



"Follow the Child"



camt Talk



Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

June 2015

### Message from the President



What a winter! Frozen pipes, power outages, snow shovelling, walking in the snow, skiing, fires in the wood stove, keeping warm, feeding the birds and waiting for the icicles to melt are some activities the winter season brought us. It's not all that bad, but it certainly was long and it makes us appreciate what spring has sprung upon us. Animals coming out of hibernation and dormancy, plants sprouting out of the ground, buds opening, fish spawning, yard work and a natural desire to want to play and not work, spring fever has come. Now that the sun is finally heading towards the Tropic of Cancer (I know it's the orbit of the Earth) the warmth has arrived to the Northern Hemisphere and it's May. Yes, May, and in six weeks time another school year will have come to an end. So hard to believe, which makes the phrase "time flies when you are having fun", true.

Throughout the school year teachers have been busy preparing lessons, planning, observing, documenting and ensuring that each child progresses positively. As teachers you have worked hard and have done your best to guide the child to their full potential. Your entire being goes into the classroom to ensure these young people are thriving. There are times when it is exhausting, overwhelming and frustrating, yet it is rewarding as you have had such a great impact on your students' lives and you have assisted them with their growth. It is big work. It's work that requires peace, calm and courage to be confident in knowing that you are doing your best.

Teachers give all day long: to the students, administrators, families and others. We are told to be inspiring, motivating and have a sense of awe in what we do. Does this come naturally, is it within us or does it have to be learned? What is it that inspires you as a

*Continued on Page 2*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

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CAMT Annual Conference

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### Inside this issue:

- \* Have Courage, Faith and Patience 4
- Montessori Research 5
- \* Montessori Cosmic Education 6
- Materials Making Workshop Review 7
- The Child, the Adult, and the Prepared Environment 8

**\* FEATURED ARTICLES BY 2015 CAMT CONFERENCE KEYNOTE PRESENTERS:**

**Maren Schmidt and Jennifer Morgan**

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

teacher and a person? As a teacher, do you get inspired when you hear about the successful growth of schools? Schools who have expanded with Toddler, Adolescence or High School programs, and this is happening despite the conflicts with Bill 10. Do you become rejuvenated when you hear a speaker who speaks to your heart about Montessori education and reminds us that we need to be aware of other educational researchers and programs? Is it a workshop or seminar that provides you with a new idea that can be shared with the students on the following Monday? Or is it something that you do for yourself that brings about the rejuvenation which you can share with your students? Regardless of what motivates you, it's important that time is given for tasks and for rest, in order to find a balance in your life.

Since November, the business of being president of CAMT has become a reality. I certainly have enough to do, but I always think there is a greater purpose for everything. There is work that needs to be done within our community of teachers, bringing one another together, further enhancing professional development and gathering a voice for commonalities of Montessori are some of the reasons. A big thank you to CCMA and AMI needs to be given, as they are working together to ensure that Montessori's authenticity remains within our schools and that Montessori remains strong within the education system. As teachers we need to support the administrators by providing the children with the best educational experiences we can.

Myself, I find learning about the history and the people who have made up Montessori education interesting. What inspired the Montessori pioneers of Canada? What is their story? In the past few issues, CAMT has acknowledged Audrey Sillick through written memoirs about her years of life, commitment to Montessori and personal interests.

CAMT received many memoirs honouring Audrey and it was decided that we would continue to honour Audrey beyond one issue. We need to continually recognize the roots of Montessori in Canada. If you have a memory of Audrey that you would like to share, we would be pleased to print it. If you know somebody beyond Ontario's borders

who has something to share, please pass this request on. CAMT is also welcoming biographies on other Canadian Montessorians so we can learn more about this important history. All these people had to have been inspired by something. What was it?

What do you do to spark the curiosity and awe within yourself? Taking the time to do something for yourself is important and we have heard this from many people, organizations and practitioners. Often this is easier said than done; yet we need to remember to take this time.

