



"Follow the Child"



camt Talk



Canadian
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Montessori
Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Summer 2013

Message from the President

UPCOMING EVENTS

- CAMT Fall Conference
November 1, 2013
The Old Mill
SAVE THE DATE!

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for more details



Well! The school year is over and the thoughts of Montessorians everywhere turn to the new year and oh yes, the summer.

We at CAMT hope that this year was an enormous success for you, your students and your school. We had a terrific year and want to thank you for your participation and support in keeping it Montessori.

Having just returned from two incredible weeks in Iceland, thank you to my principal for allowing me the time off, I feel more inspired than ever to open the world up to the children in our care. We should be showing them everything we know and learning more with them every day. Their innocent eyes are constantly searching and we have the ability, nay, the duty, to guide them and join them for then we too can

have the benefit of a Montessori childhood education. I implore you to make the most of the remaining of the summer to be all that you can be, in the classroom, and in your lives. Never stop learning and never stop wondering.

Be well this summer, be safe, be inquisitive and we will see you on November 1 at the Conference where we will ask each other, "Karrerian ingera?" How are the children? Be your best, for them and for yourself.

Please consider volunteering to be a member of the CAMT Board. Contact any of the Board members listed below if you have questions.

THANK YOU

A Special Thank you to the authors of our newsletter articles, who are awarded a complimentary event registration as a
THANK YOU!

"The things he sees are not just remembered; they form a part of his soul."

The Absorbent Mind, Chapter 7 pg 62 - 1995 edition .

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Land-Based Learning—from Casa to Junior High by Dr. Wendy Agnew

"I remember one time I went and I was still in grade three and as soon as we walked in it was like a rebirth, everything I saw in there seemed so fresh and fragile, all of the seeds were just starting to come up and grow. The whole ground with these new plants was all covered; it was a very amazing thing to see in person, this was the kind of thing you only saw in post cards... Everybody knows the forest so well that we know all of the routes that lead to certain things ...In my opinion we are learning more discovering things by ourselves and not by just writing things on a piece of paper...there is always something new to learn and expand your mind about. It can be something as simple as a bird flying above all the trees or a snail on a wet leaf." – A.B. aged 14 writing about a walk in The Wood

Getting Eye-Contact

"The most important thing to do is to free the child, if possible, from the tie which keeps him isolated in the artificial life of the city." – Maria Montessori, The Discovery of the Child, 69



The Importance of Land-Based Learning

Land Based Research works on the premise, advanced by Maria Montessori, and a host of experienced and informed educators, that children learn best through a dynamic combination of **real experience, freedom of choice, thematic learning, and creative research in nature.**

Real Experience

Real Experience immerses children in the context of their subject and affects what Montessori termed, the muscular memory. Learning by doing provides students with experiences that Montessori termed as "didactic," or self-teaching moments where the environment becomes radically pedagogical. Involving children in real experiences in nature allows the acquisition of knowledge to have meaning in the context of both the children's and the planet's life, thereby translating knowledge into durable wisdom.

Freedom of Choice

Freedom of Choice allows the natural love children have for the land and its wild spaces to be nurtured and focused. In response to the children's constant requests to 'go to the forest' we follow Montessori's dictates. As she states in *The Discovery of the Child*; "...when children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength."

Freedom of Choice is contingent upon a fluent knowledge of, not only what the world contains, but how it works as a dynamic system. A memorable student comment - "We need to go to the forest because it's alive and when we're in it we feel alive" is eloquent of the need to be immersed in the living world beyond human institutions and organizations. The forest is a metaphor for the delicate balance between free choice and responsibility we, as good Montessorians, try to practice. As the forest responds to climate; as species respond to each other in an articulate and miraculous communion; so the children absorb a wisdom older than schools - The wisdom of eco-logos - The logic of life.

Consistent immersion in a local natural environment promotes **spontaneity of choice** dependent on weather, time and the enthusiasm of children. Choice hinges on a **dynamic communication** facilitated, but not dictated by the teacher or guide, in which subjects of weather, work, and planning are

Land-based Learning *(Continued from Page 2)*

incorporated. The journey begins, not when the teacher decides, but when the children begin to dialogue.

