



"Follow the Child"



camt Talk



Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

October 2016

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Toddler Topic

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If you would like to contribute an article, please contact the CAMT Office at info@camt100.ca



Dear CAMT Member:

We are well on our way into the school year. The days go quickly and the time passes with each tick of the clock. Children are settling in and normalization is slowly taking hold. Such dedicated, important and meaningful work you are doing. This work requires love, patience, time, energy, guidance, endurance, enthusiasm, the description is endless. Throughout the day we give so much that we are often left to wonder what we have left to give to others, yet we still find it within us to give back. There are times when our energy is depleted, ideas are stagnated, enthusiasm wanes and we need a lift. We need inspiration.

What is it that inspires you? What do you do or need to keep you motivated and

enthused? Regardless if it is work or personal each one of us does something special to rejuvenate our souls and rekindle the passion. There are so many options available that these can be exhausting and I am not going to divulge a list, however, I will state that inspiration is what keeps me going in all I do. It is needed to keep me strong, be optimistic and allow the creativity to flow. My inspiration comes in many forms, and I am learning that each experience can become an inspiration. I have also come to realize that Montessori is my inspiration and my passion.

Montessori. How fortunate we are to have discovered this education at some point in our lives. How lucky we are to spend our days guiding young people through stages of development beyond the academics, and watching them blossom into the people they are growing into, our future generations. Through right action, we can inspire

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children to make our world a better place. A world which has compassion for every living being, a world that will work towards slowing global warming and further extinction of species. A world without strife. A world that is accepting and passionate about doing the right thing in order to make the change; a world with continued hope. A lofty ideal, yet our work makes it realistic. Each child who we touch, will affect somebody else and like the story *Pay It Forward* by Catherine Ryan Hyde, one person's influence or inspiration can make a world of difference. Montessori makes a difference because Montessori is international.

Each Montessori educator has a great task, and it is the Cosmic Task that plays a role regardless of the age of the child in your company. Children are curious about their environment and the world around them. You, the teacher, are their connector; you are the stimulator to intrigue the curiosity. You are the key for the child's awareness in their environment and because of this big task you need to be inspired.

To inspire Montessori teachers, CAMT seeks to provide educational opportunities to stimulate your passion, to reignite the excitement in the classroom and to assist you in being the best you can be. Through conferences and workshops, CAMT is wanting to ensure your spark remains lit.

This year, our conference keynote speaker, Dr. Philip Snow Gang, will certainly invigorate you. He will make you reflect, ask great questions and delve into deeper learning, understanding and knowing. His work will resonate with you, it will make you realize why you are in Montessori education and it will provide you with a greater purpose. You will be uplifted, and this one person will have an impact on you that will make you want to pay it forward to others. His work with higher integrative learning amongst adults creates a shift within, and it will open your eyes as to how treasured you are in the future of the child. It will re-instill your knowledge on how valuable Montessori's principles, philosophy and understanding of the child's developmental years were for the past, and for the future.

CAMT is very pleased to have Phil be a part of our conference as a keynote and workshop presenter on Friday, November 4 at the Old Mill Inn and Spa, as well as host of an intimate workshop on Saturday, November 5 at Central Montessori School. Alongside Dr. Gang, the workshop presenters are also passionate in what they do. We all have a common goal; we wish you to be inspired for yourself and for your students. We hope you will be there for both days, it will be remarkable.

As CAMT members you can also inspire the CAMT board by providing us with feedback, responding to surveys, liking us on Facebook, promoting CAMT so that we can grow throughout Canada and make Montessori known throughout our nation. You can assist to inspire Montessori educators by considering a position on CAMT's board in which your new ideas, insight and opinions will create new energy for greater aspirations.

Montessori needs your enthusiasm, and together we will be motivated to go forward in our Cosmic Task for the future of the child and our Earth.

Thank you for all you do!

Claudia Langlois
CAMT President

"Since it has been seen to be necessary to give so much to the child, let us give him a vision of the whole universe. The universe is an imposing reality, and an answer to all questions. We shall walk together on this path of life, for all things are part of the universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity. This idea helps the mind of the child to become fixed, to stop wandering in an aimless quest for knowledge. He is satisfied, having found the universal centre of himself with all things." (To Educate the Human Potential, p. 9)

Education Doesn't Need to be Reformed - It Needs to be Transformed – by Laura Flores Shaw

All sides of the vitriolic public education debate are missing a fundamental point: our changing society presents new challenges that require us to fundamentally rethink our concept of school.

Our public education system is stuck inside a [framework of factory efficiency](#) designed by last-century industrialists. All one needed to succeed as a factory executive or worker was basic knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic and the discipline to conform to rigid work requirements and carry out and deliver orders in a hierarchical organization. Our public education system successfully trained millions of children for this environment. But times have changed, and the industrial society and economy are long gone.

Due to the proliferation of digital technologies towards the end of the last century, we socially reorganized into a [society of distributed networks](#) whose economy runs on knowledge. As education researcher [Andy Hargreaves](#) states, “A knowledge economy runs not on machine power but on brain power - the power to think, learn, and innovate.” Thus, the competencies required for success in the 21st century are very different than those required in the last century.

Recognizing the need for different competencies, The World Bank issued a [report in 2003](#) recommending an educational framework of lifelong learning, which is, as they state, “education for the knowledge economy.”

According to The World Bank, the three core competencies that schools need to develop in students to prepare them for life and work in the 21st century are: 1) the ability to act autonomously (including knowing how to learn on one's own) while seeing one's self as part of a larger system, 2) the ability to effectively use tools, which includes language, information, knowledge, technology, etc., for communication, and 3) the ability to collaborate, cooperate, and handle and resolve conflicts with diverse groups of people. These competencies equip students to effectively manage the rapid changes in technology, knowledge, and society, enabling them to retool and create their own work. This latter ability is essential because the days of relying on others to create work for us are over.

