



CAMT NEWS

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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



At CAMT, we are busy finalizing the details of our 2010 Fall Conference, and they will be announced as soon as possible. Don't forget to mark the date, Friday November 5, on your calendars. Our theme for this year's conference is Montessori: Going Global. Montessori has truly become a global experience and with the technology today we are

able to connect with each other, no matter where in the world we are. We can share experiences and learn from each other. Montessorians around the world are pulling together to help children in need have the opportunity to have a Montessori education. Many teachers have volunteered their time and money to help build Montessori schools in developing countries. If you have had the opportunity to work in another country let us know about your experiences (camtnews@camt100.ca). We would like to include stories about Montessori around the world in an up-coming newsletter.

As the end of another school draws near, it is the time when we reflect on the past year. Was it a great year? Did things not go as expected? I think it is important that we take a few minutes to think about the year and questions ourselves. What worked during the year, what didn't work, what we would like to change next year and what we would like to continue? Many of you, I'm sure, do this already but if you haven't before I think you will find it helpful. Don't just dwell on the negatives, think of those great moments you had this year. Often we are too hard on ourselves. Set one or two goals you would like to improve and make a plan. Take time in the summer to nurture your spirit and find yourself again. Have fun and enjoy life. Have a great summer!

Kristin Collver, President



(Left to right): Barton Graff (CAMT), Evelyn Buchbinder (CAMT), Jennifer Kolari & Dr. Ira Schweitzer speakers at recent CAMT Mini-Conference) & Kristin Collver (CAMT President).

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Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

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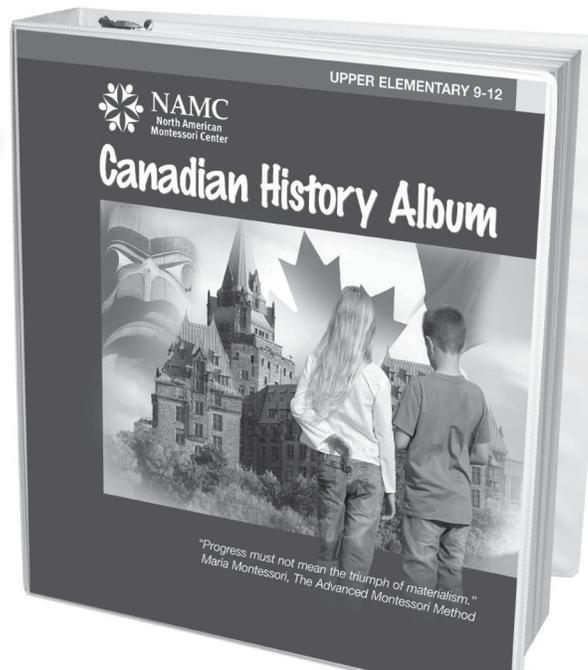
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Our Brain is Involved in Everything We Do

by Dr. Ira Schweitzer

When we are watching a student run from task to task, starting new tasks and finishing none, we as educators often become frustrated. Sam seems to jump around, is not focusing and loves to interact with others when they are busy with their own tasks. He may even be completing sentences for others, jumping all over their words. Can you hear yourself say, yes, this happens regularly? You may even hear a voice going off in your head saying "sit down, get back to work, leave her alone, hand in your finished work, or some such mantra.

We would never ask a child wearing a cast to jump rope, or a child with a sling to climb the ropes! A child with an attention disorder (ADD/ADHD) may also have a physical connection that is just not visible to us as educators.

The field of Neuro-Psychiatry has helped the practice of pedagogy to understand the brain's role in the attention process. The Prefrontal Cortex (PFC) is often called the chief executive officer of the brain. This is approximately 1/3 the entire mass of the organ. It is the supervisor involved with the "departments" of attention, planning, impulse control, and follow through. All of these "departments" are intimately involved in attention disorders.

From a physiological standpoint, low activity in the PFC is directly linked to a short attention span,

impulsivity, a lack of ability to clarify goals, and the all famous "procrastination."

Low levels of dopamine are associated with problems of motivation, attention and depression. Poor sleep habits, too much television or other screens, or the inherited trait leads to more probability of issues with impulse control and poor self-supervision. It seems the harder the child tries, the less brain activity they have to work with.

It has been shown that children with ADD/ADHD have issues with self esteem, social relationships, as well as with learning. They may even be more prone to traffic accidents as teens. They may be more conflict-seeking because this gives the brain a natural high and stimulates the PFC, but it creates problems in the classroom milieu and within the community.

One way that has been proven to help with attention disorders is to be sure there is movement, intense exercise, and low carbohydrates in the diet. It appears that by keeping glucose levels stable during the day, self control is improved. It also has a direct effect on the dopamine in the PFC.

Meditation has also been used to help control ADD/ADHD. There has been noted success with neuro-biofeedback and CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy).

I am a firm believer that focused written (or digital record) goals are essential for this child. Clear direction with goals helps to teach focusing skills and outcome expectations.

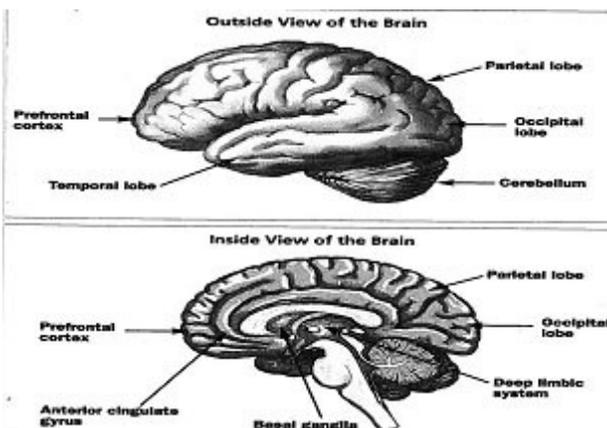
In my studies with Dr. Daniel Amen, I learned a technique from him that I have adapted for children in school. He calls it the one page miracle (OPM). I have adapted his adult OPM to make sense for our children in school.

Here are the steps. Have the child write or draw (or make a scrap book) of the goals they have for school, friends, clubs, or any other activities they may participate in. This should include friendships and relationships, interaction with parents and siblings, and their own health and exercise.

Every day, there should be a ritual in the classroom for this student to review the document. He/she should refer to it and see if his/her behaviour is consistent with their goals and plans.

Balancing brain chemistry is also crucial for the child with attention issues. As I previously stated, dopamine is the chemical of motivation drive and stimulation in the PFC. Low levels are associated with low energy, poor concentration, low motivation and impulse control problems. Many medications that can be prescribed help with this balance. I know that many are reluctant to go the medication route, but from my own personal observations medication can be a good part of the process to help children with ADD/ADHD. I have heard reports from youth who said "it took me out of the fog and opened my mind." There are some other boosts that can be employed. Intense physical exercise, protein rich meals, and some natural supplements can be of assistance, but work much better in concert with medication.

