



"Follow the Child"



# camt Talk



Canadian  
Association of  
Montessori  
Teachers

Canadian Association of Montessori Teachers

February 2017

## UPCOMING EVENTS

[February 25 – Half-Day Workshop  
Toddler Topic](#)

April 29 - Mini-Conference

May 6 – Half-Day Workshop  
Outdoor Education

[June 28—Strategies for Success  
Full Day Workshop](#)

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

If you would like to contribute  
an article, please contact  
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## Message from the President



Dear CAMT Member:

Almost a month has gone  
by since holidays began. I  
hope yours was pleasant,  
exciting, restful and  
rejuvenating. Welcome  
back to the next 5 months  
of the school year. I wish you the power of  
peace, happiness, energy and drive to make it  
a wonderful journey for you and your  
students.

CAMT has to thank you for making our 2016  
conference a great success! It was a sold out  
venue, which created fabulous energy for the  
CAMT board to go forward with spirit and  
motivation. Evaluation forms were submitted  
from the highest number of participants in  
years. Your input and feedback has assisted us  
in knowing what your needs are. We had great  
participation during our AGM, which  
provides you with the opportunity to become  
aware of CAMT's business, its successes and  
challenges. The AGM is not the most exciting

part of the conference however, it is important.  
Your participation within this Montessori  
organization is valuable.

As I stood at the podium looking out amongst  
the attendees, it was so exciting to see so many  
Montessorians together in one room. To see a  
group of people who have come together for  
one cause, the future of the child based upon  
the roots of Montessori. This vision gave  
inspiration. We came together, as Dr. Gang  
stated, to Educate Eco-Sapiens in becoming a  
new being. This is a task which I hope you do  
with love, joy and fervour. Each day is a new  
experience and a new opportunity to discover  
the child's full potential within the prepared  
environment you have created. Your words,  
lessons, and actions play such a crucial role for  
the children, and your dedication does not go  
by unnoticed.

Many of you attended the conference based  
upon your needs as an educator. Within the  
classroom we focus on the children, lessons,  
presentation, progress, observations ....need I

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## ABOUT CAMT

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

go on? We focus on the details and often we can forget the bigger picture. It is easy to consistently direct children without letting them figure it out themselves, not permitting time to allow a situation to evolve or dissolve, not giving time for absorption and development. Often we can interject too soon, worrying that everything we have managed to accomplish can suddenly become turmoil. For some, it is difficult to let go of control, to allow messes and chaos to erupt, and to allow the children to work through this energy. As Freidrich Neitzche quoted, "One must have chaos in oneself in order to give birth to a dancing star." These children are dancing, and we need to let go. It is the adult, who needs to realize that this is the norm for transformation to begin, and through this energy creativity emerges, collaboration begins, self-regulation develops and a new child evolves. A child who is interested in what you have to present, what they have to discover and what the world is about. A world in which they are a great part of and the world that is at their hands; literally in their hands as they are the promise for our future. As educators, it is our job to open opportunities for the children. We need to share our love of the world, share the respect for what we believe in, and share stories which bring to life the grandeur of what they are to experience.

Today our values are more important than ever. The children need to know that their future can be promising. Every world leader has the opportunity to make decisions that represent what is best for their country, the Earth, the environment, the people and the future. Imagine if each one followed Montessori's Cosmic Task, to live in harmony and peace; to follow Jiddu Krishnamurti's belief of Right Action. (reflecting on an action that incorporates the whole when making a decision, not just a part) As leaders they can make a tremendous positive impact on our world if they were to stand up and follow respected ethics, beliefs, empathy; to do what is right as they move forward in their role of power.

Many world leaders have shown us discrepancies in their beliefs with the decisions they have made and promises that have been broken. We may not understand their decisions, their words or ways of being, yet we have to trust. Everyone thinks differently, world leaders included and as citizens we can only hope they have the big picture in mind. We too have children who think differently and we need to respect that. As educators we hope that they will succeed, we pay attention to details, however, we need to see the greater plan. The awe, respect, harmony and peace that surrounds us in the natural world can be brought forth in the developed world. It takes a greater conscious effort to make it happen.

Is it possible to live in harmony and peace when strife and retaliation exists on a daily basis? Is this the ideal to present to the children?

I believe the bigger picture is to educate a newer Eco-Sapien full of awe, peace, respect, harmony and awareness about the world we live in. These children may never witness peace in our world however, through our guidance and hope, they will have understood it. As they grow, they can spread the energy and stand up for what they believe in. They can work towards creating a harmonious and peaceful world amongst themselves based upon their values and beliefs. They will have the power to make the change with others they encounter, just as all leaders have the power to make a difference; it's their choice. We give the children choice. We all have them and our decisions make a difference.

Peace, harmony, respect, a greater unity and interconnectedness is the Cosmic Task that Maria Montessori wanted us to fulfill. She saw the bigger picture, and she lived through a bigger picture which we now call history. She had a great plan for us and I am certain you can accomplish this goal, day by day. Thank you for doing so.

They may say that I'm a dreamer, I'm not the only one, I hope one day you'll join us and make the world a better one. Altered from John Lennon's Imagine.

Remember, love trumps.

All the best for 2017!

Megwetch,

Claudia Langlois

*We teachers can only help the work going on, as servants wait upon a master. We then become witnesses to the development of the human soul; the emergence of the New Man, who will no longer be the victim of events but, thanks to his clarity of vision, will become able to direct and to mold the future of mankind.*

( *The Absorbent Mind*. Holt Rhinehart and Winston, 1973 p.9)

## Journey to Sacred Montessori – by Philip Snow Gang

*Do not let the present mar your mind and your soul; retain that freshness of spirit and love that are so necessary to carry out our work...*

*...I trust to God that you – who are my spiritual children – may find in your love and in your intelligence the means of making Mammolina's message and work penetrate mankind's soul.*

Mario Montessori in a letter to Binda Goldsbrough,  
September 1939

Binda Goldsbrough was a course assistant to Dr. Maria Montessori before and after World War II. Her father was the coordinator of Montessori's appearances in the United Kingdom. Before she died in 2008, Binda gifted me her mother's hand written 1935 Montessori manuals as well as letters she had received before World War II from Maria and Mario Montessori.

When I viewed these in juxtaposition to the letters I received between 1978 and 1983 from Mario and Ada Montessori, I knew there was a back-story that had to be told. That back-story was about the spiritual roots of the Montessori vision.

Since then I have had some ongoing reflections. It is more than the spiritual roots of the Montessori vision. It is our journey, my journey and your journey, into "Sacred Montessori".

### Cosmic Education

When one thinks about sacred Montessori, one goes directly to the heart of cosmic education — how everything in the universe has come forward over 13.8 billion years in an unfolding, beautiful and chaotic, harmony of beingness... and that we humans are evolving the consciousness of the universe. Montessori was the first to tell this story to children.

The journey to sacred Montessori is an exploration of self as well as an exploration of Montessori's vision. It is deep looking. It is deep observing. It is deep reflecting on what is the core, the essence of Montessori's approach.

When exploring Mario's letters, one observes how he continually brings back normalization as core to the continuation of their dream. In response I write:

Normalization is the unencumbered, unconditioned response to being in communion with one's environment.

I observe how often the Montessori's acknowledge the spirit of the child, the soul of the child, the soul of the adult. I think some of that has been lost over the last 70 years.

In one of the letters, Mario mentions the Swedenborg movement. Emmanuel Swedenborg was a mystic, an architect, a spiritual teacher from the 18th century and Mario said that he hoped that Montessori would someday be as popular as that movement. I reason that they probably knew and appreciated Swedenborg, aligning with some of his principles.

Love is the essence of spiritual fire.  
Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772)

Another discovery that is found in the letters was the existence of a secret 'organization' that Maria Montessori created while in England before she went to India. She called it the Vahib. According to Binda, it was a small circle of people who came together to talk about cosmic and spiritual matters.

### Mario Montessori

I only feel that Mario had the real gift for pointing out the essence, and I am afraid people may lose themselves in the details.

*Letter to Phil Gang from Ada Montessori Pierson,  
15 June 1982*

In thinking about the Montessori's notion of soul and spirit I can only ride along side them through their words. Actually, in knowing Mario over time, I could see deep love in his smile, in his eyes, in his compassion. I was too young and not aware enough to be able to dialogue about such things. In 1981, Mary Loew and I interviewed him. If one looks at that interview you can see it in his eyes, you can feel it in his heart, this deep appreciation for the soul of the child.

### Spiritual Preparation of The Teacher

*Intelligence is the essential capacity to perceive the what is; and to awaken this capacity in oneself and others, is education.*

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*It is becoming more and more obvious and necessary that through a different kind of education a new human being comes into being.*

Jiddu Krishnamurti

To be a Montessori educator one needs to be engaged in an ongoing exploration of self and self in the world. Without that spiritual journey, we run the danger of passing our own conditioning on to children.

There are epochs in each of our lives when we begin to question what we are doing, why we are here and the very nature of life. When those epochs arise, I have learned to pay attention, to viscerally connect with them. It becomes an opportunity to discover a deep connection to life.

I go to the forest or ocean and in that space I can feel what is going on inside me. Sometimes I ask nature to help find my way. When one observes without thought – merging the observer with the observed – one allows heart-wisdom insight to emerge from the center of concentration.

The work of J. Krishnamurti calls one into this self-reflective process. His ideas on dialogue and his book, *Education and the Significance of Life* are significant contributions to the [TIES Montessori graduate program](#). Krishnamurti shines a torchlight on seeing oneself: observing the what-is of now.