To develop these competencies, The World Bank recommends moving away from traditional teaching methods to methods wherein teachers guide students toward a variety of knowledge sources rather than instruct using a single textbook; where students learn by doing, and they learn from each other, not just the teacher; where learning plans are individualized and assessments actually inform those plans; and where educators themselves are lifelong learners and model same for students.

Rather than developing these competencies, however, our public education system is still using traditional teaching methods focused on delivering standardized content via single textbooks and testing students on mastery of that content - content that is likely to change before students have even finished school. The only current “innovation” in education reform is that content is now delivered and tested electronically, which, frankly isn't very innovative. It's just doing the same thing with fancier gizmos.

[Montessori](#) education, however, utilizes The World Bank's recommended methods to develop the competencies necessary for success in the 21st century. Montessori is a framework of lifelong learning. But Montessori goes one step further - it considers the developmental needs and tendencies of children at their various stages of development from birth through [high school](#) (Montessori is not just for preschool). Ironically, though it was developed at the beginning of the last century, Montessori is a framework of lifelong learning and human development that, as education researcher [Barry Zimmerman](#) states, “includes conditions for fostering academic responsibility that are consistent with current psychological research.”

Can [Common Core](#) proponents claim that?

No. But, ironically, Montessori proponents can claim that a fully-implemented Montessori curriculum “[not only meets new national requirements, but often exceeds them.](#)” Montessori has always had high expectations for children.

Frankly, it doesn't even appear that Common Core can teach children to take responsibility for their own learning - a key competency for 21st century success. In a re-

cent NPR news story, a reporter describes a Common Core math lesson wherein the teacher instructs the children to count with her, allegedly "[shifting the responsibility of learning and teaching onto the students.](#)" How does a structured environment wherein teachers (or in some cases computers) are constantly telling students what to do and when to do it teach students to learn on their own?

And if "a knowledge economy runs not on machine power but on brain power - the power to think, learn, and innovate" - how do standards stuffed inside a factory framework teach students to think creatively so they can innovate?

Innovation and creativity require constant learning both individually and collectively through collaboration - collaboration that is, as Robert Reich states in *The Future of Success*, "informal, unplanned, [and] serendipitous."

In a factory system focused on efficiency, there is no time for organic, serendipitous collaboration. In fact, such collaboration goes against the grain of a factory model in which every student is supposed to learn solely from the teacher. And after years of a "no talking" regime, which sometimes extends even to the lunch period, our children's natural instinct to share knowledge and collaborate, which has been viewed as unruly behavior and "cheating," is suppressed. Additionally, any attempt at collaboration within the factory model is likely to be contrived and controlled as evidenced in the same NPR article cited earlier wherein the reporter describes how the teacher "[turns up the engagement a couple of notches and instructs the students to talk to the classmate next to them.](#)" If we have to instruct students to collaborate, how will they know how to navigate that process on their own as adults where it occurs informally, unplanned, and serendipitously?

Research shows that specific school characteristics foster creativity. Learning and Teaching Scotland (now [Education Scotland](#)), the organization responsible for Scotland's national school curriculum development, recently commissioned a review of 210 research and policy articles published between 2005 and 2011 related to fostering creativity in schools. It found that four school features promote creativity: 1) students have control of their learning and ownership of the work; 2) the physical environment is varied as children can work indoors, outdoors, and at locations outside of school; 3) students have flexible use of their time; and 4) students can work at their own pace without pressure. All of these characteristics together describe a Montessori school. The factory framework, however, doesn't allow for most these features as children are grouped by age, are expected to get through the same amount of material at the same time, and are told what and when to learn.

The bottom line is that any reform stuffed inside the 20th century factory framework won't prepare our children for success in this century.

So why don't we just give our children Montessori?

Follow Laura Flores Shaw on Twitter:
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What's The Hurry – by Sue Martin © Sue Martin 2016

"In a world of acceleration, nothing can be more exhilarating than going slow". Pico Iyer

Slow down, you move too fast

If you visited an elderly person in a nursing home, it's unlikely they would tell you that they wished that their life had gone by faster. Yet we seem to spend much of our lives, up until old age, in a rush.

People wear their hurriedness as a badge of pride. Perhaps they think: the more hurried they are at work, the more they will achieve; the more disciplined they are with time, the more likely they are to have a 'balanced' life; the more efficient they are as parents, the more time their children will have for extra-curricular activity. But while the motives might be good, whether or not the fast pace actually allows them to achieve those things, and whether those outcomes are actually desirable, are two big questions.

If we think of this in relation to our daily lives, we might ask ourselves some useful questions. Carl Honoré, a Canadian journalist who lives in England, has written extensively on speed in the western world, not from the perspective of how technology has changed the world, but how that technology, has changed us. One of the biggest responses is stress. While not all stress is bad for us, too much stress for too long causes toxic stress. And that has really bad effects on learning, behaviour, health and quality of life. "When toxic stress response occurs continually, or is triggered by multiple sources, it can have a cumulative toll on an individual's physical and mental health – for a lifetime" Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. Toxic stress is an issue whatever one's age.

Stop and smell the roses

There are other problems with hurriedness and the stress that results. Some of these include reduced time to enjoy art or music, inability to be creative, being unable to keep up with team sports, falling down on personal responsibilities, missing opportunities to spend time with people who share our interests, selling short our relationships, missing opportunities to recharge our batteries, creating physical or mental health problems, not taking time to enjoy the natural world, or just being unable to sit and do nothing. As parents we may also be in such a hurry, and be so stressed, that we spend less time with our chil-

dren, and the time we do spend is of poorer quality than we might like. Honoré recognizes that the issue isn't entirely a result of technology, and that many technologies actually solve big social problems. However, they can still have awful side effects.

I cannot imagine that a worker during the industrial revolution, or a farm labourer, generations before that, had time on their hands for leisure purposes. Tools have allowed people to do things more efficiently, but they also created problems. I am sure the earliest hoes and shovels were rough implements that caused cuts and callouses. Early machines brought about dreadful injuries; as we develop more sophisticated tools we created more complex side effects.

