



"Follow the Child"



camt Talk



Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

July 2016

Message from the President

UPCOMING EVENTS

Workshop—Aug 24 2016

- Strategies for Success—Kitchener ON

November 4 2016

CAMT Annual Conference

October 27-28 2017

Joint CAMT CCMA Conference

Visit www.camt100.ca for more details

THANK YOU

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

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



Dear CAMT Member:

The school year has come to an end. It is long, yet the time goes so fast. I'm sure many of you can remember the first day of school and the great plans you had and fulfilled. CAMT hopes that your year was exciting, inspiring, reflective and successful. There were challenges, however with each new experience you grow stronger, become more resilient and process the development of your students and yourself. A transformation occurs and a deeper understanding as to why we are Montessori teachers unfolds.

As this year has proven, it has been a year of growth and exploration for many Montessori teachers who have had to adjust to the CCEYA regulations. Many changes have taken place and with these changes

comes a need for a greater understanding of what the future for Montessori education will look like. There will be adjustments, however, we can still maintain the core philosophy and pedagogy if we remain true to the work that Maria Montessori had created for the child. As teachers we follow Montessori's method, however, we still need to be aware of what is taking place outside of the Montessori community. Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, "How Does Learning Happen" is very similar to our Montessori pedagogy. Self-regulation within Ontario's public school has been implemented with the assistance of Stuart Shanker and "The Shanker Method", which could also be rooted in Montessori's doctrine of self-discipline and obedience. Children are encouraged to play to learn and explore, and reading begins in Kindergarten. Elementary education for the 21st century requires inquiry based learning in the classroom. No longer is the teacher to only

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ABOUT CAMT

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Message from the President *(continued from page 1)*

provide the answers, they are to teach the students critical thought, encourage them to transform their wonder into questions, seek knowledge and to discover the answers themselves. Do these aspects of our present school system not look familiar to our Montessori Schools? Is there a difference? There is a difference as we use specially designed materials, however, a more pronounced difference lies in the spiritual transformation that takes place in both the educator and the child. It is our job to value the spirit of the child and respect their emotional, physical, social and cognitive development. As the teacher we are to transform spiritually and gain a greater insight into the child, through observation, and guidance within the prepared environment. It is this work that we do which will prepare the child for the 21st century's employment requirements. The corporate world wants people who are independent, creative and collaborative thinkers, people who can problem solve and create new ideas for the future. Do these events not happen in our classrooms? It does, and it is also happening within the public system.

CAMT's annual conference on November 4th and 5th will host an array of workshops that will reflect the changes that have taken place. We have acknowledged mandated curricular requirements, and incorporated workshops on discipline and self-regulation. We acknowledged the needs of the teachers and support their further growth as Montessorians by reinforcing the roots of spiritual transformation as Maria Montessori deemed necessary. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Philip Snow Gang will explore the spiritual roots of Montessori's vision, speak about Cosmic Education and human development. His workshops are engaging and encourage reflection within ourselves as a person and as a teacher.

CAMT is excited about each of our presenters. We have recruited exceptional talent and wisdom; as teachers, Early Childhood Educators and administrators we would like you to share in this excitement too. There is a plethora of workshops to choose from. We hope they will assist you with the changes that are taking place, while at the same time encourage us to remain rooted in Montessori pedagogy. Our work is special; we have the spirit to understand the development and needs of the child. Despite the changes occurring in schools,

Montessori pedagogy can still prevail and when we remain true to the ethics and principles of Montessori, this education IS the education for the 21st century. Laura Flores Shaw, CCMA's recent guest speaker, commented on this fact; Montessori is the academic program which will prepare the student for adulthood and fulfill the needs of employers in the future. As Montessori teachers, we need to be rooted in Montessori philosophy in order to move forward with the routes that are being presented.

I feel positive that you have served your students in the classroom well! You have assisted the development of the whole child and you need to give yourself credit for the work you do. This work has such meaning and at times, we Montessori teachers may get lost with the extraneous requirements; we observe, contemplate and go forth because we are dedicated to this task. These are the children for our future and they are emerging into a time that has many more routes than we can imagine. It will become more complex for them. However, if they are given the roots of an academic application that begins with the spirit and provides a connection to the Earth, they will find their way in wonder, in appreciation and acquire a greater love for their work and their surroundings, both natural and man-made. If we can instill a greater appreciation and respect for what has been given to us and exhibit thankfulness for all we have and where it has come from, then we are doing a great deed for the future of mankind and the world we inhabit. This awareness is the rise of a greater human being.

I would like to share with you a letter from a former student who I had not heard from in over ten years. This letter will resonate with many of you, it was written to me, yet it is for you because you are doing the same work. This letter gives proof that our Montessori philosophy does encompass the whole child, it delivers a love of learning that lasts a lifetime and that our pedagogy supports the needs for the 21st century.

My letter to you:

Message from the President (continued from page 2)

Hi Ms. Langlois:

I hope you remember me! I went to your school until 2003/2004. I started when I was about three years old and left at age eight. I'm now in my third year at Western University, and I absolutely love it.