### **Right Action, Love and Transcendence**

Life calls one to right-action and right-livelihood. When I follow right-action and am motivated by love, everything falls into place: maybe not completely as I expected and most likely not overnight, but in time. And all the while, I am also unpacking old stories. All of us carry old stories from childhood. If we want to evolve and create a way forward for a new human to arise, we have a responsibility to explore those perturbations that prevent us from living into a new story in our life. Krishnamurti says, once you actually see the conditioning (stories), you can transcend them. But until you see them you are living in an old story.

### **Love is a verb.**

*There is a difference between the verb and the word, the name, or the noun. The verb is of the active present, whereas the*

*noun is always of the past and therefore static...You may give vitality or movement to the noun but it is not the same as the verb which is actively present.*

Jiddu Krishnamurti

Embracing love as the dynamic force that carries creation forward is an intimate way of expressing our relationship to life.

### **Love is a verb**

Many of our nouns are brought to life when used in their verb form. All of the human tendencies written about by Mario Montessori were expressed as nouns: e.g. exploration, observation, order, imagination, perfection. How different they sound as exploring, observing, ordering, imagining, perfecting. They are not static. Humanity has created an environment of nouns, commodities. Life is temporal; everything is going to change. What is here today will not be tomorrow. We are all in a process of change. Even what we consider inanimate is changing. Everything is a verb — and when I experience life as a verb I do not get stuck in the past. I am in the what-is of now.

### **How can we teach this?**

Many of these ideas are the backbone of our Montessori graduate program in integrative learning. We “help Montessori teachers help themselves” in adult processes that are congruent with Montessori’s processes for children.

With an intimate connection to cosmic education one observes children and adults with a wholly new perspective. They/we are as Montessori said “continuators of creation.” It is really a spiritual vision. It is how we create an environment for the inner self to develop: for that inner being to be one with itself and the universe. So cosmos and self become a dance of creation.

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## A Toddler's Welcome – by Kate Millie

### How to Create Space for the Youngest Children in our Growing Montessori Communities

Dr. Montessori called Normalization the “most important single result of our whole work.” (Montessori, M. *The Absorbent Mind*, Oxford, England: Clio Press Ltd. pg. 204).

Normalization is an ongoing process to bring equilibrium to mind, body and spirit in an environment that promotes purposeful and meaningful activity in which the individual engages. In Montessori pedagogy normalization is a path of development individuals take according to their personalities and creative energy.

“A fresh way of thinking about the development of character is that our unique personalities are formed by our own individual efforts, which have no reference to any extraneous factors, but depend on our own vital creative energy.” (Montessori, M. (1994). *The Absorbent Mind*. Oxford, England: Clio Press Ltd. pg. 176).

We talk about normalization, the normalized child and the normalized classroom all the time. We throw the term around flippantly - “Do you have a normalized class?” “My classroom isn’t normalized at all.” “This child has reached normalization.” Although we all may know a normalized class when we see one, or a normalized child, we need to define the characteristics of normalization in general so we can reference these when looking at the characteristics of normalization in toddlers. By doing this we can reflect back on the characteristics of normalization and decide if the programming we are offering supports a child’s natural development or creates obstacles to their development.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF NORMALIZATION

#### Love of Work

“The first characteristic of the process of normalization is the love of work. Love of work includes the ability to choose work freely and to find serenity and joy in work.” (Montessori, M. (1994). *The Absorbent Mind*. Oxford, England: Clio Press Ltd. pg. 202).

The work that a child does, and feeling productive, is the child’s own work that allows them to reach a point of normalization. Children who are able to choose activities

that answer some need of their development allows a child to create themselves through work. Children don’t need recognition or rewards when doing purposeful work that is meaningful for them. Purposeful work energizes the child. When a child chooses work, is allowed to work uninterrupted, not by comment, praise or suggestions concentration can begin to develop. This respect for the child’s work begins with the tiniest baby who is observing a mobile. We allow for the concentration to develop without interruption.

The child educates himself, his work is not our work, we simply link the child to the materials. The child uses the materials for as long as they need. Work activates other human tendencies to repeat, self-correct and for perfection.

#### Spontaneous Choice

The free choice that we help children develop is an indicator of a high level of thinking. Initially a child will choose based on curiosity and then they will come to choose from a point of knowledge. Curiosity is good, but choosing from a point of knowledge is deeper. Children in Montessori environments are given a lot of opportunity to make choices: What activity to choose, where to sit and do the activity, moving about the room, speaking or remaining silent, working alone or in a group, etc.

#### Love of Order

Order is a critical aspect for a young child to develop. We recognize that many children come from disordered home environments into our classrooms. The environment we create in the classroom will support their sensitive period for order even if they aren’t living in order at home.

Children react to changes in people and routines in both their physical and human environments.

#### Independence

“The child’s development follows a path of successive stages of independence, and our knowledge of this must guide us in our behaviour towards him. We have to help the child to act, will and think for himself.” (Montessori, M. (1994). *The Absorbent Mind*. Oxford, England: Clio Press Ltd. pg. 257).

*Continued on Page 6*

Our goal for children is that they can do pretty much everything in their environment independently by 5 - 6 years old. When we create materials we must hold in mind that the child needs to be able to do the activity independently. In this preparation we acknowledge the growth of independence in the child. Normal development exists in the acquisition of independent skills.

### Cooperative and Socializes Well

The more a child can do for themselves the less they need others to help them and the more they understand that they can help others. At around the age of two to three years old a child develops an understanding of empathy - they learn that other people have feelings and needs. At this point a child is able to share.

Children absorb all the ways social groups live together. In the classroom children absorb how we model grace and courtesy as courteous relationships are a special language we use in social situations.

### Attached to and Loves Reality, Nature

Children love reality and don't need fantasy. This is one of the hardest things to convince parents of. Children love nature, animals, they are fascinated by the movement of insects, birds flying, the work of wind, rainbows, clouds, etc.

A child's love and interest in nature should be fostered, we must be aware of our biases and not pass our fears on to our children. We must marvel at the natural world and share it with children.

### Strongly Developed Will

When the child has been able to make a choice and have experienced the consequences of the choices they have made this will enable them to develop a strong will. A strong will enables a person to make decisions and direct their own life rather than depending on others for direction.

"Here is a child as he should be: the worker who never tires, the calm child who seeks the maximum of effort, who tries to help the weak while knowing how to respect the independence of others, in reality, the true child." (Montessori, M. (1989) Education for a New World. Oxford, England: Clio Press Ltd. pg. 69).

### Joy

Children are naturally happy, content, joyful, they love life and are a joy to be around. Contented children don't have to fight or be submissive.

## **THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NORMALIZATION IN TODDLERS**

Now that we have covered the characteristics of the process of normalization let's look at how these characteristics manifest themselves in a 18 month - 36 month old child. These characteristics manifest differently in the youngest children in our school communities. Often we don't see these characteristics at all or we see just the beginnings of them. We want to nurture the youngest in our schools so that they can follow a natural path of developing leading to the integration of mind, body and spirit.

### Love of Work

Toddlers are always busy, and take a great deal of pride in their work. Toddlers like work with purpose and love to work if they want to do it. Toddlers need a lot of opportunities for exploration and for repetition.

A toddler's concentration looks different than an older child as a toddler comes in and out of concentration if there is any language stimulation in the room and so we have to watch for a true end to their concentration before we intervene.

### Spontaneous Choice

Often young children are given not enough choices or too many choices in their home environments. In our Montessori environments we give limited choices, such as two choices of activities to help guide the child's choice. Toddlers are learning what it means to make a choice and so they need role models and they need to see choices being made around them.

### Love of Order

A toddler is good at creating disorder and very poor at recreating order. We help them by maintaining order for them so that they can eventually create their own order.

## A Toddler's Welcome (continued from page 6)

### Independence

A toddler can do a lot for themselves and so must be given time and an activity made simple enough for them to be successful on their own. Toddlers want to do things for themselves and so need time to do so and support and collaboration from the adults around them. Toddlers are often fearless in their drive for independence and so we must balance their safety and need to do for themselves.

### Cooperative and Socializes Well

Toddlers are egocentric and not social beings yet. They see themselves as individual and not a part of a community. This egocentrism doesn't diminish until 2 - 3 years old when they can start to have empathy for others and help the younger children in their communities.

### Attached to and Loves Reality, Nature

Toddlers love the natural world and reality. They have an appreciation and fascination of the natural world and love to be outside in nature.

### Strongly Developed Will

Natural consequences are very important for toddlers as they have an absorbent mind, not a reasoning mind and therefore can't be reasoned with. They don't always understand why they can't do something that they want to do when they want to do it. Natural consequences are our best tool to help a child as their will develops so that they can make a choice and experience the results.

### Joyful

Toddlers experience the highest highs and the lowest lows. They find joy in new experiences, in music, in the natural world and connection through work.

## **INTEGRATING OUR TODDLER COMMUNITY INTO OUR WIDER SCHOOL COMMUNITIES**

Keeping in mind that we want to support the normalization process for the youngest in our schools and we want to avoid being obstacles to their development, we must now look at how to involve our Toddler Communities in our school environments while supporting their own work.

At Dundas Valley Montessori school we have a school population of around 200 students, ages 18 months to 12 years old. We also have an adolescent program - Strata: Montessori Adolescent School with over 20 students ages 12 - 15 year olds. We are a tight knit, interdependent community. When you walk down the halls of DVMS it is not unusual to see students in the halls busy getting their snack, helping each other with activities, cleaning the hallway, sorting the shoes, etc. Every day children work and interact across age levels together and in our school community this interaction is supported and encouraged.

