

informed

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Hi

This is the last issue of Informed for 2011. I am glad that we have more readers now that many teachers working in MANZ member schools have taken advantage of the offer to receive this e-zine for Montessori professionals. For many of you school will have finished for the year, so I hope you have time to read this e-zine over the summer break. I am so grateful to have started receiving articles from Montessori teachers for Informed. So remember if you have any news or ideas to share please be in touch.



Ana Pickering

EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MONTESSORI AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND

Wishing you all a wonderful festive season and summer break,
Ana

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MANZ Professional Development 2011



MANZ 2012 Conference attended by 210 delegates in Rotorua



Two Motives for Activity workshops attended by 57 teachers in Auckland and Lower Hutt



Four Montessori Near You workshops attended by 114 teachers in Hamilton, Auckland, Wanaka and Lower Hutt.



Two Montessori Meetups held in Auckland



Three Montessori Meetups held in Wellington



One Montessori Meetup held in Christchurch - 40 teachers from Montessori centres around Christchurch



One primary workshop attended by 28 primary teachers in Wellington

One Montessori Leaders Workshop attended by 16 teachers, owners and principals for two days in Wellington

MANZ 2012 Conference

2012 MANZ Conference - Imagination, Creativity and Work

Spencer on Byron, Takapuna, Auckland, New Zealand.

Saturday April 14, 1pm to Monday April 16, 4pm.

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

MANZ is delighted to announce that Sarah Werner Andrews will be one of our keynote speakers. Sarah is an Association Montessori Internationale 3-6 trainer at the Montessori Institute Northwest in Portland, Oregon and has experience teaching at both 3-6 and 6-12 levels. Sarah has a strong interest in connecting current education research to Montessori principles and practice. She will be focusing on different aspects "imagination" including pretend play and aspects of current educational research and its potential application in Montessori.

Elise Huneke Stone will be the keynote speaker focusing on Montessori 6-12. Elise is a colleague of both Sarah Werner Andrews and Ginni Sackett, our 2011 keynote speaker. She has experience at both 6-12 and adolescent level and is currently completing the Association Montessori Internationale 6-12 Training of Trainers programme. Elise was a 6-12 teacher for 14 years and she and her husband have worked at the Hershey Farm School, Ohio, USA and she has extensive experience working in land-based Montessori adolescent programs. Her particular passion is storytelling.

Nancy Lechner-Wallner will also be attending from Portland and she will be giving workshops on Special Needs and Under Threes. Nicola Chisnall will be our keynote speaker from New Zealand

Registration Costs

Three day conference registration

Full rate \$800.00 • Member rates \$400.00 for staff and parents from MANZ member schools • MANZ individual members \$590.00

There will also be day rates offered.

Registrations will open in January, 2012 and the detailed programme will be posted online in the next couple of months.

Accommodation

Accommodation at the conference venue, the Spencer on Byron in Takapuna and can be booked via

<http://booking.ihotelier.com/istay/istay.jsp?groupID=610220&hotelID=75565>

To enquire by phone: 09 916 6111 and ask for Montessori Aotearoa 2012 group booking.

For other accommodation close to the hotel do an internet search.



Discover Montessori

MANZ 2012 Conference • April 14 9.30 am-12pm • \$50 pp

Discover Montessori is a chance for parents and those new to Montessori to come and learn more about Montessori from international and New Zealand-based speakers. You will hear a little about the 100 years of Montessori, what children do in Montessori and how Montessori prepares children for life.

Self Review, Mentoring and the Montessori Journey to Excellence at the MANZ 2012 Conference

At the MANZ 2012 Conference there will be a strand focusing on Skills for Leadership; self-review, NZTC Induction and Mentoring, the Montessori Journey to Excellence and mentoring skills.

All these topics have a wonderful synergy ... and I am looking for centres happy to commit to presenting one self-review (planned or spontaneous) completed in the last year in the self-review session. I am looking for presentations of 15-20 minutes.

If you are planning to attend conference and feel your centre or school could make a contribution to this session; please let me know by end of the school year.

If yes - please send the topic of the self review and who will be presenting it at the conference.

100 Years of Montessori in New Zealand

In 2012 the Montessori community will be celebrating 100 years of Montessori in New Zealand. The earliest mention of Montessori in New Zealand is in new entrant classes in the Wanganui District and there are records of Montessori materials being used in classes run by the Sisters of Compassion in Wellington in 1912.

MANZ will be marking at New Zealand centenary at the 2012 Conference in Auckland. We will be inviting our community to help build a timeline at the conference; you will have the opportunity to contribute photos of early classes, people, events, teacher meetings, workshops ... and help to build a pictorial history for Montessori in NZ.

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Co-construction and scaffolding in a Montessori classroom; the value of the Montessori prepared environment

by Rihana Lathiff

'Follow the child's interest' is the main aim of Montessori philosophy. I asked myself this question 'Are we really following the child's interest in our Montessori classrooms?' after attending a workshop about the schema learning theory. The workshop inspired me to investigate schemas and the theory behind them. There are two main groups of schemas: action and figurative (Wijk, 2008). Children represent action schemas through movement in the physical world such as throwing a ball, wrapping toys in blankets, hiding inside boxes etc. Figurative schemas are represented by children through static things in their art and constructions, such as drawing horizontal and vertical lines (Wijk, 2008).