Attention issues are not outgrown as was often thought in the past. It is crucial that when we work with our youth we educate them to be life long learners. That includes helping them to succeed even with ADD/ADHD.



CAMT MINI-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP REVIEW

Happy Parents/Happy Kids Session with Jennifer Kolari

by Laurie Parker

"Everything in your life comes down to relationship." With these words, Jennifer Kolari challenges us to consider our interactions at every level and with every person in our lives.

Using personal anecdotes as well as her extensive experience as a social worker, family and child therapist, and as a parent herself, Jennifer Kolari shared many insights and nuggets of wisdom in her delightful workshop.

One of Jennifer's most significant points is a technique she calls mirroring. With babies we instinctively provide this – the infant sends out emotion and we return it when we mirror it by cooing, gurgling, making faces, etc. This creates a critical connection that is helping the baby's brain to develop. Positive interaction releases a "reward chemical" that promotes bonding.

As children grow and develop, they continue to need this type of positive interaction in order to feel secure, confident, and to develop as an individual. As language becomes the major type of interaction, mirroring takes a slightly different form but is every bit as critical to the child's development because it bypasses language (the prefrontal cortex of the brain) and is experienced immediately as a limbic, or bonding emotion.

Oxytocin is the key to this interaction. It is released as a reward chemical during positive interactions, and promotes feelings of contentment and comfort. It

provides physical relief with the added benefit of being a de-escalator of emotion. Also critical to the child is the fact that the more oxytocin there is, the better able the child is to learn. Thus education is directly impacted by the presence of oxytocin.

Mirroring can be used in any human interaction. It is counterintuitive, that is, it is not our first instinct, but is highly effective. The basic way in which we mirror someone is to match the emotions he/she is sending out. The affect is an integral part of this – we must express an equal level of emotion to our response in order for the receiver to truly believe that we "get it". If that person does not sense that we understand his/her position completely, then he/she will continue to "hit the send button" and will not be able to move toward resolution.

Jennifer described the CALM technique for this empathetic response:

C – Connect. Suspend your own agenda and focus on the person.

A – Affect. Match the urgency of that person's emotion.

L – Listen. Clarify, summarize, rephrase, and echo that person's situation.

M – Mirroring. Register the message and send it back to show true understanding.

Once the person believes that the situation is being fully understood by the one mirroring, the release of oxytocin allows him/her to be open to a solution. We can now move from mirroring to

presenting the problem and can then offer a solution. Beginning sentences with the word "So" is a helpful way to lead into this. "So you were just putting your work away and Johnny ran to the snack table ahead of you and took your spot!"

In all of this it is vital to remember that our goal is to empower the children in our care to make appropriate choices and decisions. Jennifer described the "curling" illustration of parenting today. Parents often "sweep" their child's life and smooth the way for him/her. By solving their child's problems for him/her, these parents remove the opportunity for the child to gain experience and the skills for handling challenges. The CALM method allows children to identify and organize their own emotions and thus leads them to consider informed and appropriate decisions.

Jennifer inspired us to be mirrors for everyone we know and certainly gave us a great deal to reflect upon. I highly recommend her book "Connected Parenting" for those who truly want to become connected and positive with the children in their lives.

FREE CAMT WORKSHOP

CAMT will award you free attendance at a workshop of your choice for any article you write that gets published in our newsletter. Please send your articles to info@camt100.ca

Congratulations to Laurie Parker who will be receiving a free workshop registration for her submissions

Teaching with Brains

by Jennifer Kolari MSW, RSW www.connectedparenting.com

You know those delicious moments when parent and child are locked into each other's gaze—laughing, smiling or just making faces? Those moments when the rest of the world disappears? Few things in life can touch those times, but they are much more than just feel-good moments. These interactions are critical to the adult/child bond and to a child's health and development. All that cooing, copying of the baby's facial expressions and mimicking of her sounds lets her know that she is understood. That understanding is reflected back by copying and imitating babies in a wonderful back-and-forth dance throughout the day. Babies love and crave this interaction. All this mirroring calms and soothes them and helps them to feel safe with what is happening around them.

Throughout our lives all of us are calmed when we feel listened to, cared about and understood. It turns out that these feelings are critical to the development of a healthy sense of self and they are the building blocks for social cognition, empathy, attachment and learning. The way the human brain learn appears to be related to what is called the mirror neuron system. Until the mid-1990s, when a group of neuroscientists in Italy discovered the way mirror neurons function, it was believed that humans basically learned by doing. Since then, we have come to understand that the same learning experience occurs simply by watching—and mirroring the behaviors we observe. So, when you smile, coo, and make funny faces at a baby, he learns to copy you. He also learns that a particular action on his part initiates a

reliable response from you. While, as he "learns," the baby's brain is creating more and more neuro-pathways or connections, that ultimately determine how he responds to what's going on in his world.

Scientists now believe that the mirror neuron system is responsible not only for the acquisition of language and motor skills, but also for how we acquire social skills and for our ability to empathize with the feelings of others. In the words of Dr. Giacomo Rizzolatti, who led the team that made the initial discovery, "Mirror neurons allow us to grasp the minds of others not through conceptual reasoning but through direct stimulation, not by thinking but by feeling."

It seems that through mirroring and reflecting feelings back, we let children know that we care about them and understand them and also help them organize their own feelings by seeing them mirrored in our own expressions and body language. As Gabor Mate explains in his book *Scattered Minds*, the interaction between parents and

child affects the growth of nerve cells and emotional circuitry in the brain. Positive events release reward chemicals like opioids, endorphins and oxytocin which encourage the growth of nerve cells and the connections between them. Recent studies suggest the more oxytocin (a bonding hormone) is present in the brain the more growth there is and the faster those connections are made. So, mirroring, not just by parents but by significant adults in a child's life appears to have a two-fold function:

- 1) it is what creates that all-important bond or attachment that lets the child know he is safe with us, and
- 2) it is responsible for allowing him to learn and develop appropriate responses to his immediate environment.

Learning to mirror and attune to children's affect and experience can have a powerful and very positive effect on their learning, ability to self regulate and on their mental health in general. As a parent or teacher learning this technique can not only calm and de-escalate children but actually have a very positive impact on their brain.



CCMA WORKSHOP REVIEW

The Importance of Healthy Early Childhood Development Session with Dr. Stuart Shanker by Kristin Collver

"On Wednesday, April 14th the CCMA (Canadian Council of Montessori Administrators) held a workshop entitled "The Importance of Healthy Early Childhood Development" with guest speaker Dr. Stuart Shanker. Dr. Shanker's talk focused on the importance self-regulation in children and how poor self-regulation can lead to a host of long-term problems. He spoke of research that has shown poor regulation to be a factor in obesity, developmental disorders, psychological problems and health issues. Dr. Shanker stated that it is believed that 50% of children have poor self-regulation.