When we began our Toddler Community last year we wanted to encourage the open, interdependent, collaborative community, and have the greater school community interacting with our Toddler Community but we also wanted to protect the important work that the children are doing in the Toddler Class as they develop themselves and work towards Normalization. We looked at the characteristics of Normalization for a Toddler to ensure that we supported their work and never asked them to interact in ways that didn't support their natural development.

The following list outlines suggestions gathered from the attendees of the workshop for integrating toddlers into our wider school communities:

- Arranging Flowers and delivering them to classes around the school
- Folding the Children's House lunch placemats and taking them to Children's House environments
- Baking and sharing baked goods
- Children's House students visit our classroom to choose objects and shoes to polish
- Elementary students help the toddlers when toddlers change their shoes at their cubby in the hall
- Elementary students visit to read to the toddlers
- Classroom pets visit the toddler classroom with Elementary and Children's House children guiding the animal visits
- Lunch concert series
- Full school singing in the gym
- Walking to the store together
- Halloween fun fest
- Elementary students observations and discussion after

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## A Toddler's Welcome (continued from page 7)

- Community lunch
- Toddlers go on errands around the school
- Common field trips with Casa and Toddler classrooms
- Random acts of kindness between classrooms
- Winter craft markets
- Taking a video of the Toddlers for the holiday concert and presenting at the concert
- Have gym class together
- Older children serve snack to the toddlers
- In after school care the older children can help the younger children

Because we know Toddlers enjoy purposeful work we find ways for them to be effective and feel like their work has an impact on the larger school community.

We must continue to create the best possible educational approach for not only our youngest children but to support the learning of all people. As children develop and

grow we must always look into the future to remember the most important result of our work, the development of normalization, the natural development of our children.

*"The child is capable of developing and giving us tangible proof of the possibility of a better humanity. He has shown us the true process of construction of the human being. We have seen children totally change as they acquire a love for things and as their sense of order, discipline, and self-control develops within them.... The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind"*

(Montessori, M. (1992). Education & Peace ).



*Did you know that the CAMT Website lists job postings from schools looking to hire teachers?*

**Check it out at <https://www.camt100.ca/job-postings>**

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### An RECE in a Montessori Community

Bridging the Gap between Montessori and ECE has been close to my heart since I walked into Boardwalk Montessori School four years ago. When I was studying ECE in 2011, we learned about Maria Montessori during a 1 hour lecture titled, “Alternative Teaching Methods” and her methods were not recommended. I remember walking away from the lecture feeling like I wasn’t interested in any alternative educational methods. I was hired at Boardwalk two months before the start of the school year. I had no idea what I was getting myself into and I was nervous. I read as much as I could about Montessori over that summer but I still had so many questions once the school year started; Why was it so quiet? Why were such young children given items that could break? Where was all the fun? Over that first year, I sat back and observed. What I saw was the potential of the children in the classroom; they were flourishing. They almost immediately embraced the routine, they were attracted to the materials and I went home feeling so amazed by what they were learning. I was thrilled when I got the opportunity to study at Montessori Teachers College to earn an Montessori Infant Toddler Diploma.

During my studies, I learned so many things; the idea that spoke to me the most was the importance of following the child. Letting the children take charge of their learning and being responsive to their individual learning abilities made so much sense! When I learned about sensitive periods, all the memories I had of children lining up their cars or fussing over a restrictive snow suit started to make sense. I was lucky enough to work in a place where I could introduce different materials into the classroom. They were materials that I had created with specific children in mind and based on observations I had made regarding their interests, needs and skills. By introducing these materials, it gave us another way to observe the children. How were they exploring? How did they feel? By tapping into these parts of the children, we were able to connect them to the classroom in a more meaningful way. For example, when children are showing signs of stress we introduce them to materials that will help them to self-regulate, like a sensory bin filled with rice. We can add funnels, spoons, jugs, etc. to foster fine motor skills but the goal is a feeling of peace. Or another example, at the beginning of the school year a young boy was reluctant to move away from the door where he would stand and watch the cars go by so we

brought in some toy cars and placed them at the back of the classroom. When we directed his attention towards the toy cars, he entered the room and began rolling the cars around the room, exploring the space in his own way for the first time.

In order to bridge the gap, we need to compare the two education methods to create an understanding, starting with the learning environments. In child care centres, the walls are covered in environmental print and the classroom is bustling with energy and conversation. I worked in a preschool room where there was a mass clean-up before going outside. The children were so uninterested in cleaning up because it was an overwhelming task and they weren’t cleaning up their own mess. At the end of each day, the RECE’s would have to go through all the materials, sorting them and putting them back in their correct place. In the Montessori community, there are very few visual distractions and the environments are meant to be calm and quiet. The consistency of the work cycle expectation (choosing work, taking it to your own space, returning it to where you found it) catches on very quickly because the expectation is the same every day. Children in a Montessori classroom are expected to take responsibility for their own work and that includes putting it back when they’re finished with it. This was one of the first observations I made during my first year that made so much sense to me.

The next point of comparison is how the two educational methods plan curriculum. As an ECE, I was directed towards the *ELECT* (*Early Learning for Every Child Today*) Document which contained the “Continuum of Development.” This became my tool for observing children and planning activities based on their unique interests and abilities. We studied the most up to date research in child development and spent 28 weeks in various placements. During my Montessori training, our curriculum was written by Dr. Maria Montessori and resides in our various Albums, all neatly divided by subject and purpose. It was written over one hundred years ago and proven to be very successful. We spent 495 hours in placement and lived and breathed Montessori every weekend at Teachers College. Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years, “How does Learning Happen?” is moving towards Montessori principles, recognizing the im-

portance of belonging, engagement, expression and well-being in a child's education. The recommendations and principles written in the *ELECT* document are very reminiscent of Montessori's writings. I encourage you to read them and find the similarities.

The final point of comparison is play-based vs. the work cycle. The word that divides the two communities most often is "play". Maria Montessori is famously quoted for defining play as "the work of the child." *ELECT* defines play as "a child-centered activity that engages a young child and promotes learning." I had difficulty adjusting to the idea that children come to school to work. I remember feeling like the children were missing out on something fun. The idea of a two-year-old child "working" creates negative imagery for people unfamiliar with Montessori. It's difficult but I challenge people to look at Montessori and ECE through the same lens. Couldn't we see the children in our Montessori class-

rooms as "playing"? After all, they have freely chosen the activity and are directing their own learning. Yes, the materials in a Montessori classroom are not open-ended, there is a specific purpose and steps to follow but if the child is engaged and learning something it falls under the definition of play.

Over the last few years, I have observed that Montessori and ECE are more similar than they are different. They both believe in highly-trained, well-qualified educators with extensive training and emphasis put towards continuing professional development and advocacy. Both methods use an observation-based curriculum, studying the children before planning activities based on their research. Children are at the heart of both methods. At the end of the day, RECEs and Montessorians are going to work each day for the same reason, to care for and educate young people.



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## A Joyful Approach to Reading – by Elizabeth Flenniken

I was asked in the summer of 2016 if I would be interested in presenting a curriculum based workshop at the CAMT Fall Conference. My first workshop was a practical one based on my years of teaching experience. It was a wonderful experience for me to talk and share some of my ideas. I hope that participants left the workshop with at least one new idea to add to their own classroom. Now, as I write this article I hope that I am able to convey some of my practical experience into useful ideas that translate to your classroom work.

I chose to delve into language for my workshop, however, many of the ideas could be incorporated into any section of your classroom curriculum.

There were three questions that were brought up at numerous times throughout my workshop. These questions were as follows:

1. How do you reach children that struggle with reading?
2. How do you determine when a child needs more than your phonetic reading approach?
3. How do you reach children daily?

So, with that being said, I will now focus on those three questions through a “Joyful Approach to Reading”.

We use the term “Prepared Environment” and take pride in creating an environment that aesthetically looks appealing and that draws the children to the shelves and the materials they house. However, are our environments ever truly complete? I have always considered my classroom to be a work in progress. These are a few things I always consider:

- We often look for ways to modify an existing activity or bring in a new addition. If your shelves house materials that are not used, perhaps it is time to make some changes that bring back renewed interest with an activity. Take a walk around your room and make a note of areas that lack use.
- Wooden boxes with lids look beautiful and make your shelves look neat. However, my experience dictates that for many materials in different areas of curriculum “Out of Sight = Out of Mind”. I prefer, as much as possible, to have materials in clear sight.

Switch activities. I choose, for the language area especially, to change objects, cards, books, pictures and activities to keep children interested and the activities fresh.

Some changes I will make seasonally but others daily or weekly. How often do we expect a child to work with the object box, when the objects remain the same? It is wonderful when one child notices new objects. I guarantee, the box will be used all day by children at various levels of reading ability.

Over the course of my workshop, it became apparent that as teachers, we are all challenged by children who struggle. Although reading is often one area that is challenging for a child it typically is not the only area they struggle in. The reason or reasons why the child struggles have often not yet been discovered at our Casa level. Every workshop I have ever attended with respect to language development all stress the importance on early remediation when a child struggles. I loved an analogy I heard earlier this year at another workshop. The process of learning was described as a highway route connecting point A to point B. Most children travel that route by taking the direct path but there are children who take many detours in order to reach point B. Therefore, it is our job to help facilitate this extended journey and provide other options with how our classroom materials are used.

