



"Follow the Child"



camt Talk



Canadian
Association of
Montessori
Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Fall 2013

Message from the President



Welcome to a brand new year of possibilities, adventure, challenges and successes. I wish you all, the enthusiasm that I feel. This is going to be an amazing year.

The CAMT board is doing some wonderful things. We are, with the help of the membership, at the AGM this year, ratifying a new set of Bi-Laws. This is so we remain in compliance with the new federal law requirements taking effect in October 2014. There will be no major changes but you will be able to see the revised Bi-Laws on the website soon. We have undergone a Strategic Planning Session that is setting the future path. Did I say this was exciting? It is.

Number one on the Plan is to get more people involved. **THIS MEANS YOU.** The board is stronger than it has been for years.

We have old blood, we have new blood, and we want more blood. We want ideas, alternatives, voices, and we want heart.

Stand up at the AGM or better yet, before the meeting and tell us what you want to do to help. We need help setting programs. We need help improving the newsletter. We would love someone that is net-savvy to help redesign our website. Want to help but don't want to be the leader? We need helpers just as much. Ask a board member. Email CAMT. Ask a friend. Come and join us and enjoy the benefits of board membership.

The board is answerable to you, the members, but if you sit there and do nothing, don't be surprised if you get left at the curb-side.

Barton Graff, President

UPCOMING EVENTS

- February 22 2014
CAMT Pot-Pourri
Dundas Valley Montessori
- April 5 2014
CAMT Education Day
Ellis Montessori
- May 16
CCMA Conference
- June 28 2014
Strategies for September

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THANK YOU

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

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ABOUT CAMT

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The Problem? of Math by Dr. Wendy Agnew

I hated math, with an atavistic dread. Its logics were not mine - its figures harsh and meaningless. I cringed, even as an adult, when expected to do the simplest of calculations. Then I became a Montessori teacher and all that changed.

I am writing this article in response to plummeting math scores in our public schools. (See Ontario elementary students lagging in math, test results show, Clare Clancy, Waterloo Record.) What follows, is a personal account of my journey from mathophobe to mathophile. I hope it may offer a different perspective and perhaps a solution to the problem of math.

I started Montessori training in 1979, excited by the prospect of an holistic approach to learning. Contrary to popular thought, Montessori schools cater to children from ages 18 months to 18 years. Classes are designed to accommodate three-year age increments so learning takes place in a community with children often helping children. The Montessori materials are 'autodidactic' or self-correcting so children may work independently without over-dependence on one authority figure. As the children mature, concepts that were embedded in the muscular memory through elegant wooden games are complexified to satisfy the growing cognitive needs and abilities of the elementary child. For example, the binomial and trinomial cubes, delightful little wooden, multi-coloured blocks that fit in a charming puzzle, are used to explore the binomial and trinomial theorems. - A child of three, experiences satisfaction and sensorial delight. A child of 11 revisits the blocks and marvels to notice the colours and dimensions are mathematically relevant.

My contention is that it is not only the teachers who need to be developed as mentioned in the above article - it is the method. Children who have grounding in the practical, manipulative logic of patterns, numbers, forms leading to formula, find math a breeze. Not only that, but they see the context and reason for learning about Pythagoras, The binomial and trinomial theorems, numbers to different bases ... It's a game that teaches us more about our world and, as a result, learning math offers a sense of independence, interdependence and

cognitive evolution. Students are aware that math is not a human invention, but a language of patterns discovered in nature (botany, zoology, natural history, mapping, dating, personal eureka!) It reveals relationships between compounds (chemistry), substances (architecture), humans (business). Math emerges as a valuable and relevant tool for Montessori middle and high school students, part of whose mandate is to form a business and balance its books.

The key is first to introduce math at an early age but not through concepts - through beautiful manipulative puzzles that are self-correcting, age-appropriate and graduated from simple to complex challenges. That way, math is embedded in the muscular memory as a pleasurable, sensorial, and social experience.

The language of mathematics is offered in a multiplicity of ways so children with different learning techniques or styles can experiment with a variety of exercises. That way, we remove the forcing of rote learning and inject a sense of fun, challenge and relevance into the process of becoming mathematicians.

Math should not be segregated from other subjects or themes. I have seen students reveling in the role of dramatic persona as they take on the historical characters that gave us the sextant, the theory of relativity, the concept of 0... Math needs to be used by children to construct, to deconstruct, to communicate their interests and passions - graphing baseball scores, endangered species, the distance from earth to the planets...