I started reflecting my own Montessori classroom. I realised I haven't encountered many schemas and wondered why? Are children missing out on getting their schemas extended just because I haven't been able to identify them? Maybe not. Maybe the reason children's schemas aren't openly visible is because the means they need are already available. Look at a Montessori classroom; everything is already accessible for a child, including outside equipment. In our Montessori centre apart from activities including Montessori didactic material, supplies such as cardboard boxes, egg cartons, ribbons, cello tape, sticks, tools, scissors, random blocks, sheets and material and bags are available every day. While we acknowledge and support their interests, we do have boundaries which allow us to maintain the essence of a Montessori classroom; respecting the environment, equipment and others, consideration for others, and putting things away.

I noticed a child was exploring with the Knobless Cylinders by rolling them along the graded Broad Stairs. It looked like he was comparing the speed of the cylinders. There was so much learning happening,

and this boy was very focused on what he was doing. We have noticed that this boy shows a great interest in spinning, rolling and throwing objects. If you are looking at this from the point of view of the schema learning theory, you might think that this child is trying to understand the concept of trajectory. After a while I walked closely towards him and said, "I am sorry to disturb you; I can see that you enjoy rolling these cylinders. These cylinders can get damaged by rolling and if damaged, they are difficult to use for grading, which is what they were meant for." He stopped what he was doing and looked at me. "Okay," he said with an understanding, but disappointed, expression on his face. "How do you think we can solve this problem?" He was thinking intently. "May be we can go to the resource room to find some other things that you can use for rolling," I said. "Okay! Can you help me to find some other things?" he asked excitedly. The boy and I found a few things from the resource room he could use; we had some negotiations about these as we didn't want them to damage the Broad Stair. We put these objects in a box and kept them on a shelf. At this point I was merely following the boy's interest.

We have since noticed that these objects have been constantly used by this boy and other children. A variety of learning opportunities have developed for children because of this. This is one example of accommodating a child's interests and tendencies by adding resources, activities and also, sometimes, teaching strategies if and when necessary, while ensuring they are adapted to suit our environment.

Self-review is a major part of this process. As a Montessori teacher I am very careful in observing children, following their interest, extending and supporting their learning, presenting materials, listening attentively to children and ensuring when and when not to interrupt. Montessori (1972, p. 63) states



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that “When we speak of ‘environment’ we include the sum total of objects which a child can freely choose and use as he pleases, that is to say, according to his needs and tendencies.”

The Montessori prepared environment is mainly based on sensitive periods and absorbent mind of children (0- 6 years) and the Montessori philosophy. It is amazing how well we can adapt and accommodate aspects of other theories, approaches and teaching strategies such as co-constructing and scaffolding in our Montessori programme, provided the teachers genuinely follow every child’s interest, are respectful of their interests, are willing to reflect and are open to accommodate other theories and current research and adapt their environment if necessary, while still retaining the essence of the Montessori method and philosophy.

References

- Montessori, M. (1972). *The discovery of the child*. New York: Random House Publishing Group.
- Wijk, N. (2008). *Getting started with schemas: revealing the wonder-full world of children’s play*. New Zealand: New Zealand Playcentre Federation



Rihana Lathiff

Rihana is currently the lead teacher at Puddleducks Montessori @ Parnell Heights in Palmerston North, New Zealand. She began teaching in junior schools in Sri Lanka as a science teacher and also taught mathematics. Her Montessori journey started 13 years ago as a parent and then a practitioner. She has been passionate about the Montessori approach to education ever since. Puddleducks Montessori @ Parnell Heights has two classrooms and an outside classroom. Rihana enjoys the supportive teaching team, wonderful community and most of all the happy children. Currently Rihana is doing post graduate papers towards a Master of Education degree through Massey University. “I am always open to new ideas and research and continuously reflecting on my practice and challenging myself on how these can be incorporated into the Montessori approach.”



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Understanding the Four Planes of Development: The Toast Analogy

By Ed Stanford

The four planes of development were developed by Dr Montessori to explain the development of humans from infancy through adolescence to adulthood. Dr. Montessori explained human development as a series of planes; the first and third planes of development are times of dramatic transformation, and the second and fourth planes are relatively calm and stable. The first plane occurs from birth to six years, the second plane is from six years to 12 years, the third plane occurs during the teenage years 12 years to 18 years, and the fourth plane occurs in early adulthood 18 years to 24 years.

Each plane is approximately six years and has two sub-phases, each three years long. The greatest changes occur during the first three years, or first sub-phase, of each plane, when the foundation is laid out. The second half of each plane, or second sub-phase, is the time to develop and crystallize experiences or impressions taken during the first sub-phase of the plane. Dr. Montessori used sub-phases to group different ages of children to form a classroom eg. birth to three, three to six, six to nine, nine to 12, 12 to 15 and 15 to 18 years.

Here is an interesting analogy, developed by Ed Stanford from Titoki Montessori School in Auckland, NZ to help you remember the characteristics of the four planes of development.