Tech and society

The relationship between technology and society is important. Technology propels society forward, but some specific technologies also generate tension. Driving, for example, enhances our expectations of going places quickly. So too of course does flying, which has changed how business is conducted, and people continue to subject themselves to all of the stresses of air travel even though Facetime or Skype might be just as effective. Computers have completely changed how we conduct our personal and work lives. They've removed much of the repetition and drudgery, and allowed for much higher productivity and faster communication. But they also, and increasingly so, add new stressors because there's an expectation not just of immediacy but 24/7 availability. Evenings, weekends and vacation time are no longer a sanctuary for relaxation and connecting with friends and family. Any advances are offset by greater hurriedness and resulting stress. Instead of offering us more time, they require us to be available more of the time.

War and peace

One of the biggest drivers of new technology has been war. Flight safety, for example, is quarterbacked by radar, which was the quiet invention of Sir Robert Watson-Watt prior to WW2, but then co-opted and further developed by the British army. My father was part of that team. Before he died, he commented on the current "frenetic pace of life" as he called it, and thought it felt more stressful than actually fighting a war. Maybe that

was a perception of age, but he thought the pace of life was detrimental. And although they didn't frame it in those terms, the lens through which his generation had seen life was an era in which there had never been so much change.

Mark Pagel makes a strong case for human beings having an innate capacity for connection, establishing groups and functioning collaboratively, yet he suggests that social change comes about from such things as fighting, "One rough way to predict the winner in any arms race is to ask if one side stands to lose more than the other" (p24). Fortunately, he also discusses examples of cooperation, altruism and what we might think of as morally 'good' behaviours.

Dr. Maria Montessori lived through two world wars, and was focused on teaching peace, "Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep us out of war," she stated. Considering the places, times and events through which she lived in Italy, India, and Spain, this was understandable. We might think that Montessori was against technology, but it is difficult to know. Several commentators, such as Mark Powell of the American Montessori Society suggest that Montessori's scientific mindset would have encouraged the use of technology if she were alive today. However, that technology would be geared toward useful discoveries and peaceful outcomes. If she were to see parents keeping one eye on their children while the other one was on the phone, she would probably not have been impressed.

Although there is an evident initial connection between technology and conflict, that isn't the whole story. Technologies, interestingly, tend to act as agents of social change. The development of most technologies has facilitated an existing urge for people to either create, do, make, go places, buy things, communicate, and/or share what they have been doing; an urge that may be part of an innate survival mechanism. Certainly that would be the explanation of an evolutionary developmental theorist.

I am not suggesting that technology is all bad, or that it is the only cause of our hurriedness. Technology has many aspects, many of which allow us to do really positive things and improve the quality of our lives, and those of others. However, there are many instances where it may

appear to have a life of its own, and propels us forward without any opportunity to determine where it is taking us.

Slow coach

A new life of leisure was what was promised, as Honoré reminds us in "In Praise of Slow". Machines were supposed to make our lives easier. Industry would take the hard manual labour away from the majority. That might be true, but in its place evolved layers of management. The new 'knowledge economy' has more people communicating more information, but whether or not there is real human progress is debateable. How many office workers spend much of their day writing or responding to emails, rather than generating new ideas and bringing them to fruition? We are able to access endless amounts of information, but whether or not we have time to think - never mind think critically - about it could be a problem for the future. Leisure, on the other hand, might allow for 'down time', and actually improve our ability to solve problems and be creative.

It seems ironic that someone would think they could achieve work-life balance by stretching themselves so far that their schedule is tight from the moment they wake until they drop into bed exhausted. It's a common phenomenon to encounter women who feel that they can be great mothers, work outside the home and keep themselves fit and socially active. The reality is that this is the feminist dream that my generation fought for. I am a grandmother who has juggled a career while I had children in school, and tried to keep a marriage alive while keeping a reasonably civilized home. I endeavoured to connect with a group of friends, I volunteered, and so on. We wanted to be able to do it all, we tried, and in the hurrying between one part of our lives and another, how well did we actually do any one part?

Putting the on brakes isn't easy. If you've tried to have rules about excluding phones from the dining room table, organizing a regular date night with your partner, or maybe tried to leave work at a sensible time every night, taken time off work on a regular basis - possibly taken the vacation days you earned, or found time to read and tell stories with your child every evening, you might have found a number of barriers in your way. Each of these things involves planning for a slowed-down rou-

What's the Hurry (continued from page 6)

tine, or one where there is greater opportunity for reflection. Over-planning can be counter-productive as we can get into the same cycle of trying to fit everything into the day.

"It's not stress that kills us, it is our reaction to it"
[Hans Selye]

These are some of the challenges of what my socially-conscious daughter would call "first world problems". She means that the issues have arisen as a result of a sophisticated and affluent society. She is right. Maybe they aren't first world problems generally, but perhaps specific to the professional and managerial sectors of that world. Certainly there are people whose stress isn't from rushing around in the SUV. Their stress is about paying the rent, having a job, feeding the children, ensuring the children have clothes, and making sure those things are done without any shame being experienced for themselves or their children. And there are many people who appear to be managing quite well in one area yet their stressors aren't apparent because of chronic disabilities that aren't visible, loneliness, disenfranchisement, health issues and so on. We may be concerned about some of the finer points of life, but our friends or neighbours may be the ones who think deeply about all these issues, want the best for their children, but are living with high levels of toxic stress.

Perhaps the only way to bring about lasting change is to completely rethink where you are going and why. This shouldn't be a matter of goal setting, because that makes it sound like a structured activity. But having a conversation with the key people in your life about what's important, might be the way to go. There is that clichéd saying about nobody on the deathbed wishing they had spent more time at the office; and sometimes clichés hold some truth.

As a parent, grandparent and educator I have thought about these things and wondered how I might have done better. My children say they don't remember their childhood as I recall it, and that's as well.