The following points are something to think about when dealing with students that struggle:

- Acquiring reading skills requires not only accuracy in decoding words, but also an efficient rate of reading. Children who recognize sight words automatically are more efficient readers.
- Children need daily repetition with activities in order to build upon their abilities and gain confidence. Older children (5+) need repetition with a variety of reading materials. If you have strong readers in your group, encourage them to sit with children to assist with this daily repetition.
- Any remedial activity is okay for children that typically travel that direct highway route to reading. These activities can do no harm, but will provide an opportunity for growth for any child that struggles.
- As a species we learn naturally how to walk and talk but there is nothing in our genetic code that tells us it is now time to learn to read. This is always a concept that has to be prepared for with our materials and environment. Spoken language and writing are the

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## A Joyful Approach to Reading (continued from Page 11)

two essential foundations for reading. Reading is a mental act that demands a greater maturity. With reading it is our aim to help the child discover the meaning of each word and achieve what Montessori states as "Total Reading"- an understanding and an appreciation for the thoughts, sentiments and style of an author.

- Sound games and sandpaper letters are a vital part of creating a successful approach to phonetic reading. If these games and materials are part of a three and four year old's daily work cycle they will quickly be able to express themselves by using sounds. If they are not doing so and clearly have no idea what you are trying to accomplish then I quickly use other language materials to keep the child's interest. Don't give up on phonics. I constantly use sounds and match symbols to sounds but I will also introduce sight words and word matching activities. My sandpaper letters are all in one box. I do not use the approach of having a child learn first five letters in basket one before they move to basket two. If the child is struggling they may never master basket one. How frustrating for them to see other children using more letters!

So, how do you reach children daily? These are some ideas of things that I do and use in my own classroom:

- My language shelves are filled with early activities that encourage listening and training the ear to receive ideas other than just sound games and sand paper letters. The more appealing these activities are the more they will be used. I use lots of tiny objects that are always appealing. Activities could include, rhyming words, opposites, sequencing pictures, things that go-together, story writing, riddles, odd-one-out, matching, compound- words and sorting. Most of these concepts are used later as word study reading activities.
- Use these ideas at group times. We all typically gather at different times of day for group circles. Although, for me a circle time is always short, I try to make it purposeful. One example would be, as children leave one at a time to wash their hands before lunch, I ask them to tell me a word that rhymes or an opposite. (perhaps if a child was working with skip counting, I might ask them to count by tens to one hundred)
- Play echoing sound games and clapping syllables. Really emphasize the subtle movements your mouth makes with each sound.
- I have a ledge in my language area that displays sand paper letters. There are typically three letters displayed that form a word, c a t. In a little box beside the word is an object of a cat. Change these letters and objects regularly. For several weeks I had a student who kept putting a fish in the box and displaying, "f i s" to write the word fish. Another older student kept replacing the "s" with "sh".
- Another fantastic way to reach children daily is by using individual booklets for each child (these booklets hang on a door and once again are visible and easily accessible). On the back of the booklet is the alphabet. As each symbol is presented to a child you make a check mark on that page beside the letter and on a page inside the booklet you write the symbol and draw a small picture that has the beginning sound. I use these booklets throughout a work cycle. Even if you only have a moment with a child you can make it count by reviewing not only the sounds in the book but also other language concepts. For example if they have the sound "m" and the picture is a mouse, I not only review the initial sound of mouse but other words where you can hear the sound "m". As a child becomes more attuned to hearing sounds they may say a word where the "m" is at the end or in the middle of a word. You could also ask if they can think of a word that rhymes with mouse. Typically when one child brings their little booklet to me several others will follow!
- Language lessons need not always be a formal lesson. For example, we all have an object box that is used for a first phonetic reading activity. I have already stressed the importance of switching objects regularly in order to keep interest. However, I also extend the object boxes use as children gain confidence with their reading by writing longer sentences that introduce sight words, capital letters and periods. Children will also use it to write their own phonetic words and messages.
- I have learned over the years to never underestimate the abilities of children. In my class I have a student with special needs. I learn so much by watching how this little boy approaches the classroom. He loves to match things. I have photographs of all the

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## A Joyful Approach to Reading (continued from Page 12)

children that are cut in half. He has always loved to match the faces and say each child's name. I also have a box with all the children's names in it. They use this as they learn to write and print their name. The children's names are also written on their coat hook and cubby. I would never have thought of him using the box of names as a reading activity until one day as he looked through them he said a name. It was correct! I quickly took out the basket of pictures and matched just one name and picture. I then sat back to watch. He continued first by matching the pictures and then every name. I have extended this method of matching to other reading activities and objects in the classroom.

- Hide letters throughout the classroom. Sometimes having to sit for a lesson is a challenge but being given the opportunity to move through the classroom makes a sandpaper letter lesson more appealing. Every opportunity to trace a letter should be taken as this will help instill in the muscular memory the way to write the symbol at another time.
- Trace letters on a child's back. This is such a fun way for a child to experience stereognostically the way a letter is formed. I also find out who is very ticklish!
- When you do present a formal sand paper letter lesson try to also find the time for the child to sensitize their fingertips. Children love little, beautiful things and a tiny jug and dish with a beautiful cloth sets the stage for the child to receive a lesson.
- Have many different phonetic readers and reading activities. If you have several children who are reading around the same level, present different activities to each of them. They can then help each other by presenting the activity they were shown to another student. It will help them gain confidence with their own ability.
- Children are given the opportunity every day to change the reader that they take home. I like this exchange of books to come from them. Those children that are eager are often the students that are on the path to becoming a Joyful Reader!
- I present phonogram combinations as soon as I know a child is hearing sounds. When a student does not hear sounds, I will still show them these combinations in order for them to write and spell.
- Encourage your children to write using the story alphabet as much as they can. This is a wonderful opportunity to present once again, different rules to different children so that they can share with each other. For example, I will not accept the word "is" as "iz". They have to ask a friend or get the first set of sight words out to find the correct spelling.
- I read to my older children every day. Usually as they return from recess they come in to the classroom and we sit together. I do not read picture books but ongoing stories that they need to listen to in order to follow the story. I like stories that we can discuss and that they can give a synopsis to a peer if they were absent for a day. Children who need a moment longer to settle are often the students who benefit the most from this daily routine. Occasionally, I have a student who is unable to listen and needs to go to their own work immediately, but typically all the children love this time of day and I am not allowed to miss a day of reading.
- As your children become readers, I always suggest to their parent that they keep their child's bed time story sacred. Often children can't express why, but fear they may lose this special time with a parent by being asked to read instead of being read to.

Happy reading everyone! I will conclude with a quote from Dr. Montessori. She said, "Of the many gifts and talents man is born with there are none more remarkable than language. Not only does it fuse men into groups and nations, but it is the central point of difference between the human species and all others. Language lies at the root of that transformation of the environment that we call civilization". (The Absorbent Mind – Kalakshetra Publication Page 110)



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## Justin Beaver – by Claudia Langlois

Justin Beaver came out of dormancy today, January 20, 2017 and was noticed at 3:40 p.m. by families at Northumberland Montessori School. The temperature was 4°C. It was the same day President Trump was inaugurated and he changed the US energy policy, as well as scrap the Climate Action Plan. At times it's one step forward and two steps back. Such was the case with Justin Beaver as he was confused and thought it was spring.

At dismissal today, as I was talking to a parent, she asked if that was a ground hog across the road. I looked thought she was talking about the squirrel and stated, "It's a squirrel." She repeated, "Across the road, what is that creature?" I looked,. Traveling at a steady speed, along the flattened grass at the side of the road was either a small muskrat or a beaver. "Oh my gosh!, I have to go save it before it gets hit by a car," and I ran out of the room. Out the school doors I went with box in hand and noticed many other families had caught sight of this animal. Some parents had parked their vehicles along the side of the busy country thoroughway. "I will save it," I shouted, as I quickly walked across the road.

The animal was a baby beaver. It had traveled about 200 meters up hill from the river and it had already turned around and was going back along the path it had created. I followed the animal, but stayed a distance behind. I stood on the road to slow cars as they passed this *Castor canadensis* who was running as quickly as it's little legs could carry him. Running back towards the river, trying

to stay hidden in the frosted, muddy broken tall grasses, yet it was fully exposed. The tiny beaver with its flat tail dragging behind was on a mission as it followed the scent it had left. Diagonally across the road it went, under the metal road barriers and down the hill, through the trees and towards the river where it belonged. Phew! It didn't get hit by a car.

I walked back up the hill carrying my empty box and noticed the cars coming down the road. Parents in their vehicles were waving and smiling, the children were cheering through opened windows and waving. When I got to the school's parking lot it occurred to me that these families had parked their car along the side of the road to intentionally slow traffic, in order to prevent the beaver from being hit. I thought, "Wow! These parents certainly care."

Justin Beaver we may never see again, however, he will be a part of the memories from our school.

It is these random acts of kindness, appreciation and conscious awareness that helps me realize that we are making a difference in the world. I believe all things happen for a reason and hopefully one day, one step back may lead to two steps forward. We have to keep believing.



image from <http://ottersandsciencenews.blogspot.ca/>

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## The Inclusive Classroom – by Karen Skinulis

Unmotivated students, interruptions during circle time, class clown, social problems in the group ... do any of these sound familiar? Well, you're not alone. All classrooms encounter problems and challenges. The good news, I've found, is that there's no better way to solve them than to create a partnership with your students. It's what I call, the inclusive classroom. This means we shift away from teacher-led solutions and instead seek consensual agreements that everyone weighs in on. If you like the ideas of respect and democracy, this teaching style is for you.