During my training I created the TOASTER analogy to help me remember the different needs and characteristics of children in each of the 4 Planes of Development. Suppose I am going to discuss TOASTERS and TOAST with children from different planes of development, what should I discuss with each group?



Understanding the Four Planes of Development: The Toast Analogy

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First Plane (0-6 years)

- This is a TOASTER. (Show a TOASTER)
- This is how we MAKE TOAST. (Demonstrate it's use and allow children to use.)

Second Plane (6-12 years)

- This is how a TOASTER works. (Explain the mechanical and electrical operation, electricity, heat, etc...)
- This is how people have MADE TOAST throughout history and in other cultures.

Third Plane (12-18 years)

- This is how TOAST relates to society.
- This is how MAKING TOAST relates to the economy.

Fourth Plane (18-24 years)

- Do you want to contribute to the world by MAKING TOAST, or do you want to focus on other pursuits?

The word TOASTER is just a placeholder, you can substitute any object (Phone) or idea (ART, JUSTICE) into the statements above and it helps to guide age appropriate curriculum and discussions.



Ed Stanford

Ed Stanford leads a 3-6 class at Titoki Montessori School in Auckland. He is originally from Iowa, in the USA. He has always enjoyed children and has worked with every age from 2 to 18 in a diverse range of settings including day camps, summer camps, traditional preschools, Montessori schools, Monti-something schools, Waldorf schools, private international schools, and state schools. Ed says "The Montessori method is, quite simply, the most advanced pedagogy I have encountered in my search and I feel like Sir Edmund Hillary ascending Mount Everest. The Montessori method is the pinnacle of instructional methods, why would anyone want to teach any other way?" Ed holds a primary diploma for 3-6 year olds from the Association Montessori Internationale (2005) and a Masters of Education (M.Ed) in Montessori from Loyola College (2005). He came to New Zealand in 2009 and has contributed to Montessori Voices, including a feature on literacy in 2010. Recently he led four workshops around New Zealand for over 110 teachers; focusing on practical life. He shared the toaster analogy at the workshop in Lower Hutt in November.



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About Work Cycles, Independence, Normalisation, Self-Discipline and All that Magic.

Ana Pickering



This article was first published in Informed in 2003. At that time I thought I would simply write about the importance of the three-hour work-cycle. I opened some Montessori books, delved into the NAMTA journals, leafed through AMI Communications, read Public School Montessorian and went off in several directions at once. I also looked back at some notes made at a MANZ workshop in New Zealand, led by Shannon Helfrich in 2002. We came back to this topic as a professional community in 2011, with Ginni Sackett at the MANZ Conference and in the Motives for Activity workshops led by Tara Israelson and Cathy Wilson. So, I thought it was worth dusting this article off again...



We have all heard about work cycles, the absorbent mind, the prepared environment, the sensitive periods, human tendencies, the importance of repetition, how freedom has limits, the development of inner discipline etc. How do we transform this 'Montessori theory' into 'Montessori practice' each day in our classrooms? What is the key, the magic, the secret?

Montessori (1917/1965) has this to say in the Advanced Montessori Method:

The external material is then offered and left freely to the natural individual energies of the children. They choose objects they prefer and such preference is dictated by the internal needs of the 'psychical' growth. Each child occupies himself with each object chosen for as long as he wishes and this desire corresponds to the needs of the intimate maturation of the spirit: a process which demands persevering and prolonged exercise. No guide, no teacher can divine the intimate need of each pupil and the time of maturation of each; but only leave the child free and all this will be revealed to us under the guidance of nature. (p.86)

Dr Montessori noticed a new phenomenon about children. Those who freely participated in the activities began to reveal a facet of childhood not noticed before. The children exhibited an inner calmness and they were able to concentrate contentedly for a long time. Not only did they absorb skills and knowledge but they developed an inner discipline that relieved the need for external authority. Dr Montessori found that the children were indifferent to rewards or punishments relating to their work, but found great contentment and satisfaction on working alone with material that had some purpose in their lives. The children also demonstrated a sense of community and concern for each other. O'Shaughnessy (1998) reminds us about how self-discipline is an 'an individual acquisition and must be obtained through being granted freedom' (p. 85)

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Dr Montessori called the transition from one state to the other 'normalisation'. She showed that nothing affects the development of 'normalisation' as profoundly as 'work' – interesting, purposeful, constructive work. Montessori (1949/1984) the Absorbent Mind she states that children must be provided 'motives for activity', so well adapted to the children's interests that they provoke his deep attention. 'The essential thing is for the task to arouse such interest that it engages the child's whole personality' (p. 206) and she regarded the process of 'normalisation' of the child through work as 'the single most important result of our whole work' (p. 204).