Dr. Shanker believes that the current public educational system is dysfunctional but Montessori has it right. Self-regulation or as we know it "normalization" is the key to producing successful learning. In the Montessori classroom, it is the role of the teacher to regulate the child who cannot regulate him/herself and to guide him/her into self-regulation. Montessori teachers are trained to do this and see it as important part of their job but this is not the case in a regular classroom. Public school teachers confuse self-regulation with compliance and focus on managing behaviour, which does not lead to self-regulation.

Dr. Shanker talked about the five levels of arousals and their importance in learning. Students learn when they are in an alert state. Students that are too aroused (hyper-aroused) or not aroused enough (hypo-aroused) cannot learn. In the Montessori classroom, students are able to select activities that allow them to move into the alert state. A child who is hyper-aroused can select a calming activity that brings him down to an alert state. A child is hypo-aroused can select an activity that revs them up to an alert state.

This workshop was very informative. It reassures us that what we do in the Montessori classroom is what the children need and allows them to become happy children and successful learners.

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Northumberland Montessori School

Our Casa teacher had a baby girl!! We are looking for a Casa directress to fill her shoes while she is on maternity leave. This position will begin in September 2010 until June 2011, with possibility of renewal for following year. NMS staff and children are looking for an individual who is caring, innovative, spontaneous and self directed. We need someone who will be a team player, communicates well, is flexible and adaptable. On occasion, the Casa directress will be required to manage a classroom independently with a passion for Montessori education and philosophy.

If you are this dedicated, nature oriented and joyful teacher, please send your resume to

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Enhancing the Mental Wellness of Children [1]

by **Stuart Shanker, Professor Philosophy & Psychology York University**

Understanding 'Healthy Mental Functioning'

Richie was brought in to see us because he was getting poor grades in school. The first thing we noticed when he entered the room was that he was overweight and subdued, but when asked to tell us about his friends he became quite animated and said that his best friend was "Crusher" who was Romanian. He followed this up with a catalogue of his other "best friends" around the world: all members, it turned out, of an online gaming community. When we asked him to tell us about the friends he could actually see he responded: "Oh, but we all have webcams on our computers." It quickly emerged that Richie had no close friends and no interests other than tv and video games. He had trouble falling asleep, rarely ate a proper meal, and shunned all forms of exercise. But he had 'flown under the radar' for ten years, largely because he did not have a psychological, behavioural or developmental disorder and was not difficult to handle at home or in the classroom.

At present, there is a widespread 'default' view according to which, if a child is free from a DSM-defined disorder, he or she can be said to be 'mentally healthy'. But, of course, there are a great number of children like Richie who, while they are not mentally ill, can neither be said to be mentally healthy. To develop a broad-based approach to mental wellness, therefore, we need a model of the core capacities underlying mental health, rather than simply the absence of symptom-based nosologies (Greenspan & Shanker 2006).

This is the goal of the functional-emotional theory developed in *The First Idea* (Greenspan & Shanker 2004). On this model, mental health can be defined in terms of a number of attributes concerned with relating, feeling, reflecting, and communicating. At present we are focusing on fifteen key traits. No doubt other important elements should be added to the list, but then, what follows is not meant to be an exhaustive analysis of the concept of mental health; rather, our intention is to orient research in such a way that we think carefully about the competencies that a child needs in order to flourish and how best to promote their development.

The key traits that we are looking at are (see Greenspan 2007):

1. The child's overall *emotional state*. It's remarkable how easy it is to overlook this most fundamental issue of whether, by and large, a child is happy.
2. *Feeling safe and secure*.
3. *Experience* and being able to *express* a wide range of feelings and emotions.
4. *Emotional control*. Being able to consciously regulate, not just one's emotional responses, but also one's appetites and desires; learning how to cope with excitement as much as fear or anxiety.
5. *Impulse control*, in regards to thoughts as much as actions.
6. *Sustained concentration*, which demands the ability to ignore distractions.
7. The ability to *plan* and *execute* many steps in a row.
8. *Perseverance*: the ability to see a task through to completion despite setbacks.
9. *The meaningful use of language*: becoming a good communicator and an attentive and receptive listener.
10. *Having an inquiring mind*: being eager to learn and to explore and experience the joy and delight of discovery.
11. *Creativity*, which is closely bound up with the ability to experience excitement and curiosity when exploring new ideas and not be paralyzed by the fear of making a mistake.
12. The ability to *understand what others are thinking and feeling*.
13. *The ability to relate to and connect deeply with others*: to be capable of trust and love and to resonate with others emotionally.
14. *Feeling good about oneself*. What must not be forgotten is that self-esteem is grounded in self-awareness, which means not just celebrating a child's strengths but also acknowledging the areas that need further work.
15. *Logical thinking*: figuring out the connection between causes and effects in social as well as physical domains; being able to distinguish between fantasy and reality, logic from nonsense.
16. *Self-reflective awareness* of one's cognitive strengths and weaknesses and the development of effective strategies for dealing with challenges.
17. *Moral integrity*, which involves so much more than simply knowing the difference between right and wrong or behaving in a certain fashion because of

Continued on page 8

Record Keeping with Montessori Clarity by Pnina Dinkin

Maria Montessori developed an outstanding educational method upon her observations. Observing and recording is what brought her to develop this unique approach when the main idea behind is to follow the child. After completing my course and beginning to teach, planning and record keeping was an enormous challenge. Papers upon papers were stacked together, following my albums. While planning lessons the big question was always in mind, is he or she ready for the next lesson? Was their focus present while working with a certain material? Was their work accurate? After giving lessons, recording my observations was almost never done, only a vague picture of those children who were truly enthused was left in mind.

I have realized that if I am to follow the child in the true sense. I need to have accurate records in order to be able to analyze, see the child as a whole and find creative approach with each and every one.

Montessori Clarity is a computerized record system aimed for casa and elementary which I have been using for the last year, keeping in mind I am not computer savvy at all, but the small effort to learn it has been extremely rewarding. The program allows you to have your childrens' information, attendance, lesson planning, recording lessons given and childrens' work within easy reach. Planning lessons is done fast, since you have the curriculum on one screen with all children's names coloured by year level and grouped by subject. Recording lessons given is done by a push of a button on the same screen, not only that but you can write your observations and comments with ease. Furthermore, you can record childrens' work on a daily basis along with your comments or predefined ones. You can also write observations related to personal development, which is a crucial element. A child's lessons, work and comments can

be viewed on one screen as a whole or by subjects, no more looking through piles of papers. Not only that but there is also an analytical screen which allows you to see each child or the class as a whole in a form of visual charts either by subject or lessons given in proportion to work, an amazing tool. I know there are other programs out there but I feel this one truly reflects the Montessori Method, and its uniqueness is not only in its ability to have all your observations and comments but the analytical screens as well. The program works in a spiral way: lesson planning, lessons presented, lessons practiced, and analysis. Only upon clear analysis can we plan the next lesson or find creative ways if needed to help the child to reach his/her full potential.