The return after the holidays is your second shot at "beginning" the school year but it's much easier this time because the rules and routines are already in place and your students are familiar with the materials. As well, most of them have settled into comfortable friendships. This means you can kick things up a notch by putting your focus on how the classroom is running, and how to get your students more involved in this process.

I firmly believe that our goal as "Montessorians" should always be more than just expanding the intellectual capabilities of our students. I feel that to honour the spirit of Montessori's vision we must also work on character-building; to help our students recognize the benefits of cooperation, hone their leadership skills, increase their empathy, and learn how to solve problems -- in short, we need to do our part to raise good people.

The simplest way to accomplish these lofty goals is to hold regular Classroom Meetings. This gets students involved and participating. The classroom meetings are opportunities to communicate on a regular basis (not just when a problem arises) and address all the issues that are important to the functioning of a classroom. Without regular meetings, problems usually get swept under the rug, or are handled solely by the teacher and we never find out what our students are really thinking and feeling, nor how they can help us solve the problem.

To begin the problem-solving process consider each of your students individually and ask the following questions:

- Do I have any students who aren't motivated to learn; who aren't putting real effort into progressing academically?

- Do I have any students who don't seem to feel comfortable in the class (lacking a sense of belonging)?
- Do I have any students who have not made friends or don't generally get along well with peers?
- Are there any behavior problems that are persisting despite my best efforts to deal with them?

Whatever you've written down on your list of "problems that need solutions" I guarantee you will have better success if you invite your students to help you solve them. I have found that students truly care about what their peers think and the group process is a powerful force for improving behaviour. Of all the strategies and techniques I've used over the years, the classroom meeting is the gold standard for achieving results.

To get things rolling in a positive way, introduce the classroom meeting in a special circle time. Start by focusing on how well your class has been working and point out the many strengths and accomplishments you've observed. Ask for their comments and observations about what they like about the class. Then explain that in order to keep it running smoothly you will need their help. Ask how many of them want to be helpers to keep the classroom working well and don't be surprised if everyone shoots up their hand. I find children are always willing to be helpful when given the opportunity. Finally, explain that in order to do this you will need to sit down together once a week and have a special meeting that is just about your classroom. Then, introduce your five-item agenda and you are ready to begin. You can start by just taking one item on the agenda at a time. Once the class gets the hang of it you can increase the number of topics you cover in a meeting.

As I have mentioned, I found the classroom meeting to be a highly effective tool for dealing with classroom management. I think it worked so well because it was tangible proof that I trusted the students' ability to be creative, to solve problems and to work together with me. It helped them feel an even deeper sense of belonging in the group. Here are some of the highlights I remember from my years of holding classroom meetings.

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## The Inclusive Classroom *(continued from Page 15)*

### The Snack Table

One year, I had a casa class with several young children. Some were so young they had just barely graduated out of diapers. My youngest student was Amanda. She wasn't even two and a half yet, but she was very bright and had two younger siblings at home. The problem discussed in our meeting that day was our messy snack table. The students were forgetting to clean up after they'd had their snack (even though I'd shown them how to use the crumb tray and brush several times). We walked over to the snack table and looked at it together. There were crumbs on the table and floor. We talked about how we wanted our snack table to look and everyone agreed it should be left clean for the next person. I asked if anyone had any suggestions on how we could make the table tidier. Amanda raised her hand. She suggested we should get place mats for the table. Honestly, I was shocked but delighted. Here was my youngest student (not even two and a half!) showing that she had not only understood the problem, but could offer a very appropriate, practical solution. I asked the class if everyone thought they would like to try this and they all put up their hands. Amanda looked so proud of herself at that moment. We decided we'd make the placemats as an art activity and that I would laminate them. The following week when they were finished, we placed them next to the snack table. Needless to say, the problem was solved. Amanda even told a visitor to the classroom that she had thought of the idea to have placemats. Every year after that, I continued the tradition of making placemats for our snack table. This proved to me how early the ability to solve problems begins in children and that classroom meetings are therefore appropriate for every aged child.

### Home Alone

In my very first year of teaching, I encountered an unusual problem. One of the items in our weekly agenda was to ask if anyone had a "personal problem" that they wanted to share – this was not something related to our classroom, but something about their own life. I found they really enjoyed this opportunity and brought up many different things such as sadness about a pet dying or a grandparent being sick. They shared stories of fights with brothers and sisters and even difficult things like a parent being fired from a job. We recognized that these personal problems affected how they felt at school, and that sharing them increased the overall feeling of empathy in the class.

One week, a five-year-old boy named Daniel said that after school he was always alone. His 13-year-old sister who walked him home from school was supposed to babysit until their mother got home at 5:30, but she was dropping him off then going straight to her friend's house. Daniel was left alone for almost two hours every day. For some reason, he never told his parents about this --- but he did tell the class.

After the meeting, I talked to him about letting his mom and dad know what was going on. He was worried about getting his sister into trouble. I reminded him that at five, he was too young to stay home alone and his parents needed to know. He agreed, and I spoke to his mother that evening. She was extremely grateful for the information as she had absolutely no idea this had been happening. They followed up with their daughter and the problem was solved. Daniel reported at a follow-up meeting that his sister was staying home with him and he was really happy about that.

### Missing Labels

One year I had a mystery that I couldn't figure out. The laminated labels for my sets of classified cards were all missing. I figured someone had either taken them home or done something else with them, but I had no idea who it was. During the meeting under the topic of "Things that need to be improved," I showed them the pink baskets with the missing labels. As I was describing the problem, 4-year-old Mitchell grinned mischievously. I asked him in as neutral a voice as I could muster if he knew what happened to them. At first he didn't reply, but then he pointed to the heating vent along the wall of our classroom. He said the slots in the cover looked like a mailbox to him and he was pretending he was mailing them. I asked him to show us. There, at the bottom of the vent were all my labels gathering dust. For a moment I couldn't figure out how I would get them out, and to be honest, I was pretty angry with him for doing this. I explained we were going to have to figure out a way to get them out of there. The class looked at the vent carefully and we could see it was held in place by eight large screws. One of the students suggested we could use the screwdriver from the practical life shelf to unscrew them and then we'd be able to take the vent cover off. I assure you I am not making this up! I

*Continued on Page 17*

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## The Inclusive Classroom (continued from Page 16)

thought this was brilliant. Mitchell hung his head a little but agreed he would do that. He was given the screwdriver and everyone watched as he set to work. The screws were not easy to remove. In fact, it took him over an hour, but with the class involved he did not give up. When he was finished everyone stopped working and watched as we removed the vent cover and retrieved the labels. The look on his face when the job was done was priceless. He dusted them off and put them all back in their appropriate boxes on the shelf. Rarely does an opportunity for such a specific logical consequence present itself so perfectly.

### Ahmed

One year I had a boy who was having a particularly hard time making friends. He was an only child, very quiet and introverted, and English was his second language. To make matters worse, he hadn't started school in September when everyone was making friends in the class. About a month after he started, we noticed that during outdoor play time he would stand alone at the side of the playground and watch everyone play but he never joined in. Something needed to be done, so during our next classroom meeting, I brought up the problem. I reminded the class that Ahmed was the newest member of our class and I wanted to know if he had been able to

make new friends in the class yet. I looked at Ahmed and I could see that I had put him on the spot, but he shook his head no. I asked him if he would like to have someone to play with at recess and this time he shook his head yes. The next question was directed at the class. "Who would like to be Ahmed's friend at recess and make sure that he is included in their games?" My three most compassionate, empathetic students (every class has them) raised their hands. Ahmed looked pleased and when it was time to go outside later that morning, those students waited for him in the coatroom and went outside with him. From that day on he never stood alone on the sidelines. I was surprised actually, how easy it had been to help him out.

These and other problems proved to me, time and again, that by including students in seeking solutions we can teach them much more than just academics. We can help them see that they are an essential part of the classroom, and that they have a contribution to make. In my book, *Classrooms That Work*, I have many tips and ideas on how you can create an inclusive classroom by establishing a weekly classroom meeting. I hope you will give it a try in the New Year and I welcome all your comments and questions. I would love to hear your own stories of inclusion.



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## CAMT/CCMA 2017 CONFERENCE

### November 3/4 2017

**CAMT and CCMA are pleased to announce that the joint 2017 Conference will be held on Friday, November 3 and Saturday November 4 at the BMO Institute for Learning.**

**The BMO Institute for Learning is located at  
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I was shocked when I moved from Casa to the Elementary classroom. Nothing had quite prepared me for the reluctance of the children to work. Was it that they had not become normalized in Casa? Were my lessons boring? Had they lost the love of work? Did I have to order them to work? Answering “yes,” to any of the above questions did not provide an answer, but observing the second plane child did.

This is what Dr. Montessori had to say about this transition.

