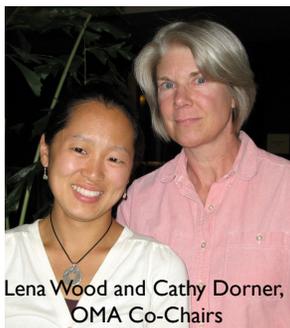


Welcome to the new Forza Vitale!

Dear OMA members,

Greetings! We are very excited to share this edition of the Forza Vitale with you. The new look and layout reflects our desire to revitalize the Montessori community and make our newsletter more appealing to a broader audience. This was why we chose Parent Communication as the theme of this fall's newsletter.

I (along with many others, I'm sure) was inspired by Dr. Steven Hughes's lecture at OHSU last month. I was especially taken with his message of the importance of how we as Montessorians communicate our principles and method to the general community. I am a firm believer that the only thing preventing Montessori from being more widely integrated into public education in the United States is our inability to communicate Montessori philosophy in a way that both preserves the heart of our work but doesn't rely on insider lingo. As we move into the next century of Montessori, we hope that the OMA will be a leader among Montessori organizations in communicating effectively with both its members and the general public.



Lena Wood and Cathy Dorner,
OMA Co-Chairs

One way we hope to reach out to both members and the general public is through our new website, which will be launched around the time that you receive this newsletter.

All members who have given us an email will receive an invitation in their email to login to the members-only section of the website, where you will be able to access the Forza Vitale, update your contact information, post a classified ad, or renew your membership.

We are very excited about our fall workshop, entitled "Deepening Our Practice" with Patricia Oriti, to be held on Saturday, November 8th. Registration brochures were mailed to all school and individual members last week. Please register by October 31st so we know how many people to expect. This ensures that we will have adequate supplies for all attendees. Due to space limitations, we can only accept the first 75 registrants.

Administrators will be interested in the leadership seminar we are hosting with the Pacific Northwest Montessori Association. Jonathan Wolff, a well-known Montessorian and lecturer, will be leading this seminar, to be held at Seattle University on Saturday, December 6th, 2008. We will be sending more information about this event to schools soon, so keep an eye on your mailboxes!

As always, if you have any questions or ideas, or would like to be involved in the OMA, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are always open to workshop ideas and newsletter articles!

In peace,
Lena Wood, OMA Co-Chair

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Primary Training of Trainers

We are thrilled to have two participants in the AMI Primary Training of Trainers sitting the Primary Course with Ginni this year. Sarah Werner Andrews is trained at both the Primary and Elementary and has been active in the Portland Montessori community for many years. Brenda Gonzales has joined us from Mexico City and is trained at the Assistants to Infancy and Primary levels.

Sarah plans to work with MINW here in Portland upon completion of the training of trainers program. Part of our strategic plan is to employ multiple trainers at each level. This will allow us to offer simultaneous summer and academic year courses as well as more Community Education programs.

Assistants to Infancy Course

MINW is lucky enough to have another fantastic group of students begin the Assistants to Infancy course this past summer. The students seem very enthusiastic about the Montessori curriculum for children under three. They are busy completing their child observations this academic year and have one more summer session prior to graduating. MINW is already accepting applications to our next Assistants to Infancy course beginning the summer of 2010.

Primary Course

This year's Primary course has thirty-four extraordinary students with very diverse backgrounds. We have been very impressed with their level of work, their thoughtful approach to the training, and their compassion for others. Their diversity is a great asset to the course and every one of them has found a way to shine.

New Practice Classroom

This August, MINW began to prepare a second practice classroom to accommodate our large Primary teacher training courses. This expansion was made possible by a large donation from Kaybee Montessori and we are deeply grateful to have the additional materials to support our students. For more information about Kaybee, please check out their website at www.montessoricollection.com.



The beautiful new Kaybee materials are being integrated into our main classroom and our current materials are being moved to our second practice classroom space upstairs. Having a variety of Montessori materials will allow our students to see the commonalities as well as the small differences in Montessori manufacturers.

Observation and Practice Teaching Hosts

We would like to give a sincere and heartfelt thanks to our observation and practice teaching hosts this year. Without your help we would not be able to carry out our mission to education adults on the nature of childhood. All of our students come back from their observation sessions with a new respect for children, their natural development, and the work that we do as Montessorians. From our staff, board, students, alumni, and friends: thank you for hosting our students. It is one of the most valuable gifts you can give!

For more information about the Montessori Institute Northwest and its programs, go to:

www.montessori-nw.org

The Montessorium
Purveyor of fine Montessori goods

An online emporium of fresh, original designs for your next clothing or giftware purchase!

www.cafepress.com/montessorium

Two of our fun designs, with many more to choose from... visit the website to see them all!



100% organic education



We give back! 5% of our sales are donated to support the programs of the Montessori Institute Northwest!

New Board Members, New Forza, and a New Website!

Big changes are afoot at the OMA, and we're excited to tell you all about them!

Firstly, we are happy to welcome several new board members, adding fresh ideas to the pot. We love feedback and suggestions from the community, so if you see any of these ladies around town, be sure to flag them down and give them your ideas! Remember, as members you help to shape the OMA and our services.

In the back row, from left to right, we have Maren Schmidt, Donna Hargrave, Cathy Dorner (co-chair), Julie DiLorenzo (secretary), and Sue Ann Gillingham (treasurer). In the front row, left to right, we have Sally Coulter, Lena Wood (co-chair), Ursula Melvin, and Vesna Kostur. This photo was taken at a recent Board Retreat in Welches, at which we discussed and refined our vision for the OMA's future.



