

informed

ISSUE 36
October 2011



Hi

In this third issue and in the fourth issue in December, I will be sharing with you research papers from two New Zealanders.

This issue features a paper about Montessori and Social Cohesion by Janet Du Fall from HiJinks Montessori in Rotorua. Janet wrote this for her Masters paper at AUT University and presented her work at Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference in Brisbane in 2008.



Ana Pickering

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MONTESSORI AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND

The second research paper will be in the December issue of Informed; but to whet your appetite it is a paper on Montessori's literacy legacy by Christine Ball, published in the AUT University research journal *Early Education* in 2007.

I am so delighted to be able to share these research articles with you over the next two issues and hope it will help you reflect on your teaching practice and also inspire you to move onto further post-graduate study.

Ana

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Montessori Near You: Inspiring Practical Life

Saturday 5 November:

Kumeu Montessori Preschool, Auckland

Saturday 26 November:

Wa Ora Montessori, Lower Hutt

There are only two workshops left in this popular series of Montessori Near You. Early this month teachers from Casa dei Bambini Montessori in Dunedin made the road trip to Wanaka to attend the workshop and met teachers from Arrowtown and Queenstown. Sam Parrant from Montessori House of Children in Wanaka commented: "The workshop was fantastic. Ed is a great speaker and so easy to listen to."

Thanks to Titoki Montessori; Auckland, Waikato Montessori Education Centre, Hamilton and Montessori House of Children; Wanaka who have hosted the first three workshops.

Focusing on the importance of Practical Life in the Montessori 3-6 community, this one-day workshop details how "inspiring practical life" can attract children's interest to concentrate and build independence through purposeful movement. Led by Ed Stanford, Titoki Montessori School.

Montessori Motives for Activity: Oral Language plus Grace and Courtesy

The one-day workshop focused on "motives for activity" introduced at the MANZ 2011 Conference; including oral language and grace and courtesy and was ably led by Cathy Wilson and Tara Israelson, Wa Ora Montessori School. The workshop was attended by 28 teachers in Lower Hutt and 30 teachers in Auckland.

Thank you to Titoki Montessori and Wa Ora Montessori who hosted the workshops.

Critical Thinking and Freedom and Responsibility in the Primary Years

This workshop was attended by 27 primary teachers from around the country in early September. An article by Rebecca Dallam is included in this issue of Informed. Thank you to Montessori @ Berhampore Primary and the wonderful parents in the kitchen !

MANZ will be working on a Going Out Handbook for Montessori primary classes in New Zealand. Primary teachers, remember to send in your ideas via the MTSN Google Group.

If you have not joined the group email Kristen Taylor at New Plymouth Montessori

kclairnz@yahoo.com.au



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MANZ 2012 Conference

2012 Conference:

Self -Review or Action Research

There will be a session at the conference focusing on self-review or action research being undertaken in New Zealand Montessori centres and primary classes. I am identifying centres and classes that will be able to make short presentations in this session (aka twisting arms). If your centre or school has an interesting self-review that you think will be of interest to your Montessori colleagues, please email me!

eo@montessori.org.nz

2012 Conference:

Montessori Journey to Excellence

The Montessori Journey To Excellence will be launched; this will be a chance for you to come and learn more about this quality self-review journey, how your staff, centre or school can be involved and to discover more about the mentoring-coaching support that will be an important support for your journey to Montessori excellence.

MANZ Conference April 14-16, 2012

We hope you are planning to attend the MANZ Conference to be held at the Spencer on Byron Hotel in Takapuna, Auckland next year.

MANZ is delighted to announce that Elise Huneke Stone will be the keynote speaker focusing on Montessori 6-12. Elise is a colleague of both Sarah Werner Andrews and Ginni Sackett. She has experience at both 6-12 and adolescent level and she and her husband have worked at the Hershey Farm School. Her particular passion is the role of storytelling.

The conference will begin with Discover Montessori; a morning to inspire parents and those new to Montessori...

2012 Conference: Self -Review or Action Research

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■ Montessori Journey to Excellence

Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand has been working the Montessori Journey to Excellence

(MJ2Ex) for Montessori centres and schools since late 2010. The intention is to have a process of continuous self-review where centres and schools engaged in the Montessori Journey to Excellence will have support from an external mentor to achieve identified goals.