Math is beautiful. Ratio gives us a sense of peace and proportion and should be taught from the perspective of real measuring and curiosity for what feels good. The Greeks can speak to children about math - try dressing up as Euclid and coming into the class to introduce 'congruence' - they will sit up and take notice.

I certainly don't suggest that Montessori's is the only way. It is a brilliant way - but the message I have

Math (Continued from Page 2)

learned from hands on, contextual, interconnected learning is that for knowledge to 'stick' it must have relevance. For concepts to be valued, they must prove relative to the students' psychological, physical, emotional, cognitive realities. To simplify - Montessori math answers the vital needs of children to touch, to literally grasp material handles that connect self and culture.

I return to that first day at U of T in Old Vic College when I held one of the thousand cubes composed of 1,000 glass beads, - when my fellow students and I laid out a chain of five and then folded it to see its transformations, first into the algebraic square of 25 and then the geometric pentagon. 'That pentagon is the shape of the side plates on the carapace of a turtle,' said a child working nearby. My father, who tried to help me with math in grade two, always marveled at the Montessori material. He would say, 'I would go back, if I could be in this class.'



The Cube Chain of Five

In closing, I realize it is difficult to change a system that is based on set curriculum, text-books, exams, grades, and a subject-based approach to learning. But I have seen teachers in the public system adopt a more holistic approach and it works. I was not capable of being happy in that system and so I embraced a new one. If you are curious, visit several Montessori classes. Check out the mathematical material from Primary to Elementary to High School and you may, like me, stop seeing math as a problem and be delighted by the many solutions Maria Montessori developed for enriching the lives of children through numbers.

CAMT UPDATE

As CAMT begins to transform its website into a more updated and interactive site, we would like to welcome two new initiatives into the Newsletter, which will now be available to CAMT members online.

The first is a "Question and Answer" column, where you can send us your questions and an experienced Montessori teacher will share his/her advice. Maybe you have a child who just refuses to work in a certain area, and no matter what you have tried, it hasn't worked. Or maybe you have a group of "mean girls" who are terrorizing other children, and you would like to hear what others have done in the past to solve this issue. We hope to eventually turn this into an online forum, where teachers will be able to talk back and forth no matter where they live.

The second is a column entitled "Inspiring Moments" and our hope is that teachers everywhere will share stories that remind us all why we love doing what we do. You know those moments that really strike a chord in your heart; when a child makes that crucial connection, or an overheard conversation between children (ex: "you really hurt my heart!"), or anything that makes you happy to be a Montessori educator.

We are working to make CAMT more available to teachers all across Canada and the world, and we need your help. So please send us your questions or inspiring stories to info@camt100.ca with Newsletter as the subject line. Thank you all in advance!

Erdkinder—The Montessori Answer to Adolescence

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If you needed to, could you build a home to live in? Could you cook a whole, nutritious meal from scratch? Could you sew clothing for your family if department stores disappeared? If there was a local or national disaster, could your community feed itself and access clean water or are they dependent on other regions, as are most urban areas, for these very basics of life? If it was up to you to see to your own survival, how do think you'd make out?

The truth for most of us is that we graduated from public high schools that let us walk out their doors with so few skills for actual human living, we'd last about a month if we found ourselves set down on a rural farm. Even if we studied textbook geometry, we'd be scratching our heads trying to apply this to putting a roof on a barn. Even if we studied chemistry, we might poison ourselves by improper testing of a well. And how bizarre is it that graduates from basic math courses spend their lives unable to balance a checkbook?

But what if, when we were 12, we went to live with an uncle and aunt on a farm? Oh, there might be some nice books around if we wanted to read up on crop rotation, mixing milk paint or understanding weather patterns, but for the most part, we would spend our time working alongside the grownups as apprentices. We would care for the animals, sow and harvest the crops, and cook the meals. We would spend most of our time out in the sunshine, working

on something real that taught us lessons about ourselves, human nature, and the planet on which we live.

