



CAMT NEWS

WINTER 2009
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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



We at CAMT hope everyone is enjoying the winter weather and all it has to offer: the beauty of the season, the promise of new growth and the rest so necessary half-way through the school year.

Get outside and let the cold restore your inner being. Walk, ski, skate, toboggan, and build a snow person. Make winter one of the four amazing seasons in your life. It will be there anyway. You might as well enjoy it. The children know how much fun there is to be had in the snow. Don't just watch them, join them.

Take the children out and show them the blanket that covers the world. Dig beneath the snow and try to find the paths made by small animals like mice. Watch for the buds to appear on the trees. Slide down the hills on your belly. Follow the children.

Watch for our April Workshop in the Hockley Valley where we will get outside and get into nature and bring it home to the classroom. Plan to spend the whole day and get dirty. Bring a friend.

Attend our other workshops and the March material swap. We have a wonderful winter/spring planned for you.

Take the time to become involved with CAMT and make it everything you want it to be. We need you to become involved or re-involved. Contact one of us and come out to a meeting. We would love to have you.

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UPCOMING CAMT WORKSHOPS

March 28	Materials Swap - Country Heritage Park, Milton
April 18	Outdoor Education—Mulmur Montessori Outdoor Education Centre
May 30	Classroom Events Through Poetry – Larry Swartz
June 20	Strategies for September—Mary Flewelling-Pinchen

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Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

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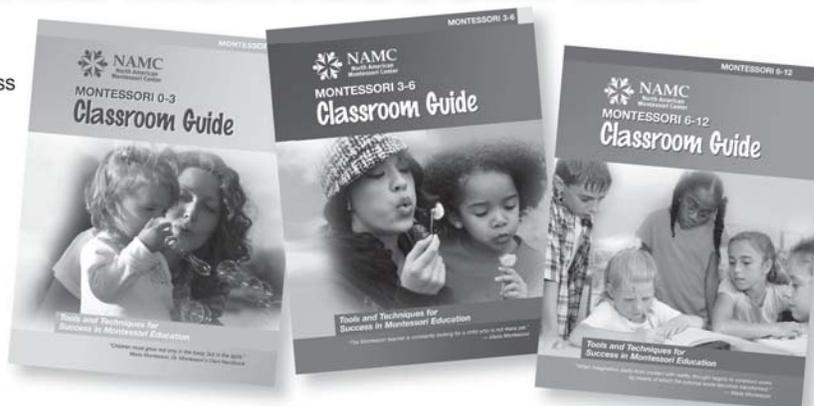
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Spring	March 1
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Preserving Dr. Montessori's Legacy *by Amy Gillies (A Conference Workshop Review)*

I attended the CAMT Conference morning workshop entitled "Preserving Dr. Montessori's Legacy" presented by Tim Seldin. Mr. Seldin began the workshop by addressing the reasons why Montessori education has veered away from the core ideals discovered by Maria Montessori. This "fading" effect is evident in schools which promote a modified Montessori approach or as Mr. Seldin put it those "Monte-something" schools.

Mr. Seldin offered a historical account of some reasons for this dilution of Montessori practice. One main reason is due to an increased need for teachers that began in the late seventies. In order to train more teachers as quickly as possible some changes to teacher training programs began to occur. These included reducing the length of time for teacher training programs, changing the format to bring the teacher into the classroom sooner and promoting self-directed internships so the main teacher in the classroom is not yet fully trained. These changes have led to some of the fundamental divides between different groups within the Montessori community.

Other challenges which threaten to push us further off the path include:

- Finding families that support authentic Montessori education
- Losing children before they complete a three-year casa program
- Financial limitations
- Inconsistencies in Montessori practice from school to school and even from classroom to classroom
- Growing public confusion about Montessori standards and how schools are regulated by different associations
- Modifying programs due to parental pressure, governmental regulations and standardization of curriculum
- Finding teachers who uphold Montessori ideals despite parental pressure, old habits, favoured subject areas and the challenges of understanding each child's individual needs

Comparing the core Montessori ideals to the blocks in a game of "Jenga", Mr. Seldin indicated that if you remove a few blocks from your school, the tower would still stand. However, if you remove more and more of these core ideals the tower becomes more likely to fall. What remains is an educational method that resembles Montessori in name only.