*“Later on the children themselves will tend to become careless in the exact performance of their movements. Their interest in developing the coordination of the muscles will begin to decline. The mind of the child will press on, he will no longer have the same love that he had before. His mind must move along a determined path which is dependent both on his own will and that of his teacher. Later on a sense of duty will make him persevere in doing through voluntary effort that which at a certain period he largely did through love, that is at a time when he had to create within himself new attitudes.”*

(Dr. Maria Montessori, 'The Discovery of the Child', Clio Press Ltd, 88)

The love of work had simply shifted. I remembered my elementary trainer, Mary Hayes, stating that the problem of Casa was how to direct the child’s movements toward productive work and the problem in elementary was directing the intellect towards productive work. The interest of the child can flit from one exciting idea to another without the child ever slowing down, pondering and embracing the idea fully. It is our task in elementary to fix that wandering intellect on something wonderful. It takes serious observation on the part of the guide to ensure that we are connecting that second-plane intellect with something that is truly feeding the child’s soul. The child is building his own mind and while he might delight in every new idea presented, he is also assessing his ability to research the idea in greater depth or complete the steps necessary to produce something of quality. The guide must show the child exactly what is required of him and at times insist on the work being started, continued and completed.

A guide who finds themselves in a position where they must insist on certain tasks being done is simply responding to the second-plane child’s reasoning mind. Elementary children are asking you, “How important is this work?” They are forming their values and judgment

based on your commitment to its completion. Some tasks are not negotiable and are usually done every day, such as putting work back where it belongs, cleaning the class, hanging coats or putting boots away. Other tasks might need a discussion with the child. In a private conversation, the guide can discover a great deal about the child’s interests, their difficulty in executing a task or understanding a concept. Children do really want to work; they want to be engaged in something interesting just as we adults do. Dr. Montessori was right when she said that there is no such thing as a lazy child.

The child is forming their moral character and private discussions are essential to show the child that you care about him or her and their contribution to the community. Emphasizing the importance of the child’s work must include the effect his work has on his friends and family. When a child works, he is not wandering and bothering others. When a child works he is engaged and happy with himself which adds to a nice atmosphere. He can share new knowledge with the class and when he works he is not wasting his parents hard-earned money. I always include the last point, as gratitude is the key to a good moral life and to happiness.

It is essential for the guide to love work too. The guide must love to clean the class, must love to read, to write, to meet with parents. The guide must love mathematics, poetry, spelling. Remind parents that it is much better to ask for help doing wonderful things like cooking, cleaning and laundry rather than sighing and complaining. With that, I will leave you with a thought from Nobel Laureate George Bernard Shaw

### **A Splendid Torch**

*This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.*

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can.*

*I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no “brief candle” for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.*

George Bernard Shaw

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## All Systems Go: Taking Montessori Classes Outdoors – by Jeff Mann

Central to the Montessori approach to education is that students learn both in and through their environment. This is why there is a strong focus in Montessori schools on preparing the spaces where students work. Montessori educators appreciate that preparation creates a place where safe and independent learning becomes possible. Students are free to move in their classroom while being physically and intellectually active. This environment promotes self-discipline and a consciousness of the needs of others.

There are commonly thought to be six aspects of the prepared environment: freedom, beauty, intellectual environment, social environment, structure and order, nature and reality. All Montessori classrooms are organized according to these principles, to a greater or lesser extent. Dr. Montessori understood the key role that the environment plays in student learning.

In many early schools where Dr. Montessori's ideas were accepted, outdoor environments were often included in daily learning. Students were free to work both indoors and outdoors. Dr. Montessori felt a strong connection to the Earth and recognized that this was also a natural inclination of young people. She felt, "there must be provision for the child to have contact with nature and appreciate the order, the harmony and the beauty of nature."

We all accept that the best way for students to learn is to be "hands on". This type of learning creates connections in the brain differently than other styles of study. Often tactile learning is more authentic and impactful to young people. Furthermore, students who are physical learners have a chance to shine when they can be engaged learning through experience. Of course, Dr. Montessori recognized these truths and developed materials to engage students' hands and minds. This is one of the reasons her materials are appreciated by so many young learners.

Today's students are living in a time when there is an ongoing concern about the human impact on the natural environment. It is critical that students learn, through hands on experience, of the complexity of the world. It can be tempting to approach environmental learning and issues in the classroom. Students can do amazing work studying flora, fauna and far flung places in books and online. They can write beautiful reports and make stunning posters and impassioned presentations. However, it is likely that they cannot identify the species of plants growing around the edges of the school parking lot or

the types of trees in the playground. The danger with over-reliance on the indoor approach is that students become well informed, but not impassioned. They may be aware, but not awake.

There are obvious and considerable challenges to adopting outdoor learning. More and more our focus on the prepared environment has been on indoor environments. Increasingly Montessori schools are in urban areas where it can seem difficult to access useable outdoor spaces. Indoor/outdoor classrooms can cause challenges for supervision and administration. The Canadian environment is not always conducive to taking students outdoors. Most importantly teachers may feel underprepared for, or uncomfortable taking their students outdoors. However, it is of the utmost importance that we do so.

All Montessori schools, whether urban or rural, have access to natural environments. In a city or town a small park or patch of grass/gardens could be what is available. Even curbs, empty lots and the verges and ravines of our cities are fascinating natural spaces. Though influenced and surrounded by human environments, these pockets show the diversity and tenacity of life. In rural areas, students may take their surroundings for granted, not really appreciating or understanding the complexity of their backyards.

A shift is required in the way Montessori teachers think about the outdoors. It is necessary to return to the idea that students should be able to learn, study and explore both indoors and outdoors. In order for this to happen, teachers who have become comfortable in their indoor prepared environments must shift their focus to the area around their school and think of how they can bring the key principles outdoors:

### **Freedom**

When working in any outdoor environment, students are free to move and explore in a way that is not possible indoors. This has a considerable benefit to the child, who gets physical exercise, increased strength and dexterity and a sense of being comfortable outdoors. As in the classroom, there should be a degree of freedom in the activities the students choose; though during outdoor learning time the focus is on learning, not free play. Montessori students quickly come to recognize and appreciate the difference between recess play time and time for learning outdoors.

*Continued on Page 20*

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## Taking Montessori Outdoors (continued from Page 19)

### Structure and Order

It is critical that students have a clear knowledge of what the expectations of them are, whichever prepared environment they are in. There should be a frank and open discussion with the class about what they are expected to do in order to stay safe, have fun and learn while outdoors. It is ideal for all parties that outdoor learning time happens regularly. In this way students know what to expect in their work day/week. Parents know when to send in the appropriate clothing and materials. Teachers can make a plan and feel prepared for the changes in the weather and seasons. After each outdoor experience there should be time to meet as a group to discuss learning and behaviour.

### Intellectual Environment

This is often the most daunting of the key principles for educators. We are comfortable in our classrooms with our neat shelves of materials and books. It is difficult to imagine what to do with a group of students outside! However, this is merely a hurdle to be cleared. Once the teacher's imagination is engaged, the possibilities are endless, in all areas of the curriculum. For example, each student can have a "tree buddy" in the school yard. They can maintain a special relationship with that tree for the whole year. If they do, chances are good that they will have a special relationship with that tree for their whole time at the school (even the rest of their lives). Students can learn to identify their tree species; do rubbings of leaves, needles and bark; write poems in each passing season; dress the tree with decorations at certain times; study how their particular tree reproduces (keys, nuts, fruit, cones, etc...) and sprout seeds from their tree; observe and describe the species they observe their tree interacting with; estimate the age of their tree; measure the height of their tree using simple trigonometry (don't worry, it's actually really easy); describe the geometry of their tree; estimate its volume; measure the area of the shade it casts; test the soil in which it grows and on and on. It is not difficult to imagine that a child who shares these kinds of experiences with one tree can make powerful inferences about the importance of respecting other trees and come to appreciate their inherent worth in their own right.

### Beauty

Of course, it is critical students learn to appreciate natural beauty. It is difficult to foster a deep appreciation of natural beauty through indoor study. Furthermore, it can at times seem difficult to appreciate the large-scale

beauty of nature in urban environments because they are so thoroughly human. However, we are very fortunate that nature is also incredibly complex and beautiful on a small scale. The greatest investment a teacher can make is a class set of medium-quality magnifying glasses. Magnifying glasses are a window into the geometric and creative magic of nature. In all seasons, students can explore all types of flora, fauna and minerals. Whether examining a flight feather, pine cone, pebble or snowflake students will appreciate the rare beauty of evolution other natural processes. Many teachers will immediately express concern that the magnifying glasses can be used to concentrate the light of the sun, creating heat. This is a potential safety concern, of course, but also an incredible learning opportunity. If students come to appreciate the beauty of the small world and one of them burns something, it is an opportunity for a powerful discussion and deep learning about how humans impact the environment. It can also lead to fascinating discussions about how powerful the sun is and ways humans can harness this energy.

### Social Environment

Just as in the indoor prepared environment, the outdoor prepared environment gives students opportunities to learn about empathy, teamwork and respect. In fact, students often learn these skills in deeper ways than they do indoors. There are many excellent resources available to help teachers facilitate activities outdoors that help students learn about communication, problem solving, goal setting and teamwork. These can be an outstanding complement to a "grace and courtesy" curriculum. Of course, by simply being together and working together outdoors, students forge bonds that foster respect, kindness and compassion.

The most basic question is, if it is evident that there is a need for frequent outdoor learning and that this type of learning is highly effective, why is it not happening more frequently? In the Montessori context, the indoor environment is too often seen as the only acceptable "prepared environment". However, on deeper examination, there is a strong historical context for daily outdoor learning in Montessori schools. Clearly, outdoor environments can easily be seen and appreciated as highly effective prepared environments in their own right. It is important, given the multitude of unique benefits of outdoor learning, that we return consistent outdoor learning time to Montessori schools.