Projects are decided upon by process of consensus that **synthesizes demands of curriculum, children's desires, and potential of place**. For example; a pristine field gives us a temporary and lovely canvass for a snow art project, a congregation of tiny bird skulls induces us to research skeletons and prompts inter-class sharing experience, a toad laying strands of hundreds of pearly black eggs stops the day.

Nature is a potent teacher. Structures not evident in our rectangular rooms inspire the children to build surprising and thrilling shelters as they *choose* to return again and again to their 'territory.'

Richard Louve has coined the term "**Nature Deficit Disorder**," to describe what is happening to our children as wild spaces shrink and freedom to explore the natural world is curtailed. He alerts us to, "human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illness." (Louve, 34, 2005)

A day, a week, a month, a year nuanced with natural shapes and rhythms provides us with powerful antidotes to this problem.

Thematic Learning

Thematic Learning, another potent Montessori principle, erases rigid subject lines and vivifies knowledge through dynamic context. Botany cannot exist without zoology. A bee is integral to the life of flowers, geography is integral to the life of bees. Nature reveals its marvelous mathematics in iterative patterns and fractal geometry. A pentagon on the shell of a turtle is echoed in the five-sided patterns found in the matrix of Red Giant stars. Thematic learning creates a sense of meaning that is supported by spontaneous journeys into Nature. The language of Shakespeare takes on a new significance when rehearsed in a forest or on the banks of a stream. The history of the Renaissance and the attitude of Renaissance philosophers to nature/culture provokes new ideas in the context of a wilderness.

Creative Research in Nature

Creative Research in Nature contests the habit of modern education to divorce the academics from the arts and the land. In classical times, the arts were the muscles of meaning through which the academics held sway. In Arts and Land based research (or Organic Research) we celebrate the art of life through the study of science and express our research through personal offerings of creativity – a dramatis persona, an aged journal, a sketch, a sculpture, an art garden that embodies the concepts we are trying to communicate. As renowned geologist Thomas Berry suggests - through mindful and active immersion in nature, we move from the 'Cenozoic to the Ecozoic Age', hopefully precluding the following...

"We have readily given up our own freedom and have ended up loving our prison and passing it on to our children ... This has caused our souls to shrink and has filled them with contradictions." Maria Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*

"It is the perfect organization of work, permitting the possibility of self-development and giving outlet for the energies, which procures for each child the beneficial and calming satisfaction."

Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook, page 187

"The objects in our system are, instead, a help to the child himself. He chooses what he wants for his own use, and works with it according to his own needs, tendencies, and special interests. In this way the objects become a means of growth."

Maria Montessori. *The Discovery of the Child*, page 149

Birthdays—MJDS Style *by Andrea Lulka*

My son is 10. He is getting used to the idea. I am not. I am looking at this huge, grimy, powerful being, and wondering what happened to my little sweet cooing baby.

MJDS has a very special way of marking the passing of time. I'm honestly not sure how they do it in the Toddler room, but I do know that when my son turned two, he took photos of himself as a baby to school (we were at Kaban Montessori then, since MJDS had no toddler community at the time), and they were shown at circle time. In the Casa, MJDS celebrates birthdays in the traditional Montessori way. A candle representing the sun is placed in the center of the circle, and the children arrange the months of the year around the candle. The birthday child takes a globe, and, as the teacher tells his or her story, and the class sings, the child walks around the sun once for each year he or she has been alive. I remember doing this in my own Casa and Lower Elementary years. It is etched into my memory, the feeling of carrying that globe so very carefully so it wouldn't fall from my small hands, my teachers telling stories, and my classmates offering wishes.

There are a great many reasons I love this tradition; one is that I feel nostalgic thinking about it. It is a brilliant way of indirectly teaching children about the passage of time - past, present, future, seasons, months and years - and the cosmos - the Earth goes around the Sun. It is a lesson integrated through music and movement, and most importantly, by tying in to personal experience. It ignites the imagination, as the child hears his/her own story, connects it to the passing of time, the way the universe works, and places the child firmly in the here and now, allowing for a sense of wonder and possibility. All through a simple ceremony which all the children I've known (as a child and as a teacher) inherently recognize as being something very special.

I loved watching my son, and then my nephews and niece walk around the sun. My mother surprised me one year as a teacher, and had me walk around the sun thirty-something times while she told my life story. My students and my son loved it.