*I have no love for those who rush
about its mad business;
put their children on a starting line and push
into Christ knows what madness.*

Brian Patten from 'Note to the Hurrying Man']

Could's and should's

In my estimation, those who demonstrate a gentle intentional approach with children, and not just write about it, lead the way. Marji Zintz specializes in "healing parent-child relationships", and her words on social media have created a significant following. Marji thinks that much of the urgency in the hurriedness "...comes from a belief in unquestioned stories we embrace about "have to" and "should" and "cannot" and "shouldn't", and these are the drivers of our relentless hurrying". She suggests that we should question these stories. Those parents who are able to address the issues of hurriedness appear to be asking questions about what they really want for their children, and how that can be achieved. Analyzing what is happening in one's life, and the lives of each of our children, seems rather obvious, even though it's difficult.

Growing up, I assumed that most families were like mine, with a mother and father, a brother or sister, and that they had a home much like ours, and almost everyone lived in a family group and they behaved according to rules much like those in our house. That was my norm. And that knowledge gave me security as a very young child. But as a growing person I needed to appreciate that people live in many different ways according to different values and beliefs about life. It isn't until we see ourselves in contrast to others, that we see what our true values might be. This can be unsettling, as the process of discovery can challenge and even overturn ingrained assumptions.

Parents and parenting

I've noticed parents in our local Chapters bookstore looking at parenting books. Pregnant moms and uncomfortable dads, as well as more serious couples, tend to flip through the available books, and make decisions about what to buy very quickly. Maybe they know already what they want. I think that's unlikely, though, because if they did, they'd probably make the purchase more cheaply online via Amazon. Yet they select a book that might direct their whole parenting style for the next 20 years, based on those few minutes. I exaggerate, as I am sure parents build an eclectic collection that grows to create their view of parenting. It's more than likely that they are influenced by the way they were brought up,

which is usually the fall-back position. We tend to internalize roles and relationships, and through those we absorb the values connected with what we imitate. Mothers-in-law may have something to offer, but the dynamics of that relationship often lead to the rejection of their ideas. My point here is that we make rather hasty decisions about what direction we are going in and how we shape our parenting philosophy.

"For fast acting relief, try slowing down"

[Lily Tomlin]

My review of books on parenting revealed an incredible number of them, and there are way more in print than you can find in any bookstore. Titles don't necessarily indicate the nature of the underlying philosophy. Covers aren't very helpful either if you are trying to align the book with your values. I find some books worrying because they are a little deceitful in their promotion of a religious or cultish message which they fail to declare upfront. Making decisions about who we are going to be in the lives of our children, what our beliefs are about children and their development, what role we might have in their lives, and what kind of care and education we want for our children...each of these questions is huge. They need big conversations, and each discussion should be built on the answers to the questions we ask ourselves about profound values and beliefs about life. They are political. They are about roles and responsibilities in society. They may be spiritual. They concern knowledge. They are the meaning of life questions. I remember having a conversation with my son about some of these things when his wife was pregnant with their first son. "I am not ready for this" Simon said. None of us is ready, but we have to be. Maybe parents need a book on how to chose a parenting book.

"No parent, educator, or legislator I ever spoke to believes in pressuring children to do things well beyond what they are capable of doing..." I don't believe in hurrying children, but" (people say), " and there is always a but."

David Elkind 2008

As educators we need to understand the perspectives of each parent. We must try to enter the mind's eye of the parent who comes to view the school where we work. "Selling" a program to a parent - trying to convince a parent that a program is a good fit for them - is not a good strategy. Even though it might take much longer,

it's better to suggest that they think about what they really want for their child, and whether the program looks as though it fits their vision. Explaining the principles, methods and underlying values is important, but the parent may need time to determine what their beliefs are about those things. Providing a bridge through education is helpful, so long as there is plenty of time for processing such an important decision. Eliminating pressure about accepting spaces is important and it will reduce unnecessary withdrawals when experience shows a poor fit. Montessori may be their chosen direction - it's certainly a program for parents who are reflective about what they want for their child.

Beliefs and values

Values are more likely to be caught than taught. For example, in the Montessori environment, the aesthetics and ideas of beauty are those that children experience daily - they internalize the value. Similarly the pace and rhythm of the classroom inculcate values concerning children's learning, and how adults respect what the children are doing. These are the antidotes to the 'hurried child' that David Elkind wrote about. Elkind has been a developmentalist from the start of his career, building his work on Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, Steiner, and Piaget, to name some of the giants. Their unifying thread is that they each started by observing children, respecting them, and appreciating their unfolding development. Their collective impact might be summed up by saying they shifted society's thinking about children, getting them to accept that childhood was indeed a distinct period of life. They each showed that children are individuals with some commonalities of development but with differences and varying needs.

Pushing and prodding

Many people in the field of early childhood education - me included - are increasingly concerned by the move toward academic programming in early education, and the lack of developmental appropriateness through the primary years. There are multiple reasons for this, and some of it rests with parental pressure for that direction. Government departments have also submitted to political pressure to increase the standards, but often done it in inappropriate ways. The new standards are sometimes expressed as learning outcomes, and these complex statements are the yardsticks set in the mistaken belief

that this will raise those standards. The basic problem is that you cannot make a child do some things before they are ready. They cannot walk before they are maturationally ready. Play and everyday activities may provide opportunities to gain particular skills in a positive no-fail manner. But if the child is 'required' to write, and cannot, they will fail. Despite copious amounts of research outlining their detrimental characteristics, these ideas of raising standards through academics and strong doses of testing, have been pushed on very young children. Young children have a need for play and hands-on materials, not formal teacher instruction. "Crisis in the Kindergarten" - was published in 2009 and described the enormous changes in what was happening in kindergartens in the US in the previous decades. The 2016 report "Is Kindergarten the New First Grade?" (Bassock et al) confirmed those changes and discussed what they meant in terms of what the children were not getting, namely play.

