



"Follow the Child"



camt Talk



Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Winter 2012

Message from the President

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Connected Learning—April 14 2012
- CAMT and CCMA Proudly Present An Evening with Dr. Jane M. Healy
- CAMT and CCMA Proudly Present A Lecture and Workshop with Dr. Jane M. Healy
- Strategies for September—June 2012

Visit www.camt100.ca for more details



Dear CAMT members, On behalf of the CAMT Committee, I extend a welcome and thank you for being a member of CAMT. If you missed the conference this fall passed, you missed a wonderful day. Marlene

Barron's keynote was as entertaining as it was informative and the workshops I personally attended were both helpful and enjoyable. From my colleagues and other attendees I heard terrific comments and praise for the other workshops.

CAMT remains in good shape financially as you heard at the AGM and we have the largest committee I have ever served on with CAMT. A very heartfelt thank you to the new members and the returning crew. You make being president so much easier than it could be.

We have a fantastic lineup for the new year. As well as an April full day workshop, and our now classic June 'Strategies for September' workshop, we are co-sponsoring a May workshop with our good friends at CCMA. Please avail yourself of all the wonderful ongoing learning available this year. That's why we exist. If you have thoughts for other workshops or would like

your school to be the location for one, let us know. We'll bring the coffee and fruit.

This year we will be stepping outside the norm for our Fall Conference. In case you didn't know, 100 years ago this July, Alexander Graham Bell and his wife, I heard it was mostly her, with the help of Maria Montessori opened the first Montessori School in Canada, in Nova Scotia. With the fine folks at CCMA we are planning to expand the Fall Conference to include a Friday night get-together and all day Saturday events. We are going to make the conference an event for the future. It is also our intention to become more public this year with events like a 'Walk for World Peace.' We want the Canadian population to know who and what Montessori was and is. Please be part of this and get your school involved. Details will follow.

If you are a member of CAMT and have a question or concern contact us please. If you have a friend who is not a member, well, what are you waiting for? Bring them to a workshop and get them involved.

Thank you for your faith in re-electing me to head this extraordinary organization. We want you to be pleased with CAMT. Let us know how we are doing.

Barton Graff, President

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Permission to Create by Wendy Agnew

I was re-reading Chapter VIII in *The Absorbent Mind* and stubbed an eyelash on that curious and liminal word “Hormé.” *Hormé* – that mystical/scientific, vital force that invests all life – in fact all the power of the cosmos.

As I mused, I began to sense ideas and images floating into my mind, rather like dust motes in a sunbeam.

Renowned quantum physicist David Bohm¹ suggested that consciousness may operate more as a field rather than as a discrete property of individual brains. Ervin Laszlo², among others, likens our brains to sensitive radios that are open to certain frequencies of consciousness depending on their state and preparation.

Hmmm! A little paradigm shift shivered through my own brain at that moment and for an instant, learning became a matter of preparation rather than acquisition. - The divine mind as opposed to the divide mind awaiting a multiplicity of fine-tuning. Then the feeling vanished and I got hungry. But the ripple left an impression.

Perhaps children, with their polymorphous tendencies, are more open to that wash of consciousness that swirls through and within the enigmatic *Hormé*, weaving a tapestry of being on the enchanted loom of mind³.

Montessori advocated for an educational environment that fostered a sense of weaving; Freedom of movement, choice, communication, even a sense of dynamic freedom in a synthesis of indoor and outdoor environments that counter the industrial model and iterate the eloquent pathways of natural systems. She honored cycles of work rather than blocks, and interrelating themes of curriculum, rather than units. She respected the beat of each child’s internal drummer within the eclectic symphony of the *humane* family – extending beyond humanity and into the wisdom of cosmic patterns.

As a seasoned Montessori guide, I am still amazed by the brilliance of ‘following the child.’⁴ In my early training it seemed too idealistic, too trusting of the impulses of life.

As a child myself however, I had no such reservations. I remember the most creative moments of early life involved freedom, independence, nature and self-directed discovery.

Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle... The Wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round ... Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a human is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves.