If my job is to follow each child, I need to do it not only based on my intuition but on facts. This combination allows us to help each child under our care to

Continued on page 9

Mental Wellness of Children *(continued from Page 7)*

the fear of a punishment; it is about *wanting* to do the right thing and having the inner strength to act on one's convictions.

It is important to stress that, for healthy mental functioning, all of these capacities, states, aptitudes and attitudes have to become fully integrated. [DMC1] If, for example, a child's ability to think logically develops in isolation, without becoming bound up with the development of his emotional range and balance, the result can be a psychological

splintering: e.g., an ability to identify but not resonate emotionally with social or emotional patterns. Similarly, a child who cannot relate to and connect deeply with others but has nonetheless memorized rules of right conduct might acquire a sophisticated 'moral script', but this is not at all the same thing as moral integrity.

None of these traits is a zero-sum phenomenon: e.g., a matter of a child either having or not having such-and-such an attribute. Rather, a child's development of these traits

varies in all sorts of subtle and shifting ways: both within and across domains and according to different situations. Moreover, a child's capacities vary according to both endogenous and exogenous factors: for example, how the child is feeling; how well she has slept; whether she has a healthy diet; the nature of the classroom environment; how warm and nurturing a caregiver is, and so on.

[1] I am deeply indebted for their comments to Barbara King, Devin Casenhiser, and, of course, Stanley Greenspan.

CAMT MINI-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP REVIEW

The Brain - Teaching Children with ADD and ADHD with Dr. Ira Schweitzer by Laurie Parker

If a child came to school with a cast on one leg, would we ask him/her to run during gym class? Of course not. Yet time and again we assume that children who have prefrontal brain disorders, attention disorders such as ADD and ADHD, are able to recognize their behaviours and control them.

Judgement is compromised in those who are affected by attention disorders. These children have a thought but haven't processed it. They are not able to do so quickly enough to consistently keep up with what is happening around them in appropriate ways. Social implications go hand in hand with this as well.

Children who face attention disorders struggle with impulsivity, time disorientation, performance problems, weak social skills, lack of forethought, seeing options and errors, cognitive flexibility, cooperation, diminished conscience, poor judgement, and trouble learning from experience. With hyperactivity we also see chronic restlessness, disruptive behaviour, constant movement, and either fast and disorganized work habits, or slow and measured.

Parents will consider medication, cognitive therapy and cognitive behaviour therapy as well as pursuit of other possible modalities.

While these children can learn to live with ADD or ADHD, they will never outgrow it. That is why it is critical for us as educators to understand their challenges and approach them in a proactive manner. Dr. Schweitzer recommended many ways in which to support and achieve success with our students who struggle with these attention disorders.

1. Movement. Extreme exercise releases dopamine, which may give you as much as one hour of focused work in a child.
2. Physical stimulation sends messages to the prefrontal lobe and assists with learning. Have big balls to sit on rather than chairs, wooden ball seat covers, or round, flat pancake donut cushions for this child.
3. Brain Gym is helpful with all children, but particularly with ADD and ADHD.
4. Refined sugar and processed carbohydrates are extremely negative for this child. Protein is needed.
5. We must have a clear set of realistic goals, even if only for the moment.

6. Behaviour modification must be immediate. Point out the behaviour. "Do you realize that you just pushed Sally?" These children are truly not aware of how their actions are received by others and it needs to be brought to their attention since the prefrontal does not do that for them.
7. Water is important. The child must be hydrated in order to focus. But it should not have flavouring because that gives the brain an extra job to do processing the sensory when you actually want the child to focus on work.
8. Combine skills training with emotional intelligence by providing positive feedback.
9. Engage students for the same amount of time as their age.
10. Establish routines. Have a routine for transitions too. Pictures of the procedure a child needs to move from one situation to the next is very helpful.
11. Use complimentary circles, where students and adults compliment one another on the successes of the day.
12. A positive attitude is critical. Avoid threats or distress.
13. Teach time management.
14. Functionalize classroom space. Avoid clutter that distracts. Have the child work where distraction is minimized.
15. Be a facilitator for this child rather than an observer. You must be the personal touch for him/her.

Record Keeping *(continued from page 8)*

reach their full potential. Before I began using this program I used to rely on my general memory of the child. Since my school began using Montessori Clarity's program I know I can do my work the way Maria Montessori would want a teacher to, based on facts, only then can our creativity in teaching take place.

Dr. Schweitzer's workshop was practical and insightful. We must learn to see ourselves as a lifeline for children with these challenges.

In the Shade of the Mountains by a Running River by Barton Graff

Last month I had the opportunity to represent CAMT at the Western Montessori Teachers' College Society "ALBERTA MONTESSORI DAY 2010" conference in Calgary, Alberta. Carol Scarratt and Claudia Clark of the Western Montessori Teachers' College were kind enough to invite me to attend their annual conference and CAMT was courageous enough to send me.

As I arrived the day before the conference, in the morning I was fortunate to spend most of the day with a lovely lady, Sharon Reib, the Director of the River Valley School in Calgary. I met with many of the staff and was enthusiastically welcomed. Their school sits right on the Bow River at the western end of the city and with its spacious rooms, very capable directresses and a river bank by the play area it is a wonderful place for children to explore the world and their place within it. On occasion the school has actually been under the water when the river overflows its banks. Now that is bringing the outside into the classroom. Thank you for giving such a wonderful tour and for hosting the conference Sharon.

On the bottom level of this school is the Calgary Montessori School, established in 1919, and the longest continuously operating Montessori School in North America. The Directress of the Casa class was there with only a few children as most had left for the day, but again I was made very welcome and treated as a new friend by the staff and the children. With the beautiful environments both inside and outside the classroom I felt like I was in Montessori Heaven. Huge thank you to Alison O'Dwyer, the

administrator and granddaughter of the founder for allowing me to visit her school.

The next day dawned bright and sunny and I arrived early to make a good impression. I did not want them to think I was just there for the lunch.

It was a full day affair attended by about sixty Montessorians from the western provinces. I met women from small schools located in small towns I had never heard of and from the major centres out west. The most common denominators amongst these women was a belief in and love of Montessori, interest in doing it better and concerns about keeping it Montessori in the face of government and indifference.