The essential building blocks of an authentic Montessori school include the following:

- A child-centred environment (focused on child-learning not teacher-teaching)
- Small self-directed groups or individual learning
- Children who enter the program at three years of age or younger
- Mixed age-groups covering a three-year span

- A complete set of immaculately maintained materials
- An uninterrupted work period of two-and-a half to three hours
- Voluntary groups presentations
- The provision for children to move around freely within reasonable limits of appropriate behaviour

An indication that a classroom is functioning based on these elements can be based on the answer to the following question: "Can a classroom function for three hours on its own without a teacher intervening?" If the answer is yes, then it is indicative of a school upholding these elements.

I found this workshop to be very enjoyable based on Mr. Seldin's perceptive, commonsense approach that was humourous and refreshingly candid. Mr. Seldin was able to wrangle out the basic elements within Montessori that we should hold in our minds during our day in the classroom, instead of the drama that can sometimes occupy us. I also found that as a new teacher I gained a better understanding of some of the reasons of division within the Montessori community. And lastly I discovered the need to help contribute towards a unified Montessori community so we can all travel down the same path together.

The “Class Museum” and the Interconnected World

by Aleta Barec, BA, MCI (A Conference Workshop Review)

As a Casa Directress at the Montessori Children’s Academy, Paris, ON, I eagerly anticipated a day of professional development at the 2008 CAMT Conference. In previous years my co-teachers and I have returned from the conference with valuable information to use at our school of nearly 100 students, ranging from Toddler to Casa. We began the conference by embracing Tim Seldin’s Keynote speech, then I went to my chosen seminar presented by Olga Dantus titled, *Integrating the Curriculum with the help of a “Class Museum”*.

The content of the workshop was intended for an Elementary classroom, and Olga Dantus had modified it to include the Casa classroom. Dantus focused on providing an Observation Table for the child to interconnect the different areas of the classroom, and increase discoveries of interconnectedness in nature. Because the child is interconnected with the world from the moment of birth, the child should be in direct contact with objects as found in nature. This is accomplished by providing an Observation Table and what Dantus terms as a “class museum” of selected objects and artifacts for the child to explore.

Dantus explained an Observation Table permits the child to relate similarities of objects, to improve his ability to classify these and aid the development of his thinking. The Observation Table provides a concrete introduction to research and comparisons. The objects provided, encourage continuous

peer conversation and sensory input during the child’s exploration. While Dantus talked, I began to picture the little fingers of Casa students I’ve observed at an Observation Table, using the dexterity of their fingertips to explore an object’s texture, shape, weight etc., verbalizing their discoveries, talking about where they have come across such objects before, and beginning to classify real objects.

After we had time to explore Dantus’ collection of objects from numerous countries, Dantus discussed the child’s work is completed not only for himself and his generation, but will benefit many lifetimes, our planet and universe. Dantus’ CAMT workshop description stated, *“To change education, does not mean changing the curriculum, but changing the way we think and act. It is changing our whole attitude towards life.”* Dantus showed us how to open the child’s mind and inspire his wonderment.

Dantus provided several objects to demonstrate a recognizable pattern in the child’s world - the five-point pattern. On the table were visual examples of the five-point pattern, such as an apple (cut in ½), pear, star fruit, starfish, sand dollar and a cactus. Dantus explained that during this exploration the child is free to follow his inner guide. The child’s mind will not wander while he self-directs to touch and compare the five-point patterns amongst the other objects. Dantus isolated the pattern and further related it to mathematical shapes.

The child’s newfound knowledge can then be applied in a home activity, which involves isolating objects at home that have a five-point pattern, further strengthening the child’s direct contact with real objects. Dantus then continued to demonstrate how to create awe in the child’s mind. She removed some of the five-point patterned objects to re-create a group now classified as fruit; including the apple, pear and the star fruit. By adding and removing objects, Dantus continued to change and expand categories to assist the child to create relationships between the objects (i.e. providing examples of insects leads to a new category of exploration - exo-skeletons; providing examples of rocks leads to a new category of exploration - minerals). Dantus further suggested that during a walk outside the child can classify the animals they may see (i.e. breed (dogs), mammals etc.). Dantus encouraged us to see the possibilities to isolate relationships between objects in our world as limitless, which is of utmost importance to the child’s understanding of his world.