Now, in the Upper Elementary, the ritual of walking around the sun is no longer interesting to these veteran Elementary students, who have heard the Great Lesson of how the universe came to be four times, have worked with all the Timelines, the Long Black Strip and the Clock of Eras and every other material that teaches them about the passage of time concretely and abstractly. So instead, they are faced with a new challenge which, to my knowledge, is unique to MJDS; the Upper Elementary students may choose one or two friends, bring a recipe, and bake their own cake, which they then share with the class.

My son, having the strong roots he does, asked to make a very special cake. My grandmother's birthday cake; the cake she made for over 70 years, for each and every birthday of all her children, grand-children, and great-grandchildren. It is a three-tier torte, with chocolate icing between the layers and meringue instead of icing, and it is a complicated cake to make. My grandmother, my cousins, and my sister know how to make it (I'm not a baker, so I was there, but I didn't learn how to do it), and now my son has taken it upon himself, at the ripe old age of 10, to carry on with the tradition.

I know what you're wondering - did it turn out like my grandmothers? The honest answer is not quite, but it was surprisingly close. What moved me was that my son shared the leftovers with his extended family at dinner that night, and that he had the incredible sense of pride and satisfaction that comes with facing a challenge head on and overcoming it. After all, isn't that how we grow?

There is another aspect of MJDS and Montessori education that always strikes me at birthday parties. Perhaps you have had similar experiences. I started noticing when my son was still in Toddler that he and his friends would all sit through the meal at birthday parties. I noticed at his birthday party this year, that while not everybody sat through the whole party-room experience, they did sit and wait patiently for their cake, raised their hands for juice, and every child from our school said thank-you.

Book Review—DRIVE: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, by Daniel H. Pink

What motivates us as human beings? The desire to learn? to have more material belongings? to be better than your peers? to achieve perfection? There are many questions about motivation, especially when it comes to the subject of motivating the next generation. I have recently read an interesting book about this very topic, and I was happily surprised to find that this author noted Montessori's method of encouraging children's intrinsic motivation, a method brought into practice over 100 years ago, as one of the few educational methods that are on the right track in regards to motivating their students.

In DRIVE: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, Daniel H. Pink writes about motivation in regards to corporate business mostly, but he has a few choice words to say about the traditional public school system, and praise for the Montessori method of education. Of the traditional public system he writes:

All kids start out as curious, self-directed Type I's (those who are self-motivated). But many of them end up as disengaged, compliant Type X's (those who are motivated by rewards). What's going on? Maybe the problem is us - the adults who are running schools and heading families. If we want to equip young people for the new world of work - and, more important, if we want them to lead satisfying lives - we need to break Motivation 2.0's (rewards) grip on education and parenting.

Unfortunately, as with business, there's a mismatch between what science knows, and what schools do. Science knows that if you promise a preschooler a fancy certificate for drawing a picture, that child will likely draw a picture

for you - and then lose further interest in drawing. Yet in the face of this evidence - and as the world economy requires more non-routine, creative, conceptual abilities - too many schools are moving in the wrong direction. They're redoubling their emphasis on routines, right answers, and standardization. And they're hauling out a wagon full of "if-then" rewards - pizza for reading books, iPods for showing up to class, cash for good test scores. We're bribing students into compliance instead of challenging them into engagement.

We can do better. And we should. If we want to raise Type I kids, at school and at home, we need to help them move toward autonomy, mastery, and purpose. (p 185-186)

Autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Is there anything that could ring more true to the Montessori method than that? Montessori was built upon the observation of children, their needs, and the activities that they responded to the most. As teachers we are taught to observe each child in the environment, to see where they are excelling, and where they are struggling. But we do this without disrupting the learning cycle. We introduce the materials, each with a specific purpose, model the proper way to handle each object and complete the activity, and set the child on the path towards knowledge, but the real learning is done by the child, through his interaction with the materials, and is motivated by the child's own desire to accomplish the job. Self-motivation is developed in a Montessori classroom through the satisfaction of completing tasks, rather than the promise of a gold star or a high mark.

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Birthdays (Continued from Page 4)

I looked around that table, at all these boys (girls have cooties, you know), many of whom had been my students, and I felt such a fierce pride at what nice people they are all becoming. Yes, they tease, and run, and jump on each other. They also share, and talk, and look out for each other in a way that belies true friendship based on respect.