A working group has been developing Montessori essential elements and quality indicators that centres and schools will use to undertake a self-review of their Montessori programmes. A consultative group has given feedback on the initial draft and a second draft has been sent out for more feedback by September 23. A pilot programme for the Montessori Journey to Excellence will be underway in 2012. It is expected that the Montessori Journey to Excellence will be used by MANZ members in early 2014.

The recent ECE Taskforce to the Minister of Education recommended a strong focus on quality and innovation, including a new, simpler funding system that pays higher quality services more. Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) members, including MANZ, agreed incentives should be considered for 'high-quality services as agreed and defined by the sector'.

The Montessori Journey to Excellence will provide quality indicators for self-review in Montessori early childhood centres and primary school classes. These 'sector specific' indicators and self-review process will potentially be used to demonstrate 'quality' to the MoE and to ERO with Montessori centres on the Montessori Journey to Excellence perhaps receiving higher funding.

Working Group chair, Gillian Somers explains, "It is the intention of the Montessori Journey to Excellence to set high quality indicators for Montessori centres and schools to aspire toward. Our aim is to acknowledge the place a centre or school has reached and to then provide support over the long-term as the centre/school continues on its journey for continuous quality improvement."

The recent release of the New Zealand Teachers Council Guidelines for Induction and Mentoring requires the development of skilled mentors within the teaching profession and the MJ2Ex will contribute to this through the development of mentors within the Montessori professional community.

MJ2Ex Working Group

The MJ2Ex Working Group will meet on 7 October, with NZ Coaching and Mentoring to do a half-day scoping meeting focusing on the mentoring programme with in the Montessori Journey to Excellence and another meeting on 14 October with Stephen Drain from the AUT Centre for Authentic Leadership, which is also tendering for the mentoring programme.

If you are curious to see the Montessori Journey to Excellence draft and perhaps give your feedback, email eo@montessori.org.nz and I will email the document to you.

Montessori and Social Cohesion.

Young children's lived experiences in Aotearoa New Zealand.

by Janet Du Fall

This paper is offered as a contribution to inform both the research and educational practitioner communities of the contemporary place of Montessori education in the empowerment of young children and the foundations of social justice created by young children's lived experiences. The research is based upon practitioner observation of spontaneous expressions in a Montessori centre for children aged three years to six years in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Keywords: Montessori, Social Cohesion, Early Childhood Education Montessori and Te Whaariki

The practitioner lens of contemporary Montessori practice in Aotearoa New Zealand is framed by both Montessori pedagogy and the national early childhood curriculum Te Whāriki, He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa: Early Childhood Curriculum. This paper explores the interconnecting paradigms of Te Whāriki, a woven mat of the principles and strands of early childhood curriculum that will assist all children to be "competent and confident learners and communicators; healthy in mind, body and spirit; secure in their sense of belonging and secure in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (p.9) and Montessori's comparison of the stages of social development to the stages and process of weaving of a cotton cloth (Montessori, 1967a).

The Montessori activities of Practical Life, including activities for care of the self, care of the environment and exercises in grace and courtesy are acknowledged as lived experiences contributing to the spinning weaving and darning of the cloth of social cohesion. The paper further explores the connection between Montessori and Maori pedagogy in respect of three key principles in the weaving of curriculum or the lived experiences of young children in a Montessori environment for three to six-year olds.

1. The principle of Tino rangatiratanga includes in this context the right to determine one's own destiny and connects with Montessori's view that the child has fundamental creative forces with which to fulfil their potential.
2. The principle of ako emphasises teaching and learning as one. All are empowered as both learners and teachers, which values a reciprocal relationship and establishes a community that believes in learning as a lifelong natural human activity.
3. The principle of whanaungatanga emphasises the connections of kin and the enhancement of extended family and the facilitation of tuakana / teina relationships whereby it is the responsibility of the older sibling of the same gender to assist the learning of the younger sibling.

Janet Du Fall

Janet Du Fall is the owner and head teacher at HiJinks Montessori in Rotorua, New Zealand.

She wrote this paper while a Masters student at AUT University and presented it at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference in Brisbane in 2008.

Janet is of Maori descent with affiliation to Ngati Kahungunu ki Wairarapa.



