



"Follow the Child"



# camt Talk



Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

February 2016

## Message from the President

### UPCOMING EVENTS

Workshops—Feb 20 2016

- Anxiety with Science
- Classroom Management
- Hands-On Workshops

November 4 2016

CAMT Annual Conference

Visit [www.camt100.ca](http://www.camt100.ca) for more details

### THANK YOU

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

If you would like to contribute an article, please contact the CAMT Office at [info@camt100.ca](mailto:info@camt100.ca)



We are now down to five months left of the school year, so hard to believe! I am sure many of you recall the first day of school, however, we are now in the long stretch towards the last day of classes. It will be here quickly, yet in the meantime there is so much to accomplish, as a teacher and with the students, to ensure the goals are met for each individual child.

How is it possible to get every lesson and extension presented when we follow the child? Our responsibility is to ensure the foundation is mastered. The expectations from administrators, parents, and ourselves are placed upon the child when in reality we need to follow their development and present lessons when they are ready. This is a big responsibility and you are accountable. So when the days go so quickly and you feel that everything has not been accomplished, do not be so hard on yourself. Remember every lesson does not need to be presented. I am not saying do not present the lessons, as they are key, yet every extension doesn't

need to be introduced. It will happen when you step back and allow the children to discover. Prepare the environment for the opportunity to present itself to the child and then let them explore, reflect and process. Do as Maria Montessori said, "The greatest sign of success for a teacher is to be able to say, "The children are now working as if I did not exist." That is the ultimate goal. However, how is that possible, when the government regulations require a greater teacher student ratio and their educational philosophy and expectations are entirely different? How can teachers not exist, when we are employed to work and to do our job? That is your job, to take the time to observe, revel in the children and their engagements with one another, force yourself to not interject and allow spontaneous experiences to take place. Look at the bigger picture, it's beyond the academics. The learning always happens, however, the big picture is to educate the human potential, not only intellectually, but also socially, physically, and spiritually. When children are left to solve problems, discover alternatives, engage in meaningful conversation, a

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### ABOUT CAMT

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## Message from the President *(continued from page 1)*

unique, creative, responsible and independent person will evolve. An individual who will take on leadership roles, seek challenges, acquire positive work ethics and be morally sound, all because they were left alone to figure it out. Of course they are guided in various aspects, however, they have not been controlled and are free to develop naturally. This is the big picture, envisioning these little people as adults, who will be intellectually and morally responsible for our future, yet in the interim we must be accountable to them.

So, the big picture requires work from you. It involves continued professional development in order to learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and rediscover your passion as to why you are in this profession. CAMT's goal is to provide you with this professional development and ever since I've been president, it seems like these sentences continue to present themselves within each greeting. What is it that you are looking for in professional development? What is it that will rejuvenate your spirit to bring the spark back into your daily routine? What is it that you need as a teacher? How can CAMT assist?

Each month CAMT is hosting a workshop and we have chosen to spread our wings and go beyond the GTA boundaries. We have workshops planned for North Bay and we are in the process of confirming other locations east and west of Toronto in order to further assist the teachers in their professional development. Continuing with professional development is important for your growth as an educator and a person. There are many groups who offer fantastic workshops and I encourage you to support other Montessori organizations as well, such as NAMTA, AMS, MSC, BCMA, MMTA, to name a few. Attend one of their conferences or their workshops, if you can, and by doing so you will get the stimulating buzz that motivates you within the classroom and assists you with the children. Keep yourself informed as to what is taking place with CCMA, the Ministry of Education and CCEYA, Community Care and Early Years Act. Be a part of other organizations outside of Montessori and participate in their events. Regardless of who you support, just keep inspiring yourself with other people's inspiration and share yours.

This year's conference is on Friday, November 4, 2016 and our keynote speaker is Dr. Philip Snow Gang; a very interesting man who has a history in Montessori that many of us will be in awe of. He was friends with Mario Montessori Jr., was involved in the Montessori Movement in the 70's and he is the founder of TIES in Portland, Oregon. Phil has a passion for Cosmic Education, the development of the child, the student and the adult. His topics will

bring reflection, insight and inspiration. You will be resonating with his words for years to come. So please mark Friday, November 4, 2016 on your calendar and save the date to attend CAMT's annual conference.