After a brief introduction by the WMTC representatives and general welcome we were sent onto the first of the three workshops we were asked to choose from the six when we registered. I wished we could have attended them all. The first workshop was INVESTIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE presented by Claudia Clark of WMTC. I learned ways of introducing the Environmental Question into the classroom without scaring the children. It was a wonderful discussion about what we can do to make the children aware without becoming a complaint-fest.

The next workshop before lunch was about using the outdoors to bring spirit and life to the children while building their leadership skills. Sheila Carruthers presented GROWING LEADERS. Most of this presentation was related to the Canadian Scouting

movement which works well as Maria Montessori was such a fan of Lord Baden-Powells work.

Finally, I spent an hour and a half with Casa teachers as THE MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY YEARS was presented to them so they would understand better how we build on the Casa materials and presentations. The two presenters, Brenna Rieber and Jyoti Basarke were terrific and kept our interest with their wonderful information. If you're in a Casa classroom and you find out what makes the Elementary program tick, you'll keep the children working with the golden beads and the chains.

All of the presenters were deeply connected with their subjects and the response was fantastic. My only regret is that I could not spend a year there learning better the names and personalities of the Directresses from all of the provinces that make up so much of what is Canada. I envy them their proximity to the real outdoors, the rivers and the mountains, but most especially the prairies. It is wonderful to know that east or west we are all Montessori in a fantastic country with more potential than anyone can guess.

To all the people I met in Calgary, Thank you and please come to visit us in November for CAMT's annual conference.

"One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child."

Dr. Maria Montessori

Six Popular Misconceptions about the Montessori Method

by Andrew Nikiforuk (reprinted with the author's permission)

The so-called Montessori controversy is really a puzzle of misconceptions often fed by public educators who are either ignorant about or dismissive of the method. Here, then, are six wrong-headed ideas about Montessori that have effectively kept the method out of the nation's inner-city schools, were it could do much good:

Montessori is only partly right!

A great many Montessori ideas have been selectively looted by the progressive camp in public education and then badly implemented. Multi-aging, the popular fad of grouping seven, eight and nine-year-olds all in the same class, is a perfect example. There are two valid approaches for this practice: John Goodland's non-graded classroom and Montessori's "prepared environment." But most public schools continue to choose the discredited "open classroom" approach.

Multi-aging works in Montessori classrooms because the didactic materials and curriculum are specifically designed for this kind of classroom organization. Moreover, Montessori teachers are specifically trained to teach in such demanding environments. The lesson of multi-aging's disappointing performance in many public schools is simply this: You can't have Montessori without Montessori.

Montessori is for the rich!

Montessori schools in Canada are private schools only because public schools have taken no interest in the method. But in the United States, Europe, Ireland, Tanzania, Sri Lanka and India, Montessori schools are often public schools that touch

the lives of many children – rich or poor, normal or disabled.

Dr. Montessori originally designed her program for children living in a Roman slum, and there are now a few good, long-time comparative studies on the effectiveness of the Montessori method for children of the poor. While direct-instruction programs produce faster academic gains for disadvantaged children, the progress made in Montessori programs seems to last longer, and easily outshines the performance of traditional nursery schools on any scale.

One long-term study that compared the effects of four different preschool programs found that the Montessori method was "the most effective in producing long-term school success." So the real question is this: Why haven't public educators in Montreal's or Vancouver's east ends developed Montessori preschool programs for their disadvantaged children?

Montessori is outdated!

Progressives, who share a uniform disdain for history, have always argued that Dr. Montessori was out of date because she acknowledged the influence of many fine educators that preceded her. But Dr. Montessori was, in fact, ahead of her time, and it has taken early childhood education nearly a century to catch up – albeit, in a very piecemeal fashion. As well, her program was based on universal human characteristics, and as her granddaughter Renilde Montessori sharply notes, "The human species has not mutated since these observations were first made a century ago." Unlike most pedagogical programs, the

Montessori method also appears to respectfully cross cultures with the ease of a migrating bird.

In addition, the low-tech, hands-on materials designed by Dr. Montessori and other Montessorians directly challenge our high-tech assumptions and addictions. Dr. Montessori strongly believed that the graceful work of hands, not machines, built civilization.

Montessori is too structured! Montessori is too open!

These criticisms partly reflect different interpretations of Montessori in North America. There is no patent on the Montessori name, and the directors of good Montessori schools pointedly tell parents, "It's buyer beware."

But the character of a true Montessori school is clear: children freely choose purposeful work in an environment designed to foster more and more independent work.

Montessori is just kindergarten stuff!

This misconception is once again the product of little reading and even less study. Dr. Montessori wrote about a great many things, ranging from the importance of environmental studies to religious education. She also had a remarkable vision for educating adolescents that include a three-year work program in close contact with the land. Such a placement, whether on a farm, ranch, or hostel, gives adolescents a chance to participate, produce and preserve. This earthy curriculum not only respects the idealism and sociability of adolescents but also marks their transition to adulthood, an event now marked by robotic labour in fast-food restaurants.

The Terra Project—Montessori Adolescent Program Development in the Greater Toronto Area

by Annette Sang

In the fall of 2008, a group of parents and the administrators of a school in the Mississauga, Ontario area met to discuss the planes of development as a part of a parent education program at the school. Out of this discussion came the realization for a few of those parents that very often, Montessori education in Ontario ceases at the end of upper elementary. Filled with the excitement of the learning from the evening, two parents, Nikki Ide Cinanni and Annette Sang, along with the administrators, began a journey of research, thinking and exploring the idea of the "Erdkinder", or a land-based, prepared environment for the adolescent, and its potential for development in Southern Ontario.

Since that day, two years later, a formal structure for the project has been developed for what now is known as The Terra Project. A working group of parents and teachers remains the core of the project. Nikki Ide Cinanni and Annette Sang act as directors and Asma Azmatullah, Maria Salinas and Elisa Tucciarone volunteer their time to the project in the capacity of research and development. This core group of women is supported by an advisory panel of Montessorians from across Ontario, all of whom have many years of Montessori teaching and administrative experience in Ontario and abroad. Additionally, some of these administrators are currently running urban Montessori adolescent programs, providing the project with much needed insight into adolescent programming here in Ontario.

To further ensure the success of this project, the working group has retained Mr. David Kahn of

the North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA), as a consultant on this project. He has taken this project on as a part of the Project 2012 work. As NAMTA notes, "Project 2012 is an eight-year plan, working with many schools, to consolidate and define a universal syllabus or framework for ages 12-18 as suggested by Dr. Montessori".

In December of 2009, David Kahn visited the Toronto region and delivered two very well attended evening presentations on the Montessori approach to adolescent education. Both evenings swelled with enthusiasm for the implementation of adolescent Montessori programs in Ontario. This enthusiasm continues to drive the development of The Terra Project's work, but also that of new urban-based adolescent programs in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (e.g. HumberSide Montessori is opening their adolescent program in Sept. 2010).