Montessori (1917/1965) gave examples of children working, so absorbed that they were oblivious to all that was happening around them;

...I happened to notice a little girl of about three years deeply absorbed in a set of solid insets, removing the cylinders from their respective holes and replacing them. The expression on the child's face was one of such concentrated attention that it seemed to me an extraordinary manifestation; up to this time none of the children had ever shown such fixity of interest in an object and my belief in the characteristic instability of attention in young children made me peculiarly alive to the phenomenon. I watched the child intently without disturbing her at first, and began to count how many times she repeated the exercise: then, seeing that stage was continuing for a long time, I picked up the little arm-chair on which she was seated, and placed chair and child upon the table: the little creature hastily caught up her case of insets, laid it across the arms of the chair and gathering the cylinders in her lap, set to work again. Then I called upon all the children to sing: they sang, but the little girl continued undisturbed, repeating her exercise even after the short song came to an end. I counted forty-four repetitions: when at last she ceased, it was quite independently of any surrounding stimuli which might have distracted her, and she looked around with a satisfied air, almost as if awaking from a refreshing nap. (p. 68)

It was this experience that lead Dr Montessori to experiment and to try to find the activities that called to the children and provoked such 'polarisation of attention" and to develop classroom routines that allowed the children to concentrate and focus without interruption.

Her work began as a psychological experiment on a group of children in her care...that small group of children between the ages of three to six years was gathered in an environment in which there was a large cupboard of scientific apparatus to be used for the purposes of a test. These objects were distributed to the children by Dr Montessori's assistants who showed the children what to do and how to handle them. After some time they were withdrawn again and these assistants were left free to do with the children as they thought best. These were the conditions which lead to a series of unsuspected psychological phenomena – the first to appear were the phenomena of concentration and repetition of the exercise. The children showed their desire and capacity to choose freely those activities which provoked this concentration and repetition and did, consequently enjoy a certain amount of freedom, though well-defined and with a positive aim. (Joosten, 1990, p. 31)



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Dr Montessori was a scientist and she developed and introduced new teaching materials and carefully observed the children's use of them. If the children were not spontaneously and repeatedly drawn to the activities, then they were taken out of the environment. Montessori (1949/1984) clarifies:

All the things now used in our schools are not just the result of elimination in a few local trials, but in trials made in schools all over the world. So we may truly say that these things had been chosen by the children. We found there were objects liked by all children and these we regard as essential. There were others that they seldom used, contrary to the beliefs of most adults and this also happened in all countries. (p. 222)

However, it was the "unusual" discipline of the children in the first Casa dei Bambini that first attracted the world's attention. Joosten (1990) worked with Dr Montessori in India and he noted:

What, however, within a year attracted visitors from all over the world to this (first) house of children was the observation that there was freedom, but no ruling adult, no rod, nobody deliberately making efforts to maintain the usual form of discipline, yet these children maintained superb discipline, unheard of before. They moved without making noise, talked in soft voices, carried their things with great care, complied with any request made of them almost before it was uttered, returned objects after use and greatest of all surprises did not quarrel over the apparatus although there was only one set for 35 children. This phenomenon of natural and serene quiet and order is indeed a characteristic of a genuine Montessori house of children. (p. 31)

When asked about the 'unusual' discipline displayed by her students Dr Montessori said the children were disciplined because they were 'free'. Even today, people find it hard to understand this 'freedom' and

Montessori schools are often criticised for being schools where children "do as they like". Many thought that the 'discipline' of Montessori schools was a result of the "magnetic" personality of the Dr Montessori herself, although this was soon disproved by the many well-run Montessori schools all over the world that had never been visited by Dr Montessori. Montessori (1949/1984) stresses that discipline comes when the child concentrates his attention on a useful exercise.

Thanks to these exercises a wonderful integration takes place in the infant soul as a result the child becomes calm, radiant, happy, busy, forgetful of himself and as a consequence, indifferent to prizes or material rewards. (p.263)



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Dr Montessori structured and developed activities such as the exercises of Practical Life in the classroom to help satisfy the child's need for meaningful activity. Waltuch (1978) tells us that the child has a strong urge to do practical life since these activities are 'truly constructive to himself' (p. 5).

Some strategies for purposeful work include

- **allowing the child to fully participate.**

Ask yourself what 'jobs' that you take care of in the classroom could be the children's responsibility? Do the children or the adults prepare snack, set tables, sweep the floor, dust, clean up messes?

- **showing the child precisely how to do things**

Why do Montessori teachers learn not to 'mumble with their hands'? Why do they show young child activities slowly, step by careful step? Is this so the children can imitate like 'little monkeys'? No, quite the opposite. Joosen (1990) explains:

The technique of their intelligent use must be carefully demonstrated. When presented with care, the child will not only use them with astonishing care and precision, he will repeat one and the same chain of actions long after this result has been achieved. He shows clearly that their function goes beyond that of learning a technique or acquiring a skill, to satisfying a formative, inner need. (p.49)

- **Providing interesting, purposeful, real activities.**

Do the practical life exercises in your classroom have any application in the life of your classroom? If you have 'pouring' exercises...do the children have an opportunity to pour in a real-life situation? If you have table scrubbing, do the children use this skill to clean up from lunch? Margot Waltuch first taught in Sevres, France prior to the Second World War. She clarifies that 'practical life is not a set of separate activities; it must be incorporated into the life of the classroom' (Waltuch, 1978, p.6). If you need some inspiration read Margot Waltuch's story:

One morning when I was visiting a school, a little boy said "Would you like some coffee?" I said yes and he disappeared. It was about ten. I forgot all about him. When it was time to go home, he came from another room with a little tray. He had made coffee for me – from scratch. He had a little coffee grinder, a jar of beans, everything. It had taken almost an hour but he had made coffee. (p.6)

- **Allowing time for repetition and concentration.**

How long do your children have to pursue their own activities?? Montessori (1949/1965) warns, 'Another negative action is the interruption of work at fixed times in the daily programme. They say to the child "Don't apply yourself too long at any one thing. It may tire you.'" (p.241).