After being at university for a while now, my Montessori education keeps coming back to me in multiple ways. The quality of the primary Montessori education I got is evident in that 10-15 years later, I still remember much of the content I learned at NMS. I remember the grammar and punctuation lessons, the printing and cursive writing lessons, I still remember many French verbs, and I have fond memories of all the world issues you taught us about and involved us in, such as global warming, animal rights, and poverty in third world countries. Additionally, I think of the education I got in public school after I left NMS, up until grade twelve, as this blank, blurry period in my time as a student. Even though the education I was getting in public school was technically at a 'higher level' of learning since I was older, my Montessori education that I got at a much younger age greatly exceeds it.

During the years I spent at public school, I sort of lost interest in learning. While I was still a good student, the hunger for knowledge just wasn't there, and nor were the tools to push me. As soon as I entered university, it was like something clicked. I have an endless desire to learn again. I've also become really passionate about education and educational reform, and my Montessori education is a major inspiration.

So here I am today at twenty years old, looking back at my Montessori education as one of the most enriching, stimulating, and valuable parts of my life so far. My time at university has also been an extraordinary and transformative experience, and I find it to be the only other part of my education that I can compare similarly to Montessori. I want you to know that the education you gave me at NMS has resonated with me so much, and that I see many components of it in my university education today. I still tell my friends about my Montessori education, and how amazing I think it was.

You seriously deserve so much credit for what you provide at NMS. I cannot thank you enough for all you did for me as a young student.

I hope you have a great rest of your holiday, and I'd love to hear back from you sometime soon.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Stewart

... Look at you! This is the work we do!

Have a fantastic summer vacation, get some rest, and do what you need to do to enjoy life and be rejuvenated for the fall. All the best!

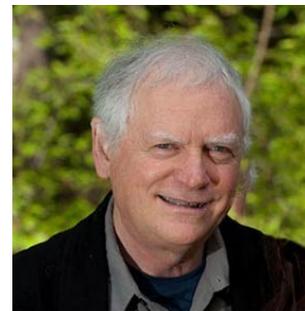
Claudia Langlois,
CAMT President

CAMT 2016 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Friday November 4 2016 at The Old Mill, Toronto

Featuring Philip Snow Gang

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



WATCH YOUR MAIL FOR MORE INFORMATION!

To Teach is To Learn – by Mary Flewelling-Pinchen

“Our capacity to learn from the child gives form and direction to our theories and techniques. It shapes and enriches our philosophy, making it alive, contemporary and significant. To acknowledge this fact changes our relationship with the child and our understanding of what it means to educate. It removes the child as the ‘object’ to be educated and places him as the subject, the guide, the principal actor”

~ Lynn Lawrence ~

When you begin working with children in the Montessori casa classroom, you discover that the methodology of presenting lessons you learned while training is actually just the starting point. Likewise, your ability to develop and incorporate successful classroom routines and celebrations in a seamless, Montessori manner is a skill that develops over time. It is the experience of giving many lessons to many children that helps you understand how they learn, how you can help and how classroom routines and celebrations can enhance your student’s learning in the best possible way. No training program, book or manual, in and of itself, can ever provide you with this kind of wisdom. It can only be acquired through your own work with children in a prepared environment. That being said, the ideas suggested below will provide you with some fresh considerations to think about as you undertake your journey of discovery in the casa classroom. In addition to my insights, you will undoubtedly acquire many more of your own as you work with the children in your care.

Observe your students intently as they manipulate the wonderful materials Montessori devised for them. The children’s work will give you cause to think, study, re-examine and practise with your own hands. Our students are actually our teachers and, when we recognize this, our true journey of discovery begins. Every lesson given is a new lesson learned. Truly, to teach is to learn.

Casa Essentials

Experience tells me that a summary of the non-negotiable factors that provide the foundation for effective classroom lessons and the development of normalization should precede any other examination of the work of the casa directress. Let me begin with the remarkable, uninterrupted, morning work period.

Montessori teachers report that when their students arrive at school each day, all they really want to do is work with the Montessori materials. This is as it should be. The equipment Dr. Montessori created for 3-6 years olds is very appealing and it provides young children with unlimited, self-directed learning opportunities. As important as the materials are, however, the provision for a long, uninterrupted, morning work period is equally significant.

Morning is the critical period for 3-6 year olds to exercise their powers of construction in the prepared environment. It is a precious time because it provides for the development of normalization in a manner that is difficult to replicate. Three hours of uninterrupted work time in a perfectly prepared setting, a relaxed pace, freedom of choice, consistent organized routines and a mixed-aged grouping – what a rare blend of opportunity for young children! Nothing else is needed and anything beyond simply detracts from the experience. Administrators and teachers need to commit to the sanctity of the uninterrupted morning work period and help parents understand its significance.