It is true that my son has a small cohort. It makes me feel better to know that his guests, his friends, many of different ages, are people who really care about him. Quality over quantity. Growing together. That's what matters to me.

Book Review (continued from Page 5)

Pink mentions Montessori schools as one of the few methods of education that are motivating their students in the right way, and I have to agree. Every day I witness spontaneous learning events, and I see each child gravitate towards the activities that interest them, the ones that fulfill an inner need to work with their hands and understand a topic. I see children at 4-years-old who want to finish labelling their map of Asia, and are not satisfied until every single country has a name. 5-year-olds who work all morning on creating a life-size model of the human skeletal system, carefully cutting out each bone and using the materials to double-check how each bone name should be written. And 3-year-olds who start every day by building the Pink Tower or working in the Practical Life area to practice the skills that are necessary to be successful in every day life.

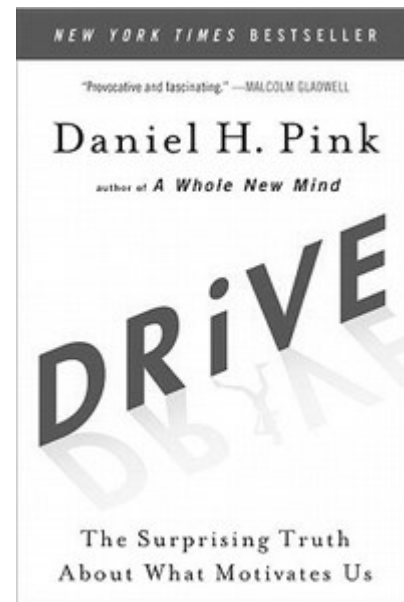
This is what Pink has to say about Montessori and motivation:

Dr. Maria Montessori developed the Montessori method of teaching in the early 1900s after observing children's natural curiosity and innate desire to learn. Her early understanding of the third drive spawned a worldwide network of schools, mostly for preschool and primary-aged children. Many of the key tenants of a Montessori education resonate with the principles of Motivation 3.0 - that children naturally engage in self-directed learning and independent study; that teachers should act as observers and facilitators of that learning, and not as lecturers or commanders; and that children are naturally inclined to experience periods of intense focus, concentration, and flow that adults should do their best not to interrupt. Although Montessori schools are rare at the junior high and high school levels, every school, educator, and parent can learn from its enduring and successful approach. (p 194-195)

In the chapter for Parents and Educators (p 185-196), there are many great tips on how to help motivate children. Such as:

- Give your kids an allowance and some chores—but don't combine them
- Offer praise ... The right way
- Help kids see the big picture

These are only a few of the topics to be found, and each one has an explanation and great advice on how to quickly put these strategies into action. The whole second half of the book is full of strategies on how to get your own motivation up and running, as well as ideas for businesses, or just about anyone who is trying to motivate others. There is also a list of books, by various authors, to continue your motivation education. I highly recommend this chapter to anyone who spends time with children. So pick up a copy of [DRIVE: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us](#), by Daniel H. Pink and get motivated!



"The inner life of man and the beginnings of his intellect are controlled by special laws and vital necessities which cannot be forgotten if we are aiming at health for mankind. For this reason, an educational method, which cultivates and protects the inner activities of the child, is not a question which concerns merely the school or the teachers; it is a universal question which concerns the family, and is of vital interest to mothers."

Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook, page 185

Workshop Review—Report Card Writing with Sarah Enright

Sarah Enright, a Montessori educator for over 15 years, trained and experienced in Casa through Upper Elementary, now the Principal at the Montessori Country School, presented a Report Card Writing workshop at the CAMT Mini Conference in April that brought to my attention some issues that every school faces when it comes to Montessori and Report Cards. Her vast experience working in both Canada and the United States, and at all age levels, has given her many valuable experiences that she was able to share with the group, and even though she told us up front that there would be no answers given in her workshop, she did provide us with information that will be helpful when writing this year's final reports.

First things first. Who are Report Cards for? Parents, right? We may like to think that the reports are going to be read by the teacher who will take on that child when they move up, but that rarely happens. The true purpose is to inform the parents of their child's progress, and should also include future plans and goals. Understanding who your audience is will help you to frame your language in a way that the parents can clearly read.