Secondly, you may have noticed that the *Forza Vitale!* looks a little different! This will be the last issue of the Forza that is printed. We made this decision for several reasons, most importantly to reduce the environmental impact associated with printing and shipping the newsletter. It will be available to all our members in electronic format, to be read online or printed out if desired. We appreciate our member's patience, cooperation and support as we transition to this more sustainable and accessible form of distribution for the Forza!

Our most exciting announcement is the complete redesign of our website by Brent Miller of Foliosus Web Design (www.foliosus.com), to be launched in the next few weeks. This new format will provide added value to our members, including a Member's Only section allowing you to set up classified ads and view the Membership Directory online, with more benefits to come! If you are a current member of OMA and have provided us with a valid email address, keep an eye on your inbox for an email from info@oregonmontessori.org (make sure your spam filters don't catch us!). This email will explain how to set up your secure user account and will include instructions and a temporary password, allowing you to access your member benefits. After you visit the link, you be prompted to change your password to something you'll remember. Please keep in mind that OMA will never ask you for your password. If you forget your password, we will reset it and send you another invitation email. Easy!

Keep an eye out for that email, and visit our new website soon at www.oregonmontessori.org
Please send any feedback to info@oregonmontessori.org.



OMA Introduces Early Bird Pricing!

Participants who register early will enjoy discounts of 10 to 20% on most of OMA's programs!

Early registrants will receive discounts on most of our workshops when they register during the "Early Bird" period. Benefits of early registration include a secure place at our limited-space workshops, accurate planning which helps us to spend your membership dollars well, and of course extra money in your pocket! Look for the "Early Bird Discount Rate" on most of our programs and seminars!

What's new? What's being done? How is it? How is Montessori growing? How do people find out about it? Can I find out more? When is it happening? How can I get involved? What are the opportunities? Who is involved? What action are they taking? Who is leading it? How can we spread the word?

Action in Oregon!

Montessori of Alameda opens new AMS training program

By Lena Wood



Tammy Kennedy, the 2008 recipient of OMA's Outstanding Dedication Award, has been keeping busy the past few months. In addition to guiding a primary class, administering the thriving Montessori of Alameda, and spearheading the opening of the Ivy Montessori Charter School, she is in the process of establishing a Montessori training center for both

infant and toddler levels based in Portland. I caught up with Tammy in late September and chatted about her discovery of Montessori, the growth of her program, and her vision of making Montessori more accessible to the community.

Lena: Tell me a little bit about how you got involved in Montessori.

Tammy: It started when I had my two children and was looking for a quality day-care program for them. I couldn't find what I was looking for, so I opened a pre-school program in my home, Kids on the Go. It started as a play based program, evolved into a conventional pre-school and before after school program for children in the Alameda neighborhood.

I was introduced to Montessori at a workshop I went to at Bethany Village Montessori as part of continuing education, and loved it so much I signed up for training that night. After that, I slowly began shifting the play-based program to a Montessori one, and we moved out of my home and into a building in NE Portland. We've been continually adding new classes since then, and we'll be opening two infant/toddler and 2 primary classrooms this spring.

What was the impetus for you to establish a new training program?

Well, we're one of the few AMS-affiliated schools here in the Portland area, which has made it difficult to find trained

teachers for our program. We had been sending staff up to Seattle to do the weekend-training up there, but most of our staff start out as aides and are also parents, so it was challenging for them to be away from their families. The expense was also an issue, so we just felt it was time to open our own training here in Portland.

Our vision was to create an opportunity for teachers to be accredited and still work while going through that process. We also wanted our existing staff to have opportunities to further their professional development, so we are also in the process of creating a program to train our teachers to become trainers.

So what will the training process look like for both the teacher trainees and those who are seeking to become trainers themselves?

It's a 17-22 month program. Our staff will have classes one weekend a month for ten months and then after that begin their official internship, which lasts another ten months. During this time they work with an accredited teacher and complete assignments for their albums. After their internship and exams they will be Montessori accredited.

For those who are in the trainers program, they are required by to have a BA degree, accreditation at their level and at least 5 years of experience in the classroom. This is really a collaborative effort; my assistant director Maria and I are currently in the process of writing the syllabi for the courses, and we've completed a self-study that has been submitted to AMS and to MACTE. We'll start classes in January, and once classes start we'll have visits from AMS and MACTE to audit our paperwork and observe our workshops.

How many people do you currently have enrolled, and at what levels?

Currently we have several students, in both the primary and the infant/toddler levels. We're still accepting new students, too! The more students we have the more fun it will be.

Article continues on next page

Can you give me an update on what's happening with the Ivy School charter efforts?

We submitted our charter to Portland Public Schools earlier this year. They were willing to approve our charter if we limited the program to first through third grade, and capped the program at 125 students, but we weren't willing to do that. Having only first through third grade would be difficult to do in a Montessori model – what would we have done with the third graders who came in for only one year? And we wanted to offer the full range of 1-8. We've appealed to the State Department of Education. Our proposal is being reviewed and we should hear what their recommendations are in mid-November.

Do you have any words of advice for those who are thinking of starting their own Montessori program?

Be flexible. Listen to families who are interested in your program, try to meet their needs. Observe the classrooms and evaluate what is working and what is not. Be adaptable to change. You have to be driven to do your own research. I think of myself as the ultimate self-directed learner. There have been many times in my life when I have not known how to do something, if there is a class I take it, if not a video and a book are also good resources. When my daughter was 5 years old and my husband was at work I

demolished our entire kitchen, with a few how to videos. I installed the cabinets, laid the tile, etc. I take the same approach to most things in life. Our current building is our 5th location, so I have had lots of experience renovating buildings. With our current location, I was lucky to have a supportive family, parent volunteers and good friends who made it much easier. You can't worry about failure. You just have to stay positive and believe in yourself.