We all have many tasks, we multi-task and we make it work. I operate a school, teach, wear many hats and the lists of jobs seems to grow. There are many times when I don't take time for myself, yet I take time to do something that is valuable to me. I volunteer at a donkey sanctuary, a place that rescues neglected, unwanted and abused donkeys; it is also home to rescued goats, sheep, cats, mules, a horse and 3 pot bellied pigs. All animals have a story of their own and the objective is to adopt them out once they have been rehabilitated.

Every Sunday morning, as the sun is rising, I go to Primrose Donkey Sanctuary; when I arrive it is peaceful. The animals are calm, they acknowledge my presence with quiet brays but they know it's not time for their feeding. It is this time of the day I cherish, as I feel connected to what matters: the earth, universe, everyone and everything around me, including myself. I scoop donkey poop, fill troughs with hay, assist with feeding and medication, and give the animals affection. In the morning, as the sun continues to rise, the donkeys begin to awaken and then their loyal care taker, Sheila Burns, comes into picture; a woman who is 69 years of age and is as dedicated to the donkeys as we are to the children. As she steps out of her farm house with at least 20 cats surrounding her, the ruckus begins, imagine forty plus donkeys greeting their favourite person with brays, whines and donkey hugs. It is an incredible experience. Gradually, the volume subsides and the donkeys calm themselves and proceed about their day, with intermittent moments of excitement, like the false fatigue in the children. As the day progresses, other volunteers arrive and we have great camaraderie, but it's not the same as

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## Message from the President *(continued from page 2)*

the early morning beauty and peace of the animals.

After spending the past 3 years with these donkeys I have observed that they have Grace and Courtesy. They respect one another, and acknowledge their elders who can live to be 50 years of age. Donkeys know when another donkey is injured and they take care around this creature; presently, a miniature donkey assists a blind donkey around the farm. They know when a donkey is going to die and they will stand in a semi-circle, head held not as high and are still; one may bray, but in general there is silence. Once the donkey has passed, the donkeys observe, have their closure and slowly movement begins again. Donkeys nurture their young as long as they are together, they teach them manners, respect and love. They need the companionship of a best friend, and they will pine and mourn their companion if gone. Donkeys like people, yet they are intrigued by children and people who have physical and mental disabilities. They are empathetic, compassionate and display love in their actions; there is no judgement. They share their space, their food and accept new donkeys willingly. They play, stand around, eat, and do their thing and once at the sanctuary, they no longer work as it is their time for rest. Despite these animals' stories, they forgive, they may not forget, but in time they will come to trust and they will be loyal. They don't hold a grudge. They are stubborn in nature, but will budge if they know they are in the wrong. If they are frustrated with another donkey, they will state it as it is, a kick to the chest as if to say, "Stop it, back off" and this is respected. If humans bother them, they will walk away.

This time for me is important. I do it because I care about the animals and I know Sheila now counts on me. At times I don't feel like going because Sunday arrives so quickly and another week is to come. Once I am at the barn, those thoughts quickly diminish and a peaceful calm takes over. It's a time for reflection, quieting the mind, absorbing the week that has gone past and the week ahead. Plans, goals and conversations take place within my mind and it comes to fruition. Yes I leave with dirty nails, stinky boots and messed up hair, but I also leave with a sense of inner calm and am more mindful. Spending time with these creatures has increased my patience,

empathy and compassion; in fact it has made me a better person. It has increased my time, my energy and the ability to give more to my community, assisting those in need or running the school. These donkeys have taught me a lot and their energy has provided me with more, and this is one of the ways I take care of myself.

Whatever you choose to do for yourself, enjoy it. Listen to your thoughts and take notice. Your body and mind know what you can do and by doing so, you will become clearer, focused, content and more productive in your life activities. Not easy to do at times, yet 5 or 10 minutes can be found, even if you have to lock yourself in your bathroom or an attic.