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## Playing with Montessori – by Parinaz Nikfarjam

*“Although millions of words have been written about play, it remains essentially unlimited by definition.”*

(Cuffaro, 1995, p.78)

Play is a contested issue in early childhood education, both in its definition and its application. As such, several theories have been devoted to its study (Dewey, 1913, Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky 1978, Csikszentmihalyi, 1971-1975, Cuffaro, 1995). Here, I will focus on two seemingly opposed perspectives and demonstrate their similarities. The first theory is that of Maria Montessori, which devalues abstract play in favour of concrete classroom work. This rejection of play is however undermined by way of analyzing Vygotsky's conception of play. When looking at the Montessori philosophy through a Vygotskian lens, one may find common elements between Vygotsky's (1978) definitions of play and what Montessori (1972) refers to as work. In other words, despite Montessori's lack of endorsement for play in early childhood education, children's activities in Montessori classrooms strongly resemble what Vygotsky (1978) characterizes as play. Though the incorporations may seem quite different, elements of control, imagination, socialization, and dramatic play, all of which form the basis for Vygotskian play, are present in Montessori classrooms. These elements are evident in different aspects of the Montessori philosophy and environment. As such, Montessori's conception of work, when seen through a Vygotskian lens, is in acceptance of play.

### Playing with Control

Vygotsky (1978) regards control as an important facet of play and argues that, “a child's greatest self-control occurs in play” (p.99). He states that in play the child attains “maximum display of will power” as he denies himself an “immediate attraction in the game” (p.99). More importantly, he asserts that the child exercises such denial of immediate pleasure in order to achieve “maximum pleasure” (p.99).

The concept of the child's control of immediate impulses is apparent in the Montessori environment. Montessori materials are designed in a particular manner, and the manipulation of these materials requires precise procedures in order for the activity to be meaningful and successful (Montessori, 1972). In other words, if the materials are not manipulated exactly as they ought to be, the end result will not be adequate. For instance, the Solid Insets (Montessori, 1972), wooden bases with holes that hold cylinders with graduated dimensions, are designed to help the child develop, among other skills, his/her sense of dimension and precision (Montessori, 1972). In

order for all the cylinders to fit in their appropriate holes, the child must control his/her urges to aimlessly put any cylinder in any hole. Otherwise, at least one cylinder would be left over. This necessitates a great deal of control and concentration on behalf of the child when manipulating the material.

However, a child who incorporates control and concentration during this activity will experience the ultimate pleasure of successfully performing the task. Montessori (1972) claims that at the end of such successful work, not only is the child not tired, he is reenergized and motivated to attempt and accomplish other activities. This portion of Montessori's philosophy closely resembles Vygotsky's (1978) description of pleasure as derived from the child's exercise of control when playing.

The concept of control is however not limited to Montessori material. Montessori (1972) states that the classroom itself, specifically the manner in which the materials are made available to children, requires the child to use control throughout the day. Montessori (1972) emphasizes that by making one set of each material available to students, they learn to wait for their turn, share, and more importantly, control their impulses to take materials away from one another. The exercise of control however does not restrict the application of imagination, which for Vygotsky (1978) is an explicit requirement for play.

### Processing Imagination

Vygotsky (1978) holds imagination to be fundamental to play. He does not make imagination an attribute of play but rather equates it to the very term (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) reaches this conclusion by constructing a unique role for imagination. He first posits that one of the goals of play is the satisfaction of needs. He then acknowledges the unfeasibility of certain needs. It is in this realm that the “child enters an imaginary, illusory world in which the unrealizable desires can be realized” (p. 93). It is this activity that Vygotsky calls play (Vygotsky, 1978). Thus the ability of imagination, in allowing the child to realize the impossible, makes it a vital tool for a conception of play based on the transcendence of the possible. With Vygotsky's (1978) conception of imagination explicated, the comparison between Vygotsky's (1978) play and Montessori's (1972) work, is next best served by the elucidation of the latter's idea of imagination.

Not only does Montessori not dismiss the importance of imagination, she actually considers it to be a significant

## Playing with Montessori (continued from Page 21)

facet of a child's development (Montessori, 1994). In her book, *From Childhood to Adolescence*, she regards a person who "does not possess the world of imagination" as developmentally "poor" (p.21). However, she strongly warns against the misuse or misguidance of a child's imagination, which result from aimless play and fantasy (Montessori, 1994). She argues that, "a child with too much fantasy is a disturbed child" (p.21). Instead, she advocates that a child's imagination "requires precision", and should be based on facts, and that instead of fantasy, reality should be presented to the child (p. 21). Only then, does the child's mind base "itself on the imagination, which brings things to a higher level, that of abstraction" (p. 22). For this reason, she suggests that the child should perform goal-oriented and realistic activities using concrete materials that would instill in him/her a strong sense of accuracy and authenticity, and thereby, allow his/her imagination to flourish and grow upon factual frameworks. For instance, Montessori (1994) proposes that the child should be presented with real vegetables when learning about them instead of just having to listen to abstract descriptions, or look at pictures, of them

Therefore, Montessori's conception of work is a two-step process, arising from the acknowledgment and understanding of the concrete, and culminating in its manipulations, to derive the abstract. Thus she does not devalue imagination but merely makes it based on reality. Montessori does allow for imagination, and as such, the transcendence of reality, insofar as it is preceded by the understanding of the possible. In this way, Vygotsky's (1978) conception of imagination is similar to the second step of Montessori's two-step work process, in its allowance of abstraction. While it may seem that this exercise of imagination, and as such play, is an internal process, Vygotsky (1978) is adamant that play cannot be asocial.

### Locus of Development

Vygotsky (1978) argues that development and learning is only possible through social interactions. He suggests that only in a social context can a child benefit from what he refers to as 'the zone of proximal development' (1978). In this zone a child, through the help of another person, learns to perform a task that is slightly above his capabilities. He contends that "play creates a zone of proximal development of the child" (p.102), in which the child is "a head taller than himself" (p.102). By virtue of rules and assistance, the child acquires the knowledge essential for both accomplishing a given task as well as developing necessary skills (Vygotsky, 1978). Play condenses in a realm "all [the] developmental tenden-

cies" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 102) that more readily catalyze the development of the child, when compared to the child's other activities. This essentially characterizes Vygotsky's zone of proximal development: a social locus for development.

While Montessori emphasizes the importance of the development of the individual, she, too, believes that such development should take place within a social context. Accordingly, Montessori classrooms are multi-aged environments, in which children with a three-year age span work, sleep, and eat together, and share materials with one another (Montessori, 1972). Montessori (1972) argues that in such multi-aged groups children benefit from one another in all aspects of their development. The older, she claims, will enjoy the privilege of guiding the younger children; develop feelings of pride and self-confidence; as well as learn virtues such as patience, kindness, and empathy (Montessori, 1972). The younger, will look up to the older; learn from them; and feel more at ease as they go through their respective stages of development (Montessori, 1972). Such multi-aged group setting will provide the children the opportunity to experience Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. However, the children are not the only creators of and participants in this zone.

As part of the Montessori environment, the Montessori teacher is also trained to create such a zone of proximal development. The teachers must present the activities to the child and then let him/her attempt to perform the activity. If the child is capable of performing the task, the teacher does not interfere (Montessori, 1972). However, if at any point during the activity the child is not able to perform the task, the teacher is there to offer the needed help, and as soon as the child can continue on his/her own, the teacher ceases the assistance and lets the child work independently (Montessori, 1972). As such, the teacher creates a temporary zone of proximal development, centered on the goal of aiding the development of the child. Therefore, the social interactions and the performance of activities within Montessori classrooms facilitate the creation of a zone of proximal development, which for Vygotsky is a product of play. Having established the presence of the attributes of play, namely, imagination, socialization and control, it is crucial to explore the possibility of finding dramatic play in a Montessori environment.

### Playing with Rules

Vygotsky (1978) defines dramatic play or pretend play as



## Playing with Montessori (continued from Page 22)

a situation in which a child's meaning and actions are no longer one and the same. In other words, when the child takes part in dramatic play, his/her actions and meanings are separated, and meanings become dominant over actions (Vygotsky, 1978). For instance, dramatic play occurs when a child chooses to make an object, such as a chair, don on a new meaning or identity. The chair becomes a car; or the chalk becomes a wand. However, Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes that even in this stage, the relationship between meaning and action is not severed. In other words, children's pretend eating actions are "reminiscent of real eating" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 100). Vygotsky (1978) concludes that "internal and external action are inseparable: imagination, interpretation, and will are the internal processes carried by external action" (p.100). While initially actions were dominant, meaning begins its ascension through play. This notion of dramatic play seems at odds with Montessori's conception of work.

Indeed, children in Montessori environments do not participate in imaginary play situations in the exact manner that Vygotsky envisions. However, they do play different activities together that involve rules. These rules give the structure that characterizes Montessori's idea of work (Montessori, 1972). However, if one follows Vygotsky's definitions, these rules are not divorced from imaginary play. In fact, Vygotsky (1978) notes that, "every game with rules contains an imaginary situation in a concealed form" (p. 96). This claim is evident in the specific activities performed in Montessori classrooms.

For instance, when a small group of children manipulate the Brown Stair (Montessori, 1972), a set of ten three-dimensional square-based prisms with graduated heights, to construct different structures with meaning and purpose, they assume different roles. While one student apt in design hones his/her talents by assuming the architectural role, another able in construction assumes the role of the engineer. Even if these terms are not expressly used by the children, their exercise is nevertheless clear. By directing their efforts towards the goal of the activity, children follow rules and adopt new identities to better accomplish their task. Thus, as accounted for by Vygotsky (1978), the rules in Montessori activities allow for the fruition of imaginary play.