Prospective students can find more information on Montessori of Alameda's Teacher Education program by visiting their website:

<http://www.montessoriofalameda.com>

The student handbook can be found by clicking on the parent education link.

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In each issue of the Forza Vitale we will feature the one or two OMA member schools and the work of their administrators. We will also post news submissions on our website, so please continue to send your school news to us at:

officers@oregonmontessori.org

...OMA Community News...

Corvallis Montessori School Welcomes New Head of School

Corvallis Montessori School (CMS), which has provided a Montessori education for primary and elementary age children in the Corvallis area for more than four decades, recently welcomed Mark Berger as its new Head of School.

Berger, who has two decades of experience as a Montessori guide and administrator, previously served as School Director for Omni Montessori School in Charlotte, NC, and as Head of School for Renaissance Montessori School in Toronto, Ontario. He began his Montessori career as a classroom teacher at Toronto Montessori Schools.

"For more than four decades, the staff at Corvallis Montessori School has worked successfully to create a loving, nurturing, child-centered environment that has educated and cared for multiple generations of children in the Corvallis area," Berger said.

"I'm looking forward to building on that long tradition."

In the fall, CMS will enter its 41st year of operations. Berger will succeed Trish Miller, who served as Interim Administrator for the 2006-2008 school years.

"During our year-long search for a permanent Head of School, Mark's extensive experience as head of school for two organizations, his warm personality, and his evident enthusiasm for Montessori education made him stand out," said Karen Levy Keon, vice president of the CMS Board of Trustees and co-chair of the search committee. "We're very pleased he chose to join us as our new Head of School."

Corvallis Montessori School, which is a member of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), offers a six-year program of early childhood and elementary education, from primary through third grade, in partnership with a thriving community of families.



Ask a Teacher!

Got a burning question that really needs an answer? Ask a teacher!

For our Fall issue, we invited Megan Mitchell, Communications Liaison at the Montessori Institute Northwest, to answer some of the questions put to us about parent communication. Megan spent nine of the past ten years in the classroom with both Primary and Lower Elementary communities. She holds a B.S. in Elementary Education and received her AMI Primary Diploma in 2005 from MINW's Summer Course.



I have a very supportive, well-meaning parent of a child in my class who wants almost daily updates on his child's progress. I love that he is so interested, but I really don't have the time for that kind of interaction so frequently. Any suggestions?

Megan says: Great question! For all those teachers who have the most well meaning parents who also express the need to have extensive daily communication on their child's progress, here are a few suggestions:

1. Validate them. Let them know that you really do hear all of their concerns and are so thankful that they are so curious.
2. Help the parent to understand when the times for communication about student progress are. Is it the Fall conference period? Can they schedule a short meeting with you maybe once every other week? (One where you have a time commitment that allows you to keep it short, thus protecting your time) Encourage them to understand the nature and extent of your private record keeping, as well as the fact that if you feel the need to communicate more to a parent, you will...via phone, email, face to face.
3. Often times, I believe parents need help in understanding the boundaries that you as a teacher have, just as the children do. Some children need more support with this, as do some parents. If a parent is asking you at a time when you are with children, or at the beginning or end of your day, let them know when a good time is to talk. Reference safety and the idea of

"I want to give you my full attention on this, and now with the children, I am not able to do so. Can I call you?"

4. Another great way to communicate this to parents is through your monthly newsletters.
5. Lastly, if you have a parent who just won't let this idea of daily contact go...Be firm, enlighten them to your time and let it be o.k. that you do not answer all of everyone's questions everyday (that would be a full time job by itself). But do, find a way to compromise whether it is through a simple written note at the end of the week, or an email.

I'm working hard with a boy who is having some behavioral issues. We're doing lots of modelling, grace and courtesy, and direct intervention to solve this behavior. The problem is, I'm pretty sure that his parents aren't consistently applying these same principles at home, despite their assurances that they have been doing so. I'm at a loss for how to proceed.

Consistent discipline, from the classroom to the home, is a hard one. The truth is, the home does not have twenty some other children, and is not always set up like our classrooms. However, if a child is really showing signs of struggling with behavior and this is resulting in a struggle with work and friends, the parents must be brought together with the teacher for a sit-down conference.

I have learned from experience that the best way to get consistent results is to ask both parents to be present to sit down and talk, and really brainstorm ideas for how to help their child be successful in the classroom. You want the parents' feedback and insight, so ask them if their child is doing these things at home. If so, how do the parents respond? If not, enlighten them about what you are observing in the room. Let them know how it is affecting the child's work, their interactions with peers, as well as your ability or inability to give the child lessons, and see areas of growth with regards to concentration, freedom and independence (three major Montessori principles).

Ask the parents to "try some things" and give them some of your suggestions for consistency. Let them know how important it is for the child's development, as well as for their success in the room and life. Encourage parenting classes together. Offer books like "Positive Discipline" by Jane Nelson or "Parenting with Love and Logic" by Jim Fay.

Make a plan that you all have to stick to. Track progress. Communicate this to the parents. As this is happening, alert your director, or a mentor. Keep a paper trail of your communications and the response. This is serious. Let everyone see the transparency of how serious it is. As much consistency between these two worlds as possible, is key for the child to be able to stay and grow in the classroom.

Ask a Teacher!

...continued

(From an OMA member parent) My four year old seems to be doing great in her classroom, but I don't see a lot of progress in math and reading/writing. She seems to gravitate to "Practical Life" activities and art, without a lot of interest in academic subjects. Her teacher reassures me that her interest will come in time, and that I shouldn't start teaching her reading and writing at home because it will conflict with what's being taught at school (sandpaper letters and other games). I want to trust the teacher but I don't want my child to get behind. Any ideas on how to proceed would be appreciated.