This trend is evident in varying degrees in England, the USA, Canada and numerous other countries. The UK situation troubles me the most as I began my teaching career there. I had hoped practice would (as I see it) improve, but it has not. Many of the current wave of teachers appear to have difficulty with delivering the mandated curriculum in anything but a regimented teacher-directed way. Their ability to offer play for four and five year olds is only in what they call "continuous provision", which for many teachers amounts to a table-based activity that's tightly controlled and only available to those who have completed their academic work assignment. At the same time, these same teachers are complaining about the inability of the children to sit still, pay attention, and keep up with their nightly reading homework. I know that teacher preparation in the UK has changed. Maybe they don't study child development anymore?

Just this week, a parent in one US state told me of their two-year old who was given homework of pages of letters that were to be completed that night. I saw the sheet that the little one had tried to write on, and her mother sent me photos of her hand grasp. In England, a reception class for 4 -5 year olds used to be play-based. Now, teachers are assessing their reading at a level that only a few years ago was indicated for 7-8 year olds. The strategies for "managing" children's behaviour appear to rely on old school behaviourism that focuses on rewards

and punishments, star charts, a degree of shaming, and a 'one size fits all' consequence, rather than talking things through, building relationships and setting reasonable parameters. All these things contribute to stress, and can make children extremely anxious. This uncertainty breeds competition (which teachers sometimes support) and the unhealthy relationships that result can create power dynamics that invite bullying.

Signs and symptoms

Attention deficit problems, behavioural issues, and the identification of a myriad physical and mental health problems are typical and then formally passed to departments catering to children with "special needs". Often these children do not have special needs, unless you think that meeting their developmental need is special. Roseann Murphy has also witnessed this awful phenomenon from the perspective of the youngest children, who are constantly being pushed and prepared for their 'next stage', rather than being allowed to grow and develop at whatever stage they have reached. She was the Owner/Managing Director of Little River School in California, and based her work on Magda Gerber, founder of RIE (a respectful approach to being with and understanding the development of very young children). Murphy says, "We seem to be on a mission in the early childhood education field to insist we prepare children for kindergarten and elementary school, while simply ignoring the research and evidence of the harm it does to children." She points to the harm that both Elkind and Dr. J Healy have described in their work, and that happens when we try to formally 'educate' young children, rather than enable them to learn through their play. We generate stress rather than ameliorate it. Play allows for the right levels of tension that are generated through self directed activity. Adult-directed teaching shifts the learning away from the motivations of the child, and spoils on-going interest in learning. The way that play meets whatever developmental need the child has at that time is an incredible learning mechanism. Why adults want to spoil that is not just surprising but deeply troubling.

"Environments that are stressful to children, especially where there is little opportunity to play in all its forms...will cause heightened levels of stress to young children" [Maggie Dent, 2013]

Purposeful play

I was first introduced to the idea that play was important at the Froebel Institute in London, England. Froebel's kindergarten (child's garden) was the place where this play was to occur. Today's kindergarten might use Froebel's name, but rarely in a kindergarten are there practiced the principles of his approach. "Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul" he famously said in his great work, "The Education of Man". I agree that if you were to critique some of his rambling sentimental ideas, you might find some of them outlandish, but like all the greats, he was a man of his time, and influenced by spiritual ideas that might seem outmoded today. However, he seems right about the notions of unfolding children's development (a concept that appears in his work) and that the period of childhood is a special one that needs to be protected: "Children are like tiny flowers. They are varied and need care, but each is beautiful alone and glorious when seen in the community of peers." The notion he articulates is of children being like seedlings that have all the components to be whatever individual they are going to be, but needing a gentle and effective gardener (facilitator). Froebel may not have anticipated the pattern of social change (although he understood human nature) but he appreciated the fact that childhood needed protecting.

Hurriedness and stress syndrome

David Elkind warned us of the "hurrying" problem many years ago - I was aware of the hurried child syndrome as my own children were growing up in the 1980s. He noticed, long before the majority, that in North American society a number of things were happening to children. He looked into what these factors were. Although they seem obvious today because social psychology is something more frequently discussed, back then the "hurriedness" that I discussed earlier wasn't considered a common problem. It was the result of social pressures and life-style choices that few had examined in any depth, perhaps assuming they were things that went along with an affluent life. There were always people who examined their lives more closely, opted out of society, became hippies, joined communes, or otherwise sought alternative lifestyles, but Elkind's thinking was new. Children were being denied their childhood, and something needed to be done about it.

I think it likely that, along with many of my generation,

Elkind might be quite depressed at the way that in many corners of life, hurriedness has become worse, not better. He always had a soft spot for what he saw as 'alternative' approaches to education, and saw hope in Montessori and Waldorf in particular. Elkind sums up his book on the "Giants in the Nursery", explaining the history of developmentally appropriate practice, saying,

"Our specific positions are based on opinions and values.

DAP (Developmentally Appropriate Practice) is based on the facts of human development that have been amassed for over a hundred years of research and over three centuries of practical classroom experience." (2015)

Avoiding or at least ameliorating the stress

Attempts to address the problems of hurriedness and stress in children's lives have been considered by the Forest Schools movement that started in Germany. Even Ontario has its own Forest School for very young children, in which children can be in touch with nature, and discover and play outside almost all of their day whatever the weather. Richard Louv's work identifying what he calls the "Nature Deficit Disorder" is a condition related to the one we have touched on throughout this piece. Lack of contact with nature, as well as the stress resulting from hurriedness and urban living, desperately needs balance for this generation of children. It is for both the child's benefit and that of nature that outdoor experience is essential.

"Nature deficit disorder describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them; diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illness" [Louv, 2005]

Play of every kind, especially physically boisterous and risky play, has been identified as being another way of preventing and attending to existing stress in children of all ages.