I look forward to a rewarding year as CAMT's president. Our new board is comprised of a group of people who are motivated, eager and ready to assist the needs of the teachers in Canada. We have great aspirations in order to enhance our experiences as Montessori educators and we have a vision of furthering the voice for Montessori. This can only be done through collaboration, connection and reaching out.

So reach out to us. If you have a special area of focus and you would like to present at a workshop, let us know. If you have heard a motivating speaker, tell us their name. If you have suggestions, we would like to hear them. This is a group effort and you're part of the crew. So come on board and let's sail the seas to increase the strength we have in numbers and to support an educational philosophy that we believe in.

This all takes work and there are many who are engaged in big projects. They are doing wonderful work within the Montessori community. They have committed their time to ensure Montessori remains as authentic as possible. Your involvement also takes time, your own precious time and it seems as if time is hard to come by. Yet if we look at the bigger picture, we have a world that needs to be protected, children who need to be enlightened and guided. We are all here for a reason.

"Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire "to make him learn things," but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence. If to this end we must consecrate ourselves as did the vestals of old, it will be a work worthy of so great a result."

*Maria Montessori Spontaneous Activity in Education The Advanced Montessori Method pg. 240*

Maren Schmidt, one of the keynote speakers from the past conference told us to be kind to ourselves, allow mistakes to happen and to grow from experiences. We have a big task and that job is to educate the human potential. Now are those not Maria Montessori's words and the title of her book? *To Educate the Human Potential*. What does this mean to you? What are you going to do with it? How are you going to do it? Have you read it lately?

I wish you a wonderful year ahead and keep up the great work! Thank you!

*Claudia Langlois,  
CAMT President*

## Cosmic Storytelling—Conference Workshop Review – by Sukhsehj Kaur

Like most of the Montessori audience in attendance at the CAMT Conference in November, I wasn't sure what to expect from Jennifer Morgan's presentation, only that I was immediately intrigued by the subject matter. The story of the cosmos, and her unique take on it through dramatic storytelling was, to say the least, intriguing.

Jennifer Morgan didn't disappoint. She had our attention from the moment she opened her workshop with an activity of grounding and rooting ourselves while opening our hearts up to the great cosmos.

Then came the storytelling. The best way to appreciate Jennifer's gifts is simply to sit back and to allow her to take you on a journey. She began by letting us know that, as soon as the sound of her thunder tube faded, she'd no longer be Jennifer, but the voice of the universe... and so it was. She began, and her voice took on a dramatic and theatrical tone, as she invited us to journey with her all the way back to the beginning of the Universe:

*"I am the Universe. I am 14 billion years old, and you too are 14 billion years old because you are a part of me. A story about me is a story about you..."*

Listening to Jennifer speak was like watching a cosmic movie that went back to the beginning of time, and started with a tiny speck that went on to explain in simple yet dramatic detail the Big Bang, the formation of elements, to the formation of stars, galaxies, even supernovas and ultimately to the formation of earth! We were on the edge of our seats and didn't at all feel like we were learning cold hard facts with no context. It was a beautiful, interwoven story being told in the first 'person' by the Universe itself. How magnificent!

Later Jennifer encouraged us to *be engaged, be amazed, and be creative* when trying to spark the joy of discovery in our students. We could see her passion for invoking awe in her audience, when she donned a magnificent flowing black robe that lit up with a hundred tiny lights to represent the universe!

Story telling is a powerful tool for all ages from the youngest toddlers, to casa students, to elementary

and beyond. While, the Cosmic Story was geared to elementary curriculum, the audience of Montessori teachers was a mix of all grade levels. At the end of Jennifer's workshop, we were all given time to share ideas, and teachers from all levels felt a new spark of inspiration for storytelling and couldn't wait to implement it into their next lessons at circle time.

We are a universal species of storytellers. From generations and generations it is how history, heritage and culture has been passed down to us before the advent of the written word. At Jennifer Morgan's workshop, we were reminded of this gift of the spoken word and inspired to use this gift to further spark amazement and awe in our students.

Jennifer left us with these beautiful words:

*What does it take to make a child?*

*It takes a universe to make a child.*

*It takes 14 billion years to make a child.*

For more information of Jennifer Morgan, visit [www.universestories.com](http://www.universestories.com)

### **Books by Jennifer Morgan - Universe Story Trilogy:**

#### **BORN WITH A BANG:**

The Universe Tells Our Cosmic Story (Book 1)

Cosmology for everyone, this is a story of the universe from the Big Bang to the formation of Earth, in the form of a letter written by the thirteen-billion-year-old universe itself to an Earthling.