At one of CAMT's recent workshops, Paula Glasgow talked about the transformation of the teacher. She said that in order for the child to grow and be normalized, the teacher must transform by becoming more in tune with themselves. Take notice of your actions, model behaviours that you would like the children to demonstrate, exhibit Grace and Courtesy, set the calm pace and lead by example. Paula stated that the children will follow the lead and what better way to spend a day than in a classroom amongst children who complete purposeful work with awe and intrinsic motivation; not forced, but brought about naturally and gently. It is big work and it is getting done. In today's age, the children do need the transformation of the teacher, they need calm and patient leadership. Within our Montessori schools the children are fortunate to have wonderful leaders and we are fortunate to have wonderful students.

So my wish for you is to enjoy your time, regardless of what you are doing. It is life's experience that is being offered to you and you can learn from it, acknowledge it, welcome it and grow, or you can groan. The choice is yours to find that inner person and welcome the growth. The children need our transformation for their success and the Montessori community needs it in order to grow with purpose.

Enjoy!

*Claudia Langlois,*  
*CAMT President*

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## Have Courage, Faith and Patience *by Maren Schmidt*

There are three qualities we need when working with children: *Courage, Faith and Patience*.

- Courage to know we are doing the right thing.
- Faith in knowing that by observing children involved in activity that they will reveal their true selves to us.
- Patience to endure the inevitable obstacles.

**Courage** comes from knowing our own hearts, our values, and our principles. Once we are clear about our direction and why we want to go there, courage seems to follow.

Courage allows us to show confidence in our children's abilities by giving them responsibility. With courage, we seek our children's advice and opinions. We avoid overprotecting or rescuing our children from difficulties. This all requires courage.

Courage allows us to focus on our children's strengths and zero in on improvement versus perfection. Courage helps us see our children as unique personalities, each a person on an individual schedule of development. Courage allows us to separate mistakes from personal worth. Courage allows us to help our children become independent. We know that allowing our children to stand on their own two feet is desirable.

**Faith** allows us to know we will get to the other side, somehow. Perhaps not as we originally planned, but often with better results. We have to have faith in the natural process of human development, and that children will make positive choices concerning their interests and passions. Learning with interest and passion leads to the development of skills and talents that build personal strength.

Faith allows us to help our children find the place that intersects with what they love to do and what they do well. As we watch for signs of how a child spends time and what he or she is happiest doing, we discover that child's true self. Our faith is certainly a virtue in helping our children reach their potential.

**Patience** is key when we work with children. Being aware of patterns of development helps us know whenever difficulty is encountered that "this too shall pass."

Patience allows us to endure uncertainty. The messy six-year-old journeying through various stages to emerge as an adult. The detached teenager transforming with confidence into a new person. The silent college student emerging as an independent young adult.

We nourish, we protect, we strengthen, and we wait for children to grow and change on their own timetable. Our gift of patience allows our children to rise above obstacles that might otherwise deter them. Complications in personal development are unavoidable, and at times, each of us has a long hill to climb, a boulder we can't get over, a river we can't ford. Our patience grants our children a chance to reconsider their paths, and models a potentiality for another course of action.

Life offers unforeseen growth, challenges, and possibilities. As parents and teachers, we are the gardeners creating conditions for optimum growth. We nourish, we protect, and we strengthen. We wait for the harvest. Our work requires courage, faith and patience.

*Maren Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland. She has over 25 years experience working with children and holds teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale. Contact her at [maren\\_schmidt@me.com](mailto:maren_schmidt@me.com). Visit [MarenSchmidt.com](http://MarenSchmidt.com).*

### CALL FOR RESEARCH POSTERS

Share your research about Montessori education at the 2015 CAMT Conference.

For more details, visit  
[www.camt100.ca/CallForPosters.pdf](http://www.camt100.ca/CallForPosters.pdf)

**Deadline for submissions:**  
**June 30 2015**

## Montessori Research – by Katrina Mosscrop

Sometimes you just want the facts! Here are significant outcomes of Montessori education.

