



National Newsletter

January 2011

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Southern African Montessori Association

Message from the President:

Dear All

Welcome back to the new year! I would imagine that you are all settled into the routine of school already, and that our long summer holidays are but a fading pleasant memory! I wish you all of the best for the year ahead. May you grow your schools in numbers, and your hearts with Montessori wisdom.

One of the most frustrating challenges that we faced with is communication with the parents. How much information do they need? When is it too much? How much do they read anyway? In this electronic day and age, e-mail communications are the most effective and immediate. Has this impacted on our personal relationships with the parents? Have we perhaps forgotten the value of the personal touch and the importance of relationship building? There are some ideas in this newsletter that are aimed at giving some direction to communicating effectively.

The SAMA office has sent out reminders about the membership renewals – I hope that you have done yours! Schools members will have been informed about the developments with NASIA and Umalusi, which at this stage have reached a point where NAISA member organisations have been instructed to ask their schools to suspend their dealings with Umalusi until NAISA's concerns have been recognised. Hopefully this situation will be resolved soon. We will keep you updated with developments as they arise.

The Durban crew are on the ball with their conference preparations – you will see their first communication in this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you again. Conference time is always such a fruitful time. Not only are the lectures from the speakers informative, but simply networking with other Montessorians, and reaffirming what we do once again is so energising and uplifting. After the last conference, I was completely overwhelmed by the amount of people who wrote to tell me of the confidence they gained by speaking to other school owners, principals and teachers, and realising that they are not alone, and that the 'issues' they deal with are 'normal'! We look forward to welcoming you in Durban.

Next week, we will be part of the 'think-tank' weekend. Thank you to Lesley Heywood at Buccleuch Montessori School for the venue. Our facilitator for the weekend, Oran Cohen, is already preparing his strategies for the smooth running of the weekend, and I am encouraged by the response we have had. Please RSVP to Irmgard at the SAMA office if you would like to join us – the future of Montessori in South Africa depends on all the stakeholders being part of the process.

Until next month – have fun and ENJOY your work!

Heidi van Staden
SAMA President

How to value our Parents in our schools;
Involvement and communication.

2011 PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICAN SAMA CONFERENCE

For a first time ever proudly South African Conference!

April 28th and 29th

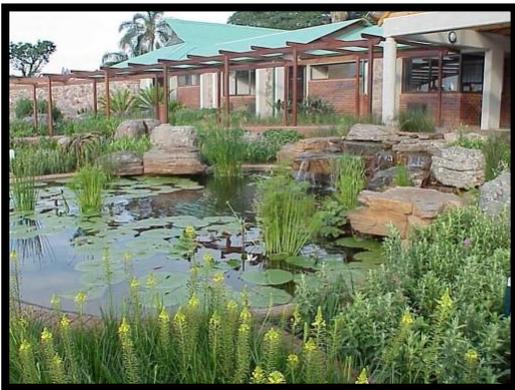


Set in the tranquil surrounds of the Durban Botanical Gardens, this year's annual conference promises to leave delegates enthused with our country's abundant opportunities for children to *'Learn and Grow through Play'*.

Join us as we explore the context of Play from a conventional and Montessori perspective, both in and out of the classroom.

Inspirational speakers from our own home shores will lead us in exploring the benefits of play for the child's holistic development, and the surrounds of the beautiful venue allow us to take you through the joys of permaculture gardening, worm farms, butterfly havens and nature walks.

This is also our first attempt at a 'greener' conference, so be prepared for a different refreshments experience!



Management training on April 30th covers a range of teacher/parent techniques from structuring referrals to various specialists, to planning and delivering the most efficient parent meetings, to helping families deal with traumas. All valuable, hands-on skills for immediate implementation in your schools.

Full conference packs will be circulated to members in early February.

Please note - only 250 places are available for the conference as these will be available on a 'first come first served' basis. So, do not tarry and remember - THE EARLY BIRD CATCHES THE WORM!



How to value our Parents in our schools;
Involvement and communication.

Communicating with Parents

One of the most challenging aspects of our work is keeping the parents informed of the school activities and their children's progress. To top that off, you are constantly being encouraged to *educate* them more about Montessori philosophy as well!

Here are some strategies that you may wish to include in your school, and which may help with keeping communitarian channels open.

Meet and Greet Days

Start each school term with a parent greeting time. Encourage parents to bring their children to school the first morning. This creates a happy atmosphere of welcoming and their enthusiasm rubs off on new parents and children who may feel unsure or even a little shy. Have assistant staff on standby to start collecting children together as the day needs to begin. Anticipate the very young ones who may have separation issues, and plan ahead for how you will deal with those children should a situation arise. Sometimes allowing a parent to stay a little longer is less traumatic for other children who are often uncomfortable with a crying child in close proximity.