#### **FROM LAVA TO LIFE:**

The Universe Tells Our Earth Story (Book 2)

The Universe continues with the story of Earth from the beginning of life up to the extinction of dinosaurs.

#### **MAMMALS WHO MORPH:**

The Universe Tells Our Evolution Story (Book 3)

Covers the story of mammals from 65 million years ago to today, including the human story.

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## Applied Behaviour Analysis—Conference Workshop Review – by Tessie Burton

### Incorporating Applied Behaviour Analysis in Montessori Settings

#### *A Workshop with Shawn Carter*

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) is not something that we are taught in our Montessori training, yet it is something that is potentially very useful when we are working with children, especially those on the autism spectrum disorder. Many of us face the challenge of integrating children with autism or other special needs into our classrooms, yet most of us have not had any specialized training on how to make the inclusion of these children easier for everyone involved.

ABA specialist, Shawn Carter, presented a very practical approach on how we as Montessori teachers can incorporate the ABA technique within our classrooms. He began by first giving us an explanation of what ABA is and how in some ways the Montessori Method follows many of the same principles. He also gave examples of everyday life situations from the perspective of an autistic child and helped us to better understand that their way of thinking or perception can be very different from ours.

This particular workshop was an hour and a half in length, which obviously isn't long enough to learn too much about ABA, but it was enough time for us to learn many of the basics. It was a good introduction for teachers just starting off and for the more seasoned teachers. Some of us were there because we have children with autism in our classrooms and were already doing the best with the resources and knowledge we have to guide these children and encourage their development. Many of us were already incorporating techniques we were familiar and comfortable with without truly knowing if this was the correct approach to take. Shawn certainly put our minds at ease with his knowledge and understanding of both ABA and the Montessori Method.

It is important to keep in mind that throughout our teaching careers, we will at some point have a child with special needs in our classroom. One of the things that I find so wonderful about the Montessori Method is that it can be applied when working with ALL children regardless of their abilities. This Method is truly a marvelous way to integrate all children into a classroom community where they will be able to find their place and get a good start in life.

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## Building Brains the Montessori Way—Conference Workshop Review – by Shweta Kandoi

#### *A Workshop with Maren Schmidt*

I had an opportunity of my life time to hear Ms. Maren Schmidt speak. One word that describes the whole workshop is "Kuleana". Kuleana is one's personal sense of responsibility. The person possessing Kuleana, believes in the strength of this value, and will be quick to say, "I accept my responsibilities, and I will be held accountable."

This sentence/word is so powerful and motivating that if any person decides to follow it then he/she will never be without guidance or happiness. I realized after the workshop that it's very important for a

teacher to rejuvenate herself, only if we are motivated can we motivate the little souls. We as teachers are not perfect or know everything. It's okay to say that I will get back to you. We have to love and be respectful, to show the little children, how to love and be respectful. Positive attitude is the key to success.

*"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever." - Mahatma Gandhi*

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## Teacher Stages of Growth—Conference Workshop Review – by Gillian Lucy

### *A Workshop with Zahra Foroud*

At the November conference, I had the pleasure of meeting Zahra Foroud and hearing her speak. Her passion for Montessori, in the classroom and how it has manifested itself throughout her life is inspiring. Mrs. Foroud described to us the importance of the prepared environment in the Montessori classroom. Being sure we are prepared, that we take the time to observe the children and manage the classroom appropriately. As well, she spoke about the Planes of Development and how an understanding of these deepen our understanding of the children, allowing us as teachers to prepare the environment in a way that fits each particular classes' dynamics.

Zahra explained that by having the classroom prepared and the teacher prepared, the lessons can come easily. She connected the method we use to teach our students, to our own everyday lives. The Three Period lesson is a method, a tool, that is used by Montessori teachers every day to convey important lessons—we introduce, practice and eventually the child gains perfection!! We also use this method in our own lives though, not just in the classroom. Whether it be in raising our own children, or learning how to drive, the Three Period lesson is in effect. A good teacher never stops practicing, we are always learning something new through preparation, self-evaluation, observing and allowing for growth in the classroom and in our lives.