Peter Gray, an American psychologist who is a research professor at Boston College, and an advocate for independent learning - largely because of his concern for the damage that the conveyor-belt public school system has done to children - is so protective of children that he may want them to be protected from schools altogether. At the same time he believes in risky play, and every other

What's the Hurry (continued from page 10)

kind of play, and experiential self-directed learning. He is all for the right kind of learning, he just thinks schools were created based on the wrong premise and they are beyond redemption. I wouldn't want to misrepresent him, but I think his stance is like Elkind on steroids. He is concerned about many of the same social issues, but frames them differently and isn't only concerned with the early years: life-long learning is also an issue for him. Instead of wanting early care and education and the school system to be improved because of what's happening to children, he wants to grind the system to a halt – or at least have anyone who wants to opt out to do just that, so that they can benefit from learning on their own. This way those pressures generated by society in general, and the school system in particular, will be averted. “We are in a crisis that continues to grow more serious with every passing year. We have lost sight of the natural way to raise our children” says Gray.

He moved his thinking away from education within walls of schools, and explained that there were so many things wrong with the school system that he proposed “unschooling”. He thought there were enough difficulties in the outside world for us to be adding more by sending children to school. “To a very great degree, school is a place where children learn to be stupid” he thought. Ouch! But although he offered a solid rationale, his idea was not widely accepted. However, it caused people to question things about school that they hadn't up until then. This radical educational movement was about trusting children to learn. In short, the system, they thought, did more harm than good. One like-minded person I know, Idzie Desmarais, lives the unschooling life, protecting her children from the harmful effects of school, and ameliorating the damaging effects of the impact of society by facilitating her children's learning at or near her home. “There are so many people in our world who need love, and food and shelter, and acceptance, and support, and trust. No one needs schooling,” she writes on her blog. That's an extreme response, but it causes us to consider what is generating the problems and, perhaps, allowing us the opportunity to address them.

Pathways

Not all schools are like those that John Holt describes in ‘Why Children Fail’. Many have characteristics opposite to the negative ones he talks about in his books. He wasn't the first to critique education systems - many came

after him and I am sure more will follow. Sir Ken Robinson started from a different perspective, as he valued different things. He sought creativity as the challenge, and thought the current processes tend to kill the sparks that they should be fanning. From a platform of social justice and understanding transformational change in education, Andy Hargreaves offers a vision that reflects some of the characteristics seen in the schools in Finland. Appreciating the need to reflect community differences, respecting teachers, and allowing them a degree of autonomy in how they do their work is, Hargreaves argues, important. Hargreaves and Michael Fullan collaborated at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), and their ideas on educational change have been influential in Canada, and impacted policy around the world. They shared a belief in the need for quality in teachers, and in supporting their morale through good leadership. Whether or not you think the ideas of the reformers of the last few decades have made any significant difference, or difference in the right direction, will depend on your ideas about the goals of education. The size of a public school system can be one of the biggest problems. While there are often economies of size, it is important to wonder how these schools can accommodate a very broad population. The question in my mind is whether they can provide the kind of experience for a child that is protected from the hurriedness that we have discussed. This isn't the only value, of course, but it is a significant one, and it might be the one on which many of the others are only branches off its root.

As an educator I worried about issues of fairness. I have wanted all children to enjoy the things that lead to the meeting of their needs. I know that does not happen everywhere, and by reason of where a family lives, and the public school available to them, or because of their finances, and what they can afford to spend on education, there won't and probably can't be equity. Not all parents are aware of developmental issues, or hold the same values, and it is as well that there are different options, but there will never be a perfect match of child to school.

Academic success is important, but it isn't the most important thing to me, and that surprises some people when they know I am a teacher. The development of the whole child is what matters more. As parents and educators collaborate on facilitating this holistic development,

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a sideline is academic success – sometimes remarkably advanced success. It is the means to that end that is more important - the process rather than the product, according to my philosophy, and that is why I think hurrying is counterproductive.

Outside the public school system

Stuart Shanker believes that supporting children's self-regulation is essential, and that play is the main technique.

"There is a growing amount of research suggesting that kids have much higher levels of psychological stress than they did a generation ago" [Shanker, 2013]

Some of my best friends teach in public schools: yes, they really do! And I don't think they are all doing a bad job. Most are excellent, caring, competent teachers with years of experience, and plenty of on-going professional development. Yet the amorphous system can be a challenge, even for some of the best. This is because success often requires a commitment to making quiet spaces for the children, tamping down the rhythm of the day and focusing on relationships. They may resist some of the pressures of accountability, pour their own resources into the classroom, and go well beyond expectations.

We don't need to look too far to find programs where the pace is discernibly slower than the average public school. However, describing a school like that might make it sound boring or lacking in excitement. Parents can be dazzled by the combination of colours, sounds, displays, brightly lit spaces, large gyms, copious use of technology, numerous schemes to promote good behaviour, parent teacher information boards, loudspeaker systems, learning centres, cascading materials, high-pitched voices, large numbers of plastic toys and play material, and so on. None of those are evil, but in combination they tend to assault the senses, and put the children in overdrive every day until they habituate and fail to attend to the details of very much. That said, there are of course some schools outside the public system that offer a competitive environment that isn't necessarily overly pressured. There's a wide range, and parents need to have choices.

It is possible to find alternatives that are developmental in nature, and offer an unhurried flow that is conducive to healthy learning. For brevity I will forgo offering any history on the origins of the approaches. Of the four

types I want to mention, you are more likely to encounter a school with the Montessori name. That said, not all Montessori schools are the same, as I am sure you know. Sadly, that well-respected name can be the label for programs that might be academic, play-based, Montessori-inspired, authentic Montessori, or nothing associated with Montessori except for the name and maybe some materials on a shelf. A parent would need to visit the school to know if it meshed with their view of education. My hope is that they are likely to follow an unhurried schedule, with children going about selecting didactic material that suits their interests and needs.