**Montessori students perform better on standardized tests in math and language than students from conventional schools** (Chattin-McNichols, 1992, 1998; Dawson, 1987; Lillard, 2006). While Montessori students do not receive grades for their work and may not be as familiar with tests, they demonstrated a more complete understanding of the abstract concepts being tested than other students perhaps due to their work with hands-on materials (Lillard, 2006; Seldin, 2006). More research is needed to account for other variables including socio-economic status and education of parents (Lopata, Wallace, Finn, 2005).

**Montessori students have more optimal learning experiences called “flow” than students in conventional schools** (Lillard, & Else-Quest, 2006; Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005; Rathunde, 2001, 2003). These are moments when challenge and ability are perfectly matched to encourage in depth engagement for extended periods of time. A flow state is when students are their most creative, innovative and joyous. According to Rathunde (2003), Montessori students more often felt they were working with peers, rated a higher level of engagement and enjoyment for their tasks and perceived the teacher as more approachable than students in traditional schools. They also keep trying! Montessori students experience failure and make mistakes everyday so they are less likely to be discouraged from challenges that present themselves.

**Montessori students develop fundamental skills for long-term success** (Diamond, 2011; 2012; Lillard, 2012). These skills are known by psychologists as “executive functions” and primarily include inhibitory control (resisting habits, temptations, or distractions), working memory (mentally holding and using information), and cognitive flexibility (adjusting to change). Montessori children at a young age have demonstrated higher executive functioning than other students (Diamond, 2011). The executive functions they develop now mature in early adulthood. They, however, act as predictors for adult behaviour and resulting success.

The Stanford marshmallow test (Mischel, 1972; 2014) and subsequent follow-up studies found that those who were able to wait 15 minutes for two marshmallows as preschoolers were as young adults significantly less likely to have problems with behaviour, drug addiction or obesity by the time they were in high school, compared with kids who gobbled the snack in less than a minute. The gratification-delayers also scored an average of 210 points higher on the SAT. One study by a Montessori teacher and researcher (Blahut, 2013) modified the marshmallow test. She explored the affect of practical life work, like a Montessori Table Washing Task, on effortful control in pre-school age children. All Montessori children in the study waited until the researcher returned to eat their marshmallows.

Furthermore, Montessori is argued by executive function specialists to be one of the most effective programs for improving children’s executive functions (Diamond, 2012; Lillard, 2012). Features that improve children’s executive functions include: (a) help children exercise their EFs and constantly challenge them to do so at higher levels; (b) reduce stress in the classroom; (c) rarely embarrass a child; (d) cultivate children’s joy, pride, and self-confidence; (e) take an active and hands-on approach to learning; (f) easily accommodate children progressing at different rates; (g) emphasize character development as well as academic development; (h) emphasize oral language; (i) engage children in teaching on another; and (j) foster social skills and bonding (Diamond, 2012, p. 338).

### How do I access more research?

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*Online peer reviewed journals, books, research syntheses, conference papers, technical reports, policy papers and articles from education magazines.*

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*Online bibliography of 16 000+ Montessori citations from 1909 to present.*

[AMS Action Research Warehouse](#)

*Online studies including AMS teacher research and Dissertation and Thesis award recipients.*

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## Montessori Cosmic Education and the Planes of Development *by Jennifer Morgan*

*"Let us give the child a vision of the whole universe . . . No matter what we touch, an atom, or a cell, we cannot explain it without knowledge of the wide universe."*

Dr. Maria Montessori  
(1870 - 1952)

Before Bill Gates, before David Christian, before Brian Swimme, and before Thomas Berry . . . . was Maria Montessori, the first educator to recognize the significance of the story of cosmic evolution as a foundational context for education and for understanding human identity. She set forth her pedagogy in her book *To Educate the Human Potential*, published in 1948.

As one of the first women medical doctors in Italy, she was trained in observation, and noticed that as the child moves into the elementary years, they begin to think abstractly and to ask questions such as: "Where did everything come from? Where did I come from? Where am I going?" That's the level, she reasoned, to introduce them to the Cosmic Story, through captivating storytelling.