### **CAMT Boar of Directors with Maren Schmidt and Jennifer Morgan**



## Developing Leadership Skills—Conference Workshop Review – by Barbara Brown

### *A Workshop with Paula Glasgow*

At the November CAMT 2015 Annual Conference I had the great pleasure of attending the workshop titled “Developing Leadership Skills” which was presented by Paula Glasgow, Dean of the Montessori Teachers College. She began by mentioning that leadership skills are important for a Montessori teacher because we believe in the benefits of the Montessori Method and want others to know and understand what these benefits are.

She asked the audience to focus on two people that they thought were good leaders as she went on to describe leadership and what makes a good leader. Leaders possess certain characteristics. They have enthusiasm, vision, passion, determination and clear thinking. They learn from their mistakes, turn challenges into opportunities, are action oriented, entrepreneurial, optimistic, take risks, are alone, don't take things personally, adopt to change and do suffer self doubt. They think outside the box and motivate others. An authentic leader is reliable, trustworthy and not false. Good leaders don't point out the weakness of individuals in front of others. Good leaders always have a Plan B and they are not afraid to change their mind when a plan doesn't or can't work. Remember that you won't look indecisive if you show the logic of your choice. Montessori leaders are committed to the Montessori philosophy, a belief in the child's ability to develop independence, and through spiritual transformation have a desire to live in harmony with all of nature.

We watched a short video which described members of Young Global Leaders who are committed to serve society by collaboration, learning and action. Together they are expressing views in their chosen areas of global leadership which include environmental sustainability, relieving suffering by working to stop the harm caused by global inequality, opposing deals that benefit pharmaceutical companies, listening versus technology and literacy versus technology.

There are several different leadership styles. All work at different times and for different reasons. These include:

- Autocratic leadership – led by a dictator;
- Democratic leadership – a collaborative leader (needs interpersonal connections to make decisions, and make people around them feel that they have contributed to decisions – e.g., setting up a school parents' committee in your school);
- Laissez faire leadership – a leader chooses to leave it to others to make decisions;
- Narcissistic leadership – the leader is centre of the universe and everything revolves around them.

### *How do we develop leadership skills?*

Begin with self reflection. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Reflect on your own vision – what do you want to accomplish in life and do you make a difference? Who do you listen to? Do you welcome suggestions and advice? Do you welcome change into your life? Are you open to active listening (even about yourself)? Do you accept opportunities to learn? Do you embrace change and are you open to personal transformation? Do you realize what's holding you back? Do you put yourself out of your comfort zone? Becoming an effective leader is uncomfortable.

You're not finished yet! Using your vision, and the information gained from everyone you have spoken to, plan to leave a legacy. How will you complement your vision in a concrete way and what action will you take? With whom will you discuss your plan? Commit your thoughts to action, collaboration and learning. Become involved yourself. Continue to listen. Accept opportunities with courage and enthusiasm. Welcome change. Carry your vision forward by self knowledge, vision, opportunities for listening, expecting setbacks and obstacles and knowing how to get help and not being afraid to ask. Remember that great leaders are surrounded by people who are experts in their field. Don't be afraid to voice your views and don't be affected by how others perceive you. Know that you are part of a network of influence and write articles and keep up to date. An example for a Montessori vision may be the introduction or non-introduction of technology in the Casa classroom or on increasing children's awareness of our planet and creating an awareness of how to take care of it.

Paula included several quotes on leadership

*Leadership greatness comes by beginning something that does not end with me.* (Robin Sharma)

*Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because s/he wants to do it.* (Dwight D. Eisenhower)

*When the best leader's work is done, people say, "We did it ourselves!"* (Lao Tsu)

So much of the above reminded me of ideas expressed by Maria Montessori in her teaching that I was anxious to make sure that these ideas had not become buried under day to day activities in my own classroom. Becoming involved, being aware of your own leadership worth while working with others and moving ahead with ideas that you really believe in are things that everyone can make part of their daily life. The optimism that you show will be noticeable on your relations with both students and other teachers. Thank you Paula!

## Practical Life—Conference Workshop Review by Katrina Mosscrop

### Practical Life is the Most Important Area of Your Classroom

#### *A Workshop with Zahra Foroud*

Zahra Foroud is a passionate educator who included many anecdotes and photographs in her workshop titled “Practical Life in the Montessori Classroom.” Practical life may be presented in the forms of practical life exercises as well as by peace activities. They are the most important area of your classroom not only because they help children practice their independence but also provides them with a sense of comfort and whole self development.