Beware of Montessori "cult" language! Admit it, it does exist. Normalized? Sensitive Periods? Parents read "your child has not yet normalized" and immediately think you are telling them their child is not normal! And Sensitive Periods? What is that? Yes, it all makes sense to us, but to anyone untrained in the Montessori method, it sounds a bit kooky. Instead, let's use a more friendly term such as a "window of opportunity" for learning. To the rest of the world, the unit column is known as the ones column, and exchanging is known as carrying over or borrowing. Simple changes to your vocabulary can help to get what you want to say, heard clearly by your audience.

Parents will look online for the Ontario Kindergarten Curriculum Requirements, and they are going to want to see some of that language reflected back in your reports. The other thing you have to remember is that non-educators look at teachers with all of their personal memories of the teachers from their past, so it is important to build up trust and communication when meeting parents for the first time, and to keep that communication open throughout the year so that

the Report Cards and Parent Teacher Interviews will not seem as daunting.

I think we all know that bad news should never be broken in a Report Card, and Sarah repeated this. Stating "We are NOT doctors, we can only make observations. The best way to break bad news is to have a long, very long, conversation, over days and weeks, starting with the gathering of information. Before you even mention what your concerns are, start asking questions (ex: How does he play at home? in the park? with his cousins? pets? etc.), and then ask the parents to look for something (ex: Watch and listen to how he interacts with the other children at the park). If you suspect a learning difficulty, your first step should be to ask the parents to get the child's eyes and ears checked, because most parents will not blame themselves for this if there is a problem."

The next thing we discussed was the various formats of everyone's Report Cards. Some had purely anecdotal reports, some had a combination of anecdotal and checklist reports, and some had only checklist reports. Guess what? Each format has its own downfall. Personally, my school uses the combination of anecdotal and a checklist. However the checklist is still just a list of materials with names like the Pink Tower and the Stamp Game, which parents really don't understand the purpose of. Plus, if you have a marking system, what does each category truly mean? My school has named each category Introduced, Practicing, and Consolidated, which I think is fairly neutral, and certainly better than categories such as Needs Improvement, Meets Expectation, and Exceeds Expectation. But it still leaves parents wondering.

Here are some of the issues that may come from a checklist report. If you have every material listed on your report, parents of a 3-year-old will wonder why their child has so few ticks, to which you will explain that it is a 3-year program, and that as their child grows they will fill out the rest of the list. But then, what happens if that same child, at the end of the 3 years has not gotten to every material? Now you have parents who think you have lied to them because you told them when he was 3 that he would

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Workshop Review (continued from Page 7)

get to it all. Now what if we changed the checklist from a list of materials, to a list of skills that are being developed? Instead of the Pink Tower, you list hand/eye control, co-ordination, concentration, motor control, etc? This is still difficult to manage, but makes more sense. Other issues may arise when the Casa child who had "mastered" reading, suddenly is only meeting expectations in the Elementary. Make sure every teacher in your school is aware of what each marking scheme really means, and that parents are aware as well.

Anecdotal reports can be problematic as well, and the most common mistakes are spelling, grammar, and negative phrasing. Imagine, as a parent, reading your child's report card and finding a spelling mistake in the language area, or finding another child's name, or a she where there should be a he. Embarrassing, and it doesn't inspire confidence in the school. Sarah told us that her school uses purely anecdotal reports, and that teachers are required to get their reports proofed by a teacher in another level, to avoid any "cult" language from getting through. Sometimes we lean on the lingo that becomes second nature, so if you teach at the Casa level, another Casa teacher may overlook something that an Elementary teacher may question, and vice versa. And then all reports are proofed by Sarah herself before they go anywhere near the parents.