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The author offers personal interpretive definitions for the context of this inquiry, derived from the principles outlined by Bishop & Glynn, (2000), Macfarlane (2000) and Montessori (1967a, 1967).

Children's Voices

As a research process, recording spontaneous expressions honours the child's voice. From both the Montessori and Maori pedagogical frameworks it allows the child to reveal themselves according to the natural laws of development.

Impressions are absorbed, connections are made over both time and context, and expressions are revealed. The limitation of this approach is that by definition spontaneity means that the expressions follow a natural process, without external influence or artificial probe and therefore the practitioner researcher may not always be in the presence of the child when expressions occur. Spontaneous observations of children are further supported in Aotearoa New Zealand by the documentation of learning, evaluation and assessment through narrative in the form of learning stories (Carr, 2001).

Learning stories may incorporate the voice of the adult observer, the child and the child's family. As each learning story captures elements of learning and development for a child or group of children, it contributes to an evolving narrative that celebrates the life story of the individual,

extended family and the learning community. Children's spontaneous expressions through narrative and photographic representation are offered for reflective appreciation.

As it was

Maria Montessori opened the first Casa dei bambini in 1907 in the tenements of San Lorenzo, Rome. Montessori describes her impressions of entering this area: It seemed to me that a recent sorrow weighed down upon the people who milled about the silent streets with a stupefied and almost fearful look. Their deep silence seemed to indicate that their lives had been broken and shattered. There were no carriages: there were not even the common, happy voices of the street vendors nor the sound of hand organs being pushed around by their owners in search of tips. Not even these sounds broke the sad and heavy silence. (Montessori, 1967, p.333) In this poverty-stricken area of Rome she observed as young children revealed their capacity to develop their individual potential and establish a community of care. The Montessori Method aroused international interest.

Impressions and Connections

Following the careful observation of young children Montessori concluded that: If teaching is to be effective with young children, it must assist

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them to advance on the way to independence. It must initiate them into those kinds of activities which they can perform themselves and which keep them from being a burden to others because of their inabilities.

We must help them to walk without assistance, to run, to go up and down stairs, to pick up fallen objects, to dress and undress, to wash themselves, to express their needs in a way that is clearly understood, and to attempt to satisfy their desires through their own efforts. All this is part of an education for independence. (Montessori, 1967, p57).

Montessori view of independence may be interpreted as interdependence. The ability to fulfil the individual's potential equally enhances their capacity to live in the world. The Montessori exercises of Practical Life emerged from the social and community responsibilities associated with caring for the new apartments of San Lorenzo in which the first Casa dei Bambini was established (Kahn, 2008).

The exercises in Practical Life encompassing the care of the self, care of the environment and Grace and Courtesy are presented to the children by the Directress and on occasion by an older child as a lesson. Presentations are viewed as a gift, a taonga, a present that offers infinite opportunities and possibilities for learning and development as impressions are absorbed and

connections explored. When Fisher (1914) wrote about her experience of visiting a Casa she was impressed by a child absorbed in the exercises of Practical Life.

One little boy about three and half years old had been intent on some operation ever since we had entered the room, and even now, as I drew near his little table and chair, he only glanced up for an instant's smile without stopping the action of his fingers. I leaned over him, hoping that the device which so held his attention was not too complicated for my inexperienced, unpedagogical mind to take in.

He was holding a light wooden frame about eighteen inches square, on which were stretched two pieces of cotton cloth, meeting down the middle like the joining of a garment. On one of these edges was a row of button holes and on the other a row of large bone buttons. The child was absorbed in buttoning and unbuttoning those two pieces of cloth. (Fisher, 1914, p14)

The connection between caring for others and caring for the environment remains linked through the exercises of Practical Life in which care for the environment flows from the indoor environment to the children's garden. Children are also attracted by plants. One children's house did not have any land that could be tilled, so flower pots were set out all around a large



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terrace. The children never forgot to water the plants with a little watering can. One morning I found them all seated in a circle on the floor around a magnificent red rose that had opened up during the night. They were silent and peaceful, completely absorbed in contemplation. (Montessori, 1967a, p71)

Activities such as learning to button and unbutton directly assists the child to dress or undress. Learning to pour water from a jug to a glass assists the child to pour a drink when they are thirsty. Learning to shake hands develops the child's interpersonal skills as a foundation for respectful interactions. Returning an activity to the shelf tidy and complete demonstrates a respectful regard for the learning and development of the next child who may wish to use that material. It further sows the seed for ecological responsibility; we should leave the planet tidy and complete for the benefit of future generations.