In her presentation, Zahra offered three points to remember when preparing practical life in our classrooms. Firstly, practical life is traditionally real, not make believe. Secondly, children perform the tasks to improve themselves, whereas adults perform them to improve the environment process. Lastly, children repeat over and over unlike adults who tend to take short cuts.

Zahra described practical life exercises according to five categories: (1) elementary movement; (2) care of environment; (3) care of person; (4) grace and courtesy; and (5) control of movement. For each, she made suggestions and invited the audience to share ideas. Movement involved exercises like opening and closing doors, pouring, spooning, sponging, walking and carrying objects. To enhance caring for the environment, Zahra suggested adding magnifying glasses to a nature table that displays special items children have found in the schoolyard, and making fabric leaves available for sweeping. Care of person may be practiced by practical life exercises such as hand washing and dressing frames. Being helpful and role playing the act of making way for others and proper table manners expresses grace and courtesy in the classroom. Encouraging children to walk on the line and play the silence game will help them to learn to control their movement.

In addition to conducting practical life exercises, children engage in practical life by visiting the peace table. This aspect of practical life helps nurture the spirit of the child. Zahra described four essential components for a peace curriculum, including: (1) compassion; (2) cooperation; (3) conflict resolution; and (4) cultural differences.

*Can we teach compassion?* Yes! Zahra suggested telling stories about people who help others, sponsoring a child from a different country as a class, contributing to your local food bank and showing forgiveness by listening and understanding instead of reacting.

*Can we teach cooperation?* Try activities that involve a variety of ages such as acting out Stone Soup by Jon J. Muth, showing pictures and stories about great peace makers, and making a year-end peace book.

*Can we teach conflict resolution?* This is where the peace table comes into your peace curriculum. When children have a disagreement, direct them to a peace table and guide them through talking to each other and solving their problem. Zahra explained this should be a place you go with love not frustration so make it beautiful by including fresh flowers. She also described using a peace mat with special objects for children to touch and hold. Additionally, a peace box can be made that gives children a place to put written words or drawings of their emotions.

*Can we teach cultural differences?* Zahra stated that understanding and learning different cultures will develop love and peace in children’s hearts. Invite parents to share their cultural backgrounds, celebrate different holidays and participate in local celebrations to inspire appreciation for cultural differences.

In her workshop, Zahra reminded us of the significant role practical life plays in the development of the whole child. Specifically, it enables the development of the mind and body through carefully arranged practical life exercises that foster movement, care of environment, care of person, grace and courtesy, and control of movement. Practical life also inspires the development of the spirit through peace education including compassion, cooperation, conflict resolution, and cultural differences. How do you begin? Try this inspiring lesson that Zahra presented at the beginning of her workshop about the five human potentials.

### The Five Human Potentials

*Materials:* candle, string, rock, angel, book.

*Discussion:* “You have special gifts.” Light a candle to represent the emotion potential: “Shine your light”. Pass a ball of string around the circle to represent social potential: “We are all connected together.” Show a rock to represent the physical: “Feel this rock. It is strong. You are strong. I am strong.” Carefully place an angel figure to symbolize the spiritual: “I feel love.” Open a small book to represent the intellect: “This book is full of ideas. We can learn something new. These are your gifts.”

## Seeds, Grains and Pearls - Wendy Agnew

As chunks of war and slabs of extinction slam into the membrane of the future, it becomes expedient to focus on the multifarious phenomena of interface and catalyst. The problems do not disappear, but transform when seen from edges and inceptions. (They also tend to become more interesting, more faceted, not quite diamonds of potential but not quite clobbers of Cain either.)

Working with interface is vital, but can be elusive because control must be given to the subject. Objectivity can provide entrance, but to embrace and understand, demands affective resonance. *How does it feel on the inside? Walk a mile in my shoes. What is the space between thee and me? And catalyst ... what begins it? A bang? A whimper? And are endings the necessary prelude to new beginnings? Montessori suggests, in To Educate the Human Potential, that the prime concern of educators is: to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination.*

I look for seeds – as catalysts ... or grains of sand - prompting layers of interface - in the oyster of time.

Here is one tiny example:

### Animal Mentors

Materials: Animal puppets or models, story cards, scarves, instruments, etc.

Motivation: To foster an innate sense of respect and wonder for the other-than-human world. – To provide a catalyst for the embodied knowing in our evolving brains and bones...