In addition to preserving the morning work period, the directress must safeguard each child’s efforts to direct his own learning. This essential is usually the greatest challenge for the Montessori guide. Knowing we can only support each child by posing no hindrance to his fragile development, we must remain continually vigilant against the imposition of our superior adult stature. Young children are keen to watch and imitate us and limiting our influence, when appropriate and possible, helps to reduce this hypnotic effect. By becoming quiet and unobtrusive, we provide the right conditions for the child to exert his own maximum effort. This does not mean we can leave a child to do as he pleases when his actions demonstrate a lack of concentration and/or control. More often than not however, we need to refrain from becoming a source of interference. This requires ongoing intuitiveness, cautious restraint and a humble spirit. Every day we are called to this task and it never becomes completely natural or easy for us. However, with time and experience we improve and when we do get it right, the results are immensely satisfying.

To Teach Is To Learn (continued from page 4)

The adult must do what is necessary for the child to act for himself...if he does less than is necessary, the child cannot act meaningfully, and if he does more than is necessary, he imposes himself upon the child, extinguishing his creative impulses... Her supervision is such that anyone who needs her is immediately aware of her presence, whereas those who do not are completely oblivious of her. ~Maria Montessori~

We know lessons are effective when they clearly demonstrate the purpose of the material and are given to the right child at the right time. Perfected presentations, a thorough understanding of each child's developmental interests and readiness and the recognition that individual lessons should be limited to only what is necessary in order for the child to succeed are three further essentials. Regardless of the length of time you have been teaching, normalization will only be sustained if you respect each child's inner guide and keep returning to the materials for deeper understanding.

Finally, we come to the most critical essential of all. This, of course, is love. Lessons given without wonder, joy, and love may impart information but will fail to capture the hearts and souls of the students in our care. Essentially, they are empty lessons because they do not contribute to the child's spirit, imagination or happiness. We cannot inspire unless we impart our own joy in discovery as we direct our student's learning. Our mission to nurture children in the ways of peace can only be accomplished with kindness, joy and love. Above all else, give lessons with love.

Love is more than the electricity that lightens our darkness, more than the etheric wave that transmits our voices across space, more than any of the energies that man has discovered and learned to use. Of all things, love is the most potent.

Strategies for Success in the Montessori Children's House

Wednesday August 24 2016
Sunshine Montessori
10 Boniface Avenue Kitchener, ON N2C 1L9

As each new school year approaches, many teachers wonder if they are sufficiently prepared to establish the necessary foundation for the development of normalization in the casa classroom.

This full-day workshop is designed to help teachers understand the exact mechanics that contribute to the development and maintenance of normalization in the casa classroom. The actions a directress should undertake during the critical, early weeks in September will be examined in detail. Strategies that support the maintenance of normalization will be discussed and songs, stories and games that will carry teachers and children through each season of the school year will also be presented.

If you have ever wondered if your class is unfolding as it should, this workshop is for you.

About Mary Flewelling-Pinchen

A.M.I Casa Directress, Consultant and Author of "Directing the Montessori Children's House", Mary has been teaching at various Montessori schools in South-western Ontario, including Sunshine Montessori School, for the past 35 years. She earned her AMI Primary Diploma at the Toronto Montessori Institute under the direction of Renilde Montessori, Audrey Sillick and Judy Buckman. Mary acted as the programme director for the Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers between 2006-2013. In the fall of 2014, she had the opportunity to establish a casa classroom in Chengdu, China. Mary presents workshops and consults with casa teachers and parents on a regular basis. She established Montessori Casaworks in 2012 to advocate for Montessori education and to support directresses, parents and the Montessori community at large in their transformative work with children and families.

REGISTRATION FEE: CAMT Members: \$75 Non-Members: \$90

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)—NOTE: Credit Card and Invoicing Options Available

I, along with over 400 Montessori educators, recently attended CCMA's Annual Spring Conference featuring Laura Flores Shaw, MS. I would first like to thank CCMA for bringing such a great presenter to speak with us, and to all of the volunteers who helped to make the day run smoothly.

Laura Flores Shaw holds bachelors and masters degrees in psychology and is currently working towards a doctorate in education with a specialization in mind, brain, and teaching at Johns Hopkins University School of Education. She is also the founder of White Paper Press and the Montessori White Papers, and she writes and speaks internationally about education, brain development, and parenting.

Her first topic was Examining Normalization in Practice and she asked us some questions that got us thinking.

- *Can you define normalization?*
- *Do you ever talk about normalization with your colleagues?*
- *When do you think normalization takes place?*
 - *3-6 only?*
 - *1st plane?*
 - *Throughout the lifespan?*
- *Should a child be fully normalized by the time he or she moves to Elementary?*
- *How many of you use "normalization" or refer to people being normalized beyond the primary years?*
- *Administrators – Are you looking for normalized behaviours when you do classroom observations for teacher evaluation purposes?*

If you were to take a moment right now, what would your answers be?

Can you think of a definition quickly off the top of your head? Can you picture it in your classrooms? Do you and your administrators share the same opinion of what normalization looks like at your school? Does normalized equal well behaved?