It was also during Mr. Kahn's visit that The Terra Project working group identified and began negotiations with the landowners of a 53 acre, historical farm property (that also houses an arts and cultural centre), in an active farming area in North Oakville. The goal is to secure this site as a potential start-up location for a part-time program for visiting urban adolescent programs that are looking for a large land base to supplement their urban programs. Additionally, we would like to offer this site to lower and upper elementary programs in the GTA as an opportunity to enhance the elementary Montessori curriculum and to encourage the forward thinking

of students, parents and guides towards the outstanding benefits of a land-based program for adolescents. We are working toward a goal of implementing this transitional program in the 2010-11 school year.

We are utilizing this phased-in approach, based on the advice of Mr. Kahn, given that in our area, we do not currently have a large enough pool of upper elementary students from which to draw in order to begin a full-time adolescent program on the land. This approach will allow the development of a larger pool of potential students when we open the full-time program in three to five years. If, for some reason, the number of potential students for a full-time program increases in the near future and where funding becomes readily available, we would be thrilled to implement a full-time program in a shorter timeframe.

The Terra Project working group has and will continue to consult with experts in many different fields (e.g. Montessori education and training, regional planners, experts in the farming community, local experts in history, geology, archaeology, astronomy, zoology, botany, visual arts, etc.), to ensure that when the school is implemented, whether on a part-time or full-time basis, it is providing the best prepared environment that we can for those adolescent students who want to attend.

While the goal of The Terra Project is to plan for and implement a world-renowned, land-based Montessori Adolescent program in the GTA, we do not want to stop here. It is our long-term plan to

Continued on page 13

Thoughts on Education: Self-Regulation Learning, Coping, Succeeding

A Review of a workshop by Dr. Stuart Shanker

by Regina Lulka *(Reprinted with permission of the Author and MJDS)*

Last week, I attended a workshop by Dr. Stuart Shanker, co-author of the Early Years Study 2, and one of the most influential educators in Canada. The work-shop focus was on how we can help our children learn the communicative, cognitive, emotional and social skills needed to maximize their full potential.

Dr. Shanker is not a Montessorian. He is the Director of the Milton and Ethel Harris Research Initiative (MEHRI), cognitive and social neuroscience institute at York University, a Professor at York, and the Director of the Council for Human Development and Past President of the Council of Early Child Development. He is also Director of the Cuba-Mexico-Canada Research Initiative, an international, multi-disciplinary investigation into preventative mental health. Quoting from many studies, books and from his own experience, Dr. Shanker explained how self-regulation is the key to education, and therefore the most important thing any child can develop. He says this is one of many areas in which Montessori schools excel, and one of the reasons his children attend a Montessori school.

He talked about how public and private schools are just now realizing the importance of this trait, and how it affects practically every area of life. Self-regulation is seen as having the ability to: control emotions, handle anxiety, express anger, delay impulses, think through problems and so forth. As we see here at MJDS, students who have self-regulation are capable of leading their own learning; they are eager and driven. Dr. Shanker describes a successful child as one who: is happy, enjoys being alive, enjoys being with other children, and wants to learn. In Montessori we call this normalization, and it is the driving force of our philosophy and practice.

In adults, as in children, lack of self-regulation is now known to lead to the following problems among others: auto-immune disorders, psychopathology, developmental disorders, heart disease, externalization or internalization of problems and obesity.

The acquirement of self-regulation can begin in utero, and continues throughout our lives. Dr. Shanker was very clear that it is the relationship that children have with the adults

closest to them that helps or hinders this process, and that the influence of these relationships continues to be of prime importance until approximately 22 years of age. That is, until after the last period of rapid cell growth occurs in the brain. The problem he sees in traditional school systems is that although teachers may believe it, and schools may know it, the system itself is set up to educate on the basis of compliance, speed, and accuracy. Instead of being given support in building relationships with their students, teachers are given management techniques.

The result is that, although most of the students who leave traditional school systems are not mentally ill, most are not mentally healthy: only 18% of Canadian adults are considered to be mentally healthy. Unfortunately, there are no statistics on Montessori children, but Dr. Shanker emphasized the fact that the enriched co-regulated interaction that takes place with trained Montessori teachers benefits every single child.

The new Early Childhood Curriculum, based on the work of Dr. Shanker, is based in great part on Montessori principles. Other schools are trying to integrate these ideas, and we are happy that more children will benefit. But it is Montessori as a whole, as a system, that works best for our children.

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THE TERRA PROJECT *(continued from page 12)*

complete the educational environment for the third plane by planning and implementing a Montessori high school in the GTA.

For more information on this exciting project, please contact Annette Sang, Director, The Terra Project at theterraproject@gmail.com or by phone at (647) 402-2806.

Book Talk

“Nurturing the Spirit in Non-Sectarian Classrooms” - Aline D. Wolf by Kristin Collver

This is a book all Montessorians should read. Nurturing the Spirit reawakens an awareness of the spirit and reminds teachers that there is more to the Montessori Method than academics. The question “what is spirituality?” is raised and the difference between spirituality and religion is examined. This book addresses spirituality in secular classrooms and helps teachers understand how they can bring the spirit into the classroom without upsetting or offending parents.

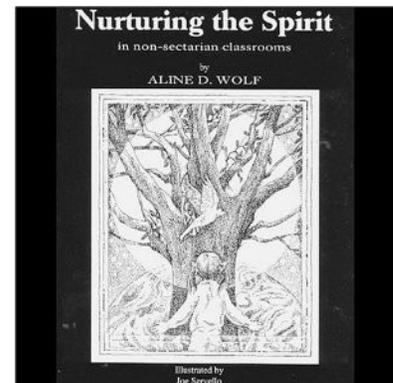
Nurturing the Spirit takes one back to the beginning of training and the focus on the preparation of the teacher. It includes chapters on “Nourishing the Spirit of the Teacher” and

developing “Community for Teachers.” This book reminds us of the importance of taking care of ourselves and meeting our own spiritual needs.

Nurturing the Spirit is filled with practical ideas that can be implemented in our own classrooms. The activities suggested are both interesting and easy to add. There is a focus on peace and what we as Montessori teachers can do to develop personal peace and to spread peace in the classroom environment.

Nurturing the Spirit is a book that can be read over and over again and still reveal new meaning and understanding. It is a great addition to one’s Montessori library where it can

be reread whenever there is the need to re-awaken the spirit and to remember why we do what we do.



Art Corner

“How To Teach Art to Children” published by Evan-Moore by Barton Graff

If you studied Art in school you probably do not shudder and grow sweaty in the palms when you hear these two words together. The rest of us do.

The practice and appreciation of Art can only come from a teacher who practices and appreciates Art. If you don’t you will have a difficult, if not impossible, time trying to open your children’s eye to the glory and wonder that is the World of Art.