Academics in the Casa... The term "Keys to the Universe" is the phrase or motto used for the three to six age group. This is different from elementary, where we "Give them the Universe". The primary classroom has a huge focus on the development of all of the materials and most likely your child is getting a number of these lessons. It is also interesting how a child may not even remember the names of these language and math lessons, or has maybe not shown readiness for them. (Note that much of the math curriculum is slated for the 4.5 year old.) The Sensorial and Practical Life areas all have major foundational purposes for getting the child ready for some of the more extensive Language and Math lessons. For example, the Practical Life activity called "Washing a Table"

"Find out from your guide how you can encourage these developmental principles, not compete with them"

strengthens the child's hand and arm, improves hand-eye coordination, offers the round, looping motions they will encounter in the Sandpaper Letters, and introduces their eye to the left-to-right, top-to-bottom reading pattern that we use in our culture. If a child does not have strong sense of these principles, it has been shown that the challenge in Math and Language is much more difficult and often the child is then unsuccessful there.

Having said that, spoken language is always key. Sandpaper Letters are fun! Counting and sorting and estimating are natural human tendencies. A child gravitates to the energy in these activities as naturally as to the energy on the Pink Tower and Hand Washing.

No, you don't need to be giving those lessons to your child that the guide is already trained to give, but of course you can play sound games and use phonetic concepts with everyday objects in your home, etc.

Count and sort and play games to support the development of the Mathematical Mind. Perhaps suggest a parent night on how to foster this development in your home. Find out from the guide how you can encourage these developmental principles, not compete with them.

Each issue, we'll invite a member of the Oregon Montessori Community to answer your questions as best they can! Email your questions to us at:

officers@oregonmontessori.org

Deepening Our Practice

A workshop guided by Patricia Oriti

Saturday, November 8th, 9-12 noon.
Providence Child Center, Multipurpose Room
830 NE 47th Ave., Portland 97213
(Not Providence Montessori School)



Join us at this enriching OMA Fall workshop!

In our roles at Montessori schools, we are engaged with the work of human development, daily. Always, we must hold at the front of our awareness, at the top of our 'lesson plans,' removing obstacles to the child's naturally unfolding developmental timeline. Yes, many of us heard this phrase in our training. It is easy to become lost or overwhelmed in the process of discriminating what those obstacles are, and how to remove them. What should those obstacles be replaced with? More work? More challenging work? More structure? Less structure?

A deeper experience for the child in the classroom community stems from a deepening of the guide's own understanding and Montessori practice. Come gather for a stimulating discussion about how to create a plan for deepening our practice.

This workshop is designed for Guides trained in Assistants to Infancy, Children's House and Elementary, Adolescent Community instructors, Administrators and Support staff. For more information visit the OMA website: www.oregonmontessori.org

PNMA - OMA SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SEMINAR



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2008, 8am to 5pm
SEATTLE UNIVERSITY



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Bring your ideas and your team to work out your issues of leadership in a supportive learning environment with the guidance of a school consultant, administrator, teacher trainer and parent educator who puts it all together for a holistic point of view.

Jonathan will apply the Montessori Method to School Leadership with the 3-period lesson:

- 1: Introduction and Presentation of Effective Leadership Strategies
- 2: Small group practice sessions to Assimilate new skills
- 3: Identify Key Learning and Prioritize Action Plan

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP IN THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Advocating for Program Quality & Consistency
Building Collaborative & Supportive Staff Culture
Change Management & Leadership Style



AFTERNOON RECEPTION TO INTRODUCE PNMA & OMA LEADERS & MEMI

NETWORKING NORTHWEST MONTESSORI LEADERSHIP GROUPS

Meet colleagues in an environment of collaboration
Share resources for common challenges
Be part of the bigger picture of Montessori in community

This event is offered to the membership of both Pacific Northwest Montessori Association and Oregon Montessori Association who are the foundation of Montessori Leadership in the Northwest. Register for the event with your organization. The Pacific Northwest Montessori Association is kindly hosting this event and will post all updated event info at www.pnma.org. Additionally we welcome Montessori School Leaders who are interested in working with us to share this opportunity for growth.

SEMINAR FEE TO MEMBERS OF PNMA & OMA: \$125

SEMINAR FEE TO NON-MEMBERS: \$150



Register online at www.pnma.org



Seattle University, 900 Broadway, Seattle WA 98122 www.seattleu.edu
Student Center Room 160, at 12TH Avenue and Cherry (use Cherry Street Garage)

Life after Montessori

Grace and Courtesy



OMA Board Member and Montessori parent, Vesna Kostur, shares with us a deeply personal experience of the world outside Montessori.

Our oldest daughter, Nina, led us to Montessori. We were so happy with the education she received that by the time she was set to graduate we felt without a doubt that Nina was well prepared to go forward into middle school. As it turned out we were right, Nina was prepared for the bigger world but I soon began to question whether I was ready.

The first thing I noticed when we started looking into the next step in our daughter's educational life which included pre-professional ballet and middle school is that the children in the stage after Montessori seemed big and hairy; my daughter was quite petite and, well, not hairy. Hairiness aside, I turned my attention to an observation which I found to be quite prevalent and far more troubling, disrespect. The way in which teenagers addressed each other and the way that adults (teachers included) addressed the adolescents appeared to be very harsh. After many years of grace and courtesy the change in my child's soon-to-be daily experience seemed to be a fall from grace, and I was a little concerned about how our family was going to negotiate the changes we were about to encounter. We didn't have to wait long to be tested.