"The child can develop fully by means of experience in his environment." Maria Montessori

Rudolf Steiner's Waldorf Schools are based on a respectful view of the child. Children stay with the same teacher throughout their years in the lower school up to grade eight. In each year there is structure but an extremely calm natural environment that lacks clutter. Waldorf communities are based on anthroposophical ideas, which Steiner developed as a spiritual philosophy with application to farming, medicine, those with special needs and the elderly. He had an unusual vision of human development, but his insights have provided nurturing, unhurried and successful education right through from babies onwards. There are Waldorf schools across Canada but more in BC and Ontario, with additional early childhood programs.

"Our highest endeavour must be to develop free human beings who are able of themselves to impart purpose and direction to their lives." Rudolf Steiner

Friedrich Froebel didn't do so well, in that few schools in Canada carry his name, although The Froebel Education Centre is a stronghold in Ontario. However, the few Froebel, and Froebel bilingual schools, offer an education that brings to fruition his vision of education. The development of the kindergarten and ideas of learning in a natural and protected environment remain today, although his work has been updated.

"My children will not be schooled, they will be developed." Friedrich Froebel.

What's the Hurry (continued from Page 12)

Waldkindergarten or nature preschool is another concept that emanates from Germany, as did the original kindergarten. These programs offer every kind of learning typical of indoor learning, but outside, taking advantage of nature. The commercial world is shunned in favour of playing and discovering, climbing and building shelters, being involved with math activities, creative opportunities and stories. These are becoming more common in Canada. They offer the advantages of addressing potential nature deficits (as previously described), offering a natural rhythm of life, and support to holistic development.

"There are several schools of belief such as Montessori and Waldorf that say children shouldn't be introduced to formal written concepts...until age 6 or 7" [Barrie Forest Kindergarten, 2016]

Forest schools have been popular in the Netherlands and Finland, and are becoming more common in Canada. Some of them mirror elements of Waldorf schools, while others are more focused on outward bound independence, or adventure playground-type learning, or even totally self-directed discovery reminiscent of A.S. Neil's Summerhill. The YMCA Academy in Toronto is for high schoolers who need a blend of individualized learning and outdoor education. That is an example of a very different type of school that meets developing needs in a "...supportive, safe and challenging community..." (Don Mills Head of School). Variations of Forest schools are likely to be more available in the near future as Forest School Canada offers more training.

Final thoughts

Some folks argue that moving children to a sheltered space isn't the kind of protection they need, which is to learn how to manage the difficult world. There is merit to that argument, although there are also limits to the child's capacity to deal with so many things simultaneously. I believe that hurriedness diminishes feelings of security, and my understanding of the literature on the mechanics of stress leads me to think that its toxicity leads to it being a barrier to healthy development. A low level of toxic stress is enough to undermine learning such that a young child is unable to engage in the quality of self-directed activity and play that is necessary for their holistic development. Older children may experience a lack of motivation and energy that depletes their ability to learn and develop in ways that prevent them

from being successful academically. However, it may bring about emotional challenges beyond those that are observed in other environments. All children are different, and their stage of development, patterns of response, personalities, and cultural and family experiences, will have them process life differently. Children of all ages may respond negatively to any separate aspect of the hurrying experience. Some find some stressors have greater impact than others.

Stress is a reaction, although we often use the word to describe what is going on around us. If we can help children build resilience, they will be better able to manage stressors, and enabled to recognize their reactions to situations. Studies on resilience support the need for adults to facilitate that resilience. We don't know if teaching children to think positively about the huge stressors of hurriedness can be effective. Mindfulness, yoga, exercise, sleep, and recognizing feelings and stress responses, taking voluntary time-outs, talking about anxieties, and building other aspects of emotional intelligence each have protective effects.

A major study undertaken by the American Society of Pediatrics and published in 2012 (Garner, Shonkoff et al) considered early childhood adversity and toxic stress. This marks a change in direction in that a multi-disciplinary "ecobiodevelopmental framework" shifts the idea that stress is only the concern of parents and educators. In this scientific model that considers genetics, economics, poverty, housing, and so forth – or the social determinants of health and development, including brain development - the ultimate responsibility appears to go to pediatricians. I can't see them doing much grassroots work, being involved in discussions about values and beliefs about what is wanted for children. Maybe I am cynical. The science may push forward our knowledge about toxic stress, building better brains and reinforcing robust resilience, but is it going to tell anyone how to stop hurrying?

What's the Hurry (continued from page 13)

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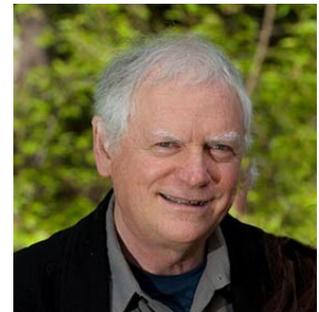
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CAMT 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Friday November 4 2016 at The Old Mill, Toronto

Featuring Philip Snow Gang

Philip Snow Gang is the founder and Academic Dean of TIES (The Institute for Educational Studies), Montessori academic, historian and eco-cosmological educator. In the mid 1980s, Gang, in collaboration with Ron Miller, helped to popularize the term "holistic education", and he served as a leading advocate for the movement on the International stage. He also collaborated with the UN University for Peace who helped plant the seeds to create the Global Alliance for Transforming Education, and was an important figure in popularizing the Montessori schooling methods for use in the United States. In the late 1980s Dr. Gang took part in the Global Thinking Project. As a Citizen Diplomat he traveled to Russia and was in dialogue with teachers, principals and directors of the Soviet Academy. Most significant was the Siberian lecture on Ecology where he presented Our Planet Our Home. [CLICK HERE TO WATCH HIS VIDEO](#)



VISIT WWW.CAMT.CA MORE INFORMATION!

Proactive Schools Boast the Strongest Readers – by Diane L. Duff, B.Ed., M.A.

If we're to believe the statistics, 8 out of 10 students who struggle at school have a reading challenge. And the statistics suggest that most of those eight students will have a specific reading disability, sometimes referred to as *dyslexia*.