Taking Kids Out of Limbo by Getting Real

In the words of Dr. Maria Montessori: "My vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding on that verification from that secondary school to the university, but of individuals passing from one stage of independence to a higher [one], by means of their own activity, through their own effort or will, which constitutes the inner evolution of the individual." It isn't what we're used to in today's world, but Einstein certainly agreed: "Precious things are conveyed to the younger generation through personal contact with those who teach, not - or at least not in the main - through textbooks. It is this that primarily constitutes and preserves culture."

In an Erdkinder program, the children live on a farm and their 'schooling' consists of running the farm as a business, including caring for the animals and tending the crops. Interspersed with these weighty tasks are academic studies based on real books and field trips. The goal of Erdkinder (German for Earth-Children) is to produce adults who are equipped with the confidence in themselves and actual skills to live in the real world.

The Humane Kindness of Erdkinder

In older societies, peoples mark the passage into adulthood by various ceremonies. Inuit boys go on a vision quest. In other cultures, taking part in one's first game hunt marked the entry into adulthood. After this, the boy was considered a man by the culture and expected to assume all of the responsibilities of manhood. Most modern societies are now virtually without any meaningful markers of this kind. Instead, we have created something new called 'the teen years', where someone is not really a child but not yet an adult. Maria Montessori was astonished that during the time of physical, emotional, and intellectual turmoil called adolescence, most cultures immobilize children behind desks rather



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than let them put their energies into meaningful projects.

It is little wonder, then, that so many young people, lost in this vague, enforced limbo, turn to drugs to distract themselves from the purposelessness of life, or become suddenly violent as do wild animals who are kept in cages. Human family systems are destroyed every day because someone refuses to be faithful to the family unit, to care for a sick family member, to care for a home, to care for children, to handle family money responsibly. Irresponsible people make life miserable for everybody, and I believe our current system of education, and the unthinking approval it has from the majority of society, is largely to blame for this. The Erdkinder method, by contrast, empowers adolescents with the knowledge that they must take responsibility for their own care and that their activities, pursuits and actions have a very real effect on their fellow students, instructors, home and community. Lessons about economics, environmental sciences, domestic arts are acquired through hands-on work and the intellect is developed by reading, by community discussion, by enriching interactions with art, music and nature.

Seeing Erdkinder In Action

Hershey Montessori Farm School located in Huntsburg, Ohio offers one of the best-known adolescent programs in the United States. It is both a day school and a boarding school, serving some fifty students between the ages of 12-15. The school is housed on a large working farm, and the main house is designed to allow the students to run it alongside the adults. The students clean, cook, and learn to process and preserve farm-grown foods. Students are actively involved in the 'family' finances, working with a budget when they shop for the school's needs. The house is also the center of their social activities, a place to pursue art and to live alongside both their peers and the adult instructors who run the farm school.

In addition to the main house, there are numerous barns and workshops on the property. Students care for the farm animals, learn handcrafts like woodworking, experiment with horticulture in an

alternative energy laboratory and put on performing arts shows. Not only do the students make daily use of these facilities, they have also designed some of their own including a maple sugar house. The farm is surrounded by ninety acres of forest where the students hike, explore, swim and enjoy horseback riding. Beyond acting as stewards of the home, barns and land, the students run a bed & breakfast for the public.

In the midst of all of this vigorous and creative living, students are necessarily learning the following skills and arts from real-life experience:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Basic Math | Ecology |
| Biology | Algebra |
| Accounting | Chemistry |
| Physics | Economics |
| Food Science | Land Management |
| Humanities | Domestic Sciences |
| Animal Husbandry | Artisan Specialization |
| Conflict Resolution | Environmental Sciences |

For any adolescent, this is an impressive skill set. What is most remarkable about the above list is that these subjects will not be vague, ultimately forgettable mental concepts. Children leaving the Hershey Montessori Farm School will have used these abilities to meet real challenges and better the quality of their own lives. These are accomplishments that will stick with them throughout adulthood.

I would assert that the most important lesson learned by graduates of this exemplary Erdkinder program is this:

They can depend on themselves to create a life which honors their unique needs while at the same time honoring the needs of others.

Starting an Erdkinder Program

The most successful Erdkinder programs will most likely be extensions of already-existing, well established Montessori schools. This ensures that the necessary infrastructure is already in place. An existing school will provide the needed influx of students, as children already in Montessori move up

Volunteering for CAMT

Would you like to be a part of a growing and vibrant organization? Are you interested in sharing your passion for Montessori education with hundreds of other people? By volunteering on the CAMT board, you will help to further establish Montessori education as you collaborate with Montessori professionals from a variety of backgrounds. Our goal is to provide exceptional professional development and support for Montessori teachers throughout Canada.