The middle school we were fortunate enough to find ended up being a great fit for our family in many ways, and Nina was lucky enough to move forward with a number of her Montessori classmates in tow. Her ballet class, however, ended up affording us with a bit of a different experience. Classical ballet has always been a thorny proposition for me, but I knew at some point we would have to make a greater commitment. Nina decided to try out for a placement at a pre-professional studio. She won a spot in the level she was aspiring to, and we made that greater commitment.

Luck would have it that on the very first day of class, our daughter was shamed by her teacher to the extent that she (our rock solid child) was brought to tears, and the moment she got into my car at pick up time the flood gates opened; Nina wept like I've never heard her weep. The things that went through my mind at that moment were neither gracious nor peaceful. To put it mildly, mama bear was angry. At the very least, I wanted to fire off a very stiff email. I won't mention what was at the very most end of the spectrum and luckily for me I managed not to share anything from that realm with Nina either. Instead, I let her vent. It was clear that she needed to let this painful experience out of her system.

Through a tightly clenched mouth Nina proceeded to say things that ripped at my heart and I found it next to impossible to keep from interrupting her. None the less, I continued to keep quiet and listen.

“Nina wept like I've never heard her weep. The things that went through my mind at that moment were neither gracious nor peaceful. To put it mildly, mama bear was angry”.

“I'm a TERRIBLE dancer! Mama, I don't belong in there. I wouldn't be surprised if I was demoted to a lower level”.

With tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat I said, “What do you think we should do, Nina? Do you think I should talk to your teacher about this?” With anger in her voice Nina choked out a resounding, “NO!” and I left it at that for the time being.

That evening I had a meeting with a group of Montessori friends and with a heavy heart I decided to share Nina's experience with them. Bless their hearts, some of my friends were as angry as I was hurt and we decided to delve headlong into a discussion which put us squarely into that “other end of the spectrum”, just to humor ourselves for a while. In the end, I decided that fighting fire with fire wasn't the solution I was looking for. I knew that if I wanted to live in a peaceful world I would have to search for a peaceful solution for both myself and Nina.

Arriving at that conclusion alone was enough to put me in an altogether new frame of mind. I thought about how classical ballerinas have traditionally been trained and took heart when I considered the years of abuse that Nina's ballet instructor must have endured in her youth and about how that sort of treatment (or mistreatment) can damage and warp, even cripple some people. If simple grace and courtesy were woven in and out of all our lives early on, I thought, this world would be a better place.

Life after Montessori Grace and Courtesy - cont'd...

I then began to reflect on the idea of just how fortunate Montessori children are to be able to receive years of grace and courtesy lessons in their beautiful classrooms and about how the layer after layer of peace education can create an intricate foundation for them which serves as both a spring board and a safety net. I determined that it was time for me to put faith into that foundation and on my way home from my meeting I called Nina just to check in and to share my new found insights with her.

When Nina answered the phone, I was struck by how calm and composed she seemed. I shared with her my thoughts regarding her instructor's training and about the fact that I believed that her experience must have entailed a fair amount of abuse and disrespect. Nina considered what I had just said for a moment and then, with compassion in her voice she said, "That's so sad". I asked her if she had thought more about her

unpleasant incident at the ballet studio earlier and if she had arrived at any conclusions.

Nina said that she had decided to chalk it up to a bad first day for her teacher. She said that it must be "very stressful to teach all those children" and that she would take the wait and see approach before she drew any sort of negative conclusions. She felt that she shouldn't take the episode too personally because these things happen. After all, "I am no longer in a Montessori classroom, mama".

Maybe not, I thought, but the spirit of Montessori grace and courtesy still lives in my child.

Rajko and Vesna Kostur would like to acknowledge the gracious work of guides Annabeth Jensen, Sarah Andrews, Lorelea MacAfee, and Anna Varnelius. Thank you for planting the seeds of peace in our three children Nina, Leksi, and Nikki.

Montessori goes Green!

Recyclable and Reusable Grocery Bags available for Schools to Purchase

Dina Sykora and Monica Motsko, parents at Child's View Montessori and Cedar Hills Montessori respectively, have manifested a vision to promote Montessori education while offering reusable grocery tote bags made of recycled materials.

The idea first emerged out of a discussion with Tammy Ulrich, directress of Child's View Montessori School, about a fundraiser for Earth Day. Monica, amongst a few others, found that the concept really resonated. From there the two began the adventure of finding a manufacturer of the bags, conceiving of the images and moving forward with their own personal funds. They commissioned Sally Coulter from the Montessori Institute Northwest to transfer their logo ideas into graphic art. The idea of the globe with children was contributed by Terri Sharpe from Montessori Children's House of Longview, WA. To keep it simple and inclusive while providing a resource for Montessori information, the OMA website is referenced at the bottom instead of listing all the schools individually.

These grocery bags will be available for purchase by the end of the year! According to the Oregonian (July 24,

2008), the City of Portland may ban plastic and paper bags or institute a charge for them, following the example set by San Francisco and Seattle. Here is an opportunity to support the parents in our communities do the same while promoting something near and dear to all our hearts!

Montessori school representatives are welcome to pre-order the number of desired bags. 600 bags (300 of each design) will be available. Each bag will be sold to schools at cost: \$2.25 each. Each individual school can then set their own price.