Laura continued by explaining that normalization is not a one-time event, there is no waving of the wand and magically a child becomes normalized. Normalization is a continuous development that changes as the child grows and develops, and one that needs to be supported constantly.

Normalization requires deep concentration, discipline, sociability, and love of work. What does this look like for a 3-year-old? A 7-year-old? A 12-year-old? Each stage of development is different, and so the child must be supported according to their needs at the time.

Here are a few of the ways in which Laura recommends fostering normalization:

- Facilitate concentration (ex: invite the child to do something for the environment such as potting a plant, then they are eager to do more work)
- Understand what "follow the child" means
- Understand what "freedom" means in Montessori
- Make behaviours explicit (or *hold up the mirror* as Laura said: "I notice that Emma is upset because you accidentally disturbed her work as you passed by, how do you think we can help her?")
- Make thinking explicit ("I see you are getting frustrated ... what are you thinking right now?")
- Encourage deliberate practice – get them going, make it sound exciting and interesting
- Make the learning process explicit – talk about the way it feels to learn, and that it is often hard at first
- Make learning strategies explicit – set goals, plan, organize and transform information, seek and collect information
- Help children recognize when they need to restructure their learning environment.

This was definitely a thought provoking workshop, and I hope that after reading this you will take the conversation back to your school and discover what normalization means for you. Thank you again to CCMA and to Laura Flores Shaw for a wonderful day of professional development.

As CAMT's Director of Communications I am pleased to announce that we are featuring an article from Laura Flores Shaw in this issue of CAMT's newsletter as well as the next issue. The article that appears in this issue is an excerpt from the Montessori White Papers that Laura says has been very helpful in explaining to parents how Montessori education fosters the development of creativity. The article which appears in the next issue is an article that was published in the Huffington Post, and Laura has graciously given CAMT permission to reprint.

Montessori and Creativity - by Laura Flores Shaw

KEY POINTS

- Creativity does not arise from chaotic free expression;¹ it is not a fixed innate ability; and everyone has creative potential.²
- Creativity is a learned skill requiring knowledge^{2,3} and visual literacy.⁴
- Environments impact creativity development.^{5,6} Four school features promote student creativity: 1) students have control of their learning and ownership of the work; 2) the physical environment is varied as children can work indoors, outdoors, and at locations outside of school; 3) students have flexible use of their time; and 4) students can work at their own pace without pressure.⁷ Montessori schools have all of these features.
- Allowing time for creative activities, which are not limited to the arts, contributes to increased student motivation, enjoyment, enthusiasm, engagement, concentration, attention, and focus.⁷
- There is direct evidence that Montessori schools foster creative performance, development and potential compared to conventional schools.^{8,9}

Human consciousness comes into the world as a flaming ball of imagination. Everything invented by man, physical or mental, is the fruit of someone's imagination.

Maria Montessori

To Educate the Human Potential

For seven years I headed a Montessori school, and one of the most common concerns parents had related to creativity. There was one mother in particular who stands out in my mind. After observing the toddler environment, she sat down with me and asked whether the children were allowed to “mix up the works.” When I told her they were not, she replied, “Well, that’s not very creative.” To me, allowing ten toddlers to “mix up the works” – works specifically designed to teach cause and effect, develop fine motor skills, and generate sensory impressions to cultivate imaginative thought¹⁰ – did not sound creative; it sounded like absolute chaos! But for most people creativity is thought to arise from chaotic free expression.¹ For some who actually work in creative fields, however, this is not so. As comedic actress Amy Poehler stated in a recent *New Yorker* article, “I’m proud that Mike Schur [a member of her creative team] and I rejected the idea that creativity needs to come from chaos.”¹¹ Her own success and the scientific research show that she was right to reject this widespread notion.

Here’s what researchers know about creativity: it’s not a fixed innate ability; everyone has creative potential; to be creative one must have knowledge and be visually literate; environments impact creativity development; Montessori schools have all the features necessary to foster creativity; and there is direct evidence that students attending Montessori schools show greater creativity than children attending conventional schools.

Knowledge and Visual Literacy

So creativity is not a fixed, innate ability, and everyone has creative potential. But that doesn’t mean that being creative is simply a general ability that can be applied to any area of interest.^{2,3} Instead, we need to think of creativity, which is a complex construct, as being on a spectrum with *general ability* at one end and a *specific area* (such as math or creative writing) at the other end. On this spectrum, creativity is much closer to the specific-area end.³ The reason for this is that in order to be creative, you need to have knowledge. If you don’t know anything, you don’t have anything with which to create. And the sooner one acquires knowledge the sooner one can actually create something novel and useful.²