The depth of concentration discovered in children by Dr Montessori in those early classrooms cannot be achieved in classrooms where the children are constantly interrupted for group time, outdoor time, special visits etc. When the children are concentrating and working independently they are developing self-discipline. The teacher's important task is to 'protect them from interruptions. Polk-Lillard (1996) reminds that 'Montessori discovered that once children become self-disciplined they do their best work when allowed a three hour uninterrupted work cycle' (p. 93)

If you look at the time in your Montessori programme and take away 'settling in time' and 'group time' and outdoor time'...how long do your children have to focus without interruption – an hour? Two hours??

Some Montessorians say that achieve a true three hour work cycle you need a three and a half hour session. I hear the cry "What about time for outdoor play?!" If your programme includes opportunities to go outside during the session there is no need for 'group outdoor time'. If a large part of your session includes outdoor time where the children run madly about – you may ask "who" needs this outdoor time – the staff or the children?

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The outdoors should be an integral part of the entire Montessori environment; not an escape from the indoors. The indoors can go out; there are many images of children in early Montessori classes taking sensorial, language, math and cultural materials outdoors to work in the sunshine. There are now Montessori centres in New Zealand who have focused on indoor-outdoor flow and offer children free access to both the indoor and outdoor environment.

Classroom routines reflect our expectations, the demand of parents, what can be achieved in the given physical space, the number of adults available etc. Keep in mind that your role is to 'protect the child from interruption'. Children often lack their own time. At home they are regularly interrupted to go with parents on errands, to visit friends, to watch TV, eat snacks, do jobs etc. The time they have in your classroom might be the only time they have for "themselves" in their day!!

Polk-Lillard (1996) issues this warning:

Montessori schools that do not maintain this unbroken work cycle compromise the results of the children's education. Sometimes parents pressure Montessori schools to hire additional teachers to introduce various 'special' activities into their classroom. However their benefits are negated by the constant interruption of the children's work. The protection of the child's right not to be interrupted when productively occupied is the key to the children's development of concentration and interest in their work. (p.94)

Montessori also identified the agitation that can occur in a classroom partway through the session. She called this 'false fatigue' and maintained that the usual response of the teacher to call the class together or go outside was absolutely the wrong thing to do. She observed this aimless period but went on to observe what would happen when the teacher did not intervene. She discovered that this 'false fatigue'

is a temporary stage that the child may pass through before choosing his or her main work of the morning – something absorbing and challenging. Where children are not given the 'time' to reach this deep period of concentration the class will usually continue to be restless, with children flitting aimlessly from one occupation to another.

If we fundamentally believe that work is the key to 'normalisation' and that self-discipline is an individual acquisition and that children are intrinsically motivated to learn why do we often feel despair that we will ever get it 'right' and feel that Dr Montessori was unreal in her expectations? That a class of 'normalized children' is a dream and a fairy tale?!! Were children simply different in Dr Montessori's times?

Montessori (1917/1965) remarks that children from different socio-economic backgrounds responded differently in Montessori environments.

If, indeed, the pupils are very poor children, this phenomena does nearly always happen at once; but if they are well-to-do children, already sated by the variety of their possessions, and by the most costly toys, they are very rarely attracted at first by the stimuli presented to them. (p.87)

And that was before the invention of TV, computers and play stations, let alone cell phones, iPhones, iPads etc !! Shannon Helfrich (personal communication, 2002) also acknowledges that it was a greater challenge to engage children in work than in earlier decades and that growing up in a 'techno' world has an impact on children.

However even teachers in early Montessori schools faced despair when the 'theory' did not meet 'reality'. Children in Montessori's time did not become 'normalised' overnight either.



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This is from a teacher, Mlle Dufresne in England, as she began her work with children. She describes the initial disorder as follows:

I must confess that the first four weeks were disheartening: the children could not settle to a task for more than a few moments: they showed no perseverance, no initiative; at times they followed one another like a flock of lambs: when one child took up an object, all others wanted to imitate him, sometimes they rolled on the floor and overturned the chairs. (Montessori, 1917/1965, p. 88-89)

However each of these teachers, who were working independently all described the same pattern in the initiation of order in their classrooms. Miss George in the United States described how order started in her classroom:

Directly the children find their objects interesting, their disorderliness disappears at once: their mental restlessness is at an end and they amuse themselves with the blocks the colours". "The battle is only definitively won, when the child discovers some particular object which spontaneously excites great interest in him. Sometimes this enthusiasm awakens unexpectedly, or with curious rapidity. (Montessori, 1917/1965, p.90-91)

Helfrich (2003) suggests the challenge for Montessori teachers is to help each child move from disorder to order and clarifies that the teacher and child are engaged in a work of collaboration. The challenge is to facilitate the child, leading towards the potential for a more normalised experience and Helfrich (2003) provides nine keys to help a child move from disorder to order.