The exercises in Practical Life not only foster an individual sense of wellbeing and belonging but also provide a foundation for social cohesion by fostering practical contribution to the wellbeing and belonging of the group. Caring for one's self, caring for the environment and establishing the skills and empathy to engage in respectful responsive interactions supports the principle of Tino rangatiratanga. This principle includes in this context the right to determine one's own destiny and connects with Montessori's view that the child has fundamental creative forces with which to fulfil their potential. Further connections are interwoven with the concept of mana or "standing" in which the mana of the individual is also the mana of the

community. The Maori term for caring for others is manaaki, which derives from mana.

Expressions

The author's curiosity about the ways in which young children express their developing understanding of connections was aroused by a boy aged four, who, over a period of several weeks, would repeatedly recite a monologue to every adult and child whom he encountered.

"Uncle Matt is the boss of Dad,
Dad is the boss of Mum,
Mum is the boss of Anna,
Anna is the boss of me,
I am the boss of Nadine,
Nadine is the boss of baby Cam,
Baby Cam is the boss of the cats,
the cats is the boss of the chickens,
and the chickens is the boss of
nothing".

"Who is the boss" may be interpreted as an inquiry about responsive and reciprocal relationships. This spontaneous expression involves complex thinking. Thinking which explores an understanding of social relationships, connections between the social and the natural worlds, the Maori perspectives of kinship and whanau and curiosity about the concepts of manaakitanga in both the social and the natural worlds.

Learning to have friends and to be a friend is an important aspect of young children's participation in a Montessori community for which the exercises of Grace and Courtesy provide a foundation. Montessori described social development in the context of participation in social life, in which social problems are solved and acceptable behaviour is learned. (Montessori, 1967a)

On one occasion a girl of four was observed talking to a friend. "I feel so left out with only three friends, so... I am going to have four friends!"

The child demonstrates a capacity to value friendship and connects friendship with a sense of emotional wellbeing. In exploring an understanding of the social world connections are made with a growing awareness of mathematical concepts.

Three friends is quantified as not enough but four friends is evaluated as good. Another four-year old boy was observed exploring the concept of friendship on several occasions.

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On the first occasion several children were working at a table when one of the children called across the table to another, "James" to which he replied with his full name, "James Simon Broughton". Two of the children now called to James using his first name and again he replied by stating his name in full. Next Mia tried calling to him, "James Broughton". Now James replied, "No you have to call me James Simon Broughton". Mia replied, "But it is a bit hard to say that". James repeated his name in full, "James Simon Broughton". Mia asks, "Can I just call you James?" James says, "Okay".

Days later James and another boy were running outside. As they ran past he called, "Kelvin is my friend... he likes my name!" As Kelvin ran by he called, "James is my friend...he is the same big as me!"

Days later again, Peter and James were playing together when Peter asked James, "Does your Dad have friends? James replied, "No, I am his friend" Peter queried, "Are you sure?" James answered assertively, "I am his friend".

Some weeks after, James was showing Hamish how to build towers with connecting wooden blocks. When Hamish had constructed a tower, James told him, "You did it Hamish, you built a mummy one, you did it, you did it today". Hamish smiled at this acknowledgement, to which James added "Next time you will be able to build a daddy one!"

James' expressions evidence a journey through the development of the self-awareness and the developing consciousness of friends and family, whanaungatanga, into a weaving of ako, the reciprocal, responsive capacity to be both a learner and also promote the

learning and development of others in the Montessori community. In turn this enhances the mana of both the individual and the mana of the community. Social cohesion is experienced as a lived and dynamic process.

Montessori advised, "There is only one specimen of each object, and if a piece is in use when another child wants it, the latter... will wait for it to be released. Important social qualities derive from this. The child comes to see that he must respect the work of others, not because someone has said he must, but because this is a reality that he meets in his daily experience" (Montessori, 1967a, p221).

One morning a marble tower was set up on the covered deck near the garden. A young boy who had recently turned three years came and sat down with the group of children who were waiting turns to roll the marbles down the tower. He asked when it would be his turn and the directress [the Montessori term for teacher] explained to him that children were taking turns in order around the table. After a couple more children had their turn he asked again and was offered the names of the children who were before him.