The above arguments by no means suggest that play is explicitly advocated in the Montessori philosophy. Neither does it imply that all aspects of play can be found in a Montessori environment. Rather, that the essential characteristics that frame Vygotsky's (1978) definition of play are embedded in Montessori's (1972) philosophy of

work. Vygotsky (1978) lists control, imagination, proximal development and dramatic play as essential elements of play in general. While Montessori (1972), does not semantically favour play, the Montessori classroom, its activities and materials, nevertheless exercise the key facets of play listed above. Control is encouraged in the performance of tasks; imagination made apparent in the abstractions of concrete objects; proximal development allowed by the interaction of children with one another and the teacher; and finally, dramatic play realized by virtue of rule-based activities. Thus, the similarity between Vygotsky's (1978) play and Montessori's (1972) work depict the very nature of the debate focused on the constitution of play. While the conceptions of Vygotsky (1978) and Montessori (1972) exclude one another when seen superficially, a common play permeates the two definitions. Indeed, both conceptions can complement one another by being open to this playfulness.

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## Cycles of Embodied Learning: The Botany of Hope – by Dr. Wendy Agnew

In Autumn, we celebrate the world of Botany with combination of independent and collaborative research. The project starts with a brainstorm about the world of plants that includes their collusion in the oxygen and evolution dance. Each class responds with its own signature of desires... Together, we compile a list of possible research topics. These can include, geography, mythology, medicinal properties, companion plants, history, uses, interdependencies, diagrams, recipes, etc. Thus primed, we take several trips to our local forest, thankfully in walking distance, to look for evidence of plant characteristics using comparative anatomy ... *We move many ways ... How do plants move? What are commonalities and differences? ...* We are blessed with a wild place where grapevines the size of wrists twine up gnarled witch-hazels and holes the size of fists are evidence of woodpecker restaurants; Where maple keys whirl, milkweed seeds float, and burrs are tenacious; Where huge, standing, elm skeletons provide refuge for smaller plants and lookouts for hawks and compost smells good, sprouting purple mushrooms, orange shelf fungus and wood ears.



Our Forest Mentor

Once home, with specimens collected (we make a pact not to pick anything by the roots or damage branches) we lay out our findings and explore the mathematical

details of cones, the translucent delicacy of wild cucumber seed pods, or the taste of spearmint. Senses stimulated, we discuss ... The Library.

The Public Library is becoming an endangered species but the children seem surprised and charmed to think that their predecessors worked diligently to provide an affordable mecca for readers. We discuss the history of libraries ... from the temple rooms of Sumer and the libraries of Alexandria and Timbuktu to scriptoria of the Middle Ages. In Britain, the Public Libraries Act of 1850 paved the way for the right to read. Something we tend to take for granted. The older students are tickled to hear that Francis Place, a campaigner for the working classes, thought that libraries would encourage people to spend less time at the bar.

When students return laden, from their local temple of books, we start sharing. This happens in a circle with a master of ceremonies keeping the plant plot moving. Research is reinforced through a student-invented game - Capture the Fact- a wrinkle on tag, involving running, questioning, and fact rescue. Collectively refreshed, we come inside and begin the process of researching and designing our projects. The focus is to make them come alive by any means. Presentation day sees an embarrassment of botanical riches from plays, to sculptures, to graphic stories, to carefully crafted games. Some projects are donated to become part of our Library of Botanical Research.



White Water Lily

– Research presented as a Dance/Drama

*Continued on Page 25*

## The Botany of Hope (continued from page 24)

The next week, the students collaborate on a Botany feast, usually meeting in pairs at each other's homes to prepare something relating to their chosen plant.



Detail from Botany Feast  
(Offerings have included green tea, caprese kabobs,  
herbed chicken, sugared violets ...)

Botany flows into zoology as we extend our program into a farm immersion, mentorship that begins in lower elementary and culminates in junior high. Present in the picture below left, are grasses such as Timothy, Brome, Alfalfa, Clover, and some volunteer but nutritious weeds like Dandelion and Mullein. Students' concepts of grasses expand into a visceral/ cognitive / historical appreciation of pasture, and hay-making as preparation for winter. Botany becomes both feed, and fuel for flight.



Feeding Time



Flying Time

Interconnection is a cornerstone of Montessori education. At the CAMT conference this year, I had the pleasure and pain of participating in The KAIROS Blanket Exercise <http://spiritoftheland.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Blanket-Exercise.pdf> presented by Dawn Penrose. It was a powerful and sobering experience to act in a potent ritual that embodies the shrinking of the wilderness and the decimation the first people by colonization. I reflected on the fact that all our attempts at reconnecting with the land and facilitating meaningful experiences for our students diminish without knowledge and understanding of the deep ecology practiced by First Nations people.

This, we attempt through an embodied engagement with the history of tribal life before Canada was 'claimed'. One aspect of the presentation is a research-based ritual developed by the children to welcome the spring. The presentation sites are created during a series of visits to our wild wood. The students make costumes, shelters, share languages, tools, stories, hopes and fears. The rituals they present are often transformative, touching and awakening a sacred and forgotten resonance.

For our winter concert, we decided to use a series of Cape Dorset Inuit prints as a reminder of the powerful synthesis of scientific, emotional, spiritual and practical connections to this place we call home ... a synthesis that whispers in the prehistory of human being.



A caribou tastes the air (bed-sheet mural)  
Inspired by *Signs of Summer* -  
Kananginak Pootoogook



## The Botany of Hope (continued from page 25)

These efforts are modest, but initiate a gestalt of surprises. Outcomes are never really known when true collaboration exists, because each individual impulse transforms in the compost of cooperation. The seed of an idea, nurtured by the prepared environment, sustains a botany of hope perhaps?



Collaborating



Trash to Tweet ...  
Rescued tree branch with winter birds  
(recycled materials)



## SELF-REGULATION | THE EARLY YEARS

### What is self-regulation?

The early years are a time of extraordinary growth and development. A baby's capacity for self-regulation—how she manages energy expenditure in response to stressors and then recovers from the effort—is wired during these critical years. Trajectories are set early and once set can be difficult to change later in life.

Anyone concerned with the healthy development of a young child needs to pay close attention to the child's self-regulation, helping her feel safe and secure, and calming her when she's startled.

Unfortunately, there are numerous interpretations of the term “self-regulation” in psychological literature. In particular, “self-regulation” is often confused with self-control. Self-control is not self-regulation. Behaviour modification techniques and programs designed to instill self-control in young children can have short term success. However, this approach might also lead to

additional longer term problems in mood, attention and behaviour.

Similarly, social emotional learning (SEL) programs in the education system designed to teach emotion-regulation, while promising, have not yet demonstrated robust long term outcomes. However, there is an intimate link between SEL and self-regulation; helping children develop effective self-regulation in the early years sets the underlying foundation for successful SEL over their whole lives.

At its core, self-regulation refers to the manner in which a child recovers from the expenditure of energy required to deal with stressors. Prolonged and excessive stress (allostatic overload) can significantly affect “higher” functions such as language, social cognition, executive functions and, indeed, self-control.

A child that is chronically hypo- or hyper-aroused as a result of excessive stress more readily goes into fight-or-flight, or freezes.

# SELF-REGULATION | THE EARLY YEARS

## Recognizing stress and stressors

Stressors come from five interconnected domains: biological, emotional, cognitive, social and pro-social. Heightened stress in any or, as is generally the case, several (if not all), of these domains leads to negative downstream consequences. Identifying and reducing stressors is the first step towards easing a child's stress levels and bringing her back to a calm and focused state, and ultimately improving her ability to self-regulate.

Stressors can vary significantly. What is a stressor for one child may not be for another; and even for the same child, what may be a stressor in one moment may not be in another when the child is in a different physical or emotional state. Some common stressors for children in the early years are:

- The child's biology—for example, her sensory/motor system
- Poor sleep regime
- Poor diet (high in processed foods)
- Lack of physical activity
- Stressors in the environment—for example, too much noise, light or crowding.

Clinical studies have demonstrated that it is indeed possible to enhance children's self-regulation, and that doing so results in meaningful improvements in any or all of the above five domains.

## 5 steps of self-regulation

There is no such thing as a “quick fix,” or one solution to help young children to self-regulate. Rather than thinking of self-regulation as a universal program, we need to reframe self-regulation as an educational process. There are five critical steps that parents and other caregivers can take to address these issues and help children return to calm.

1. Read the signs of stress and reframe the behaviour
2. Recognize the stressors
3. Reduce the stress
4. Reflect
5. Respond

These steps can also be applied to groups of children, or indeed, to the caregivers themselves, and will vary in execution across centres, classrooms, communities and families.

## Next steps

These are proven steps towards having a happier and healthier child. With the right kind of support, the results can happen fast.

Contact The MEHRIT Centre at [info@self-reg.ca](mailto:info@self-reg.ca) or visit [www.self-reg.ca](http://www.self-reg.ca) for further information.

*Stuart Shanker, Susan Hopkins, The MEHRIT Centre*



### Series on Self-Regulation: What You Need to Know June 2015

This resource was developed by the Society for Safe and Caring Schools & Communities, in partnership with Dr. Stuart Shanker and The MEHRIT Centre. It is freely available to use in support of creating welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments for children and youth. Download this resource and more at [www.safeandcaring.ca](http://www.safeandcaring.ca) and [www.self-reg.ca](http://www.self-reg.ca).