Black Elk (Oglala Sioux)

This ongoing column is dedicated to the children - their inventions and discoveries that tickle the obdurate tendencies of adults. I call the column “permission to create” because, so often, I think we adults unconsciously place implicit barriers on the natural tendencies of children to innovate, initiate and iterate creative acts. Do we follow their impulses to go out and commune with nature – a most ardent and collaborative creator? Do we allow them to truly write before they read? Do we stop and observe with patience and

intuition, the dance of chaos and order that unfolds daily in our environments? Do we follow with tender commitment Montessori’s injunction not to interrupt children immersed in the task of becoming? I know I don’t always... But when I do – such thrilling surprises!

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2. Ervin Laszlo, “Cosmic Symphony – A Deeper Look at Quantum Consciousness”, The Art of Living <http://artoflivingguide.org/thinking/cosmic-symphony-deeper-look-quantum-consciousness> October 18, 2011.
3. Charles S. Sherrington, *Man on his nature*. Cambridge University Press, 1942, p. 178.
4. Maria Montessori, *The Secret of Childhood, The Child as Teacher..*

Permission to Create *(Continued from Page 2)*

A Little Story of Revolution:

"What shall we do with this idea of Revolution?" I asked my class of junior high students.

"We want to do time-lines." "With partners."
"And with pictures – hand drawn only!" They say.

The research begins and we begin meeting weekly to share ideas and information.
The facts flowed, seeding the field of our collective consciousness with fertile fecundity.

"So Cuba was like the playground of rich Americans." "Champagne and caviar for not all!" They surmise.

"Castro had 300 fighters and Batista had 10,000!" L tells us. "But Castro won!"

We started to talk about the structure of revolutions and came up with some interesting ideas - One being to simulate a revolution at the school as a culmination of the project. I said I would let the administration know in case they got nervous.

"Let's go outside," said someone. "We can make a game based on revolutions!"

We discussed various and profound motivations for change and I designed a rather uninspired relay race between the Capitalists and the Communists (Cuba was still strumming out thoughts.) The sun shone, the air crackled with laughter and oxygen and the Capitalists won the race. Then T suggested a wrinkle to the game.

"Hey, why don't we (the Capitalists) spin around ten times with our heads down before we run, - Like too much champagne." Everyone liked that idea.

"What about the Communists?" It was pondered.

"They have to do 20 jumping jacks each before they run." "You know, 'cause they're probably fitter but hungry and exhausted from working so hard and not enough food."

The lawn was filled with panting revolutionaries and wobbly over-indulgers. The sun still shone and the

air still crackled with increased challenge. The race was run. The Communists won.

We finished the day in a circle, with a discussion about ideals and realities. We unpacked the several Communisms we had become familiar with and opted for participatory democracy. One of our students spoke about Iran. One spoke about the 'Arab Spring' and made predictions on the future of governments in Libya and Egypt.

"Its funny about democracy," someone said, "You kind of have to practice it or it becomes just another system." "Funny that!" said someone else, "It's the freedom that makes it such a challenge."



FREEDOM TO MOVE

The Toddler Environment *by Angela Gidman-Patient*

Part & Contributor to the Whole Community and Our Obligation of Observation

I'm a Montessorian trained in Casa and Assistants to Infancy and when I decided to have children, it was important to me to have them in a Montessori environment. I have two boys and they both began their formal Montessori education at 18 months. When selecting a school, I spent over a year prior to their commencement observing every Montessori environment within a half hour radius of my home. Then one day then I found it... everything I had ever imagined.

As I observed at this particular school, something became very clear to me: the sense of **Community**. This was a true Montessori community where the older children from casa, lower and upper elementary (sometimes siblings), would hold the doors, walk the toddlers down the stairs to their classroom and collect and distribute laundry throughout the morning. This type of movement throughout the school made it feel like an authentic children's house. The children were being nurtured at every turn in the school.

Now, not only do both my sons attend the school, I now am a directress in the Toddler classroom. There are ten toddlers and two trained teachers, the children attend five days a week, half day and range from 18 months to 3 years of age. Children at this age are unique beings and I am continually amazed at the process of development. When a child comes to us, they come with varying degrees of independence or lack thereof. Many variables come into play and we act as investigators in our observations, taking notes on where the child is developmentally. Observing without judgment – a scientific observation. Once a child feels loved and nurtured and they know the routine of their day through consistency and repetition, they feel secure and basic trust is established. It is at this time where you see a glimpse of independent thought and spontaneous spurts of independence that allows you to engage them further.