1. Presenting a variety of options to the child – finding the “hook”.

‘Many times we expect the child to be interested in a few early presentations that we give, only to find them wandering aimlessly. We need to broaden the scope of the presentations that we give. This does not necessarily mean more in terms of the numbers of presentations, but certainly we need to widen the variety of different activities that flow from the presentations that we give. We must keep searching until we find the one thing that meets the child’s needs and interests’ (Helfrich, 2003).

It may take a while but you or the child will find the “thing” that catches’ his interest. Be alert and observe the child, talk to the child and discover what they are interested in, ask the parents for clues...never blame the child and never give up!! Tirelessly offer activity!

2. Thoroughly orientating the child to the environment for physical and psychological safety and security.

‘This is accomplished primarily through the preliminary movement exercises. Children how have just entered the Children’s House (3-6) need to feel comfortable and secure before the psyche is free to engage in interesting activities. When the child is still upset by the parent’s departure, or does not feel a connection to the group and something interesting, it is easy to stay focused on that uncomfortable feeling. The variety of preliminary movements allows a child to practice the simple activities that are spontaneously a part of many other more complex activities. The child can feel secure in handling a chair or the rugs, carrying a tray, pouring from a pitcher into a basin or out of a basin into a bucket. Many times that more complex activity is intimidating because the child is overwhelmed with a diversity of expectations’ (Helfrich, 2003).



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For primary (6-12) teachers the same principle applies, but different activities are included to make the child settle easily. Suggest something you know they will be able to do with ease and show them where things are. You would also be able to make use of other children as 'buddies' to help the newcomer.

3. Including the child in as many small group activities as possible for orientation and for exposure to the realm of possibilities.

'In addition to feeling competent with respect to individual activities, the child needs to feel comfortable as a member of the group. The child needs to have a sense of where things are located in the environment. Language activities related to building vocabulary also serve with this orientation' (Helfrich, 2003).

Help the child to discover the classroom, where things are kept, what they can use, what expectations are and help them to connect to the other children and adults.

4. Remove the simple transition exercises that no longer serve to engage the interest of the child.

'While I have stated the importance of the preliminary exercises and the simple transitional exercises, the child is ready to move beyond these quickly. Many times, the Practical Life area needs greater attention to rotating out simple activities and rotating in the more complex and therefore more challenging activities. It is only then that the child will stay in the "flow" experience' (Helfrich, 2003).

Prepare the environment to meet the needs of the group of children you currently have. Not the children you had four years ago. Your shelves regularly to keep interest high and take out anything with dust on!!

5. Providing activities that offer the potential for concentration and repetition.

'The exact nature of these more complex exercises is defined by the parameters of your environment. Sweeping and scrubbing the floor would be purposeless in a carpeted environment, where carpet sweeping and rug beating might be much more appropriate' (Helfrich, 2003).

Primary teachers please also do not forget the need for 'practical life' in your classrooms. There are many things primary students can be responsible for in the life of the primary class, tasks they should be responsible for even though the children do not come to the work with the unboundless joy of the three to six year old. This is when you use the 6-12 child's concern about 'fairness' and bring in a class roster!

6. Protecting vigilantly the first vestiges of concentration – protecting the new worker.

'How often do we abandon the new worker? A child who is consistently interrupted soon learns that there is no value to deep concentration. It is frustrating to be interrupted when you really get into something, so the psyche says "Don't engage, because it is less painful"' (Helfrich, 2003).

Evaluate how you 'protect' the worker in your class, how children learn to respect each other's work spaces, how the child is protected from interruptions from other adults and consider your work cycle.

7. Actively weave the wanderer back into the work cycle.

This is best done one on one. Help the child who has lost the connection to work. Simply stating 'you need to get to work' is no help. I still hear Miss Stephenson's words of wisdom: "Deary, if he could have, he would have". This goes to the heart of the teacher's role. It is our responsibility to facilitate and help the children to find a connection' (Helfrich, 2003).

I loved this one! Beware also of unhelpful comments like 'Where is your work?', "Are you challenging yourself?", "Choose something before I count to 3" and "Get some work now!!" Approach each child with the assumption you can help and they will find something useful to them. Try hard – it is difficult sometimes I know!!

8. Articulating choices, helping process, modelling the expectations.

'Many children have little opportunity to be active participants in the world around them outside of school. They hear many messages conveying a sense of incompetence, especially when they have not done what was expected. In the Children's House we cannot presume. Focus on communicating to the child what he or she can do. "You can choose any work that you have been shown". "You can do this as much as you like". "Yes, you can clean this". Or "When you take work out, it is your job to put it away before you choose something else". Use positive declarative statements so the child hears what can be done- the expected action is clear' (Helfrich, 2003).

Ever noticed how children can be so competent in your Montessori class and yet unable to carry their bag out to the car at home time? Expectations are powerful tools!!

About Work Cycles, Independence, Normalisation, Self-Discipline and All that Magic

Ana Pickering

9. Being firm yet gentle when setting limits.

'This is a new experience for many children. There are many children today that I believe have never met a limit they didn't think they could get around. The notion of setting limits as a natural, positive protection for the activities of children seems to have become "passé" in today's parenting models unfortunately this leaves the children adrift with no 'river banks' to guide the powerful, natural energies that they carry' (Helfrich, 2003).