In order to keep CAMT strong, we need more helping hands. We need educators who are passionate, dedicated and eager to network in the Montessori community to help serve its needs. One more person makes the board stronger and makes Montessori more present in our world. Perhaps you are the one whose contribution will expand and improve the impact of Montessori in the lives of Canadian children and teachers.

The CAMT executive meets once a month at Bannockburn Montessori School in Toronto, usually on the first Saturday morning of each month. From time to time, we conduct conference calls if we are unable to meet face to face. Our primary activities revolve around organizing the annual fall conference, hosting workshops in the winter and spring and preparing newsletters for our membership.

If you think you might be able to assist CAMT, or even if you are tempted, but a little unsure, please attend one of our board meetings. You will discover how we operate and how you might benefit by collaborating with us. Please consider joining our team. We'd love to work with you!



Erdkinder— (continued from Page 5)

to higher grades. These children will be well-equipped for Erdkinder, since they have a firm foundation in the Montessori method; their parents will be familiar with Montessori as well. In some cases, where schools are unable to provide an actual farm where children can live and work, modified Erdkinder programs are put in place. These include day and overnight field trips, student-directed studies, apprenticeships, long-term projects, student-run businesses, and an enriched program of academic studies focused on great literature and the humanities.

While the 0-3, 3-6, and 6-12 age groups have always had a clearly outlined curriculum, Dr. Montessori left only general guidelines for Erdkinder. This lack of specifics has probably been one of the main reasons that Erdkinder has not been implemented in more Montessori programs. However, a quick search for

"erdkinder" in any major search engine will return many helpful websites about Erdkinder in general, and existing Erdkinder programs specifically, indicating that many teachers and parents have already forged ahead to make Erdkinder a reality even without universal guidelines. I believe the time is ripe for the notion of Erdkinder. The implementation of the Montessori method, both in schools and homeschools, is on the rise. Parents who appreciate the results of Montessori for their children in the lower grades are desiring the same nurturing, respectful, child-centered environment for their children once they get older. My hope is that more and more Montessorians will see Erdkinder as a viable possibility for adolescents, and as Maria Montessori said, enable them to "pass from one stage of independence to a higher [one], by means of their own activity, through their own effort or will."

Best Practices Handbooks *by Tim Seldin*

Dr. Montessori's legacy needs to be preserved in the face of rapid expansion and adaptation in a wide array of situations. We are concerned that Montessori could one day become "whatever anyone does in her name" and the value of the method for children will be lost. Montessori is both a set of practices and a condition of mind. The joining of these two parts is what distinguishes good effective Montessori classrooms.

The idea of "best practice" has the power to promote a higher level of professionalism, because it can engage Montessori teachers in meaningful discussions at a much deeper level, leading perhaps to a better understanding of human nature. It could certainly lead to teaching practices within a school.

Dr. Montessori's thoughts need to be the core of our work. As Paula Lillard once told me, "If we could just allow our egos to be less dominant and focus on what Dr. Montessori said and did, it would be more than enough to occupy a professional life. It is too bad that more Montessori schools are based less on a rigorous study of Dr. Montessori's practice and insights than on our competing personalities."

Having said that, I have to gently point out that much of the Montessori legacy was handed down through an oral tradition. She hesitated to put too much in writing because of her fear that people would mistakenly believe that you could master the skills and develop the profound insights and perspective that she was trying to pass down through independent reading. Much as I treasure the books, I know that they represent only a small and far less than complete collection of her knowledge and practical teachings. Perhaps the fact that she earned her living in part through the operation of personally supervised teacher training programs also influenced her, but there seems to be little doubt of her strong position in this matter.

Dr. Montessori was also very clear about her concerns about well-intentioned people who attempted to use part of her approach, but not all, or those who similarly attempted to blend her ideas in with many others. It seems that she taught through an extended process of lectures, demonstrations, work with associates, and supervised periods of observing and

working with children. While there does not appear to have been one consistent model used throughout her career, all Montessori teacher preparation programs during her lifetime were personally supervised by Dr. Montessori and ran for periods of a year or longer. Mr. Joosten's often spoke about the value of taking training several times from different centers, gaining a fresh perspective each time. Hilda Rothschild gently joked that every time she read the *Absorbent Mind*, someone slipped in new pages that she never noticed before.