When observing we shouldn't move about the classroom, as we don't want to distract the children or disrupt the children.

It is in this way that there exists a symbiotic relationship between the toddler community and the rest of the school. A relationship that is beneficial to the children at all planes of development one that presents a calm curiosity and mutual respect that is founded through observation and cultivated and nurtured by modeled behaviour and interaction. It is also our foundation as we prepare to aid the child in their future development and prepare the environment to constantly meet their needs.

Maria Montessori said

"It's through observations that we guide our children, providing us insight as teachers in so many ways. It helps us to attain normalization in the classroom; it gives us insight to obstacles of development and aids us in a deeper understanding of ourselves. It gives us perspective. Montessori describes observation as an ability that can be acquired through practice in being conscious of something in particular. It can become an art form, a different way of seeing. It takes time, attention and love for the child." ¹

I will always remember Dr. Montanaro's words, *"Observation helps develop objectivity; and we should not interrupt the child when engaged in an activity even when we do not understand. It is a way of learning the child's development, we watch before acting."*

When observing we shouldn't move about the classroom, as we don't want to distract the children or disrupt the children. If we start asking the teacher questions or move about we change what we see, it's no longer a scientific observation of the child's environment; it's now your environment. If you are observing one particular child and you can't see him/her don't change positions, go back another day. *Observe again, again and again to understand!*

Infant and Toddler directresses are always observing on a daily basis as it is the nature of the age of our children, safety is our utmost concern. Constantly

The Toddler Environment *(Continued from Page 4)*

observing the child's physical health and wellbeing, mastery of materials, toileting, interaction between other children, seeing their environment through their eyes... how they see it. However, we need to step back, sit on the floor and blend into the wall whenever the opportunity presents itself the children at this age are changing rapidly.

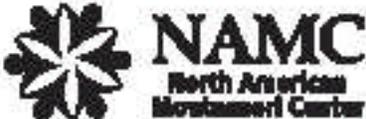
The toddler environment provides the foundation for self construction in which the whole mental structure depends upon; physical, psychological and emotional growth. Through observation you can achieve normalization. Observation leads to independence; a glance and a smile if a child is doing the right thing creates a sense of peace and calm. If you are standing back at a distance observing, you are giving them space and the freedom to construct themselves but you are also getting the insight you need to manage your classroom. Freedom

intertwined with discipline will be the foundation that will help the child develop inner discipline. If you are perplexed and feel like it's just not happening go back to *The Absorbent Mind*, Chapter 26: Discipline and the Teacher. If something is not working, look closer-what are the obstacles in the environment, is it the teacher? It is paramount that we observe our own actions and take a closer look at the obstacles in the environment.

I have always gone back to my observations as they really have been my 'Life Lessons', giving me future insight to so many things, personally and in the classroom. Observing, while trying to refrain from judgment, understanding that there is always more there than what we see with the naked eye.

REFERENCES

1. *The Discovery of the Child: The Clio Montessori Series*, Chapter 3.

INFANT/TODDLER	EARLY CHILDHOOD	ELEMENTARY
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <h1 style="font-family: serif;">Become a Montessori Teacher</h1> <p><i>... without missing work</i></p> </div> <div style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">  </div> </div>		
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Embracing Technology in Visual Art by Christine Benson

Technology has blessed us with an amazing variety of tools and programs that allow students to participate in an interactive learning environment. Computers and new interactive electronic boards have armed educators with the ability to bring the previously difficult to access “outside” world inside their classroom walls. As a visual artist and educator I have always been skeptical of technology and quick to question its role in visual art education.

As a child of the 1980’s my elementary education was untouched by computers and my early years were spent observing and participating in a world where your own hands, eyes, and ears experienced the textures, colours, smells and sounds first hand. Nothing was simulated on a computer screen and even the sound of chalk on the blackboard and watching my teacher erase away her neat handwriting like magic left me spellbound.