[See the list below of DTJN member Montessori Teacher Training Programs that train in Cosmic Education.]

Developed over sixty years ago, Cosmic Ed has been tested in classrooms around the world and continues to evolve. There is a strong impulse emerging now in some training centers to see Cosmic Education across all levels from Infant Toddler through High School.

One such program is the Houston Montessori Center, directed by Dr. Betsy Coe. In June, Jennifer Morgan (DTJN President) gave a program at the Houston Montessori Center, Houston, Texas (US) for 225 teachers. Dr. Betsy Coe, director of the Houston Montessori Center shared how she sees Cosmic Education and the planes of development, which have been understood within the Montessori world for decades. The new development is to map Cosmic Education onto the planes.

### **The Three Planes of Development and Cosmic Education:**

#### Plane I (0 to 6): Sensorial Engagement

This is the phase when the child is immersed in the physical world, experiencing a sense of wonder, thrill, and absorption with a flower, a bug, worms, exploring the woods, getting wet in the rain. Most important in this phase to allow the child to follow their natural inclinations to explore the physical world, to experience it with rapt attention. Their first experience of the universe is through the senses.

#### Plane 2 (6 to 12): Intellectual Engagement

When the child shifts into a higher cognitive level, the Great Lessons, or Stories are introduced -- The Stories of the Universe, Life, Humans, Communication, and Math. All lessons are taught in an evolutionary context. The lessons are first taught as stories to engage the imagination, then followed with timelines and activities in all the disciplines -- sciences, geography, history, language, math, geometry, art, and music. Eventually, the child tells the story. It's important to note here the integral approach of cosmic education -- integrating mind, heart and body. Peace and environmental education flow naturally out of the Great Stories.

#### Plane 3 (12 to 18 and beyond): Responsibility and Practical Engagement

In this plane, there's a shift toward personal responsibility inside the larger context of an evolving universe. The understanding developed at the earlier planes is translated into action. In the School of the Woods Middle and High School directed by Dr. Betsy Coe, students in this plane build straw bale houses, run a farm and will soon operate a Bed and Breakfast business. "Cosmic Gift/Task," a central idea in Cosmic Education, suggests that everyone has a gift and task to perform on behalf of the whole. Just as plants have the gift of photosynthesis, it is also their task to release oxygen into the atmosphere for others to take up. They do it for selfish reasons, for their own survival, but their gift also provides a huge service to the whole. In this plane, the child, now growing toward adulthood, begins to understand their personal Cosmic Gift/Task inside the context of an evolving universe.

*Continued on Page 7*

## Cosmic Education *(continued from Page 6)*

Interestingly, since the planes are already so developed inside of the Montessori world, mapping on Cosmic Education is less about doing different things in the classroom, and more about the consciousness of the teacher, or the "spiritual preparation" of the teacher, as Dr. Montessori called it. In other works, it's more about orienting all activities, like a compass, to the larger context of an evolving universe.

DTJN members Michael and D'Neil Duffy wrote the book used in training centers to teach Cosmic Education titled: *Children of the Universe: Montessori Cosmic Education in the Elementary Classroom* which is posted on Network.

### **Montessori Teacher Training Programs in Cosmic Education:**

Merrie King, Director, Montessori Education Center of the Rockies  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/merrieking/>

Dr. Betsy Coe, Director, Houston Montessori Center  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/houstonmontessoricenter/>

Michael and D'Neil Duffy, Montessori Elementary Teacher Training Collaborative  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/michaelduffy/>  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/rebeccaduffy/>

Dr. Philip Snow Gang, Director, The Institute for Educational Studies (TIES) at Endicott College  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/philipsnowgang/>

Abbie Kelly, Director of Teacher Education Services, American Montessori Society, New York, NY, US  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/abbiekelly/>