For the older children, try some of these 'classroom-attractors':

(Adapted from:

<http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=3748288>)

- Placing sign-in sheets on each table with a cup of pens. Let parents fill in any updates on address, cell phone, emergency contact numbers etc with their child.
- Set out photo albums with pictures taken from the previous school term/year so that parents can see what their child's experience will be like.
- Placing a brain teasing puzzle on the table — parents LOVE trying to figure out a challenge that their own child will work on!

Parent Letters/ Newsletters

I have found that if parent letters have a similar format each time, parents tend to get in the habit of keeping up to date with the various aspects of school life. Headings which could regularly be addressed may include:

- Work being covered (where parents could help with books, pictures etc)
- Social events that need diarising (remind parents often of these!)
- Community service projects
- Fund-raisers
- Outings
- Staff input
- Interesting Montessori information (maybe have a short paragraph with the 'Montessori word of the week')

Reports

Decide on your schools policy on reporting and communicate this to the parents upfront in your parent handbook. For example:

Term 1 – verbal reports. Parents come in for a coffee shop to look through their children's work with them, and discuss progress with the teacher face to face. You may also encourage parents to come and observe their child working for part of a morning. New parents especially find this informative. (Note: wait for the children to be settled in, before allowing observers – usually towards the idle of February.)

Term 2 – written report. This report after the first semester is in writing, and includes checklists as well as a written general comment regarding progress in each area.

Term 3 – verbal report. Parents are scheduled for an interview with the teacher and come in after school hours for a 20 minute meeting to discuss progress. This is the meeting where you may discuss the child moving up to the next level (i.e. from preschool to primary).

Term 4 – written report. A full report, written communication on each area. (May also include checklists.)

How to value our Parents in our schools;
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An Open Door Policy

Try to keep an open door policy with your parents throughout the year. Open door does not mean that they can come in unannounced during school hours because it would disrupt the classroom. However, parents could have the freedom to contact the school and set up times to come in to volunteer or observe. Once parents get the feeling that they are welcome (within clearly defined limits), trust is established.

Difficult Communication

In difficult situations, LISTEN to parents and acknowledge their anger/frustration. Try not to become defensive, but rather show compassion and then work WITH the parent to resolve the issue. Ask questions like, “How would you like to see the situation resolved?” “Would you like to suggest a way that we can move forward now?” I have generally found that parents who are allowed to speak their mind while you CALMLY listen, do quieten down and want to resolve the issue.

I have also found it useful to say to an angry parent, “I can see that you are very upset about this, and I am taking your concern seriously. Can I go home and think about this? Let’s meet in the morning when we are both fresh, so that we can work this out together.” This works like a charm, and will give you time to reflect, and spiritually prepare yourself for the next day!

Heidi van Staden

Have parents make suggestions of what they would like to see more, particularly the ideas that have worked well. We need to create more of what works. Keep a record of this so that you can refer back to and repeat these successes.

Child parent social functions are good ways of building community.

Please send us your list of how you do this. Here’s a start:

Beach sand castle building in the early evening

Walks together in the green belts

Story telling evenings

Trike and bike events

Treasure hunts

Games days.

How to value our Parents in our schools;
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Using email and websites as a communicative tool.

Now with the use of email we can be in touch with our parents at a much quicker rate. I find a Monday email works well with ongoing information of not only events but issues as they arrive, for example parking details reminders of hats, please RSVP to meetings, etc, whatever it is that you need to keep your families informed about. Through the week I build a list of items as they arise so that compiling the email is almost done. Remember to keep it positive and supportive. Emails of course saves paper. For the few who do not have email, I print out the letter for them. This letter is also on the notice board for anyone who did not receive their email for some reason and for staff.

Another good way to use email is to send updated information about what is happening or happened in the classroom. You can also give good feedback on individual children by sending a photo with a short message. I think any parent would be in appreciation with this form of communication. Our SAMA parent newsletter gets emailed to every school parent as well. Use the Bcc when sending a group email so that you do not give out all email addresses to protect privacy and spamming.

One idea of using is email is that we will be sending each parent a Valentines message and photo from each of their children on Valentine's Day as a surprise love message. I am sure you all have more ideas to share, please send these to us on how you use email as a form of communication.

However, do not use email to address concerns with their child, which must be face to face. The tone of an email can very easily be misconstrued.

Websites or blogs are also a sound place to have communication with parents. They are able to log in with a password thus allowing school letters, accounts and articles that pertain just to parents, access. They can access forms, policies again cutting down on paper expenses and waste. You can recommend useful websites and online resources.