As an art student at the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto I relished my time in the studio, getting my hands covered in ink, paint and clay and the feel of my carving tool cutting away the surface of my printing block. I knew that it had been an especially productive and invigorating day by the splatters and stains on my apron and hands. It was then that I realized that the sensory experiences produced when creating art could never be recreated or mimicked by any piece of technology. I agree whole-heartedly with Maria Montessori who said, “The human hand allows the mind to reveal itself.” I feel that my own hands have always been my greatest tools.

Since 2002 I have been the messy-handed art teacher whose colorful bag of art supplies have encouraged kids to get their own hands dirty in pursuit of the joy and confidence that comes from the participation in

hands-on visual art activities and self-expression. What was accomplished by the conclusion of the activities? Yes the students learned about line, texture, colour, shading, value and shape. Yes the classroom teacher will have a piece of artwork to grade for their report cards. But more importantly it has provided the students with a sensory experience, a memory, a confidence-building activity and a way to express their individuality, beliefs and ideas. Sure the desks got a little dirty and the floor a little dusty

but wasn’t it worth it? So I was skeptical when a few fellow educators tried to convince me that computer technology could be used effectively to instruct some visual art lessons. Soon I began to see chalkboards replaced with electronic boards and handwriting replaced with computer fonts. I vividly remember one such visit to a classroom where as I began to lead

the students through an art project called scratchboard (where students create an abstract layer of colourful shapes in crayon, coat the crayon with a thin coating of black acrylic paint and then scratch intricate lines, textures and shapes with a tool to reveal the colour underneath) the teacher had a revelation: “Why don’t you use the electronic board to demonstrate scratchboard? It’s the same thing,” he stated matter-of-factly. I shuddered as he turned on the big screen and opened a drawing program. Using a prefabricated “pattern” tool he filled the screen with colours, then used the “paint brush” tool to “paint” the screen black. Next, using an electronically controlled pen, he removed some of the black colour from the screen. “It’s pretty much the same process,” he said. He was thrilled. I was shocked. The goal of the lesson was to be inspired by Austrian artist Gustav Klimt’s “Tree of Life” by creating their own self-portrait by filling the trunk and branches of their tree with objects and lines that told us about them. How could that kind of



A Collaborative Pollack Inspired Painting Created By Grade 7 Students

individuality be accomplished by employing templates and computer programs? Would the students not miss out on the obvious lack of the sensory experiences and the ability to create in an open way? What about the obvious lack of connection to their own hands? Watching the process unfold I couldn't help but wonder what would happen if all art went digital? What if every pencil and paintbrush was replaced with a mouse?

A little shaken from my brush with technology but still optimistic, I continued on my journey. Soon I found myself teaching a class about Abstract Expressionist painter Jackson Pollock whose "Action Paintings" used rhythmical patterns that saw him drip, splatter and pour paint directly on the canvas. My stomach sank when, with a giant canvas under one arm, a bucket of unusual painting tools and a drop cloth for the floor I spotted it... the electronic board! With the goal of the workshop to fling and splatter paint I cringed! Would this board be employed to aid us in our spontaneous paintings? But just as I began to tell the students about the interesting ways in which Pollock created his pieces the electronic board lit up and the teacher proceeded to stream a video of Pollock painting in his studio. Instantly the students were transported outside their classroom walls and into his large, spacious studio and were witnessing him work. Suddenly it was technology that had given me goose bumps this time. My handwritten chart paper with facts about the artist could not compare with what the students had just seen on the screen. This time technology had not been used to

replace hands-on learning but rather used to enhance it.

Last week I found myself faced with the same electronic technology and the classroom teacher innocently suggested that instead of using the chalkboard to draw and teach the students about Picasso's Cubist paintings that I use the electronic screen instead. My heart started racing! I had come face to face with the ultimate question: could visual art live harmoniously alongside traditional visual art media and ideas? I took a deep breath and admitted to the students with some embarrassment that I had never used an electronic board before and promised that I would give it a try.



A Future Pollack In Action

With a sly smile on his face a boy in the front row said "I guess you learned how to do something new today too!" Finally I had learned an important lesson- that nurturing and encouraging young students to be creative and develop their imaginative spirit often means learning to embrace new ways of teaching that combines traditional methods with emerging technology. As educators we need to be a bridge between the past and the future, with one hand honoring past traditions and one reaching eagerly forward.