He waited for the duration of another couple of turns and asked again when his turn would be. He was told the names of the children who were waiting ahead of him. Recognising that he was having difficulty waiting the Directress gently patted him on the shoulder as he waited. After he a few minutes he turned to her and said "Your turn too!" as he gently placed his hand on her back and began patting her.

On another occasion a young girl of just two and half years who had been attending for only a few

weeks was noticed one morning watching an older child using three of the Montessori cylinder blocks. Tia sat on a chair opposite the child for several minutes, watching. Tia looked over to me and said, "I want a turn". Smiling to her I asked, "What do you need to do if you want a turn? Tia replied, "Wait for Wiremu", and so Tia waited and waited while the child completed the task of replacing 30 cylinders of various dimensions into the blocks, assessed his work and corrected the placement of some cylinders. When finished Tia grinned with delight as Wiremu passed the cylinder block. Respecting the work of others provides the dual opportunity of developing the disposition of persisting with difficulty and sustaining an interest (Carr, 2001).

The observation of a more experienced member of the community and respecting others work promotes whanaungatanga by developing a sense of contribution and belonging to the community of learning. Montessori observed social cohesion was evident when accidents occurred in the Casa as the children assisted each other:

But what do our children do? They all run to help, saying with an encouraging tone in their little voices, "Never mind, we shall soon find another vase," and while some collect the pieces, others wipe up the spilled water. They have an instinct to help the weak, encouraging and comforting them and this is really an instinct for social progress. (Montessori, 1967a, p 227-228)

One morning there was a loud crash in the room. A girl of two and half years had dropped a tray containing two jugs, one full of water as she was

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returning it to the shelf. Two other children were already assisting, reassuring their friend, "It's okay, we can clean it up". They picked up the materials off the floor. They got the cleaning cloths from a nearby shelf and began to mop. There was a lot of water and many cloths and a concerted effort was required to contain the spill. They showed the young girl where to get a cloth and although they did not ask her to help, after watching for a while she joined them. When the cleanup was complete they simply placed the many wet cloths into the laundry basket and returned to their work. Accidents and spills offer an opportunity to encourage, comfort, assist and connect the skills acquired in the exercises of Practical Life into the daily life in the centre community. The observations offer an insight into young children's responses and expressions. An aspect that is more difficult to convey is the depth of compassion and integrity that underpinned these expressions. This is the spiritual dimension woven into their evolving social cohesion.

Conclusions

The expressions observed were deeply rooted in the exercises of Practical Life. Impressions absorbed and acted upon in the Practical Life activities were connected to real life experiences, and expressed in the interpersonal interactions that are the life experience on a daily basis within the centre community. The observations revealed that activities that facilitate the care of the self, the care of the environment and the exercises of grace and courtesy, develop concentration and independence through freedom of choice, and in so doing create the social cohesion of independence,

interdependence in the deepest sense of the term. The concepts of a community that promotes belonging and well-being, participation by all in both teaching and learning, and the child's right to reveal themselves through natural laws is evident in the observations.

It may be more than one hundred years since Maria Montessori observed phenomenon in the first Casa dei Bambini established in Italy, yet spontaneous expressions in a contemporary Montessori context in Aotearoa New Zealand reveal similar expressions. This paper supports the view that unconscious social cohesion in the period of the absorbent mind and sensitive period for the social aspects of the world have remained constant over time and place in a Montessori-prepared environment. The observation of children through the lens of a practitioner remains a perpetual "work in progress".

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the children and families who gave permission for their children's voices to contribute to this research.

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This paper was presented at the AARE Conference and published on the AARE website <http://www.aare.edu.au>. The paper is republished with the kind permission of the author, Janet du Fall.

■ Work and the Second Plane Child

by Rebecca Dallam

This article was prepared for Informed by Rebecca Dallam, after the workshop she led for Montessori 6-12 teachers in Wellington, New Zealand in September, 2011. Rebecca is currently completing the AMI 6-12 trainers programme under the mentorship of Allyn Travis.