But not all children who struggle with reading and writing have a learning disability. Some simply require more direct instruction or a more personally-tailored approach than those who learn to read easily.

Whatever the cause of a child's struggle to become literate, research has shown that early detection of the signs of future reading and spelling difficulties, coupled with early intervention, can help many children avoid the struggle and go on to become successful readers and writers.

I have, for many years, strongly advocated that students' literacy skills be assessed from the time children enter the 3rd year of Casa *at least* until they finish the last year of the Lower Elementary. Although what children in the Casa will be tested on will be different from what children in the Lower Elementary cycle will be tested on, the principle is the same.

Catch the difficulty early, *before* it becomes a real problem. It's important.

If, by the end of the 1st year of Lower Elementary, children haven't developed reading skills at approximately the same pace as their peers, there is a significant risk that they will remain on that 'failing' trajectory for the long term. And that, of course, will carry over into everything they do at school.

Children who aren't reading at approximately the same pace as their peers are not developing the same wealth of vocabulary or the same base of knowledge about the world. Children who aren't reading at approximately the same pace as their peers will eventually find themselves struggling with math problem solving, understanding social studies passages, and writing stories. And the discrepancy between their skills and those of their peers will continue to grow.

And we haven't even mentioned the fact that children who struggle to read do not find any pleasure in reading. And that becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: *Reading is*

hard = Don't like reading. Don't like reading = Avoid reading practice. Avoid informed reading practice = Reading remains hard.

Assessing our students to ensure their reading skills are keeping pace with *realistic* expectations is key to proactive and *informed* instruction for all students --- and key to remedial intervention for those who demonstrate that reading and spelling don't come easily to them.

TASKS/SKILLS TYPICALLY ASSESSED AT EACH GRADE LEVEL ¹

3 rd Year Casa	1 st Year Lower Elementary	2 nd Year Lower Elementary	3 rd Year Lower Elementary
Print Awareness			
Alphabetic Principle	Alphabetic Principle		
Phonological Awareness	Phonological Awareness		
Phonemic Awareness	Phonemic Awareness	Phonemic Awareness	
	High-Frequency Word Recognition	High-Frequency Word Recognition	High-Frequency Word Recognition
	Knowledge of Phonics for Reading and Spelling	Knowledge of Phonics for Reading and Spelling	Knowledge of Phonics for Reading and Spelling
	Control of Sounds when Spelling	Control of Sounds when Spelling	Control of Sounds when Spelling
	Comprehending Strategies	Comprehending Strategies	Comprehending Strategies
	Oral Reading Fluency and Speed	Oral Reading Fluency and Speed	Oral Reading Fluency and Speed
		Vocabulary Level	Vocabulary Level

Is the school you teach in ~ or the school your child attends ~ proactive about reading development?

Visit : www.thereadingschool.ca

¹**Phonological Awareness:** Awareness of the sounds in language, e.g., appreciation of rhyme; ability to make and judge rhyme; ability to clap out syllables.

Phonemic Awareness: Awareness of the sounds in words: e.g., ability to identify the first, last or medial sound in a word; ability to identify the common sound in a group of three words; ability to parse a word into its individual speech sounds.

Interfacing with Cycles of Nature – Cycles of Self

Every year we do a fall Odyssey with our junior high students.

Sometimes it involves hiking four hours into the deeps of Algonquin Park, emerging transformed and bush-forged to start the year with a tribal edge.

Sometimes we canoe, honing collaborative currents. This year, we returned to Tobermory.

It's a gradual process, becoming part of a new space. We baptise ourselves in the turquoise grotto, watching, as the rock sculpts us into prehistory and technology melts into minerals and bones. Reflection is easy around our fire. We take time to listen to the stories of our budding tribe and feel the swell of 'usness'.

The land is eloquent. On the third day, we explore patterns shaped by others ... Andy Goldsworthy's spiral jetty, the playful eco-art of Sylvain Meyer, the exquisite seed and flower-petal mandalas of Kathy Klein. The images wow us. We carry them in our minds eye as we walk on the magnificence of Georgian Bay shores sculpted by giants of wind and water - rock and fire.



Andy Goldsworthy



Kathy Klein

Returning to our hearth, we find ourselves in groups and make our own patterns – mandalas to the four elements. They grow in a thrilling communion of kids and capers, shells, and pine-cones, stones, ash and moss. I am gob-smacked by their creativity.



In progress ... Mandalas to Autumn and Water

Natural Mandalas *(continued from page 16)*



In progress ... Mandalas to Autumn and Water

At the fire, as night falls, the students create a welcome to the four elements and their directions. It has a playful edge to it. Someone drums. Each group takes the central totem from the middle of their mandala and uses it as a blessing for each person in our circle. There are giggles, woven with moments of profundity and surprise, as is always the case when children lead.

In silence they drift away, using torn strips of coloured construction paper on which to write hopes for the coming year. Then, ceremoniously we read them and burn them, letting the fire transform them to smoke. The hopes and dreams encompass the philosophical and the pedestrian. The only one the fire rejects is, "I wish for no homework."



Mandala to Fire – stone/ash/sage/wood



Mandala to Fire – stone/ash/sage/wood

The Olive Branch



Pictured here is Pamela Leudke, a CAMT Board of Directors member, with District Education officials in the Mbeya region of Tanzania, Africa.

Through her volunteer work over the past 10 yrs., she has helped The Olive Branch For Children develop 28 Montessori Kindergartens in a remote region of Tanzania. The local government education officials and village headmasters are beginning to take an interest in the philosophy and methodology of Montessori education.

This past summer, Pamela met with the District Education Officer (pictured on the right) to share and discuss The Olive Branch For Children's approach to education in the Montessori schools the charity assists to operate in villages within the District. More details about Pamela's volunteer work will be in the next CAMT newsletter.

For more information about this program please visit:

www.theolivebranchforchildren.org

or email Pamela directly at:

olivebranchmontessori@gmail.com