Scratchboard Drawing Done By A Student

Practical Life—A Review of Katherine O’Keefe’s Workshop By Christina Koutrouliotis

As Montessori teachers we often become persuaded or encouraged to focus on Math and Language materials by parents. We overlook our own beliefs to appease our parents. But we are truly hindering the development of our students when we allow this to happen. As Montessorians we know the importance of the Practical Life materials and how they provide children with the foundation for developing independence and specific skills.

For those reasons I am always looking for new ways to enhance the children’s interest in the Practical Life area, which is why I attended the workshop by Katherine O’Keefe on November 4th, 2011. She had many ideas that one can implement in the Casa and Elementary classrooms. I walked away very inspired and could not wait to get back to the class to embellish my Practical Life shelves.

Most of Katherine’s ideas were very simple to implement. One important recommendation is that we should change our shelf throughout the year. The Practical Life area should not look the same September to June. They do not have to be completely new exercises; you could add an extension of one exercise or change the bowls, containers, trays etc. to give a new, fresh look. That will eliminate the tendency of some children sitting with a Practical Life exercise and appear to be busy or productive, when they are not really interested in working.

Katherine also brought up some important points to remember. The first point she mentioned is to learn to observe, and not just the children, but the classroom and shelves as well. If some materials are not used, look at why. If some children cannot concentrate or improve their fine motor skills how will they be able to work with long pieces of work? Katherine also reminded us that we need to re-present exercises. “A practical life presentation should be like a ballerina doing a pirouette. The presentation should be like a performance with precise and purposeful movements.”

The ideas Katherine introduced for the Casa level were:

- Rotate the exercises.
- Use jugs that curve to the children’s small hands and fit well at the top of the spout.
- Use coloured water in the jugs and bowls.

At the end of the day have the children take part in washing and cleaning all the P.L. materials. This will enable the children to appreciate their classroom as it shows that they are responsible for everything in it.

Encourage the use of big, long, wet, messy exercises. At times teachers hesitate to present these exercises at the thought of all the work involved but these are the most important. They can include exercises such as washing clothes, washing dishes, preparing snack. Some schools do not have the space or accommodations to have a garden, so improvise and grow an herb garden in the class. Children can harvest the herbs and grind them to make tea.

For window washing and plant care do not limit the children to the classroom, allow them to wash hallway windows and take care of plants throughout the school, (safety permitting).

For Elementary classes Katherine’s suggestions were as follows:

- Have a toaster oven in the class with ingredients that are accessible. Making scones were recommended because they are very simple.
- Teach them how to do embroidery or crocheting.
- For an overnight trip elementary children can plan a trip to Ottawa; encourage students to book it, write the newsletter and plan a fundraiser to make the trip less expensive.
- Allow students to write the letters to inform parents of the trip, and other pertinent information concerning the trip.
- Have Elementary students plan Casa trips or excursions.
- Have Elementary students make their own land and water forms out of plastacine or paper mache.

Overall this workshop had many great ideas revolving around the Practical Life area and truly enforced the importance and need for these activities.

The Biosphere—A Review of Rosanna Gaudio's Workshop By Claudia Langlois

Canadian History and Geography are areas in which Elementary Montessori teachers need to prepare themselves. Although the Montessori Curriculum does not provide us with the lesson plans specific to these subjects, after attending Rosanna's workshop I feel confident that this subject area can be well covered. Not only will it be covered, but elementary teachers can use a variety of materials that are available within their classroom. The Time Lines can incorporate History and Geography. Chart 15a, displaying the sun's rays and the knitting needle experiment which demonstrates the seasons in Canada which can also be connected to Canada's vegetation. To demonstrate Canada's journey from the South Pole to the North Pole, plate tectonics can be used to show the movement. If we want to go back billions of years, Chart 19, which is the erosion chart, can assist students in learning about Canadian landscapes. Our lessons with the Clock of Eras will encourage the students to explore fossils and find out what types of rock our country was made up of. How old is this land we walk on?

When did man move into North America? When were the stone carvings made? To learn more we refer to the Timeline of Man. Where did these people come from? The Migration Charts and Progress of Civilization cards can assist with the Aboriginal people and later the pioneers. How these people survived can be explored with the unit on Economic Geography Interdependencies. We can use the Great Lessons to pull out key lessons which can be related to Canadian History and Geography. If we use our imagination and the materials, we can create the Canadian Curriculum.