Please feel free to contact Monica Motsko or Dina Sykora any questions and to place your order: monimot@comcast.net or dmsykora@earthlink.net

Montessori



www.oregonmontessori.org

This design will be printed in gold ink on a royal blue bag

Education begins at birth

- Dr. Maria Montessori -



www.oregonmontessori.org

This design will be printed in white ink on a hunter green bag

Preparing Parents for their Child's First Montessori Experience

by Cathy Dorner

As Montessorians, we are trained to spiritually prepare ourselves in order to do our work with the children. We learn to hold back our judgments, observe with open minds, look at the potential of every child and learn to follow their interests. Parents need to make a similar transformation when they choose a Montessori school for their child. Many parents do not know that when they call or make an email inquiry to a Montessori school, they will be embarking on a new philosophy of parenting, committing themselves to a more conscientious lifestyle that focuses on the developmental needs of the child and taking a fresh look at their child's abilities, independence and uniqueness. Are they ready as parents to send their child to Montessori school?

How well a new parent starts off on the right foot in that first year can be determined by how well a school adequately prepares that interested parent for his/her child's experience at school through a well considered enrollment process. If a parent follows a school's step by step orientation, their transformation can evolve as the parent learns more about the Montessori method, understands the benefits to their child and realizes the reasons why schools ask what they ask of the parent. Without preparation, there may be misunderstandings of the program at first.

In general, schools follow more or less the same procedures in their preparation of the parent via their enrollment process. From first contact with the school to their child's first visit with their teacher, the parent walks through the process absorbing more of the Montessori philosophy, gaining more understanding of their profound journey as parents and recognizing the role the teacher undertakes in their child's Montessori experience.

How does the enrollment process prepare parents for Montessori and allow for this transformation to occur?

Step 1: Every admission starts with the first contact - an interested parent has their first introduction to Montessori and builds their knowledge base of Montessori principles. Ideally, every parent would know a little about Montessori before they make their first contact with the school. Usually, they have heard something about Montessori through their various networks. Maybe they have done a little reading too. Some frequently asked questions and answers are important to help guide interested parents. Generally, parents will have common initial questions that schools can answer with an FAQ sheet (Frequently Asked Questions) from their website or at the ready in response to phone inquiries. These are important to clarify the program and as a way to either encourage the interested

parent to pursue their inquiry further or, to inform those parents who find they are not interested in Montessori. It is also an opportunity to dispel some Montessori myths - Montessori is too structured, Montessori is too unstructured, Montessori has religious affiliations, etc.. FAQ's should, of course, be specific to the school but, also include: who is that shining light named Maria Montessori, the history of

Montessori, her observations of the child's natural and spontaneous developmental cycles, description of the Children's House, Infant Community and Elementary programs as appropriate.

Even if a parent did not want to follow their interest further, they come away more aware of the Montessori philosophy then before the inquiry. FAQ's should also include why we start at 18 months, age three and age six, a description of the 3 year cycle and the philosophy around the mixed age groups so parents realize that they are making at least a 3 year commitment. Parents looking for a shorter program can suspend their interest at this point. For those parents who are still interested, the next step would be an observation and tour. A further reading list would be helpful too, especially if the school's waiting list is long.

“Are they ready as parents to send their child to Montessori school?”

Preparing Parents for their Child's First Montessori Experience ...cont'd

Step 2: Observation and tour to answer questions -

A parent sees Montessori in action for the first time and begins to really imagine what this experience could mean for their child. They can now ask questions based on what they have read and what they have seen.

For the parent whose interest is piqued after their first contact via phone and/or the website and further reading, he/she will have a broader knowledge base and is perhaps thinking about how their child could fit in the program. Most schools require an observation and tour with questions before enrollment. The observation is best when parents have some preparation, usually a little checklist of what to look for and how to sit and watch the children and the guide. The following tour goes into much more depth about what it is the parents are seeing in the classroom. It is important to bring to parent's attention the basics of Montessori. What is the prepared environment? What is the purpose of the 3 hour work cycle? How do the children interact with the materials, freedom of choice, experientially based materials responding to a child's developmental interests, sustained work period in fostering concentration, preparation of the child to function independently, the role of purposeful work in the classroom, the social life of the classroom, the reasoning behind the mixed age classes, the focus on building inner discipline in the child.

While observing, the parent can really see what the Montessori classroom is like. For many parents, the observation will immediately affirm for them that this is the right place for the child because they will be able to "see" their child in this kind of environment. They are very enthusiastic to start their child and can feel the magic of Montessori. For some parents though, the observation can raise a lot of questions.. For parents concerned about their child's socialization, they may wonder why children often work by themselves. For those parents that are not accustomed to children acting independently, they may wonder why the teachers don't seem very "nurturing". Other parents may not understand the meaning of Practical Life and

wonder why the children spend a lot of their time on care of their environment. Administrators, school enrollment directors and guides have learned that parent's misconceptions about Montessori will often arise after the observation and have ready answers to these questions. These hesitations are important to note though, because it may take this particular parent more time to absorb the philosophy and to "get on board".

Again, the tour director should let the parent know what the completion of the 3 year cycle could mean for their child's sense of self, individuality, responsibility, inner drive, ability to collaborate and a solid foundation in academic understanding.

“For many parents, the observation will immediately affirm for them that this is the right place for the child”

Step 3 - Questionnaires - Parents can process what they have learned to date and record what they are doing (and not doing) at home. This can be a process of self reflection.

Questionnaires include details that will be important for the Guide to know. More importantly though, these questions invite the parent to assess their family life. Perhaps for the first time a parent is really stopping to think about their approach to discipline and what limits they have in place at home. How much TV/movies are they allowing their child to see. In what ways are they really promoting their child's independence. Other questions to include: (for IC and Children's House), does your child sleep by themselves, still use a bottle, can they dress themselves, what level of potty training is your child at, does your child nap, how much? A questionnaire should also include a question about why the parent wants Montessori for their child. If a parent fills out the questionnaire thoughtfully, he or she will have a better understanding of the kind of parent they are and what they may need to work on as they begin to develop their Montessori parenting approach.