Second Plane children are naturally driven to know as much as they can and understand the interconnections in society, the world, and the universe, both past and present. Their minds are finely-sharpened tools capable of taking in great amounts of new information. If the child has been given freedom to develop fully in the First Plane, s/he will, in fact, arrive at the 6 - 12 environment with a keen desire to work, particularly together with peers.

No prepared environment is perfect and each prepared adult will be at a different point of understanding the process of balancing freedom and responsibility. Some children may enter the 6 - 12 class with little or no Casa dei Bambini experience. Other children may have experienced the Casa dei Bambini fully but have a home life that is drastically different in relation to freedom and responsibility. This can be discouraging for the directress but Dr. Montessori advised us to remember that spontaneous activity comes from a universal inner drive, waiting to be properly channelled.

There is only one line of development which is normality. If it is disturbed in its path it becomes deviated but each individual, however deviated, has the tendency to return to the normal. If this were not so we could do nothing. So all we have to do is to set this energy free. It is as simple as that. This is not giving freedom to children in the common sense. What is the use of freedom to children, if it is freedom to develop their deviations? When we speak about freedom in education we mean freedom for the creative energy which is the urge of life towards the development of the individual. This is not a casual energy like the energy of a bomb that explodes. It has a guiding principle, a very fine, but unconscious directive, the aim of which is to develop a normal person. (Montessori, 1979, p12)

Children who have come to the 6 - 12 level less well prepared, either socially or academically, may initially require more adult input but a carefully prepared environment should assist them to quickly recognise their own inner drive toward focused, meaningful activity. A well-functioning peer group assists this process, so the Prepared Environment cannot comprise too high a proportion of children with special needs, or the cumulative environment will not be able to support each individual within it.

Going Out

Dr. Montessori observed the Second Plane child's need for a wider environment than that provided within any school setting. The Prepared Environment for this age child should contain the keys to the universe but only the keys. It should stimulate the child's natural interest in seeking information and experiences that cannot be found within a classroom. The classroom setting provides keys in the form of lessons, charts, stories, and concrete



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by Rebecca Dallam

materials that are designed to stimulate the child to want to know more. It is essential that the environment is limited so the child desires to leave the safety of the classroom and strike out into the real world. Montessori (1958) says "...the child of seven years has strong legs and seeks to escape from the closed circle. Instead of hemming him in, let us facilitate his mobility" (p 12).

We use the term Going Out for these external experiences, meaning a small-group excursion planned and executed by children in relation to their classroom activities. Going Out is related to classroom study by linking it to real life. It provides the child with an opportunity to think about why we study things and how they will serve us in the future, to give an inquiring mind a deeper understanding of how society and the world function, and, hopefully, bring greater clarity to the individual about his or her potential future contributions. Any adults who participate in Going Out are there for safety, not direction or decision-making, so the children should have only their own experiences to reflect upon.

Over time humans have developed supranatura, all that which we have created in and of our various environments on the earth. The child needs to see and experience this creation in situ; it cannot be brought into the classroom without losing its contextual meaning. The child can explore the body of human knowledge built up through ages and across cultures, including building his or her own individual sense of responsibility and stewardship toward the natural environment that sustains human life. These new learning opportunities provide for the child's mental development.

However, information being sought is only one aspect of Going Out; another purpose is to offer the child a way to develop social experience and come into contact with human society. Just as it is the parent's job to love and prepare a child to leave home, the teacher's job is to work in the child's best interest to prepare him or her to leave the school and join society. The child needs to be equipped to no longer need either the parent or the teacher, and this preparation toward living in society provides for the child's social development.

"It is difficult to make social relations real if one uses only the imagination; practical experience is necessary. One cannot awaken conscience by talking about it."

(Montessori, 1958, p13)

Dr. Montessori emphasised that Going Out is not to be an escape from the indoor environment but a carefully planned excursion involving material preparations. These preparations assist in developing the child's will and sense of responsibility by directing his or her innate urge toward a purpose. The skills required and planning involved provide a means for the child to organise and plan ahead. Practical aspects of preparation that are related to development of the will include how to organise information and items, how to orient yourself in a new environment, practising social courtesies and exercising restraint, collaborating with peers, and understanding social nuances. All this preparation contributes toward the child's moral



■ Work and the Second Plane Child cont...

by Rebecca Dallam

development.