Many people assume that because Montessori teachers present the materials in sequential steps, especially during the preschool years,¹² that the method inhibits creativity. But Montessori schools, in addition to promoting self-care and self-regulation and other executive functions¹³ (see *Montessori and the Development of Executive Functions*, this volume), are specifically designed for students to construct knowledge in math, language, history, science, geography, music, and art. That knowledge then serves as a foundation for later creative thinking and performance. This is one of the reasons why the last year of the primary program (for ages 3 to 6) is so important. After acquiring knowledge and skills both directly and indirectly through self-directed and self-initiated interaction with the materials during the first couple of years, children have a foundation with which to create. Leaving the program prior to completing the full cycle (which includes the kindergarten year and possibly longer) to attend a conventional school where children are required to do what everyone else is doing will halt that creative momentum.²

Continued on Page 8

Additionally, Montessori argued that imagination was fueled by sensory impressions and contact with reality.^{14,15} This is why, in addition to providing opportunities to construct knowledge, the sensorial materials in a 3-6 year old classroom are designed to train a child's perception, sense of touch, hearing, and taste. The sensorial materials are far better training for imaginative thought than the dress-up corner found in conventional pre-schools as the research shows that pretend play doesn't enhance creativity.¹⁶

But training our senses – particularly perception which, as psychologist Rudolf Arnheim states “makes it possible to structure reality and thus to attain knowledge”¹⁷ – is necessary for critical and creative thinking.⁴ Perception training makes us visually literate so we don't merely accept what we see (which is so important in this technological age). And it makes us able, as a life-drawing professor once told me, to “draw what we actually see instead of what our mind *tells* us we see.” And that's when the real creativity occurs because you can deconstruct the world and reconstruct it into a new and innovative form. That's what Picasso did (along with Georges Braque) with Cubism after spending years mastering the ability to paint realistically.¹⁸

Environmental Influence

Research also shows that the family and school environments can either stifle or promote children's creativity. For instance, families with an authoritative parenting style – parents listen to their children, encourage independence, are warm and nurturing, and set appropriate limits – are shown to have more creative children than families who practice a rigid, authoritarian style.⁵ The Montessori framework encourages an authoritative interaction style between teachers and students (which is why I enrolled my children in Montessori during their toddler years). Like the authoritative parenting style, Montessori provides freedom but within limits, simultaneously providing children a sense of control and security.¹⁹ The conventional, industrial school framework (see *Education for the 21st Century Economy*, this volume), on the other hand, is authoritarian.²⁰

In addition to an authoritative classroom culture, there are other specific school characteristics that foster creativity. Recently, Learning and Teaching Scotland (now Education Scotland), the organization responsible for

Scotland's national school curriculum development, commissioned a review of 210 research and policy articles published between 2005 and 2011 related to fostering creativity in schools.⁷ The key findings revealed four school features that promote creativity: 1) students have control of their learning and ownership of the work; 2) the physical environment is varied as children can work indoors, outdoors, and at locations outside of school; 3) students have flexible use of their time; and 4) students can work at their own pace without pressure. All of these features together describe a Montessori school.

At all program levels, Montessori students are expected to have control over their learning and ownership of their work. Even in an infant program, children are cutting their own mango for snack with choppers, and feeding themselves – taking ownership over their own hunger! Montessori schools also have varied environments within the classroom: students can work at tables, chowkies (low-lying tables), or on the floor. They can also work outside on a patio, in the garden, or even outside of school. Small groups of elementary children, for instance, can plan and attend “going outs” to museums or meet with an expert on their chosen research topic. Going outs are another way to reinforce the idea that learning occurs everywhere, not just within the classroom walls. All programs provide the children with two to three hour time blocks, providing flexibility of time and deeper exploration into subjects. Finally, Montessori is a truly individualized learning method as children progress at their own pace without unnecessary pressure.

The Scotland study also revealed that allowing time for creative activities, which are not limited to the arts, contributes to increased student motivation, enjoyment, enthusiasm, engagement, concentration, attention, and focus.⁷ The key tenet of Montessori education is to foster concentration.^{13,14,21} But what's really compelling is that research shows that even during the typically tumultuous pubescent period,²² a time when student engagement typically declines,²³ middle school students attending Montessori programs show more enjoyment, interest, motivation, and feelings of being “in the flow” than students attending traditional middle school programs.²⁴

Even at this sensitive age, Montessori not only encourages creative activities, it also keeps students engaged and loving learning.

Montessori Students Show Greater Creativity

There is also direct evidence that Montessori environments foster creativity. In 2008, Besançon and Lubart examined the impact of school environment on children's *creative performance* and overall *creative development*. They compared Montessori and Freinet, both of which are alternative pedagogies, to conventional schooling. The children in this study ranged from 7 to 12 years old. They were tested on divergent and integrative thinking tasks, with one year occurring between test and retest. Both divergent and integrative thinking are necessary for creativity. *Divergent thinking* involves generating many ideas from a given stimulus. *Integrative thinking* involves using divergent and convergent thinking, the latter of which includes defining a problem and reorganizing information to find a right answer. Results showed that both Montessori and Freinet positively influenced children's creative performance compared to conventional schools. However, compared to children attending all other schools, including Freinet, the Montessori students showed an overall increase in creativity development regardless of their initial creative ability level. Montessori had the greatest impact on student creative development.