I left this workshop with a concrete method to demonstrate the complexity of interconnectedness to the child. And I was left to further contemplate my role in guiding the child to open new channels of ideas and discoveries, to support his developing mind, for the betterment of the child’s contribution in this world and that of mankind.

What Is Montessori? An Inspiring Teaching Methodology by Joan Louis

The Montessori Method of Education creates a stimulating environment and brings out the creativity in a child enabling him/her to work at his/her own pace. This in turn will give the child a solid foundation giving him/her the confidence and knowledge needed to succeed in the academic challenges ahead. The year 2007 marked a milestone when this globally acclaimed teaching method celebrated its Centenary throughout the world!

This proven method of education has never ceased to amaze me and inspire me with what it brings out in a child, the hand being the es-

sential instrument of touch and its influence on the brain's ability to form a cognitive image and stimulate learning is a miracle that was recognized by our pedagogical mentor Dr. Maria Montessori and forms the fundamental premise used in the Montessori Method of Education.

It does not pass judgment on a child but invites and encourages the child to be absorbed in the many stimulating teaching materials designed for the child's individual pace.

In my career of over 18 years with Town Centre Montessori

Private Schools, as a result of the Montessori Method of Education, I have seen many fine confident, independent, talented, competent and disciplined young students emerge from our classrooms ready for the challenges ahead on the complex journey of learning and life. This invigorates me and inspires me to continue in my career which is very rewarding.

“To let the child do as he likes when he has not yet developed any powers of control is to betray the idea of freedom.”
Dr. Maria Montessori –

Four Steps to Winning Cooperation by Claudie Clark

Creating an atmosphere where children feel ready to listen and to cooperate.

1. Express understanding of the child's feelings.
2. Show empathy without condoning – show that you understand the child's perception - you can also share a similar experience.
3. Share your feelings and perceptions.
4. Invite the child to focus on a solution – what could he do in the future to avoid this problem.

We will be more effective with children if we always ask ourselves, “Is what I am doing empowering or discouraging.”

A misbehaving child is a *discouraged child*. The discouragement comes from discouraging beliefs and a sense of not belonging or feeling insignificant. It does not matter whether the beliefs are based on facts or children's perception of the situation. Behaviour is based on what children think is true, not what is true.

Stop focusing on consequences (usually these are mislabeled punishments) and instead focus on solutions;

The 4 R's for logical consequences:

1. Related
2. Respectful
3. Reasonable
4. Helpful

If any of the Four are missing, it can no longer be called a consequence.

Decide what you will do instead of what you will make the child do.

You can't make children “*do better*” by making them “*feel worse*”. ***Children do better when they feel better.***

For a completed handbook of working solutions, we recommend, Jane Nelsen, Ed.D.

Positive Discipline
ISBN # 0-345-48767-2

The Power of Poetry *by Claudia Langlois (A Conference Workshop Review)*

As I walked into the room I first noticed the books and thought this will be very interesting and fun. Once Larry Swartz began speaking I knew this workshop was going to be very energetic and entertaining. Larry exhumes enthusiasm, creativity and humour. His excitement came across in his determination to help us enjoy poetry.

Poetry doesn't come easily to many. Many of us have memories of John Gray's beautiful poem, "In Flanders Fields", having to recite it over and over only to be graded for our memorization abilities. Others attending the workshop had fond childhood memories involving poetry. We came to discover that our interest in poetry stemmed from our first experiences and exposures to poetry. The world is full of poetry in many different languages, we only need to discover it and that is what Mr. Swartz intended to do.

Larry brought a variety of resources, which were available for everyone to look over. These books were openly displayed on the table. Mr. Swartz told us to select the first book we found interesting; either by the title, author or the cover and we were to look and read the book quietly. There were books on themes such as seasons, dogs, animals, games, silly poem books, tongue twisters... the selection was endless. We picked a poem and Larry asked us why we liked the poem and then with great intonation he read it to us.

Many of the poems Larry introduced were short poems and had a catchy rhythm. He taught us techniques on how to teach poetry or to remember poetry without drudgery. Mr. Swartz showed the CAMT members many ways to learn a poem

1. Have the children listen to you read the poem
2. Project the poem on an overhead, flipchart or hand out individual copies and have the children read the poem with their eyes while the teacher reads.