We need to always begin by going back to the source. However, we need to do so understanding the limitations inherent in the published literature, and recall the countless monographs, speeches, interviews, recollections of those who worked with her, and other first hand sources of information.

The question is what did Dr. Montessori write, say, or actually do in her schools?

As to the process of compiling a "Best Practices" handbook, I don't see the process as one of simply allowing a simple majority to rule.

The challenge is to get several people working together on a faculty, each coming with individual insights, previous experience, and less than perfect memories and understanding, to wrestle with, define, and hopefully agree on the way specific issues will be addressed at a given school. Since there are no "Montessori Police" to arrest those of us who do not faithfully implement her legacy, we do much better to go through a process intended to refresh our memories, deepen our understanding, and wrestle with legitimate questions of whether or not there is an even better way to address something than what she did.

Five Steps to Best Practice

The Montessori Foundation recommends that schools follow a five-step process in working towards a definition of Best Practice.

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Portland Congress Review by Mary Flewelling-Pinchen

Well, the 27th International Congress, (July 31- Aug 4, 2013), has come and gone and I feel very fortunate to have been a part of it. Portland, Oregon, known for its commitment to environmental initiatives, was the host city for this event and it provided a wonderful backdrop to the Congress' theme of "Montessori, Guided by Nature". The Congress organizers from the Northwest Montessori Institute did an amazing job promoting this event and welcoming their guests. Street banners and large advertisements were on display at the airport, on transit vehicles and all around the city and radio interviews with prominent Montessori educators were conducted prior to the event. In all, about 2,300 participants from 57 countries were in attendance making the Portland Congress the most highly attended one to date!

Dr. Montessori established the first International Montessori Congress in 1929 to raise awareness and understanding of Montessori education. Since that time, 25 subsequent congresses have followed approximately every four years in various locations

around the world. While the International Congress Movement is a tradition maintained by the Association Montessori Internationale, it remains open to anyone interested in Montessori education. This year's congress was notable for the broad support it generated from many national and local Montessori organizations as well as the endorsements it garnered from many educational foundations, universities and local schools.

The 2013 Portland Congress challenged its participants to look closely at how Montessori education is guided by the natural development of children and how it fosters a respectful relationship to the earth's natural environment. The very first event of the Congress was "Montessori in the Square" – a public viewing of 3 large outdoor classrooms (0-3yrs.) (3-6 yrs) and 6-12yrs.). Thousands of people passed by these model classrooms to watch children work in their beautifully, albeit temporary, prepared environments. This highly visible platform, reminiscent of Dr. Montessori's own glass classroom

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Best Practices— (continued from Page 7)

1) Define a burning issue in writing as a clearly stated question. For example: Is there any compelling reason why we must keep our five year olds in the same room as the three and four year olds?

2) Take a really close look as a staff at what Dr. Montessori said, wrote, or did. Identify your sources. Establish the best reference library that you can get.

3) Turn to the experts, the Montessori mentors in your life, and ask them what they believe to be true. While a David Kahn, Miss Stevenson, Harvey Hallenberg, Celma Perry, or whomever you most respect and admire may not always agree with Dr. Montessori or offer infallible opinions and advice, they are a reasonable and highly legitimate resource.

4) Next, try to find out what is believed to be best practice outside of Montessori. In many cases, we can gain valuable insights by looking beyond our limited

community to see what others are doing. Frankly, that's what Dr. Montessori did when she lovingly adopted the ideas and many practices of Jean Itard and Eduard Seguin. Just because it wasn't invented here, doesn't mean that someone else's research is invalid.

5) And, finally, put your insights down in writing, with the commitment to make this become universal practice within your school.

As Albert Einstein said about science, the whole process is a search for what is true. The airplane flies not because we believe it to be true, but because the laws of the universe work a certain way.

at the 1915 San Francisco World's Fair , allowed Montessori to shine. Many people commented on the children's remarkable focus and engagement in spite of the very public venue. Montessori trainers and guides were on hand to answer questions and offer insights to enquiring viewers. Concurrently, about 550 conference attendees boarded buses to visit 15 local Montessori Schools that had opened their doors throughout the city.