Method: Phase 1 – Researching ~ object to subject - Guide prepares for a humble act of what Morris Berman calls *participating consciousness*<sup>1</sup> by translating information into dialogue... (Make into little booklets or cards in the subjective voice – shorter for younger children, longer for the elders – excerpt Included below\*)

Phase 2 – Meeting and Greeting - Once intimate with the wonders of a particular animal, Guide dons puppet – hand made, donated, or purchased, and introduces it to the children. This is wonderfully fun and evolves as you go. Tip - focus on the puppet as s/he speaks. Play with comparative anatomy...“How do you pick up *your* food?” “Where are *your* houses?” “What’s become of your tail and claws? Etc.” The tone is respectful, and everyone takes turns answering, asking, and following the thread of the discussion.

Introduce the idea that animals have much to teach humans and, that some humans ‘go to school’ in the wild, often learning from animal mentors.

Phase 3 – Challenge the children to gather in small groups (of approx. 3), choose one puppet per group and its card, and, via whispered discussion, find a way to tell parts of that animal’s story using scarves, bodies, simple props, etc.

It helps to give a time limit and encourage the use of slow motion, sound effects, and freeze frames.

Children may rotate puppet as narrator while the other children in the group help animate the story.

### Manipulating scarves as water and waves



## Seeds, Grains and Pearls (continued from Page 8)

Musings: After the groups present, have a quiet period for reflection and then share thoughts about kinship and learning between human and other animals. Let one of the children be the chairperson and guide the discussion. This can lead to artwork, poetry, journaling, further research, sculpture, the mathematics of conservation, collaborations of letter-writing, fund-raising ...etc. And can be tailored for children aged 5 and onwards.

More: Meditation and guided visualization can provide a ground for mask and mural...

*Bird Mask – (feathers and plaster) & King-Sized Bed Sheet Mural inspired by Dorset Print*  
Stories of the Universe can inspire animations of evolution... (See resources below).



We may provide seeds and grains, but it's children who create the pearls. In animating the following, it was a delight to see a large group of children organizing themselves from smallest to largest to make a deft shell exchange while a 'hungry octopus' waited in the 'shallows.' Comment from smallest 'crab' – "poor fellow – he has to eat someone – I think I might have to give myself up!" All the 'Hermit Crabs' objected strenuously, so we made the octopus a juicy fish from several spare scarves and both the food chain and the vacancy chain were satisfied!

*\*Excerpt: There is a cool thing we do! We sometimes make vacancy chains. Even though we're called 'hermits' we work together! When we find a nice big shell we gather around it and form a sort of line from largest to smallest. When the largest crab moves into the new shell, the second largest of us gets the discard. Then the third largest crab can have the shell the second largest crab gave up and so on! No time to argue with hungry predators nearby. Are we ready???* ©

### Resources:

#### Videos:

Hermit Crabs - masters in cooperation and tactile finesse

Shell Exchange (vacancy chain) – from BBC Earth

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1dnocPOXDQ>

Third season from Jonathan Bird's Blue World

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dYFALyP2e7U>

#### Books: The Universe Story Trilogy

*Born with a Bang: The Universe Tells Our Cosmic Story*  
(Book 1)

*From Lava to Life: The Universe Tells Our Earth Story*  
(Book 2)

*Animals Who Morph: The Universe Tells Our Evolution Story* (Book 3)

Author: Jenifer Morgan, Illustrator: Dana Lynn Anderson

A recent book for children (age 2-7) develops a profound sense of interconnection with the Universe and fellow inhabitants through evolution... **Grandmother Fish**, Author: Jonathan Tweet, Illustrator: Karen Lewis – review ... <http://www.npr.org/sections/13.7/2015/10/29/452848537/a-childs-first-book-of-evolution>

And of course ... Go out into nature and immerse ...

#### REFERENCE

1. Morris Berman, *The Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

## A Visit from Philip Snow Gang by Andrea Lulka

A question for all teachers: When was the last time you gave a lesson - any lesson - without any content outcomes in mind whatsoever?

I was reminded of the importance of this last week, when I was privileged to witness Dr. Phil Snow Gang in action, both with adults and with children. Phil visited Toronto recently to reconnect with some old acquaintances, and to share some aspects of his rich Montessori legacy in the hope of inspiring Montessorians to re-examine the purpose of our work, and to engage in a dialogue that would connect and build understanding.

