



January/February 2010

Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Dear Parents

Greetings and welcome back to the SAMA community.

New parents are also welcomed to our first communication with this year. I trust that having made the choice to put your child in a Montessori school, you will very soon start to see the benefits of the method!

Our parent newsletter is a space where we offer Montessori parents interesting information and articles regarding their children's development and the Montessori philosophy. I am keen to write about, and find articles that will be useful for any needs that you may be experiencing, and so encourage you to please email me and queries or suggestions for content.

To start the year off, I would like to share some interesting facts that I researched on the effects of parent involvement on your child's education. I found overwhelming evidence that parent involvement relates positively to children's educational development. Maintaining the Montessori philosophy at home will be a huge benefit to your child.

Here are just three suggestions that may inspire you to try something differently this year.

- Encourage independence by allowing your child the time to complete tasks like cutting carrots for the salad, setting the table, brushing teeth, tying shoe laces etc.
- Create a routine that will help your child feel secure and understand what is expected of him or her – e.g. after dinner we bath and get into bed with a book for reading time.
- Montessori believed that every child has an innate love of learning. Find opportunities to broaden your child's general knowledge. Talk to your child about the interesting aspects of your work and encourage them to share their experiences of the day. These interactions go a long way in helping the child become aware of his place in the world.

Supporting your child's school and participating in various activities is another way of being involved. If you have the time, volunteer help in some way. You may help maintain a flower bed and involve some of the children in the activity if that is your strength. You may be able to give some time to read with the children. Perhaps you have a hobby or interest that could be shared with the children at a special celebration like art and craft for Valentine's Day, or even a cultural presentation like sharing with the children and bringing in artefacts from your experiences on a trip abroad.

Being present for parent meetings, parent conferences and school functions is also vital. Your input and contribution make you an active member of the school community and your child benefits from this. Being informed and involved will help you to be an effective parent and give you useful insights into the Montessori method and how you can support the school and ergo your child. Children go through a sensitive phase for socialisation during their preschool years.

You will probably notice your child speaking more of group games and activities. They also begin to show interest in a specific friend or group of friends. Encourage this by organising play dates with your child's peers. These could be structured times when a group of parents get together and agree that they will take turns to entertain the children for an afternoon a week. If there are for example 4 children in the group, each parent would organise activities like art, craft, baking or possibly outdoor games once a month. This opportunity to socialise with children, who are also coming from the Montessori environment, extends the opportunity to work on the skills given to them at school. Ask your child's directress for ideas on managing the group.

Good luck with trying to implement some of these ideas. I leave you, till next month with this food for thought, "Parental involvement in education seems to be a more important influence than poverty, school environment and the influence of peers." DfES; Every Child Matters (Green Paper).

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