What is a Directress to do?
ISBN 1-55799-811-6, HOW TO TEACH ART TO CHILDREN, Published by Evan-Moor, for grades 1-6. Price: \$24.99.

This book can be found at Scholastic Canada. Item 800997. If you do not use their services for book clubs you may want to reconsider.

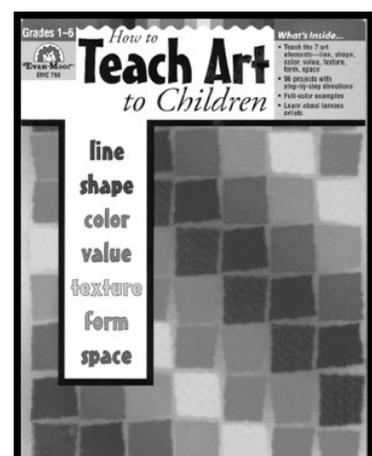
For the novice Art Teacher, like moi, this book lays down the basics in an interesting, hands-on way.

The topics covered include: line, shape, colour (sic), value, texture, form, and space. Each chapter defines and gives many examples of each topic, allowing the child to create art, not just crafts. There are quite a few reproducible that allow a little tighter control when needed and the rest of the book, 160 pages, use a huge number of different mediums such as: paint, crayon, tissue, pastel, and clay. The children are directed to draw, imagine, think, follow directions and create.

I studied sciences and math in school almost exclusively and many are the time I wish I knew then about Art, what I have learned by using this book. Maybe my bacteria would have

looked less like my paramecia if I had.

Get a copy for your class or for your school. It is much better than making little crafty bugs for the parents of your children to stick all over the house, especially the refrigerator.



Hanging In With Montessori In Tough Times *by Tim Seldin*

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The economy is in the dumps, you're worried about money, and you've got a child in Montessori. It's reenrollment time, and, like millions of parents just like you, you're going to have to decide what to do next year. Now what?

If you've hit the wall and simply cannot afford next year's tuition, you might want to check to see if the school can lend you a hand. You might also ask the children's grandparents to see if they are in a position to help. More and more often, grandparents play a major role in helping their children with tuition.

But for many of us, the issue may not be so much if we can afford to continue to pay the cost of tuition; instead, we may have concern about what the future may bring and a sense that now may be the time to move on.

It's no secret that I'm a died-in-the-wool, true-blue Montessori fan, but you've got to make an important decision. So how can I help?

I can encourage you to ask yourself three questions:

The first is: Why did you choose Montessori for your children in the first place, and has your thought process changed over time?

My second question for you is: What have you been hoping to see your children take away from their years in Montessori, and how important are those outcomes?

And finally, I encourage you to ask yourself: How important do you feel the next few years in your children's education will be?

How might they benefit if you are willing and able to stay the course, and what may be lost if you can't?

Benjamin Franklin wrote that an investment in education pays the



best dividends. Centuries later, most people would still agree with him.

Every year is precious, and however our children are treated and taught by us at home, in school, and on the playground by their peers, will have tremendous influence on their future.

In the last issue of *Tomorrow's Child* (Fall, 2008), Sharon Caldwell was fairly critical of conventional schools, and her words led at least one reader to object.

But the issue, as I see it, is not between public schools or private, but between the beliefs, practices, and outcomes that have become the norm in most

schools (public and private), as compared to those held by a range of child-centered schools, public and private, that offer a range of substantially different educational experiences and tend to lead to a different sort of adult. Within that wide range of educational alternatives — private, charter, and public— one finds Montessori schools, Waldorf schools, Friends schools, Jesuit schools, and many more.

There is clear evidence, based on both hard data and tens of thousands of anecdotal experiences, that the children who attend these schools that seem so different actually do exceptionally well. Why might that be?

There is pretty clear evidence, despite the impression held by many nervous parents, that Montessori gives children the skills that they need to excel.

We can all understand why some parents will be tempted to take their children out of private school in tough economic times.

Historically, most will give it some thought, and then decide to stay. Why? One reason parents have expressed in the past, and are expressing again today, is the importance of keeping things as stable in their children's lives as possible in times of great stress.

But in the case of Montessori schools, there is yet another factor to consider: how can we best prepare our children for the future?

Today, the global economy has changed. The great opportunities

Continued on page 16

Hanging in with Montessori ... *(continued from page 15)*

are shifting to enterprises and fields based much more on innovation and information. The schools that most people think of as being 'traditional' are actually not very old historically. They emerged in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to waves of immigration from non-English speaking cultures and the growing move from an agrarian economy to one that was increasingly urban and industrial. The large public school districts developed in the big cities and only later spread out to the suburbs after the second world war.

The traditional American school was, for centuries the one-room school house, which had multi-age class groups and teachers, who tended to remain with the same groups of children for several years.

Because children were immersed in the everyday life and work of their family and community, they tended to have much more direct, hands-on experience with practical mechanics, everyday tools, daily chores, and the cycles of the seasons from planting to harvest. The things children were expected to learn in those much

smaller and more simple schools placed greater emphasis on cultural literacy, history, geography, the lives of famous people, great inventions, and great poetry and literature.

Can you see the parallels between the oneroom school house of American past to Montessori?

The large schools that we all know today were consciously designed to educate the masses according to plans and a course of study developed in the school

district's central offices. And, ironically, for much of the 1900s, the organizational model that inspired policy and procedure was the approach to mass production and depersonalization of the American factory and corporation. Students were considered the 'raw material,' the school was thought of as a 'factory,' and teachers were



thought of as the 'work force.' The tension between labor and management is still present to this day in most school systems. So, as Sharon Caldwell suggested in the Tomorrow's Child Fall 2008 issue, most objective analysts agree that conventional schools were designed to produce complacent workers, or, in middle class communities, people who are good at working within the system, following the rules, and responding to the demands and expectations of their supervisors.

In an information-age economy, we need and reward people who see things in new and different ways. There is far less need for the workers who just put in their time and go along with the current corporate party line. It is obvious that corporations are far less committed to loyal employees.

But what may not be obvious is that the best jobs are increasingly going to the people who are incredibly intelligent, creative, and forward thinking. It is a highoctane blend of people skills, the ability to organize and coordinate projects, and innovation that wins elections (think about the incredibly well-organized grassroots campaign run by President Elect Obama) or that builds successful businesses (think about Google Founders Sergie Brin and Larry Page, AOL founder Steve Case, or Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, all of whom credit their success in large part to their Montessori education).

We know that Montessori works! I am constantly amazed that year after year so many parents express the same concerns, as if Montessori were a new, untested experiment. There are tens of thousands of Montessori schools around the world, and they have produced outstanding graduates for more than one hundred years.

Montessori has historically been the choice of parents, who do not value conformity but rather the cultivation of their children's curiosity and creativity.