Gary Davidson, Azoka and Seacoast Montessori Center  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/azoka/>

Ann Wilson, Director, Princeton Center Teacher Education, Princeton, NJ, US  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/annwilsonpcte/>

Mary Schneider, Executive Director, Montessori Education Institute of the NW, Bothell, WA  
<http://www.deeptimejourney.org/people/>

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## Materials Making Workshop Review

CAMT recently held a Material Making Workshop that was just what I was looking for. So often we attend Professional Development events, and the information you gain is invaluable, but it is not always something that you can put into action the next day. Toddler teachers were invited to a session on Arts, Crafts, and Circle time with Nandita Agarwala, where they made animal puppets for storytelling. Casa and Elementary teachers were invited to "Play Around" with Tessie Burton, where they made Classified Cards of the Theatre.

I attended the Casa/Elementary workshop about how to put on a play with young children and Tessie was very well prepared and knowledgeable. She also made the experience fun for everyone as we tried various improvisation games, having to let go of

some of our inhibitions and get involved. After a delicious mid-morning snack we went back to work, this time on creating the Classified Cards for the Theatre that Tessie had prepared for us. It was great to look around the room as people were using the paper cutters, gluing, and sharing stories about past plays we had attempted to put on in our own schools.

Thank you to Tessie and Nandita for taking the time to prepare all of the necessary materials, and to CAMT for providing this opportunity for hands-on Professional Development. I enjoyed it and hope you will hold more workshops like this in the future.

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## The Child, the Adult and the Prepared Environment by P. Donohue Shortridge

The task of each human is to fully develop himself. To begin to actualize this lifelong endeavor, the child first seeks grounding in his body, in the environment and in reality. Additionally, the child seeks out respectful, sensitive adults who will accompany him through his formative years. These sensitive adults offer the world to the child in small, manageable chunks that balance the child's need for emotional and physical safety with his impulse to explore. Hopefully, these foundations are present in the family setting.

Ideally then, the Montessori prepared environment is another place where the child will find conditions ideally suited to his cognitive, physical, emotional and spiritual development. It is here that the child will come to know himself and others in an environment expressly designed for his life. In other words, the purpose of the Montessori prepared environment is to offer an ideal setting where the child's life can flourish.

Children are born equipped to follow their unique developmental path. Their natural impulse to know the world drives them to learn, each developmental milestone mastered in its own time. The child feels safe in the Montessori prepared environment because his needs are met respectfully and faithfully.

*...the purpose of the the Montessori prepared environment is to offer an ideal setting where the child's life can flourish.*

From this safe base, the child becomes confident in himself enough to explore ever more widely. The adult's respectful approach of positive guidance or discipline fosters in the child an internal locus of control. The child learns that he is capable, that he can contribute in a meaningful way and that he can influence what happens to him.

If it is the child's job to construct the adult he is to uniquely become, then it is incumbent upon the adult to facilitate that growth rather than to impose her own will on him. The Montessori adult willingly relinquishes her own agenda for the child and instead learns from him what he needs next from the adult and from the environment and faithfully provides it. Fundamentally, the adult removes

external obstacles to the child's learning which are ironically often precipitated by the adults themselves.

*If it is the child's job to construct the adult he is to uniquely become, then it is incumbent upon the adult to facilitate that growth rather than to impose her own will on him..*

The adult models grace, self love and a sense of wonder about the world. She guides the child in his quest to make sense out of everyday experiences. She breathes life into the words she speaks, she moves slowly and gracefully at a pace that puts the child at ease. She is confident that the child will reveal his true nature given the appropriate mix of a carefully prepared developmentally appropriate environment and an insightful adult, keenly aware of herself and of the young person she guides.

My experience has shown me that the extent to which the adults do this, is the extent to which children thrive.

*Donohue Shortridge is a consultant to Montessori schools; she speaks and writes about children and their families in the American culture. pds@pdonohueshortridge.com*

### PHOTOS FROM CAMT MATERIALS WORKSHOP