Rosanna agreed that a curriculum plan needed to be developed. The task can also be very overwhelming as there are so many resources available and to find an area to begin with is a challenge. Rosanna wanted to keep the Montessori element intact and didn't want to re-invent the wheel, so she took the Fundamental Needs of Man and applied it to our countries' history, beginning with the First Nations.

This workshop was very engaging. In small groups the attendees created the Fundamental Needs of Man Chart for each Native nation according to Canada's

biomes. Rosanna provided each group with the relevant resources in point form and each group applied the information according to the needs of the specific nation. Rosanna also provided the circles on which the headings for the needs of mankind could be written, such as transportation, shelter, defense etc. Below these main heading circles the actual information pertaining to each need was written out, providing an exciting and dynamic way for elementary students to learn about Canada's aboriginal past as well as reinforcing their knowledge of Canada's biomes and resources.

Rosanna provided the group with a CD that has fabulous lessons which can be used immediately within the classroom. She also covered content for Canada's biomes, provinces, Prime Ministers, government, and she provided an extended study of Fundamental Needs by explaining that once a Community or Society is formed people create symbols to represent them and samples of Canada's symbols were given. Not only did Rosanna give the group their own CD but she compiled a list of resources which are beneficial and geared towards the elementary student. The series which begins with the title The Kids Book of... Great Canadian Women, Canadian History, Prime Ministers and Geography were referred to as well as other sources, too numerous to list. Rosanna stated that many Government of Canada websites have information that is easy for the student to comprehend.

It was a wonderful workshop. A workshop that provided the teacher with materials and ideas which could be used the following week. Rosanna was extremely gracious in sharing her lessons and ideas, and I am certain that the elementary teachers who attended are extremely grateful as they now have a curriculum based on Canada's First People, Canada's biomes and the government. Thank you Rosanna!

The Observation Dilemma—A Review of Dr. Marlene Barron's Workshop by *Claudia Langlois*

Now You See It, Now You Don't The Observation Dilemma Finding the Lens to Notice, Analyze and Plan

Observation is what we as Montessori teachers do best. We have been drilled to observe, follow the child, and plan; but do we really stop and observe the child in order to do what is best for them? When we observe we are attached and subjective. There is no way we can be detached and objective because we are part of the process and are a participant in the event being observed. As we observe we filter each observation through our own eyes, we then interpret what we see and make our own judgments about the child. Yet, our judgment is not the only valid observation. A co-worker may see the child in an entirely different light, based on their perception and personalities.

Dr. Barron gave an example of two teachers in the same classroom. One teacher is calm and the other has a "zip-zip" energy, one who is always on the go. Both these teachers will see a student who speaks slowly, takes their time doing work and has a casual approach to everything, differently. The calm teacher will say that the student is doing a fabulous job, is meticulous and careful, where as the "zip-zip" teacher may perceive the student to be not applying themselves to the best of their abilities. Who is right? For these reasons record keeping is important so that what takes place in the classroom is best for the child, not for the adults. As adults we need to respect every activity in which the child engages. It is only through experience within the environment that the child can begin to understand the world. Each experience is work and each experience is important, regardless of what we observe and have interpreted. It is the teachers' responsibility to create a classroom that meets the needs for each individual child. If we need to meet each child's needs, then we may need to re-design or adapt the physical environment to meet the needs of each child. Dr. Barron gave an example of using a ladder when the child builds the Pink Tower with the Broad Stair, by having this ladder easily accessible for the child, the work can be completed and the child's need will be met. We may need to adapt the existing materials to each child's needs and we need to allow the child to adapt to the environment, by figuring it out themselves.

As teachers we need to create materials that are interesting to each child so that the child can create. Dr. Barron discussed painting in the classroom. She showed a picture of a child painting and the paint was everywhere, she then asked the group the question, "How many of you would allow this to take place in your classroom?" A few teachers put up their hands. She further elaborated, in her jovial manner, that many teachers wouldn't allow it because it's messy. "The paint goes everywhere and who has to clean it? The teachers, so we prevent this from happening due to our needs, however, we need to let this happen so that the child has the full experience."