In my case, I wanted my children to be fascinated by books, interesting people, and new ideas. I wanted to ensure that they felt their education was a gift, not a burden. I did not want to encourage them to accept what their teachers taught without question. I did not value obedience over kindness, respect, and courtesy. What are your own goals?

Continued on page 17

Hanging in with Montessori... *(continued from page 16)*

Montessori's Basic Principles

- Children are not born lazy. Schools need not use external controls and manipulation to influence, control, and shape their intellectual life.
- Children learn best when they are encouraged to choose work freely, rather than simply do what they are told from one task to another.
- Children learn best in schools that treat them with kindness, honor, and respect. Curiosity develops best when children do not see school as a burden and a set of imposed assignments and guidelines
- Children learn best when they really can see and grasp the big picture

Outcomes of Montessori Education

Intrinsic Motivation: Children who go through Montessori tend to develop an innate desire to engage in an activity for enjoyment and satisfaction.

Internalized Ground Rules & Ability to Work with External Authority: Montessori students normally follow internalized ground rules, whether or not people in authority are watching.

Creativity and Originality of Thought: While Montessori students are typically confident about their own knowledge and skill, they also respect the creative process of others and are willing to exchange ideas, information, talents, and credit with their peers.

Social Responsibility: Montessori children tend to be quite aware that their words and actions impact the welfare of

others. They normally are great leaders and team players, making positive contributions to their community.

Autonomy: Montessori children tend to be self-directed, composed, and morally independent.



Confidence and Competence: Children who attend Montessori schools tend to become confident and competent. As adults, they normally become quite successful. At the same time, they tend to retain the ability to learn from their mistakes and remain reflective and openminded.

Spiritual Awareness: Montessori students are often exceptionally compassionate, empathetic, and sensitive to the natural world and the human condition.

Academic Preparation: On an academic level, Montessori provides students with skills that

allow them to become independently functioning adults and lifelong learners. As students master one level of academic skills, they are able to go further and apply themselves to increasingly challenging materials across various academic disciplines. They learn how to integrate new concepts, analyze data, and think critically.

In conclusion ... I hope that this article will help you, the parents of Montessori children, with this important decision that you must make every year.

The final choice is, of course, yours, and you must do what is right for your family.

By having your children in Montessori, you have given them a great gift. By keeping them in Montessori, you will not only continue to give them the gift of lifelong learning, you will help all of us by providing the next generation of leaders who understand how to take initiatives to change the world for the better. As Albert Einstein once remarked: "You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created."

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Idea Exchange: Practical Life

End of Year Activities *by Kristin Collver*

Making Lemonade

Materials:

- Lemons (cut in half)
- Tray
- Juicer
- Apron
- Cups
- Basket (for the lemons)
- Container of sugar
- Plastic table mat
- Measuring spoon
- Stir stick



What to Do:

The student first washes his/her hands. The student selects a lemon half and a clean cup from the shelf and places them on the tray. The student then takes the tray to a table. The student puts on the apron and places the plastic table mat on the table. The juicer is placed in the centre of the mat. Across the top, from left to right, the lemon, the cup, the container of sugar, the measuring spoon, and the stir stick are laid out. The student places the lemon half on top of the juicer and begins squeezing out the juice. The student places the cup in front of him/her after as much juice as possible is squeezed out. The student pours the juice into the cup. The container of sugar is opened and three teaspoons of sugar is placed into the cup. The student then stirs the juice with the stir stick and drinks the lemonade.

The student then cleans up the activity. The juicer, measuring spoon and stir stick are washed and the cup is either disposed of (if paper) or placed in the proper spot for full cleaning. The table mat is wiped off and the apron is folded and all the items are placed on the tray and the tray is returned to the shelf.

Comments:

This activity is always a popular choice with the students. I usually put out four whole lemons a day, allowing eight students a day to do the activity. Slicing the lemons in half can be an activity for the older students or can be prepared by the teacher. The amount of sugar used can be adjusted. I have found the students like the juice when it is a little tarter than one would normally have it.

Idea Exchange: Culture *by Kristin Collver*

Flower Hunt

Materials:

- Laminated Flower Hunt Cards
- (8 - 12 pictures of local flowers with the name underneath)
- Dry Erase Marker

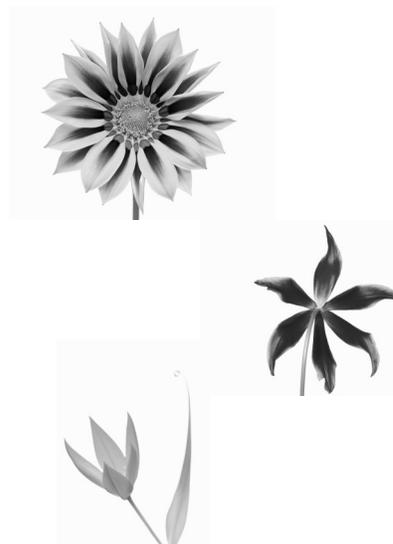
What to Do:

The students work in groups of 3 or 4, with a mix of younger and older students. The students go for a walk around the neighbour and try to find the flowers on their flower hunt card. When they find a flower

on their card they use the dry eraser marker to check off that flower. The students are encouraged to use the names of the flowers when finding them.

Comments:

This is a fun activity to do that encourages an interest in plants. This activity works best when the teacher first takes a walk to see what flowers are grown in the neighbour to ensure the students can find the flowers. The pictures can either be taken with a camera or cut out of gardening magazines.



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- Motor Activities

**Early Childhood (3-6)
Diploma Program
six albums including:**

- 3-6 Montessori Educator's Guide to Theory and Classroom Practice
- Practical Life Activities
- Sensorial Activities including Music
- Culture and Science
- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Over 475 Blackline Masters on CD
- Over five hours of Montessori video presentations on DVD

**Lower Elementary (6-9)
Diploma Program
fourteen albums
including:**

- Elementary Educator's Guide to Theory and Classroom Practice
- Physical Geography
- Cultural Geography
- History
- Science Experiments
- Five Great Lessons/Cosmic Education & Peace
- Advanced Practical Life
- Botany
- Zoology
- Matter & Astronomy
- Health Sciences, Art & Music
- Language Arts – Book 1 & 2
- Math – Book 1 & 2
- Over 1,100 Blackline Masters on CD

**Upper Elementary (9-12)
Diploma Program
seventeen albums
including:**

- Elementary Educator's Guide to Theory and Classroom Practice
- Physical Geography
- Cultural Geography
- World History
- Scientific Method and Technology
- Health Sciences
- Astronomy & Ecology
- Botany & Microscopic Study
- Zoology
- US History
- Canadian History
- Matter & Energy
- Language Arts – Book 1 & 2
- Math – Book 1, 2 & 3
- Blackline Masters on CD



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