Here are a few of Sarah's tips:

- When writing reports, do the whole child at one time, rather than doing all of your Math comments in one go. This way you can focus on the one child at a time, allowing you to personalize your comments more easily.
- Be careful of your mood when you sit down to write, as it will colour your language. Always be sure to leave the report for a day or two and then go back to read it again.
- Turn negative phrasing into positive. Stay away from words like can't, won't, unable to, etc. Remember, children don't choose to struggle, it just happens.
- "I" has no place in a Report Card. It is not your opinion, only your observations.
- If you wouldn't be comfortable writing the opposite, don't write it. For example: Joe is a pleasure in class. Does that mean Kate is not a pleasure if you don't write it on her report?
- Include future goals and plans, especially if there is a problem. This lets parents know that you have a plan in place and that you are following through.
- Remember that we need to meet the parents where they are, just as we do for the kids. Phrase your language accordingly.

Sarah's workshop left me with lots to think about, and it was nice to hear an honest and professional opinion about the true purpose of Report Cards. And though I know it will be a lot of work, I am feeling better prepared to enter into Report Card season.

"All children seem to be happy and satisfied with doing what they can. The activities of others do not arouse their envy or painful rivalry, nor are they themselves inflated with empty pride... Their readiness in inviting others to observe their work or to listen to their explanations of it makes us realize that we are in the presence of individuals who are masters of their own homes."

Maria Montessori. The Discovery of the Child, page 303

"How great should be the results among the little children from three to six years of age if the organization of their work is complete, and their freedom absolute? It is for this reason that to us they seem so good, like heralds of hope and redemption."

Maria Montessori. Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook, page 189

Workshop Review—Parent Teacher Communication with Jessie Steinberg

I have to applaud CAMT for arranging such an upbeat, energetic and motivating presenter for the Saturday morning workshop on February 23rd, 2013.

As teachers, we know how important it is to continue our own education in order to give our students the best possible experience. We also know that dedicating yourself to an all-day workshop on a Saturday may not be high up on your list of things to do. But we do it anyway, hoping that the workshop will live up to expectations.

Thankfully, on this Saturday morning we were not just sitting and listening, we were engaged and loving it, and as all Montessorians know, this is when the real learning takes place.

Jessie Steinberg; team builder, outdoor education specialist, and retired Montessori teacher; began the morning by re-arranging the conference style seating arrangements into a large circle with lots of space in the centre for her to "authentically express" herself, and we soon found out that she wasn't going to be the only one who would be out of her chair.

Now, the topic for this workshop was "Parent/Teacher Communication: Creating Positive Relationships," which is something that every teacher hopes for. However, making this a reality with every parent seems to be easier said than done, or so I had thought. After the first 15 minutes with Jessie, I was beginning to see things a little differently.

Right away Jessie called us out on our authenticity, making sure everyone spoke in the first person (I vs. we) as we went around the group saying what we hoped to take away from the workshop. Most of the group had similar desires, such as learning how to best approach parents in tricky situations, how to convince parents to trust the method, what topics to include in P/T interviews, and so on. Fairly common concerns I think, no matter what age group you work with, or what school you are teaching at.

The first activity was to find a partner, stand back to back, and have a conversation about something happy. Easy right? Then we were instructed to move 5 meters apart and get back to our conversation. Not

so easy this time. And we went back to our seats to reflect. The goal of the activity was to bring to attention how large a role your vision plays in communicating with others. Some felt robbed of eye contact and body language, some felt the freedom of anonymity, and the group definitely felt uncomfortable communicating in this situation.

Next, Jessie asked us this question: In general, out of 100%, how much weight do you give to the WORDS you say, the TONE you say it in, and the BODY LANGUAGE you present?

My guess was Words = 40%, Tone = 40%, and Body Language = 20%. I was wrong. It actually works out to be Words = 7%, Tone = 38%, and Body Language = 55%! Shocking isn't it? Almost makes me want to do everything in writing from now on, maybe even take a vow of silence ... almost.

Jessie did not leave us stranded with this information, and immediately brought our "stories" to light. What is your "story"? According to Jessie, your "story" is the communication-sucking monster that attaches to your face and prevents you from being honest and authentic. I wish I could turn my experience into a video and replay this whole workshop for you, because it really was amazing. I'll do my best to paint you a clear picture.

Jessie; a petite woman dressed in a workplace appropriate sweater and pant combo, Doc Martins peeking out, short hair (which she told us is usually in a Mohawk), more than one pair of earrings, and a not so quiet speaking voice which immediately calls you out on everything you say that is un-authentic; created a welcoming, fun and safe atmosphere within moments of beginning her presentation. I loved the humorous view on life she expressed, and we were laughing and smiling (at a Saturday workshop, 9:30am!) all morning.