3. The children would help the teacher read the poem
4. Teacher reads a line and children read a line.
5. Teacher reads and child fills in incomplete word
6. Use of actions and gradually words are eliminated.
7. Read the poem like a bouncing ball, the voice begins loud then quiet, whisper then shout or slow and then quickly
8. Play patty cake while reciting the poem with the children
9. Each child gets a line, the child stands up when it is their turn to say the line
10. Make the poem have a musical connotation, have groups and the poem can become a round

Eventually the children will have the poem memorized and they will be able to recite it themselves

Interactively, Mr. Swartz was fantastic and enthusiastic. There were many smiles amongst the teachers. We went back to our childhood, playing patty cake to a poem written by Dennis Lee called "BUBBLEGUM". We initially listened to Larry, then we repeated each line, we then said the poem with him, then we played patty cake with a partner while saying the poem together. He repeated it twice with us. At the end of the poem he counted to eight and we had to find another partner and do it again, this time Larry began to leave out words. At the end of the poem Larry counted to six and we switched partners again, each time the rhythm getting faster and faster. The last time we said the poem ourselves without Larry's assistance.

BUBBLEGUM by Dennis Lee
 Bubblegum delicious
 Bubblegum delight
 Bubblegum de-lovely in the
 Middle of the night
 Wrap you up in bubble wrap,
 Wrap you up in gum,
 Wrap you up in wonderful
 'Cause you're the special one.

The last line we would point to our partners.

Larry introduced many styles of poetry, List poems, I like apples, I like sweet apples, I like crunchy apples, the initial I like... would be given by the teachers and the students would fill in the adjective prior to the noun, then each student would continue saying I like.... He included tongue twisters, silly poems, stories, can be poems, almost every type of short prose could become a poem, depending on how it was read. Children begin to see patterns, rhymes and syllables and this helps them enjoy and retain the poem.

Mr. Swartz had many suggestions as to how to incorporate poetry into your classroom. By including poetry into your daily routine the children can be exposed to hearing 180 poems a year, or repeating the poem two days in a row and they would still be exposed to 90 poems. Take the time to include poetry one morning a week for half an hour. Have a quiet time in which the children can select a book, read the poems and look at the picture, reading skills will be enhanced and follow up activities could be done. Some suggestions were for the children to write out the poem following the written style and the pieces of work could be displayed for everyone to read. A book of poetry could also be made by the children and left on the shelf for all to enjoy. Even drawing a picture book and the words could be filled in at a later date.

Mr. Swartz emphasized changing your tone of voice and incorporating drama will enhance a poem. Actions always entice the children regardless of their age. Poetry can be used in both the Casa and the Elementary classrooms, it is up to the teacher to introduce poetry in an interesting manner. The ideas that Mr. Swartz presented were endless, it only takes a bit of imagination and enthusiasm and the words can be lift off the pages.

The Importance of Practical Life

by *Claudia Langlois* (A Conference Workshop Review)

The excitement of creating Practical Life exercises is the forefront of each Casa teacher; we take pleasure in putting together the lovely colour co-ordinated activities. Exercises on the shelf include: spooning, lacing, pouring, polishing, dressing frames, folding, sorting, classifying...these are all created for the children to use. All the wonderful exercises that we make for our students and each activity serves a purpose. The children love the fact that they get to repeat the exercises, they have a choice and they complete their work with pride and in the process are satisfying their sensitive needs. We have beautiful practical life shelves, however.....

As Olga Dantus began to speak about the Practical Life activities, she reinforced the concept of Practical Life by putting the "life" back into the activities. But don't we already have that; doesn't everything serve its purpose and the child's need? According to Olga, many of us are not incorporating the life, we have lovely activities, but they are not realistic and life serving. Olga's reinforcement of the purpose of Practical Life involved not only practical life exercises but exercises that utilize Practical "Life". During her workshop, Olga concentrated on putting the life into these exercises. Many of our practical life exercises serve the purpose for fine motor hand eye coordination, assist in the development of attention span and encourage the independence that the children in the classroom need, however, Olga stressed that the life exercises are missing in many of these activities.