In 2013, these same researchers took a subset of the subjects from their 2008 study to compare the *creative potential* of children in Montessori and conventional schools. Overall, Montessori students showed higher performance (and, thus, greater creative potential) on all tasks compared to conventional students. However, the strongest effects were found on tasks involving creative writing and idea generation, evidence that Montessori schools promote both. Interestingly, other researchers recommend that conventional schools make time for and encourage idea generation to promote student creativity.⁵

Ironically, the creativity research shows that the best way to prepare children for the creative challenges of the 21st century is to adopt the features and practices of a school system developed over 100 years ago by a woman named Maria Montessori.

FOOTNOTES

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The Energy of Wanting (an excerpt) by Wendy Agnew

*"It is perhaps helpful here to note that the root of the word "organize" is related to the Greek "ergon," which is based on a verb meaning to "work," and that this verb is also the root of the word "energy."*¹

The term *Flow* according to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, describes a state of engagement between environment and self that recapitulates the following characteristics: "goals are clear, feedback is immediate, skills match challenges, concentration is deep, problems are forgotten, control is possible, self-consciousness disappears, the sense of time is altered, the experience becomes autotelic (is worth having for its own sake.)"²

Education or engaging the flow – of culture and nature – is, in part, a tribal³ activity. The pulse and rhythm of life, or intimacies of personal, cultural and environmental contexts, fade under the aegis of centralized control but bloom when embedded in a Deweyan, participatory democracy that accords recognition to the potential of the young, the arts, the crafts, the natural sciences, the humanities, the animate earth.⁴ French philosopher and ethnographer, René Girard speaks most eloquently of nuances between tribal and civil organization. To simplify; a tribal ethic embraces its members in a cyclical synergy of "violence and the sacred,"⁵ recognizing the imminence of both states in nature and human nature. Civil ethics tend to institutionalize, commodify and extract both violence and the sacred from nature and human nature in an effort to manipulate and control these potent and sometimes terrifying forces. Mass compulsory schooling tends to dilute the passion of learning – to codify experience to such an extent that the totems, chants and rituals of being and becoming are stripped of their potency.

In Joseph Schwab's words - "Eros, the energy of wanting, is as much the energy source in the pursuit of truth as it is in the motion toward pleasure, friendship, fame, or power... In short, a curriculum is not complete which does not move the Eros, as well as the mind of the young, from where it is to where it might better be."⁶

Curriculum may be thought of as the structural integrity of formal learning systems, but *Flow* – call it Eros, desire, curiosity - leads to construction of identity. In most learning institutions, curriculum is imposed on students and teachers in units of content and through specified

structural frameworks, creating what Ivan Illich refers to as "education under the assumption of scarcity," - knowledge seen as a sparse and costly commodity managed by a series of experts. Illich states that, "In fact, learning is the human activity which least needs manipulation by others. Most learning is not the result of instruction. It is rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful setting. Most people learn best by being "with it," yet school makes them identify their personal, cognitive growth with elaborate planning and manipulation."⁷ Illich intimates that being in place in a "meaningful setting" – promotes, what I will dub, a 'tribalizing of the civilized,' or bringing about a synthesis between nature and culture.

Cognitive psychologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela coined the word "autopoietic" to describe the self-regulating intelligence exhibited by dynamical systems - from microscopic organisms to the planet earth. Physicist Fritjof Capra details the adaptive "intelligence" of the earth (to regulate excess carbon dioxide in its atmosphere) in his book *The Web of Life*.⁸ As members of the biotic community, humans manifest a similar potential...the ability to continually sculpt themselves. Children, we maintain, themselves dynamical systems, are autopoietic. If given the opportunity, they are capable of constructing personal epistemologies with which to navigate the inconsistencies and anomalies of time and place by evolving and adapting themselves physically, emotionally and intellectually. This theory reestablishes the concept that individual and collective cognition have organic roots. - What better sense then, than to embed curriculum in the iterative intelligence of biotically articulate place.

Tribalizing the Civilized

"Some teachers have misconceived the intellectual as standing in contrariety to the physical and material and upon this misconception have built courses and coteries that encouraged in students already partially isolated from reality contempt for the concrete, the impulsive and the earthy."⁹ "... the isolationist error is exemplified by the dictum (sponsored by at least two educators of note) that " the aim of man should be to destroy the mammal within us."¹⁰

The Energy of Wanting (continued from Page 11)

Curriculum, in the Western paradigm, tends to presuppose the necessity of education as institution. *Flow* suggests that education is a byproduct of living. However, the bulk of North American culture is becoming increasingly institutionalized, from centralized schooling to agribusiness, from the music industry to healthcare. How is it possible to encourage *Flow* in a jungle of cognitive and ideological right angles?

I witnessed aspects of *Flow* and a tribalized civility at *The Hershey Farm School* near Burton, Ohio. Based on Montessori's principles¹¹ for satisfying adolescent needs, it organizes its curriculum as a functioning dialogue between students, guides, inhabitants, and environment. Occupations – “practical applications of operating community through the work of a common enterprise” and Humanities – experiencing the depths of cultural engagement through embodied knowing, distinguish interconnecting aspects of this learning culture. An Urban Studies Program establishes potent links with inner city communities.