Every "story" that was expressed was told to get left at the door, or out the window, or at the Timmies down the street, because it will always be there for you to pick up after the P/T interview. Everyone

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Workshop Review (*continued from Page 9*)

makes choices, it's a part of life, and you have to make the conscious choice to leave your "story" behind and pick up your role of educator and care giver, a knowledgeable and committed part of the Parent Teacher Relationship. We all have that inside of us, it's why we do our job everyday.

The answer is never as simple as that, or is it? My "story" has many layers: I'm young, this is only my 4th year as a molder of the next generation, I hate confrontation, and I want every parent to be more than satisfied with the educational experience that I am bringing to their child. So how does my face-sucking monster affect my ability to communicate?

Well, I feel like a "Nervous Nelly", just waiting for a giant cane to sweep in, grab me around the neck, and yank me off stage with a loud "waaa - waaa - waaaaaaaaa" playing in the background. In my mind, I know what I want to say, but my face-sucking monster makes me doubt myself, over think, and makes it difficult to express myself openly. My heart beat races, I feel the heat rise in my face (knowing that it will turn bright red - ripe tomato red), and I want to run and hide.

I know my students; their likes/dislike, personality, behaviour triggers, social interactions, where they are excelling, and where work needs to be done. I spend 40+ hours every week with them, and I love every second of it. Even when I get peed on by a 2 1/2 year old, at 10am, with no spare clothing, and my home an hour away (if traffic is moving), I still love my job, and look to my own actions for creating that incident. I should have insisted he go to the bathroom, as it was around the time when his accidents had been occurring, but no, I was taken in by his adorableness (and trusting in his word that he did NOT need to go), and picked him up to get a closer look at the staff photos in the lobby. Life lesson learned!

My point is, I know my stuff and I am committed to giving the children in my care the best educational experience possible. So why is it so hard for me to talk to the people who created these wonderful little people that I work with every day? It's that silly monster, I never realized I could just rip it off and forget about it for a time. Now I know better.

Want to know Jessie's response to my story? She said, put everything out on the table. Say "I'm so happy to meet with you, I have so much to share, and I'm a little bit nervous, so please know that I am committed to providing the best education for your child and an open and honest relationship with you." You have now set the table for a great conversation to begin. If you think about it, they are just as nervous as you, if not more so, but when you lay the foundation for an honest and authentic conversation, they will jump right in.

It's hard to compress all of the information and still make sense, but I'll try to sum it up.

- 1: Be honest and authentic - say what you mean and mean what you say. Phrase your words to encourage communication rather than discourage communication.
- 2: Tear that "story" monster off your face, and toss it away.
- 3: Set the stage - create a space that is welcoming and comfortable.
- 4: Believe in yourself and your abilities.
- 5: If you feel the atmosphere shift (maybe you said something that was heard in a different light than the way you meant it), stop the conversation and say "I feel like the mood has shifted, lets go back and figure out what happened." That way the parents don't leave with a bad taste and unanswered questions.

Jessie brought to attention the things that are so simple to do, but are often ignored. We all want to have great relationships with the people in our lives, and in the Parent Teacher relationship there is always a common goal, the child. So build upon that common goal, and invite the Parents to be a trusted part of the relationship. If you feel like your school could use a little team building, or any other of her specialties, I would highly recommend Jessie Steinberg. We were all sad to say good-bye when the workshop was over, and I certainly felt uplifted and motivated to start working on being honest and authentic all of the time. Thanks Jessie, and thanks CAMT.

See you at the next workshop!

The Montessori Journey—A Powerful Parent Event by Pat Gere

One of the most powerful parent events is a Montessori Journey, also known as Journey and Discovery, A Silent Journey or Discovery Journey. We've now run four Montessori Journeys at OMS Montessori and each had a significant and lasting impact on our Board of Directors, our staff and our parents.

The school prepares one classroom at each level with a number of exercises laid out as if a child was about to use them. From level to level several streams of the curriculum are followed, such as multiplication or adjectives. A group of parents (Board members or staff) is invited to take a 'silent' journey through each class, simply examining with their eyes what is spread out. They do not touch anything. They do not speak. No one is in the room but the group and the leaders from the school. When all the levels have been visited, the group returns to the start and shares any observations or comments that they wish.