Olga also gave examples of necklace making, instead of using the wooden beads, or straws and foam pieces, very unique beads could be used and each bead could have a story attached to it. An example is a turquoise bead; this bead could have many tales

attached to it. Turquoise comes from many places and this could lead into the study of geography, including rocks and minerals. How was turquoise discovered? An introduction to explorers and history could take place, adornment or jewels; a study of jewellery and silver could begin. The imagination can lead in many directions. It need not be expensive, many thrift shops have jewellery that could be used for necklace making and as she stated, each bead could have a piece of history attached to it.

Spooning and pouring exercises, could lead into snack time. The children serve or prepare their own snacks using the appropriate utensils. While engaging in Apple Cutting the child is shown how to use a corer, a knife and compost. Olga suggested that tongs could be used to serve food items onto a plate instead of moving pompoms from one dish to another. The children could then prepare and serve their own snacks, obviously using the required sanitary methods. They can fold their own napkins, clean the crumbs from the snack area and wash the dishes. Perhaps many classrooms already do this, however, Olga's workshop was emphasizing the practicality of using life-based exercises in our Practical Life area within the environment.

The exercises that involve pouring, spooning and table setting could lead to a final Practical Life exercise of Tea Time. Each exercise will now come into use as a final presentation for serving tea and cookies. This lesson would be a three-year process, or until the child is ready to use a kettle and pour hot water. The children already know how to carry trays with breakable items, they can set up a table, but now it can be for the final purpose of a beautiful table setting of fine china for Tea Time.

Olga stressed that we need to put daily life like activities back onto our shelves in order to prepare the child for the realistic future.

Walking out of the workshop, I thought of how much more "life exercises" could go into the Practical Life activities and the more I thought about it, I realized it would not be difficult to incorporate all these life skills, the only difficulty would be the "preparation" time that the Casa teacher would need. Once again though, this would be a "life" lesson that we as teachers would need to find.



*CAMT conference
November 2008,
presenter Olga
Dantus with a child,
Nili Tock, showing
the wonders of a
trilobite fossil*

Writing and Reading: Two Divergent Processes

by Dr. Daniel Jutras Ph.D.

Remember the surprise and revelation small children offered Maria Montessori one day of December 1907 on the Casa dei Bambini's roof terrace when they were shouting with pride: "I can write! I can write! I know how to write! Nobody told me how! Nobody told me how!"

"The first word written by my little ones aroused within themselves an indescribable emotion of joy." Montessori uses words such as *exuberance, excitement, frenzied joy, torrent of tireless activity.*

Later, contrary to the accepted thought of the time when Dr. Montessori discovers that some children could read, that one human being can communicate with another in this new and mysterious way without a word being spoken without the help of adult, she talks of a thrilling experience with words such as light of joy, triumph and comprehension.

"The children learned the sounds of all the letters of the alphabet and gradually began to combine them into syllables and then words; they compose then are eager to write..."

The children already knew how to read the sounds of the individual letters; now they put the sounds together and connected them with the thing named. The child began by translating the word slowly into individual sounds, not understanding at first, but repeating the series of sounds over and over, faster each time, until finally the word bursts into his consciousness. Then he looks upon it as if he recognizes a friend, and as-

umes that air of satisfaction which so often radiates our little ones. This completes the exercise for reading. It is a lesson which goes very rapidly, since it is only presented to a child who is already prepared through composing. Truly, we have buried the tedious and stupid ABC primer side by side with the useless copy-books". (The Discovery of the Child, p. 59)



Speaking Italian, her mother tongue, Maria Montessori advocated a phonic approach to graphic language awakening. She was well aware though that, with regard to sound-symbol relationships, the orthography of English was not as that of Italian, so she encouraged her followers from England and North America to adapt her approach to the rules of their respective languages.