How many teachers give lessons because it is in the manual and it's the right time and the right age to present this lesson? What if the child has already learned the lesson by observing and listening to lessons for another student? Do we really need to give that lesson? When we give lessons make them meaningful to each child. Sometimes we give lessons even when they are not needed.

The goal for a teacher should be to have a thinking classroom. Do you have a thinking classroom? Does your classroom provide a social community which encourages children to think physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually? Humans learn only through active, meaningful engagement with others.

How do the students in your classroom behave, what are their mannerisms? As we know, all learning takes place in a social context. The teacher is the model. Your actions make an impression on the students. Dr. Barron talked about object perception, when one looks at something, others will follow. She said that when we give presentations we should look at the work, when we do work we should be looking at our work, not elsewhere, as the children will notice and imitate our actions. We need to be aware of what we are doing, because as well as us doing the observing, we are also being observed.

When we observe the child, we are being subjective due to our own personal experiences; however, we don't remember everything, so how can we be true observers? Dr. Barron says that when we rely on memory for planning and reporting we are actually creating a fiction for ourselves and for our students as

The Observation Dilemma *(Continued from Page 10)*

our memory can no longer be accurate. We begin to forget, we can't remember exactly, so we need to document, not two hours after the circumstance or before bed but immediately. We need to document what the children are doing, how they are using the materials, what they think they are doing, by asking them, and with whom they are interacting. Only by immediately documenting the observations can there be a cumulative understanding of each child.

Observations need to be conducted by looking and listening, and by continuously looking and listening again while taking notes. Only then will we have an accurate account of the child.

So in order to find the lens to notice, analyze and plan, teachers need to:

Observe each child

Record useful data

Analyze the data

Plan for each child

Act – make a decision to do OR not to do

Report to co-worker, parents, documentation

When a teacher has correct and accurate observation notes documented then the true creativities and social interactions of the child can be determined. These daily documentations will go into the child's portfolio and monthly cumulative summaries will be written for each child. The child's strengths, favourite activities, what the child loves doing will be documented.

How does the child display problem solving strategies when:

- creating an art project
- working with a puzzle
- in a social situation
- encounters an intellectually challenging activity
- in writing, in reading

How does the child display:

- independence/interdependence
- respect for others
- respect for the environment
- autonomy
- initiative
- self confidence and competence, and
- joy in working are some examples.

How does the child respond to external authority? How does the child assume responsibility in the classroom? These are some questions that Dr. Barron posed during her workshop.

Dr. Barron also showed an example of her record keeping, which is documented on a sheet of three ringed paper, divided into 6 vertical rows for the days of the week, with the final row being used for anecdotal comments. Lined paper is used so that the student's names can be written down. Selecting a consistent time of day, daily recording will take place, for example 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Within the column, the teacher writes down the accurate observation for actions, interactions, and lessons. Dr. Barron created symbols to replace words, such as an arrow facing the right for leading, or an arrow directed left for following, a circle for circle activities, 'ng' for no good when a child is not acting accordingly with material or socially, where as a check mark can be used for positive work or interactions. These observations then need to be summarized. Each weekend the teacher would work on a fourth of the class and this creates the child's cumulative record which is then recorded on a separate page for each child. When this is completed the teacher has spent 8 times each year thinking deeply about each child. From these observations monthly plans can be made, individual programs, and differentiated learning techniques can be applied. Now, the teacher has acquired a true understanding of the child and a subjective report can be provided.

It takes a lot of work and dedication to apply this type of record keeping, but we have an obligation to the child to provide them with a true report, not based on our inaccurate observations.

Dr. Barron's book [Recording and Reporting](#) a comprehensive early childhood observation and recordkeeping system was available for sale, as well as other books. Information about her books can be found on her website www.barroninternational.com and from this site there is a link to purchase her books.

Dr. Barron's lively spirit and interactive workshop kept the interest within the group. One can certainly determine, by observation, her vivacious approach to education. It would be fun to be a child in her classroom. Now, would it be an accurate observation to call Dr. Barron a "zip-zip" person? It certainly is. She used the term during the presentation to describe herself as a "zip-zip" person. One would have to be a high energy person in order to accomplish all she does and has done. It was a pleasure to experience her workshop and her vivacious presentation.



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