Education as Fertile Peace (The Farm School)

Student “occupations” extend to the care and slaughter of animals, the upkeep of an evaporating pond, the operation of a bed and breakfast/museum of local history, the weekly marketing of produce, a maple sugar operation, liaison work projects with the local Amish community, barter, the building of a bioshelter, care of an organic garden and ongoing necessities generated by the environment. “The humanities” encompass the running of a coffee house extempore (a forum for compositions and

performances of student work), seminars on philosophy, history, science, art and literature as well group discussions on ethics and issues related to urban and rural communities, dramatis persona, architectural constructions animating history, *The Odyssey* or extended field trip, and explorations of mathematics and science as crystallizations of culture. Projects are student driven and presented collectively. Assessment is effected through a combination of peer and mentor response. Day to day responsibilities include the cooking of meals, the organization and upkeep of house, barn and grounds, and engaging in the process of ongoing research. The academics are consciously embedded in all aspects of life as a means of expressing and examining individual and collective identity – a manifestation of Deweyan democracy.

I speak of a tribalized civility because in the act of living consciously and respectfully with the land I witnessed an ethical depth that implicated personal choice. Violent and sacred aspects of the self were not controlled by the



structural brutality of prescription, but reflected on and explored in the practice of survival; – in the nurture and butcher of other mammals, in the intransigent articulations of weather and soil, in negotiations of chosen and conflicting commitments.¹²

The aspects of *Flow* were evidenced in a reflective and reflexive series of overlapping physical, emotional and intellectual ‘spirals’ – frames *unboundaried*, extending into past and future and richly textured with iterations of culture and necessity. Here, we see variation nurtured and knowledge emerging as “embodied metaphor”¹³ through what Martin Heidegger described as “opportunities to participate afresh in the non-prespecifiable presencing of things.”¹⁴ Whether in the ‘life’ of curriculum or the ideologies of identity, attention was connected to the continuity of place.

The Energy of Wanting (continued from Page 12)

As cognizant “mammals” we spend a lot of time in hypothesis generation but the fluent pursuit of answers (*Flow*) is often obstructed by the mechanized violence of a system that teaches children “to be alone in a crowd, to acquire a disconnected world view, to accept assignments from others rather than generating their own, to compete, to be organized by litter.”¹⁵ As truant mammals on a ‘shrinking’ planet it may be worth our while to accord the status of mentor to the animate presence of the earth and reenroll in the articulate and personally immanent academy of place-based pedagogy. The challenge before us, is, as ‘rewilding’ advocate George Monboit writes, “not about abandoning civilization, but advancing it. It is to ‘love not man the less, but Nature more – Lord Byron”.¹⁶

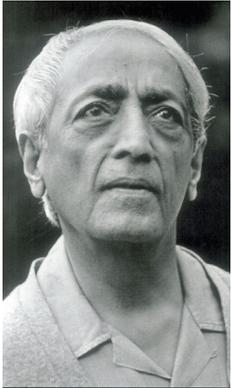
FOOTNOTES

1. David Bohm, *On Creativity* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 79.
2. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, “Flow and Education,” *The NAMTA Journal*, Vol 22, No.2, (Spring 1997), 16.
3. Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).
4. See David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York: Random House, 1997).
5. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 143-168.
6. Joseph Schwab, *Science, Curriculum and Liberal Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 109.
7. Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 39.
8. Fritjof Capra, *The Web of Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 17-50.
9. Schwab, “Eros and Education” in *Joseph Schwab, Science, Curriculum and Liberal Education*, 106.
10. *Ibid.*, 107.
11. Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1997), 71-81.
12. In the building of the Great Hall, a tree was felled, but it was felled with ritual and respect and incorporated as the lintel of the fireplace, a totem resonant of sacrifice and gratitude. David Kahn: *Lectures, An Orientation to Adolescent Studies*, Burton Ohio, 2003.
13. See Connelly & Clandinin, *Teachers as Curriculum Planners* (New York: Teachers College, 1998).
14. Michael Bonnett, *Fifty Modern Thinkers*, 27.
15. Elliot Eisner, *The Educational Imagination* (New York: Macmillan College Publishers, 1994).
16. George Monbiot, *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding*

Montessori and Krishnamurti: Story and Unconditioning by Philip Snow Gang

You are not a drop in the ocean.
 You are the entire ocean in a drop.
 Seek the wisdom that will untie your knot.
 Seek the path that demands your whole being.

Rumi



In *Unconditioning Education* J. Krishnamurti says, "It is becoming more and more obvious and necessary that through a different kind of education a new human comes into being." In Montessori's writings towards the end of her life (*Education and Peace, Education for New World, Reconstruction in Education and Formation of Man*) she advances the notion of the evolution of a new "human being." In *Education for New World* she says that as servants of the child we shall "witness the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of the New Human who will not be the victim of events, but will actually have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society."