The alphabet is a repertoire of frozen sounds. Isolated from others, each sound is given a particular code or symbol. Bringing a young child to the analysis of a spoken word is encouraging him to focus on the phonemic structure of that spoken word. As the Montessori "golden rule" requires focus upon one thing or point of interest at a time, we encourage the child to detect the initial

sound of spoken words, then later, their final sound that constitutes each word. When a word has been "examined" by the child, broken down sound after sound, and when this child knows the symbol of each sound, he is able to substitute the sounds into corresponding symbols or codes. The child can compose with the letters of the moveable alphabet, and then later write with an instrument of writing. We say that he has accomplished the analysis of the word which is a defined mental process. Reading differs from composing or writing; it is a more complex mental process. The child who has successfully analyzed and composed many words with letters from the moveable alphabet will then use the same tools by reversing the mental process of analysis. Faced with a display of letters forming a word, the child will recognize symbols that he will associate with their corresponding sounds, then substituting the symbols for sounds and will recompose the word by making a synthesis of all its sounds in the sequence of their display. This child has accomplished the synthesis of the word. Reading is being able to capture a language from a formation of symbols carved by someone, substituting the symbols for sounds and grasping the meaning of the graphic word.

We, teacher-guides are meticulous about the process children are introduced to sound-symbol correspondence and word structure in order that they themselves discover how to spell, compose and thereafter read.

Reading Aloud to Elementary Students *By Sarah Enright*

All teachers would agree on the importance of reading aloud to children in their early years. We know it builds vocabulary, builds listening skills, builds verbal and non-verbal cueing, etc. Many elementary teachers believe in the importance of reading aloud but find it difficult to incorporate it in the hectic day to day schedule. Research has shown that reading aloud to children continues to have benefits for all ages of children, including teens.

In the Lower Elementary classroom, children are continuing to perfect the skills of reading and comprehension. The books the children can read for themselves are often simple enough to decode, however, they are also too simple to be interesting. Reading aloud, allows for the children to hear interesting tales, as well as introduce more complex vocabulary in context, prior to the child decoding the words for themselves. The discussions following the reading were guided by the teacher with open ended questions to assist the students in critical thinking and linking the story to their own lives. Another benefit to reading aloud is introducing new authors. When I taught Lower Elementary I would take the children to the library each week. I always found that the children had difficulty picking books as they were not sure what authors were interesting to them. By reading aloud, I was able to introduce new authors, as well as, new series.

In the Upper Elementary classroom, students tend to be

aware of authors or genres of writing with which they are interested. Reading aloud, introduces new genres, as well as new topics of interest. For the Upper Elementary student, during reading aloud, I was able to model tone of voice, expression, etc. These skills helped the students in their own oral communications and public speaking, especially during presentations. I also enjoyed the discussions that often followed reading aloud. Hearing the students' predictions of what could happen next, as well as critiquing how a character handled the problems in the past chapters always left me amazed at their insights and problem solving abilities.



Finding time for reading aloud is always a challenge. While in the Lower Elementary classroom, I always read before lunch. I would have the children pack up their work 15 minutes prior to lunch and begin reading as soon as two children joined me in circle. The other children could continue putting away their work and listen to the story at the same time. In the Upper Elementary classroom, I experimented with reading before lunch, after lunch, before dismissal, etc. but I found the best time was during lunch. After the children had settled and begun eating, I would read for

about 10 minutes. It was just enough time for most students to complete their lunch but it also allowed time for socializing after the story.

Many teachers have difficulty choosing books to read to the children that are appropriate for all three age levels. I have found that starting the year with picture books and working up to chapter books geared for the older age is most successful. Books geared toward the younger students bore the older child and they are not interested to listen. However, books for the older child can be explained to the younger children by their older classmates. Please see below for a list of my favourite read aloud books.

Lower Elementary:

- * *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* by J.K. Rowling (series)
- * *Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynne Reid Banks (series)
- * *Make way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey (picture book)
- * *Ralph and the Motorcycle* by Beverly Cleary (series)
- * *Something for Nothing* by Phoebe Gilman (picture book)
- * *The Bad Beginning* by Lemony Snicket (series)
- * *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
- * *Trumpet of the Swan* by E.B. White
- * *Wizard of Oz* by Frank Baum (series)

Reading Aloud to Elementary Students (*cont'd*)

Upper Elementary:

- * *Owls in the Family* by Farley Mowat
- * *Silverwing* by Kenneth Oppel (series)
- * *The Giver* by Lois Lowry
- * *The Golden Compass* by Philip Pullman (series)
- * *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien (series)
- * *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith (picture book)
- * *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs as Told by A. Wolf* by Jon Scieszka (picture book)
- * *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt
- * *Wringer* by Jerry Spinelli

These are only a few tried and true books for reading aloud. Any book read to a child will benefit them. Be sure when selecting a book, you read it completely prior to reading it to your class. You don't want to be caught with something

unexpected or something you are uncomfortable addressing with your students. I always liked to pick a novel or two that was also made into a movie so we could watch it as a class after the novel was read. It is a fun introduction to a comparison between written text and visual media (popcorn is mandatory).