The following morning, the group reconvenes and revisits the classrooms. This time there are short written explanations and instructions with each exercise, and a Montessori guide who will give a presentation and give guidance or answer questions. When each level has been visited, the group once again reconvenes to share their experiences.

What makes this model of sharing Montessori so powerful? Very few people take the opportunity to be truly silent for very long. Being silent creates a very special situation, almost reverential. The observers slow down and actually see what is before them; after all, there is nothing else to do and you can't leave without being quite rude. There is nothing to distract you; there are no cute children to watch; you simply pay attention to the beautiful materials, notice similarities, and wonder about the purpose. Interestingly, when the silent journey is over, parents don't burst into speech when they finally can. Rather there is a reverential, quiet reentry into the world of speech and sharing with others.

On the second day when parents can touch and manipulate and recreate what the students do, the group of parents has many characteristics of an actual class. There is a community of learners, some

know or can guess more than others. Some are quiet watchers; others dive right in. The materials naturally lead in the right direction and, if they don't, the Montessori guide is there to assist. Parents experience the sequential development of concepts.

Parents are deeply affected by the Journey's experience, emotionally and intellectually. They can clearly see how what their children are experiencing forms the basis for amazing things to come. When they come to observe their child in their class, they have a framework to understand the complexity and depth of experience that is unfolding before them.

Many Montessori schools have offered the journey in one form or another. The first journey, developed by Barbara Gordon, the head of the St. Alcuin Montessori School in Dallas, Texas, then called Montessori Academy, has been shared from one school to another, growing a larger and larger cohort of schools who use this powerful parent activity. If you don't know of such a school, you are welcome to email OMS Montessori at patg@ottawamontessori.com and we will happily share our resources.

"In our system we obviously have a different concept of discipline. The discipline that we are looking for is active. We do not believe that one is disciplined only when he is artificially made as silent as a mute and as motionless as a paralytic. Such a one is not disciplined but annihilated."

Maria Montessori. The Discovery of the Child, page 49

CAMT Strategic Planning - Your Input Please!

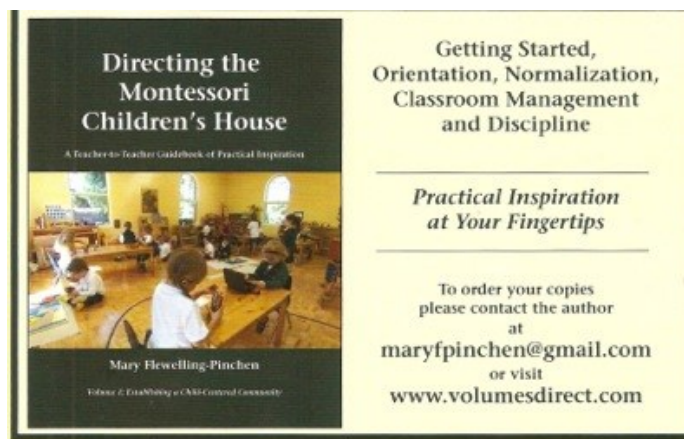
In an effort to ensure that CAMT meets your expectations in the future, your Board of Directors is conducting a strategic planning session this summer.

Please take a few minutes to complete this membership needs survey by Wednesday July 31.

All Montessori teachers completing this survey will receive \$10 CAMT Cash, which can be used for membership fees, workshop registration fees, and conference registration fees. This coupon will appear once you complete the survey – and cannot be shared or transferred.

NOTE: This survey is anonymous - you will not be asked to provide any contact information.

Watch your email for a survey link!



INFANT/TODDLER	EARLY CHILDHOOD	ELEMENTARY
<h1 style="text-align: center;">Become a Montessori Teacher</h1> <p style="text-align: center;">... without missing work</p>		
ACCESSIBLE The convenience of distance education	AFFORDABLE Montessori Diploma Programs and Curriculum	
FLEXIBLE Start any time on your own schedule	VALUABLE Transform your center into a Montessori Daycare	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>NAMC North American Montessori Center</p> </div> <div> <p>Toll-free: 1.877.531.6665 info@montessoritraining.net www.montessoritraining.net</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right;"> </div> </div>		