Western Cape Regional Meeting: 05 March Blue Moon Montessori Preschool Heathfield

“When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get **involved**, you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better.” (unknown)

How to value our Parents in our schools;
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Pick up the phone and share good news or one thing from a child's day with a working parent whom you do not get to often see.

Make notice board posters using the children's photos taken in the school with an inspirational quote. Change these regularly.

Think before you speak. Put it between positives. See the other point of view.

Have a short home visit with new children beginning of the year.

Create coffee morning/evening forums once a month to allow parents to share concerns and ideas with one another. Staff can take it in turns to attend these thus contributing from a Montessori philosophy perspective. We have had some very successful feedback from these and again it builds the community of the school.

Have a parent or two, depending on the size of your school, to act as parent liaisons. All they do is be available to new parents who then can then ask regards school procedures, protocols and policies. New parents need some nurturing themselves when bringing their children for the first time into schools, so to have a sympathetic ear can put them at ease.

Make sure all your policies are in place and available to parents

How to value our Parents in our schools;
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Have parents commit to 3 hours a year volunteer time. Parents can choose from a list of jobs pre-drawn up and then give of their time and expertise in that area. An example would be gardening tasks. Make sure you have a vision that is clear and a parent who oversees this. You could make a tree with the branches as your areas of work and the leaves are detachable as a task is done it can be taken off or filled in that that specific task is completed. For more information http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin437.shtml



Have a parent appreciation day.

Preschool Registrations

Here in the Western Cape we have much focus on the registration of our preschool and crèches and Patricia de Lille is on a very good mission to check that we are all compliant and registered. I was even fortunate to receive a visit from our local ward councillor who seemed a bit overwhelmed by the task he has had handed down to him.

As we know that when registering your preschool with the department of social development it is a requirement now to for each staff member to have police clearance certificate. The children are then protected from anyone who may be on the sex offender's role. Please contact your own department of social development for clarity. For those who are still to go through the process you need to make an appointment at your local police station. Take with you your I.D. and a copy and R60.00. This process takes up to 6 weeks before you receive your certificate. This is for all staff working on the school premises.

I am sure many of us could tell many stories of frustration in trying to get our new schools registered, not just with the department of social development but with town council, fire chiefs and health departments etc. It is great to see that there are stringent requirements in place, but the wheels of government departments are so slow!

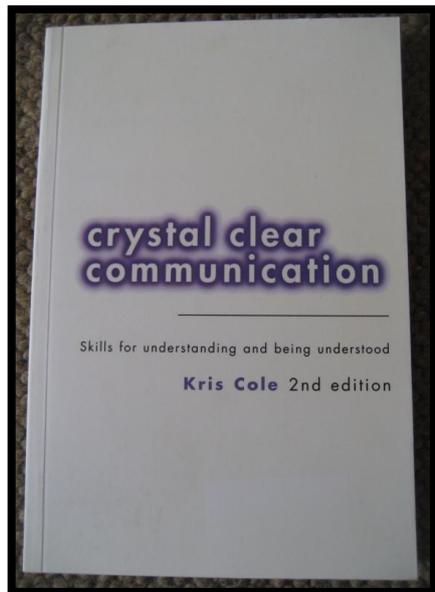
Jacky

"If you're not actively *involved* in getting what you want, you don't really want it.

Peter MacWilliams

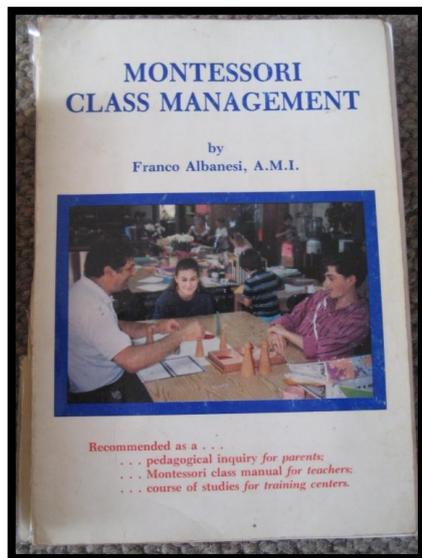
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Recommended Reading



Crystal Clear Communication
Kris Cole
ISBN: 978-0-724-80538-9

Full of inspirational ideas. Focus on speaking and listening, the effect of body language. There is also focus on communication via the written word. A good resource for staff development.



Montessori Classroom Management
Franco Albanesi
ISBN: 0-9628008-0-5

Written by a highly qualified Montessori teacher and trainer, Mr. Albanesi gives suggestions with regard to common classroom issues. He uses the 'more-rational' and 'less-rational' structure throughout the book. Practical and useful at all planes of development, although aimed more at 6-12 year plane.