If you already read aloud to your classroom, I hope you continue to do so and find many hours of enjoyment with your students. If you are struggling to find time to read aloud, find the time for this very important component of your language curriculum.

Observation by Evelyn ten Hagen

The true observation of the child and his/her environment reveals hidden truths and revelations. Montessori teachers use this tool on a daily basis to understand and fully feed the child what he/she needs intellectually, physically and emotionally.

Periodically, my colleagues and I take the opportunity given to visit other schools in order to develop not only our professional and personal goals, but to connect with other Montessorians and educators.

As a result, on November 24, 2008, I traveled to Peterborough to observe Kawartha Montessori School in Peterborough, Ontario. Kawartha Montessori School is a small school located in a quiet residential area quite close to the city's retail section. It houses two Casa classrooms, one Lower Elementary and one Upper

Elementary classroom. Each classroom has two teachers; one a trained Montessorian and the other an Ontario certified assistant who is mentored by the senior Montessori teacher. All Montessori teachers are qualified and have extensive experience (i.e. 15 years teaching experience). This school is CCMA accredited.

My observations of the classroom were welcomed and each teacher made an effort to answer my questions and to allow me time to quietly observe the students. It was a pleasure to be allowed the opportunity to share their space and to observe a productive morning of learning.

After observing in the Upper Elementary classroom I had the opportunity to chat with the principal, Ugette Vanderpost. Ms. Vanderpost was very open

and offered a copies of various documents that had been revised based on research and feedback from both teachers and parents. All revisions were made carefully with the Montessori philosophy foremost in mind.

Ms. Vanderpost and I discussed the social/emotional development of the child and the role of the school in this regard. We discussed how technology is influencing our youth and exchanged resources. We also discussed anxiety and the child and how to best support the child and the family during these times.

All in all, I was impressed by the professionalism and quality of education at Kawartha Montessori Schools. It is wonderful to see that Montessori is alive and well and living in Peterborough.

Odyssey Through The Ages *by Evelyn ten Hagen*

Each year, the grades four, five and six students of Toronto Montessori Schools, in Richmond Hill, Ontario, invite others to travel back through time and explore man through the ages.

The grade four students start off the Odyssey by taking an in-depth look at early man from Australopithecus Afarensis to Modern Man. The students, complete in costume, present various topics to the hundreds of visiting parents and students, ranging from detailed reports on specific species of early man, to a more general overview of archeology, fire and even, DNA.

The travelers work their way through the presentations towards early civilizations. The grade five students focus their presentations on Ancient Egypt and Ancient Greece. The flowing robes of these eras are plentiful and the smells tantalizing as each group of students present their chosen topic. Visitors have the opportunity to learn more about such topics as the ancient practice of mummification, foods of Egypt, The Role of Women during these times and Weaponry, just to name a few.

After exploring Ancient Civilizations, our visitors make their way through Ancient Rome and even-

tually, England during the Middle Ages. The grade six students teach the traveling visitors all they know about Ancient Romans, including historical figures. The mystery and magic of the Middle Ages is brought to life by the students through their dynamic presentations of the various aspects of this time. Medicine, food, law, leadership, and clothing are some of the topics covered.

By the time a visiting traveler makes his or her way through our Odyssey Through the Ages, they are enlightened about our past, and like our students, able to understand more clearly, why and how our civilization is the way it is today.



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A Casa Directress' Stroll In A Toddler Montessori Environment by Asma Azmatullah

As a Casa teacher, I am always proud of the beautiful environment a true Casa offers. For me nothing in a child's educational world would be in any way complete if it is not called both Montessori and Casa. Having newly joined Kaban Montessori as a Toddler supply teacher I had to change my opinion and include Montessori Toddler and Casa.