Preparing Parents for their Child's First Montessori Experience ...cont'd

Step 4 - Parent Orientation and the Parent Handbook

The parent is coming face to face with the parent handbook and the school's policies. This step should be mandatory for all enrolling parents because it is vital that parents realize what they will need to do as an interactive part of their child's Montessori experience in the school, what is their role as a parent and what commitments will they need to make to ensure their child's success.

They learn the nuances of the school's culture and philosophy. For example: Are they willing to pack a lunch that doesn't have sweets, commercial, gimmicky foods that distract the child from eating natural foods? Can they say goodbye to their child without lingering or entering the classroom? Do they understand the importance of their child entering the classroom independently? Can they make a commitment to the kindergarten year?

The details of school policies may seem burdensome to some parents and perhaps difficult for some parents to accept, however, when parents understand the reasons behind the policies, they will be much more willing to cooperate with the guide and make a commitment to the Montessori philosophy.

Step 5 - First meeting with the child and parent -

This may be the first time the guide has met with the parent and their child to discern how the child responds to the environment, to the teacher, to a lesson etc. The guide and the parent will begin their parent/ teacher relationships and develop mutual trust at this point. From the previous steps the parent is prepared to start the process of letting their child go.

The first meeting with the child, is just as important for the parent as well as the child. With a few questions to the parent, the Guide can sense where the parent is emotionally. Is the parent ready? When an experienced guide meets a parent for the first time, he/she will be on the lookout for parents who may need more help, for example: the ambivalent parent who questions the details, the parent that can't let go, the parent looking for a "nurturing" place, the selective parent who wants

the academic part of the Montessori program but, doesn't see the value with the rest of it.

Guides, parents and children all appreciate the smoothest transition possible. As the guide senses these particular issues on the horizon with the new parent, he/she needs to focus on communication. For the parent who has an exceedingly difficult time letting go of their child this may take some time. Some parents will need some extra handholding but their trust will win over if the guide is intent on good communication. The guide needs to make an earnest effort to write daily notes or make phone calls the first few days, followed by a weekly or biweekly communication the next week and a mini conference by the third week. The sooner the bond of trust is established, the sooner the communication will flow and the stronger the parent/teacher bond will grow. In general, parents can let go of their fears when they have the support, compassion and wisdom of their guide who can also be gentle yet firm regarding Montessori principles and capable of setting limits for the parents.

From here, parents should be encouraged to continue communication with their guide, attend parent information nights, participate in all conferences and to observe their own children as they grow and develop. Hopefully, by now, as parents grow in their Montessori consciousness, they are embracing Montessori parenting techniques and practicing Montessori values in the home.

Parents have a daunting task ahead of them, for it is increasingly more challenging to raise healthy children in our complex and demanding culture. The more schools can invest in their parents and help them establish a Montessori compass, the more successfully parents can help guide their children and work as collaborative partners with the school. We want both child and parent to walk harmoniously through their Montessori experience together - preparing the parent one step at a time is a good place to start.

Cathy Dorner is an AMI-trained Primary Guide at Childpeace Montessori. She has worked as a guide for 18 years. In her spare time, she enjoys eating year round from her vegetable garden... including

What Should School Be For?

Highlights from Dr. Steven Hughes' Lecture, "Good at Doing Things", hosted by the Montessori Institute Northwest

Dr. Steven Hughes, a pediatric neuropsychologist at the University of Minnesota and a parent to an eleven-year old Montessori student, spoke to a full house on September 23rd at the Oregon Health and Sciences Auditorium. In his talk, entitled Good at Doing Things: Montessori Education and the Higher-order Cognitive Functions, Hughes posed the question, what should school be for?

What Students Want

Hughes turned to the research of his associate and mentor, Dr. John Raven, to highlight the following ten outcomes that students wanted from school:

- To leave school confident/able to take initiative
- To be independent
- To develop character and personality
- To hear about career and educational opportunities from experts
- To apply knowledge to solve problems
- To be able to express oneself effectively
- To be able to put forth ones' own opinion
- To know about different types of careers
- To be encouraged to express opinions
- To understand the implications and responsibilities of marriage

Teacher Wishes

What do teachers want to teach? Raven found the following desires among teachers:

- Help students develop their characters and personalities
- Encourage students to be independent
- Make sure students can read/study on their own
- Encourage students to have a sense of duty toward their community
- Ensure that all pupils can speak well and put what they want to say into words easily
- Encourage students to have opinions of their own
- Help student be considerate of others
- Help students contemplate what they really want

to achieve in life

- Make sure students can express themselves clearly in writing
- Teach about what is right and wrong

The Reality

What gets taught? Raven's studies showed the following educational goals get the most attention:

- Help students do as well as they can on standardized tests
- Help them develop a considerate attitude toward other people
- Make sure they enjoy the lesson
- Encourage them to have opinions of their own
- Encourage them to have a sense of duty toward the community
- Make sure they're able to read/study on their own
- Teach them about what is right and wrong
- Ensure they can express themselves clearly in writing
- Ensure they can speak well and put what they want to say into words easily
- Encourage them to be independent and stand on their own two feet

Hughes commented that Raven's study has been duplicated all over the world with the same results, finding that teachers and students' desires, actions and outcomes are in conflict.

Montessori Approach Assists Both Students and Teachers

What makes Montessori education different? Hughes said that Montessori education allows the experimental interactions of a child with his or her environment. It is the experimental interaction with our environment that promotes healthy brain development. Experimental interaction gives a child the ability to achieve self-confidence, independence, the development of character and personality strengths, problem solving skills, self-expression, opinion formulation and more. The work in a Montessori classroom aligns the goals and outcomes of both students and teachers.