Andre Roberfroid, president of A.M.I., kicked off the official opening ceremony with inspirational and challenging words for the audience. Then a marvelously diverse programme unfolded. The daily schedule included 5 blocks of time, each allowing for 6-10 simultaneous break-out sessions, for a total of 70 different workshop options. Conference goers were able to choose their own programming track on site, which enabled each person to craft their own uniquely personal congress experience.

The line-up of speakers and their messages was truly remarkable. Dr. Brian Swimme, Lynne Lawrence, Molly O'Shaughnessy, Dr. Adele Diamond, Sandford Jones, Paul Hawken, Judith Snow, Rukmini Ramachandran, Trevor Eissler, David Kahn, Laurie Ewert-Kracker, Dr. Vandana Shiva and our own Eduardo Cuevas were some of the notable speakers who inspired, informed and touched souls. There were parent education workshops, interactive art displays, a vendors fare with nearly 100 exhibitors, a museum dedicated to the role of nature in Montessori education and several outdoor excursions to explore the beautiful wilds surrounding Portland. My own personal highlights included the entertaining Montessori elevator speech contest, the presentation by Educateurs Sans Frontieres which provided historical context and information about current Montessori outreach and the vision presented by the American Montessori Learning Collaborative about what can happen when great organizations build a platform based on the strengths of their common goals. The concluding "Gala Portlandia" brought everyone together on the outdoor grounds of the convention centre to celebrate with good food, music, dancing, and companionship. Even the weather gods co-operated by providing us with a

picture-perfect warm evening that did justice to the efforts of everyone who had contributed to making the Congress such a success!

Perhaps the most lasting legacy of the Portland Congress will be that so many Montessorians, from so many diverse background and trainings, came together to share their commonalities with each other. The spirit of unity and empowerment was definitely in the air and it will be exciting to see where this energy takes us in the years to come. I hope that we will rise to meet the many challenges that face us and that we will indeed launch the new era that Andre Roberfroid spoke of so passionately in his opening address:

"I challenge the Congress to launch a new era for our movement: an era where diversity will replace division, an era where difference will help to serve the children more effectively, an era where all Montessori organizations will respect each other..... May the Montessori Congress in Portland be remembered as a world assembly opened to all Montessorians and driven by the spirit of joining efforts to help our children build a better future. Yes, my friends, our task is daunting, but our capacity is endless!" - Andre Roberfroid

Audio recordings of all of the keynote and break-out sessions from the Portland International Congress are available to order through BackCountry Recording: www.BackcountryRecording.com (904) 400-2379

The next International Congress will be held in Prague, Czech Republic, July 2017!

Congress Review by Glenn Goodfellow

On July 31st, 2013 the 27th International Montessori Congress began, marking the world's largest international gathering of Montessorians. Nearly 2500 people from over 55 countries convened in Portland, Oregon to explore the universal aspects and unique facets of Montessori.

Dr. Maria Montessori established the International Montessori Congress in 1929 to raise awareness and understanding of Montessori education. Since then, 25 subsequent Congresses have followed around the world, with one held approximately every four years. It has been nearly 40 years since the Congress was last held in the United States, and its return built much excitement.



The International Montessori Congress is a tradition maintained by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), and remains open to anyone interested in Montessori education. This year's Congress was unique with its broad support from so many national and local Montessori membership organizations, as well as endorsements from educational foundations, universities, and local schools. The Congress was organized and administrated by Montessori Northwest, formerly the Montessori Institute Northwest, Portland's AMI teacher training center.

Portland, Oregon, nestled within the American Pacific Northwest, is a region known for both its rich biodiversity and vibrant Montessori community. Here the study of volcanoes and old growth trees runs in tandem with Dr. Montessori's teachings of a child's capacity to explore and study nature.

The 2013 International Montessori Congress allowed

participants to look more closely at how Montessori education is guided by children's natural development and how that growth fosters a respectful relationship with the environment. The Congress theme, "Montessori: Guided By Nature," took root in that dynamic relationship and celebrated the ways in which we are all uniquely tied to the physical and ecological makeup of our surroundings.

An initial component that made Congress attendees feel truly welcome in Portland was the attention paid by conference organizers to broadcasting the event, as well as general messages about Montessori education, throughout the city. As delegates arrived at the airport, their trains featured large ads for Montessori. Street banners hung around town advertised the Congress, and interviews with prominent Montessorians were heard on the radio.