In a smooth-running classroom environment there will be a climate that encourages the children to go out and practical aspects leading towards it. These include the regular use of work diaries and work conferences, a reasonable maintenance of the environment, the existence of positive rules, the individual child's ability to exercise self-control, and an ability to keep one's word. In this atmosphere of trust, the directress knows that participating children will have the opportunity to benefit from the moral, mental and social purposes that Going Out offers. In these ways, Going Out is an essential aspect of the Prepared Environment for the Second Plane child as s/he continues the self-construction process of childhood.

Limiting Information in the Environment

We have to prepare the environment so that Going Out is not only possible but actively encouraged. The environment should have all the materials needed for the stories, presentations and demonstrations in your albums. The materials should be beautiful and well cared for so they inspire the children to want to work. We also need to have a few carefully selected, beautiful, books in each subject area that provide some basic information to get children started with independent exploration. These books need to be chosen taking into account the variety of reading abilities you will have in a group of 25-30 children.

However you have to be careful not to have too many books in your class. Having some selected books is the way you can keep information current – because information on some of the topics we will introduce changes. We don't need to change our materials, and we don't usually need to change the presentations, but we do need to update the books in the environment, so that some current information is there. The rule for how much information is enough to get children started but not so much they can find everything within the classroom. We have to make it necessary for the children to go out. This means if we have an extensive classroom or even a school library, it takes away the motivation for Going Out. As much as possible, children should use the local public library. With 9-12s, a desired point of arrival would be to make regular use of local high school or university libraries but this is something you must work toward one step at a time.

Use of the internet is an important factor here, which means in the classroom as well as bringing information from home computers. The internet is a wonderful tool, but probably not a tool that young children need to be using. Cars are also great tools but society expects people to have a certain level of maturity before they can be licensed to drive on public roads.

Reading is the most important skill that children need to develop in the 6 - 12 class. Being literate is the key that unlocks culture in most societies today. People are expected to be able to read and understand, retrieve information, spell reasonably well, and write coherently. Screens of any type are very attractive to people and once the habit is there, it's very hard to break the charm of instant gratification provided by beautiful images. So we need to really think about whether time spent in front of a computer, supposedly learning how to search for information, is actually contributing anything toward becoming literate when you are between 6 and 9 years old. I believe that what the child is doing is entertaining but not developing literacy skills, which are the foundation we must build on. Once the child is older and has developed competence

with reading and writing, and once they are able to better distinguish quality from debris, learning to search for information on the internet can be liberating. But we want the idea of Going Out to be well established before then, because Going Out meets the social development needs of a young child in a way the internet does not. Using the internet with competence does not offer the opportunity to interact with real people and the life of society, nor does it afford the chance to plan ahead, organise, negotiate with peers, or learn how to travel safely.

Unless you develop an active Going Out programme in your school and in your 6 - 12 class, you are missing a key element of the formula and you're not implementing what Dr Montessori envisioned as the best learning environment for 6 - 12 children. Instead, you have a mainstream classroom that is using the Montessori materials, which is not the same. You will have to explain your rationale regarding internet usage clearly and effectively to parents, students and even other teachers to have their support, because many people are under the impression that children will somehow suffer or be "left behind" if they don't begin using computers early in life.

References

Montessori, M. (1979/1989). *The Child, Society and the World: Unpublished Speeches and Writings*. Oxford: Clio Press.

Montessori, M. (1958/1994.) *From Childhood to Adolescence*. Oxford: Clio Press.

■ Montessori and the Media

Here are some articles of interest from the media. Some are directly related to Montessori and others to education and parenting. You may like to share some of these with your parent community.

Smart Parenting Smart Kids

Raising a smart child means being a smart parent and teaching self-discipline. Setting limits!

<http://www.wltx.com/news/story.aspx?storyid=139615>

Does class size really matter?

Parents are dying to get their kids into smaller classes but research shows they may be panicking over nothing...

http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/08/06/good_school_excerpt/

Family Mealtimes

Find out why “a meal is about civilizing children. It’s about teaching them to be a member of their culture.”

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1200760,00.html#ixzz1XofbCO88>

The Age of Distraction

Modern technology means our children are living in a state of perpetual distraction. In a neuroscience article, Thomas Rogers suggests Montessori provides the much needed “challenge- based problem-solving kind of education”.

http://www.salon.com/life/feature/2011/08/21/now_you_see_it_interview/index.html



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