Good at Doing Things

Hughes discovered Montessori education when he asked his friend, Deborah Sussex, who had extensive experience working with older children and teens at Camp Widjiwagan in northern Minnesota, where the best kids in the area came from. Her answer was (continued on next page)

What Should School Be For?

Continued from previous page

“Lake Country Montessori School.” Sussex said that the kids at the Montessori school could figure out what needed to be done, do it well, and embellish on the task. Other adolescents, she said, had to be asked to do something more than once, reminded, and held accountable. But if you asked the students from Lake Country to set the table, they would do it, and embellish the work by adding flower arrangements. Montessori students were good at doing things. That was the difference.

Pediatric Neuropsychologist as Parent

Hughes learned more about Montessori education as he watched the process in action with his daughter. Observing her, he began to understand the power that Montessori education had on positive brain development. “Montessori education is the embodiment of all I learned in my PhD in pediatric neuropsychology,” Hughes told the audience. “It’s like education designed by a gifted pediatric neuropsychologist.”

Hughes commented that 75% of his peers in pediatric neuropsychology have children who attend or have attended Montessori schools. Neuropsychologists see that Montessori environments push the edge of learning for children, keeping the brain challenged, and thus growing. The child’s hands-on experimental interactions within a Montessori environment aid optimal brain development. “What should schools be for?” Hughes asked again. They should be about building better brains.”

Building Better Brains: A Montessori Strength

How do we build better brains in Montessori environments? Hughes said the strengths of a Montessori classroom included the child’s opportunities for repetition of activities, the psychological safety and security of a classroom, the caring for living things, the multitude of activities that use the hand of the child to reinforce learning, the creation of a cycle of choosing, doing, and learning, the multi-sensory materials available, the child’s self-guided learning, and the exploration of the out of doors.

Hughes explained how the brain is especially wired to accept sensory information from the hand and showed a humorous picture depicting brain development being dominated by input from the hand. The brain looked like it was all hands, bringing home the point that the hands-on learning that occurs in a Montessori classroom is perfect for children’s brain development.

Hughes stated that all meaningful work needs error analysis, and that a strength of a Montessori classroom is that the child is free to make a mistake and learn from that failure. It is with the child’s analysis of error that creates the development of executive function in the child. “Nothing is as good as Montessori education for the development of executive function,” Hughes said.

Normalization Aids Executive Function

The prefrontal cortex in the brain controls executive function. The prefrontal cortex serves to help us link present to future, develop impulse control, and to modify events remote in time and space. It is this part of the brain that allows us to plan, imagine, organize, create self-awareness, self correct, choose strategies, and make critical judgments. The child’s work in a Montessori environment fosters the executive functions of the brain. The outward manifestations of the child’s internal brain growth are shown in the child’s observable behavior. Certain behaviors indicate that optimum development is occurring within the child, a process that Montessori called “normalization.”

Normalization is characterized by the young child’s love of order, love of work or meaningful activity, love of silence and working alone, attachment to reality, spontaneous concentration, obedience, independence and initiative, and joy. Children who exhibit these behaviors seen in normalization are also good at doing things. For those concerned about academic development more than being good at doing things, Hughes provided some statistical information.

Research Shows Academic Achievement

Hughes cited Dr. Angeline Lillard’s research at Craig Montessori in Milwaukee showing that by the end of kindergarten Montessori students performed better than their peers at executive control, decoding language and early math, social awareness, and appeals to social justice.

What Should School Be For?

Continued from previous page

By sixth grade Montessori students outperformed their peers in social skills, exhibiting a sense of community, creativity in story writing, and complexity of sentence formulation.

The East Dallas Community School, a public Montessori started in 1978 in Dallas, Texas serving children from birth to third grade, had the following results: In 2002, 78 percent of third graders applied to go to gifted and talented programs and were accepted; 99 percent of students obtained GED's or equivalent; and 88 percent went to college when only 50 percent of Dallas public school students go to college.

Montessori Culture, Methods and Materials are Singular Strengths

Hughes' final point was that Montessori differs in contrast to other theories of education in that Montessori culture, method and materials are well established. Hughes gave the example of John Dewey's ideas. Dewey believed that students should be involved in real-life tasks and challenges, an idea that Montessori practitioners also endorse. Dewey's philosophy in comparison to Montessori education has not been enriched and developed by

a vibrant learning culture supported by methods and materials. Educational culture is the most important part of Montessori education as it contains a view of humanity that is transformational, and the core values of Montessori education create civilization.

Our Earth Needs People Who are Good at Doing Things

As Hughes showed a picture of our Earth from space, he said we must realize that no one is going to come and save us. We are it. Montessori education can help our children become people who can solve the problems of our planet, people who can look around, figure out what needs to be done, and do it.

Montessori kids are good at doing things. That's what Montessori schools are for. That's what our world needs.

Visit Steven Hughes' website:

www.goodatdoingthings.com

Angeline Lillard's website:

www.montessori-science.org

Dr. John Raven's website:

www.johnraven.co.uk

Maren Schmidt is an AMI trained elementary guide who currently writes the award winning child development column, Kids Talk™. Visit www.KidsTalkNews.com

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Call for submissions!

The theme of the Winter Forza will be
"Practical Montessori".

How do we apply Montessori's ideas to our everyday practice in the classroom? What are the realities of our daily lives in the classroom, and how do we integrate that into our "best" Montessori practice? Also send us your favorite games, tips, tricks, and activities - everything you wish you'd known when you started teaching! We also accept community news. Send submissions to:

officers@oregonmontessori.org

Due date for submissions:

December 12, 2008