The very first event most attendees participated in was "Montessori in the Square," a public glass-classroom event held in the heart of downtown Portland. Pioneer Courthouse Square is a large public plaza in the center of the city which regularly plays host to various events such as music festivals and vocational fairs. Organizers knew that it would be the perfect venue for an event intended to attract both Montessorians and non-Montessorians alike.

This celebration of Montessori education featured three large interactive classrooms: Assistants to Infancy (ages 0-3), Primary (3-6), and Elementary (6-12), and included activities for children and information for parents. Montessori in the Square was the ideal, highly-visible platform for Montessori to shine.

Thousands of people passed by the model classrooms to watch the children work in their beautifully-prepared environments, and were in disbelief that even in such a public venue children were focused and working as normal! Trainers and guides were on hand to assist viewers with questions.

Concurrently, 550 conference attendees boarded buses to visit local Montessori schools throughout the city. Fifteen schools opened their doors to Congress visitors

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Congress Review *(continued from Page 10)*

to walk them through their learning environments, explain how the school was established, and answer questions. In a twist of efficiency, conference-goers didn't know which three schools they would be attending until they boarded their bus. Many people commented on how much they enjoyed visiting learning communities that featured classrooms for ages at which they themselves did not teach.

The 2013 Congress daily schedule included 5 time-blocks, each allowing up to 6-10 simultaneous "breakout" programs, for a total of 70 programs with varying numbers of attendees in each. Conference-goers gathered each day to hear moving keynote addresses from both a Montessorian and a non-Montessorian. Together these co-presenters led attendees to look at meaningful subjects through different lenses. Keynote speakers included cosmologist Dr. Brian Swimme, naturalist Paul Hawken, disability advocate Judith Snow, and eco-feminist Dr. Vandana Shiva.

Conference-goers were allowed to establish their own breakout programming tract, giving them more choice to craft a uniquely personal Congress program.

Other components of the Congress, for which there is not adequate descriptive space in this article, were: an afternoon of parent education workshops, interactive art displays, a vendor fair featuring nearly 100 exhibitors, a museum dedicated to the role of nature in Montessori, excursions into the beautiful wilds surrounding Portland, and a glamorous closing gala party.

The closing address of the conference heard André Roberfroid, AMI President, announce Prague, Czech Republic as the location of the next Congress in 2017. Montessorians from around the world, many from diverse backgrounds and trainings, came together at the Congress and shared their commonalities with each other. That spirit of unity and empowerment is still in the air. Closer to home, employees of Montessori Northwest have an increased awareness of their ability to achieve great goals together and with broad community volunteer

support.

In a way, the individual memories of a Congress attendee are a bit of a dreamscape. With so many moving pieces, it was impossible to witness every component. One's mind recalls the thrill of seeing busloads of colleagues from Japan and Thailand arrive, hearing the applause for the fabulous keynote speakers, the smell of Earth filling the massive exhibit halls from the interactive nature displays, the delicious food at the closing Gala Portlandia, on and on and on...

The staff at Montessori Northwest extend their appreciation to the many people who helped make the 27th International Montessori Congress a great success, attendees and volunteers alike. Your hard work created something truly special and unique for us all.

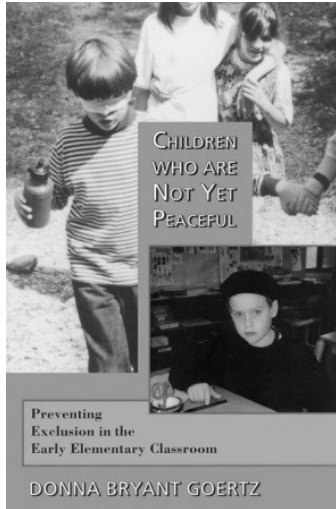
Until this event reconvenes in four years, we Montessorians can look forward to seeing where the spirit of this year's Congress take the movement next. See you in Prague!



The following article was written by Glenn Goodfellow, the Administrator for the Congress, and employee of Montessori NW. It was composed with the expressed interest to provide attendees and schools with content for newsletters and other summary publications. You are encouraged to use it, or sections of it, for your own needs. Photos can be found at <http://montessoricongress.org/photos/>.