You all know this one, say what you mean gently and firmly and often!!

The task of the Montessori teacher is to understand her philosophical roots, to observe her children and to help each child become active in their pursuit of independence and self-discipline. Helfrich (2003) concludes:

We can't despair. But also we cannot sit back and wait for magic to happen. We must be active. We must present both to small groups and to individuals. We must be vigilant in setting basic graces and courtesies that create and protect the working atmosphere. As a result the nature of the group begins to change. It does not mean there won't still be chaotic days, but overall the work atmosphere sustains itself, the level of challenge in work escalates and above and beyond all. The children are happy and fulfilled as their energies are focused upon activities that are in harmony with their spontaneous nature.

Believe in the child, believe in the Montessori materials and environment and work to support and nurture the children in your care.

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■ Going Out and Geometry for Montessori 6-12

Elise Huneke Stone will be the keynote speaker for 6 -12 teachers at the MANZ 2012 Conference in Auckland. Here she shares two short articles written originally for parents when she taught at West Hills Montessori in Portland, Oregon.

Going Out in the Elementary

“Going Out” is what we call it in the elementary (primary) class when the children’s work takes them beyond the four walls of the classroom into the world. Going Out is considered part of the 6-12 programme as it is presented to teachers in Montessori training centres all over the world, and was part of Montessori’s own plan for how best to meet the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs of the elementary child. Unfortunately, many Montessori schools and teachers are too intimidated by the challenges of preparing the environment and the children to support the work of Going Out. We are fortunate at West Hills to have the opportunity to enrich our children’s education with Going Out, and our blossoming elementary has recently started this most important work. Already we can see the benefits of Going Out both for the individuals and the community.

It is a Montessori practice at all age levels to limit our presentations and materials to the “keys” needed by the child in order to explore independently. The child is, as often as possible, the agent of his or her own education. For the elementary child, that means we don’t have available every book or lesson on the subject being studied, nor do we usually shepherd the children on adult-planned field trips. Instead, when the children’s interests drive them to find out more than what we have available, we invite them to undertake a Going Out.

For example, our recent Going Outs included a trip to a rock and crystal shop to identify a child’s rock sample, and a trip to the zoo to observe the bats. Another group was researching flowers, and after studying the parts of the flower and the function of flowers, they took some money from the class budget and purchased annuals for our outdoor flowerpots.

Often the children go with a specific question in mind, something that can be answered by an expert or learned by observation. Sometimes the Going Out will provide them with a concrete experience of what they already explored abstractly or with their imaginations. Sometimes the Going Out is meant to solve a problem in the class or enrich the environment for us all.

Going Out entails a great deal of responsibility. We have a database of parent volunteers. The children themselves make the contact, arrange the transportation, schedule the Going Out around what else is happening in class, get permission slips signed, and afterwards thank the people who help them. Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of courtesy on their Going Out. Often they take notes or otherwise collect information.

All of the components of preparation for Going Out serve the child’s mind: the organization, the challenges of working together, the thinking ahead. The experiences satisfy the children’s intellectual curiosity. But some of the benefits are less tangible. The public is unfailingly impressed with the behaviour of Montessori elementary students when they’re on a Going Out. The children often get this feedback directly, which is perhaps the most valuable part of Going Out: to hear from adults other than parents or teachers that your work is respected and your good behaviour is appreciated. What a powerful message for the world to give to our children! What a powerful message we send to our children ourselves, when we help them with Going Out and share with them that the world is a fascinating, friendly place that they can learn to navigate safely, where they will be competent and welcome. This message from the world to our children is the reason why Montessori schools support Going Out.



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■ Going Out and Geometry for Montessori 6-12

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Geometry in Elementary

Traditional schools do not offer much geometry to elementary children. On the version of the public school curriculum we make available to guide the students' work through the third year, there are minimal requirements for the subject. More extensive geometry exploration is traditionally reserved for middle school or beyond.

Yet in Montessori we begin introducing geometric language in the primary (3-6), and our elementary students study the parts and kinds of polygons, lines, rays and angles, equivalence, Pythagoras and Euclid, area of all plane figures including the circle, and solid geometry, including volume. We fully expect all our students to explore these concepts and work with them competently and joyfully. Why do we Montessorians view geometry so differently than traditional teachers? How do we present it so that our students are so successful?

First of all, we present geometry as a human legacy, a collection of discoveries and accomplishments made possible by the marvellous human mind. We introduce geometry and measurement first with the Great Lesson, "The Story of Numbers," and continue over the years to tell stories to the children: How Geometry Got Its Name, The Story of Pythagoras, The Story of Measuring Angles, and more. Did you know that the protractor we use today to measure angles was designed by the Babylonians, who looked up into the circle of the night sky overhead and divided it into 360 degrees?

Secondly, we offer the children the chance to experience geometric relationships for themselves. With our ingenious Montessori materials, the children can explore and make their own discoveries about geometry, just as the pioneers of geometry did before them.