When asked to engage with grades 5-8 at the Montessori Jewish Day School on a cosmic level, Phil engaged with the students, not with the content. He sat on the floor to tell them his story, and invited each student to share "the most interesting place you've ever been." With answers as varied as the Cayman Islands, Disney World and "my room" it was clear that the students were at ease. What emerged, following the showing of the film "The Awakening Universe" was a simple, open-ended, very lightly mediated dialogue. What we saw was a group of students keenly interested in exploring and expressing their ideas. In the words of a grade 7 student: "We watched a film about how the universe was created and how we are connected to the universe. He told us how we live in the habitable zone of the Milky Way, and the habitable zone of our solar system. Dr. Gang inspired a lot of the kids to ask questions and we talked about the universe, the earth, and science fiction."

Phil was also asked to speak with small, diverse group of Montessorians, representing various organizations, training centers, schools, and selves. During this session, he shared his story, and invited us to see how the cosmic threads that connect us to the universe and to each other weave through all of our stories.

Phil began his Montessori journey, as so many do, as a parent.... especially intrigued by the concept of Erdkinder. He made the Bergamo pilgrimage in the early 1970's, to study under Eleanor Honegger and

Camilo Grazzini. In the mid-70s he developed several working groups to explore the Erdkinder idea. Together with Mary Loew he organized the 1981AMI International Study Conference: Adolescence, An Exploration. Through his Montessori work, Phil developed close personal relationships with Mario Montessori Sr. and Mario Jr, who served on his doctoral committee. Phil was a driving force behind the Montessori adolescent program revival in North America, and was in the Training of Trainers program when he became disenchanted; he saw a lack of congruence between the process Dr. Montessori wanted teachers to undertake with the children and the manner in which adult relationships worked in Montessori institutions.

And so he forged his own path, working with several Higher Learning institutions to create integral and integrative transformative learning programs for educators, forming close ties with scientists, politicians and authors. In 1995, Phil and his partner Marsha founded the TIES Masters of Integrative Education programs at Endicott College. Among the first of its kind, TIES represents an online Montessori environment for adults, and is designed to support the personal transformation which Dr. Montessori often and firmly asserted was the key to the effective implementation of Montessori education.

Phil realized along the way that just as young children grow through interactions with the environment, adults grow through dialogue. Dialogue, in this case, being a way of engaging in observation of self and others while remaining open to varied viewpoints and with the goal of creating shared meaning. Dialogue is a path to normalization for the adult, as surely as the work of the hand is to the young child.

When his path took him to New Zealand, Phil formed a close friendship with Binda Goldsborough, a course assistant to Dr. Montessori before and after WWII, and whose father had been the head of the British Montessori Society. Binda made a living bequest of her personal correspondence with Mario Sr. to Phil and Marsha. In these letters, he reminds her that the work of normalization is the key to the development of the new human.

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## A Visit from Philip Snow Gang (continued from Page 10)

When we look at the final years of Dr. Montessori's work, and the last books she published, Phil reminded us, we can see very clearly that she was focused on the creation of the new human, on education as a means for achieving peace through this process of creation.

Normalization is an ongoing process, throughout our lives, in which we as adults can engage consciously. I invite you, as Phil invited us, to consider what we might see - what adjectives you would use - in a normalized person at any age.

What followed Phil's presentation was dialogue, in smaller groups, based on questions. It was inspiring to see members of various Montessori organizations, rarely together in one room, engaging in open-ended dialogue. There is a poignant beauty to a question that cannot be answered. When we are able to sit with unanswerable questions, we grow. We open. We expand. We enter a space in which we surrender to the unknown, in which possibility abounds, in which paradox is possible. It is a space in which heart-wisdom can flourish.

In the end, this is what we want to create for the children in our environments - a space in which their whole being can flourish.

In order to provide such a space for children, adults need a space to flourish too. We need each other. We need to provide each other with that space - to create connections and dialogues amongst ourselves as Montessorians so that we can continue to grow, to normalize, and to undertake the ever so important perpetual spiritual transformation.

Amongst those letters to Binda was one written shortly before the outbreak of WWII. It is particularly poignant today, for us. In it, Mario says: "'Do not let the present mar your mind and your soul; retain that freshness of spirit and that love that are so necessary to carrying out our work.'

Our work has never been more important.

### CAMT Conference Presenters...