Book Review—Children Who Are Not Yet Peaceful by Donna Bryant Goertz Steinberg Reviewed by Sarah Doughty

CAMT is pleased to announce an upcoming workshop with Donna Bryant Goertz in May 2014. In anticipation of this event we thought it would be prudent to read and review the wonderful book she published in 2001, entitled Children who are not yet peaceful: Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary Classroom. Here is what some of the critics have to say about this book:



"Master Montessori teacher Donna Bryant Goertz teaches children compassion, generosity, cooperation, and collaboration by letting life be the curriculum. These stories show how they slowly learn to work and play with each other peacefully. If you have ever loved a child, you will treasure this book."

Terry Masters, former public school teacher

1998 Texas Gifted Educator of the Year

"Goertz's children embrace two ideas: that serving others in need is paramount, and that needing and accepting help is a gift one child can give to another. This book captures the community of compassion and cooperation at the heart of Montessori education."

David Kahn, Executive Director,

North American Montessori Teachers' Association

As soon as you begin reading this book, it is clear that the author is a true believer in the authentic Montessori method, has the experience of 30 years of teaching, and a fully developed Montessori school that is thriving and sought out as one of the best educational programs available in that area. How did Donna build this empire of amazing Montessori ideas? By refusing medication in her "troublesome" students, and relying on the strength of the Elementary classroom to welcome and integrate each new student, regardless of what issues they happen to be working on. From anger issues to the need for perfection, there is a story in here that will relate to students that you currently teach, or have taught in the past.

The first thing that struck home with me was the similarities that I could recognize within each story; almost every single one could be matched in some way to children that I had worked with. The second was the way in which Donna speaks to her children, especially in times when things are not going well! It's easy to speak loudly and scold a child for doing something that is socially unacceptable...but how do you turn each and every moment into a living lesson on appropriate behaviour? How do you make the lesson include the entire community? Donna shows you how, through in depth stories from her own experiences in the classroom.

Personally, I am a Casa trained teacher, so the whole Elementary aspect is only known to me from my own childhood experiences. I was lucky enough to attend a fantastic Montessori school until the end of Early Elementary, so I am somewhat aware of what it is like to be in such an environment, although I will admit that my classroom was never filled with 30+ children ... it was more like 10, as the school was just beginning to build up the Elementary.

The way that Donna speaks really makes me think about the way that I speak to my students. I know that my students are not yet on the Elementary developmental plane, but I see how influential I could be in creating an early acceptance for everyone's differences, and building an open and honest repertoire for speaking about ones feelings. It's okay to be angry, sad, excited, or any other feeling, and the important thing is how you express them. Donna understands this, and that children need time in a supportive and understanding environment to gain the confidence necessary to change a behaviour.

In one story, a child was constantly bumping into the other children's work and clearing the shelves of all the materials. She approached the child and told him that the next time he wanted to make a "glorious mess" that he should come and tell her, and they would make a "glorious mess" together. When the child finally came to her with this request, they took out colourful balls of string, brought them into an empty area, and threw them into the air, creating this "glorious mess" for everyone to see. And everyone did

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A Montessori Biography by Tim Seldin

An extensive bibliography of works by or about Maria Montessori and Montessori education.

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see, as once they had finished they asked the class to come and see the "glorious mess" that had been made. Everyone commented on the beautiful colours and the artistry that could be found in this new activity, and then went back to their work while the child and Donna rolled up all of the balls of yarn, and put them away.

You have to read the whole story to fully understand the impact of this one activity. A child who has always heard people saying things like "Why are you always making a mess?" or "Why can't you sit still?" develops an idea about himself that becomes negative. For someone to start to turn the idea of a "mess" into a "glorious mess," one that doesn't make people upset with you, yet still fulfills a need that cannot yet be denied, is truly inspiring.

This is one of the many stories found in this book that support the idea of handwork (knitting, crocheting, sewing, cleaning, etc.) as being crucial to the process of integrating into the Elementary environment and redirecting behaviours. As a Casa teacher, this book gives me a new level of respect and understanding for the Practical Life area that speaks to each and every child. There are so many lessons to be learned from this book that I feel like I will be reading it again and again as my career moves forward.

If you are looking to be inspired, or just want to enjoy a good read, then you should pick up a copy of Donna Bryant Goertz's *Children who are not yet peaceful: Preventing Exclusion in the Early Elementary Classroom*.

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Authors' Note: Our thanks to the North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMTA) for their assistance in compiling this bibliography.

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