Much of the children's work in geometry is concrete,

hands-on manipulation. But abstractions can and do occur. A child working with the area material, for example, will eventually abstract for herself the formulas for area of triangles without a teacher ever giving it. I've seen this over and over, and it still amazes me every time! Then it's just a short intellectual leap to deriving the formula for area of a trapezoid. Similar discoveries happen in all areas of geometry. Just yesterday a child came up to me and showed me that 4 right angles with a common vertex have a measurement of 360 degrees...the same as the complete circle of the protractor. Tomorrow I will ask him to divide 360 degrees by 4 (with the racks and tubes) and further reinforce his discovery.

Which brings us to the third difference in how we present geometry in a Montessori class. Geometry is completely integrated into their work. Geometric concepts are applied across the curriculum. When we teach about seasons, we demonstrate the perpendicular and oblique rays of the sun. When we teach grammar, we use geometrically similar symbols to relate the parts of speech performing connected functions. For example, the members of the noun family (article, adjective, noun, and pronoun) are different kinds and sizes of triangles.

With such a developmentally appropriate, hands on, integrated approach to geometry, it's no wonder that this subject is so beloved in Montessori elementary classrooms all over the world!



Elise Huneke Stone

Elise describes herself as a life-long student of human nature. She studied developmental psychology and anthropology, holds AMI diplomas for both 3-6 and 6-12, has supported families as a natural childbirth educator and doula; and worked for several years with the North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA) Orientation to Adolescence and as a houseparent at the farm at Hershey Montessori. She is now completing AMI Training of Trainers at Hershey Montessori Training Institute in Cleveland, Ohio, and will join the staff at Montessori Institute Northwest in Portland, Oregon in 2012. But Elise says she learned the most about human nature from her husband and two daughters (all involved in Montessori,) and from her students in the 21 years she spent in Montessori elementary and adolescent communities.



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Progress on Montessori Journey to Excellence

Have you read about the Montessori Journey to Excellence? The working group has been working on this Montessori Journey to Excellence Project since November 2010. In the last year four meetings of this group have been held and two drafts have been sent to the consultation group.

The intention of the Montessori Journey to Excellence is to have a process of continuous self-improvement with quality indicators for Montessori ece centres and schools. Montessori ece centres and primary classes or schools engaged in the Montessori Journey to Excellence (MJ2Ex) will have mentoring support to make quality improvements.

The Montessori Journey to Excellence identifies three main areas for review

- a. Montessori Learning Community
- b. Montessori Learning Environment
- c. Montessori Adults

For each of the three areas essential elements are identified and quality indicators and contra-indicators are defined for each essential element answering the question 'what would this aspect of practise look like if it was effective?'

Early childhood centres can formulate quality indicators for self-review from different sources including including Te Whaariki, ERO Evaluation Indicators (2009) and Quality in Action Te Mahi Whai Hua etc. The Montessori Journey to Excellence provides Montessori ece centres with a set of quality indicators for self-review of their Montessori practise. This will compliment planned and spontaneous self-reviews in Montessori ece centres and strategic, regular and emergent self-review in Montessori primary classes and schools.

The Montessori Journey to Excellence will be a voluntary continuous self-improvement process for Montessori centres and schools. Information outlining MJ2Ex plus all self-evaluation forms/self-review process will be available free to any centre/school who can choose to use the Montessori Journey to Excellence to do an annual self-evaluation of all essential elements/ quality indicators. There will be quantitative rating of each quality indicator in the self-evaluation process and the centre/school can choose to identify a focus for Montessori self-review each year.

To be identified as being on the Montessori Journey to Excellence, to use the identifying logo and to gain the support of a Montessori mentor, the centre or school needs to be a member of MANZ. There will be a cost for being on the Montessori Journey to Excellence; mainly to cover mentor costs.

Recent Work on the Montessori Journey to Excellence

The working group of the Montessori Journey to Excellence met in October for a half day scoping meeting with Aly McNicholl from NZ Mentoring and Coaching. Progress was made on identifying the role of a mentor in the Montessori Journey to Excellence and the process for centres and schools to join the Montessori Journey to Excellence, self-evaluation by centres and schools using the essential elements and quality indicators, mentoring support and documentation. A further meeting was held in November with Colleen Douglas from Massey in the search to find a partner to work on developing the mentoring support offered through the Montessori Journey to Excellence.

Information on the mentor training programme and Montessori Journey to Excellence pilot programme and how your centre or school could engage with these programmes will be sent to MANZ members in 2012.

It is planned to start the pilot programme and mentor training in 2012-13 with a roll out of the Montessori Journey to Excellence in 2014.

The Montessori Journey to Excellence will be launched at the MANZ 2012 Conference in Auckland in April and workshops focusing on mentoring skills will be part of the Skills for Leadership workshops at the conference.



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■ Montessori and the Media

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

Montessori Glossary

A glossary of Montessori jargon and terminology from mariamontessori.com. Great to use for parents and those new to Montessori

http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?page_id=414

Self Control

Why it is important and how we support young children to develop self-control?

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/05/18/090518fa_fact_lehrer?currentPage=all Self Control

Probability Lessons for 6-12

Wendy Calise has shared probability lessons you can use in your class ...

<http://library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1103261502875-161/Probability.pdf>



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