Marsha Snow Morgan and my collaboration over the years birthed some significant observations. We embraced the idea that the entry point for preparing adult teachers is to immerse them in the all encompassing contexts of ecogenesis and cosmogenesis... and that those same two contexts, through story, should shape childhood education. This would integrate the core experiences required for Ecosapien, the new human.

During Montessori's years in India (1939-1946) one of her hosts was the Theosophical Society. They were also responsible for publishing some of her books and pamphlets, as they did for J. Krishnamurti. People who followed the teachings of Krishnamurti opened Montessori schools in India. And many Montessori teachers over the years throughout the world have followed Krishnamurti's work. This is how Marsha Morgan and Pauline Matsis came together to open Nova Montessori School in New Zealand. There is a certain quality of presence that the guides bring into the classroom that is quite different than in most Montessori schools. What is that difference?

In the Advanced Montessori Method Montessori says: "It is unquestionable that with this method of education the preparation of the teacher must be made *ex novo*, and that the personality and social importance of the instructor will be transformed thereby." (1918/1991, p. 100)

This aligns with Krishnamurti's insistence that in a school setting both teacher and learner are in a process of *unconditioning*. Krishnamurti spent his life exploring the domain of psychological freedom. There is an ancestral and cultural imprint that prejudices or conditions the mind, resulting in unexamined assumptions about life. He asserts that to rid oneself of these assumptions is freedom's gateway and the essential task of education; he names the process *unconditioning*.

Let's explore that... not just me sharing ideas but also you, pausing and reflecting and seeing for yourself. Krishnamurti says:

...the child is conditioned and the teacher, the educator is conditioned. In the school, the teacher and the student are both conditioned. For the teacher to wait until he is unconditioned, you might just as well wait for the rest of his life. So the question is whether the teacher and the student in their relationship in a school can uncondition themselves.

...the teacher and the student have to establish a relationship. That means a relationship not of one who knows and the other does not know. The establishment of the right-relationship between the teacher and the student is imperative. And the teacher has the responsibility, is dedicated to this. (63-4, Unconditioning Education, 2015)

How do we meet on the unconditioned ground?

For me, the first step for the youngest children is to notice wholes. Not to question what they notice, just to notice... to take in the whole of existence in this microcosm of nature. For this, the classroom is not enough, there needs to be beautiful gardens and opportunities to be in nature, to plant and observe flowers, to plant and observe food growing, to see the clouds, the rain, the sun and to *notice*. Sometimes we are too quick to name the parts of things before there is a total "seeing" of the whole.

Montessori and Krishnamurti (continued from Page 14)

Exploratory questions about life and relationship create essential processes for deconditioning during the second plane of development. I use to think that all Montessori teachers practiced dialogue circles where community inspiration, concerns and questions about life are explored, but recently I observed otherwise. In establishing that setting, the teacher also enters into her own conditioned stream of awareness.



There is a plethora of stories that have been developed for six to twelve year olds. Why? Story provides a sense of wonder and appreciation for the significance of life. It offers exploratory questions and metaphors to experience the mystery and it identifies the overarching contexts that shape who we are. Story is an essential container in the unconditioning process.

I suggest that the beginning point for cosmic awareness is not the story of the Universe, as many practice, but starting with something close and familiar. Recently, deep in the forests, I came to the realization that the most profound way to introduce the story of the Universe is engagement in Gaia. What if children begin here?

Why not start with the concrete – Gaia – and create a sense of wonder around a forest niche – or seaside, or mountain, a garden, or any place in nature? The adult poses exploratory questions. In the silence of the space: *What do you notice? What do you smell? What do you hear? How did all this come to be? What are the interconnections – Earth's natural systems – that maintain these patterns?* An exploratory dialogue emerges. Rituals, like John Seed and Joanna Macy's Council of All Beings, where participants "become" an aspect of Gaia and act it out, are essential activities for discovering our roots and deep-seated connection to nature. John Fowler, who works with ages nine through twelve in an inner city Montessori public school, uses the Council ceremony every year to imbed the children in the story of their "chosen" animal. They see and know as if they were that being.

After some time, the teacher ponders with the children: *Perhaps the cosmos has a story to tell us about how all of this came into being. It is a story about stars and supernovae, solar systems and planets, bacteria, humans and polar bears. Would you like to hear more?*

Everything you see right now, right here and everywhere, was born when our grandmother star exploded a very very long time ago...." Shall I continue?

Advanced versions of the same stories may be given during the third plane of development, relying on what is now known as Earth Systems Science. Also, at this stage, the mythological heroic stories become relevant to understanding oneself in the world.

Dialogue and questioning are essential processes in birthing a new way of seeing, one that is not prejudiced by the past and capable of seeing the "what is" if now, allowing right-love, right-action and right-freedom to emerge.

Continued on Page 14

Montessori and Krishnamurti (continued from Page 15)



Council Member



Council Member



Council Member



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