As a mother I believed it is was not worth sending your child anywhere at a young age. If you can be at home, keep your children with you for as long as you could. As a teacher I didn't want to be a part of the Toddler classroom in any capacity. In fact I was teased that as a Casa Directress, I would not survive for even a few hours among these "powerful little people". Survive I did and I've actually had the most amazing experience of my professional life.

The day I was to be a supply teacher in the toddler environment at Kaban Montessori I was extremely nervous. As I walked into the class the first thing I noticed was the calm and quietness, I thought to myself "Oh good, the children are not here yet, I can have a few extra minutes to compose myself before they start arriving". I took some deep breaths and, in a fraction of a second I noticed that not only were there a few children already in the room but they were engrossed in the material they were using. Although they glanced at me, some were curious and asked their teacher who I was, while those not too shy asked me directly what my name was. Through these beautiful gestures they put

me completely at ease and from then onwards the most memorable journey of my life started and continues to this day and I decided to pick up my pen and write in order to share these exquisite feelings with others.

I was surprised to see that the basic fundamentals of a Montessori environment were the same in both the Toddler and Casa classes, as well as the manner in which the children go about doing their tasks. I was admiring that they were following the sequence of activities, tucking in their chairs, and placing materials back exactly where they had found them; something I was positive only occurred in the Casa class. As the day moved on I was more and more astonished, at circle time the children actually sat down for 20 minutes and participated with their teacher. Getting ready for outdoor time, they made great efforts and eventually succeeded getting into snow suits, hats, mittens, changing indoor shoes for outdoor boots and vice versa upon coming back into the school.

Toilet training, very important for the toddlers was handled with extreme patience, as the children were encouraged to be more independent. The lunch and snack time was a sight to behold. It was so beautiful to see how the children were going about setting their tables and waiting for food to be served and then eating independently. In some adult's view it might seem a bit messy as there could be a spill or food missing the children's mouth but that is nothing compared to the independence the children were devel-

oping. It was totally worth the mess.

As a Casa directress it pleases me to see, when children are learning all the basic tasks in the toddler program, how easy it will be for them to walk into Casa and go directly to learning new exercises; thus shortening the orientation period. For children coming in September without the toddler program this period could sometimes last until January. Where I come from there were only Casa schools available and none for Toddlers. As a mother of two beautiful children ages 18 years and 6 years, if I could turn back the clock I would surely send my children to a Montessori Toddler program now, knowing what a difference a prepared environment makes even at a young age.

Toddlers are like seedlings, if you sow them in well fertilized soil you will reap its rich harvest.

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The Role of the Montessori Directress/Director by Kelly Addison Scriven

Dr. Montessori left us with many comprehensive materials and amazing subjects to learn. Perhaps the single most important lesson, which trickles down into every nook and cranny of the Montessori Casa, is the role that the directress/director plays in the lives of the children. This role is not the typical role an educator plays; the all-knowing role, rather it is one of observation, reflection and modelling. During my first year teaching I have learned just how important this role is when I see myself in the children in their manner of speaking and movement.

As a Montessori educator the primary requirement is to be aware of what we should not be; this means not to be a teacher, in the most generic and archaic sense of the word. Being termed a 'teacher' carries many connotations; to be someone who is in front of the children with a large oppressive desk, to be righteous, shameful, or disgraceful to the children, to influence the child's own decisions with one's own emotionally charged expression, or to consider oneself to be the all-knowing adult in the room, (when it is the child who naturally carries the absolute truths); to be a teacher we must ourselves believe that we teach the children, which we do not. To be a directress/director we need to provide the necessary tools for the child to teach themselves. As such we should therefore endeavour to encompass certain traits in order to properly carry on Dr. Montessori's pedagogy.

The directress/director must be able to; prepare the environment for the child's purposes alone, to observe the child in their environment and be sure it suits their needs and stages of development, to be experts with the materials so as to model for the child, to be the mentor to the children of their environment, to be the protector of the children, and to advocate on behalf of the child. To do all of this we must continually prepare and know our own self, to comprehend the reason why we became a directress/director.

The directress/director who attempts to encompass all of these virtues daily will have a profound impact on the Montessori child. This will be a true 'teacher', in the Montessori sense of the word; a person of wit, intelligence, happiness, and awareness.

'Never bring a child down to your level, attempt to raise yourself to theirs'.



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