Answers to December cross word

Across:

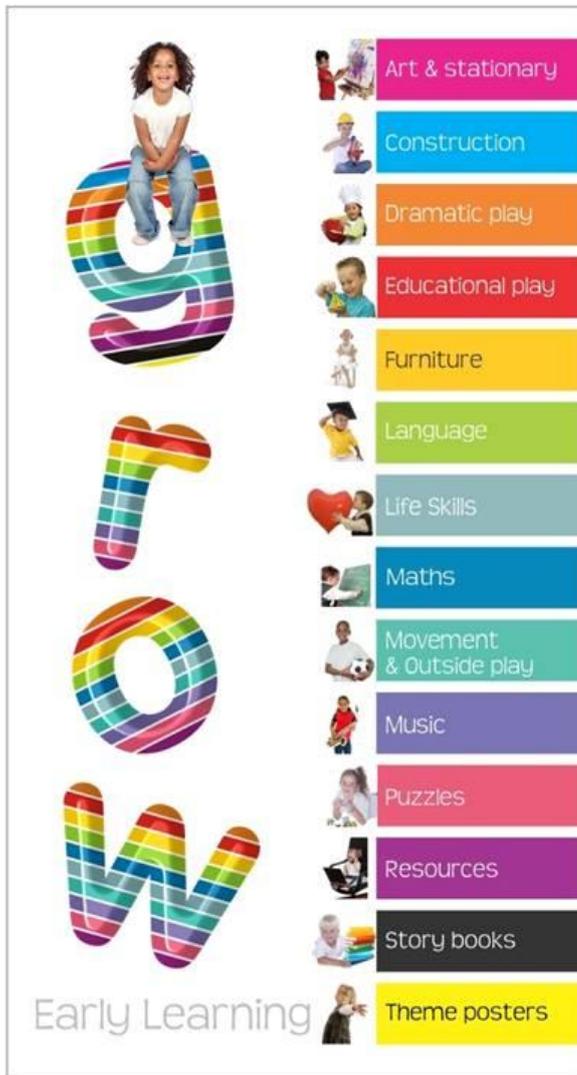
1. People you are related to (FAMILY)
3. Popular Drink (CHAMPAGNE)
6. Shredded Paper (CONFETTI)
7. December 31st (NEWYEARESEVE)
8. Touch Lips (KISS)
11. Time to Celebrate (MIDNIGHT)
12. A Noisemaker (HORN)
13. May Old _____ Be Forgot (ACQUAINTANCES)

Down:

2. Popular Resolution (b) (STOPSMOKING)
4. Popular Resolution (a) (LOSEWEIGHT)
5. Move to music (DANCE)
1. People you like (FRIENDS)
9. January 1st (NEWYEARS DAY)
10. Gathering of People (PARTY)

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Marketing



Early Learning

Grow learning company was established in 2005 and has done extensive work with and for the Education department. We have launched a new curriculum based catalogue that includes all essential learning resources for ages 1 – 10 years. Please come and spend a couple of hours with us to view all these resources. **We offer:** Over 2000 items built to last. Affordable and competitive prices. Diverse languages. New Concepts.

Where & when? Any time between 9am & 5pm on

02 Feb @ Bon Vie, 16 Bute Rd, off Windermere DBN

03 Feb @ Makaranga Garden Lodge, Kloof

04 Feb @ Cool winds Lodge & B&B, Hilton

Kindly contact Colleen on 082 652 8008 /
wilsoncm@iafrica.com

To RSVP & for directions or any further information.

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Email: info@puo.co.ca

Something Splendid

Supplier of Montessori card material
Elma Ray - Anderson
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Email: elma26.3@gmail.com

Vacancies

Knysna Montessori School requires the following staff from January 2011: 3-6 year Montessori Qualified Directress with experience, and a Senior Primary Teacher – SACE Registered to teach Afrikaans Additional Language, Natural Sciences and Technology with strong leadership qualities.

Interested candidates to e-mail CV's to tbeyleveld@gmail.com or fax to 0865923301.

Montessori in Umhlanga/Durban is looking for a dynamic Montessori Directress to join their team in 2011 – contact Nicky on 072 444 7277 or email CV's to nicky@topschools.co.za

The Cottage Montessori School Gauteng requires a Directress to teach in our 3-6 environment to start a.s.a.p please send your CV's to Janet at cottagemontessori@mweb.co.za or phone 086 672 1376

Blue Moon Montessori Preschool in Cape Town has an opening for a substitute 3-6 Directress for May to December 2011. Please send CV to bluemoonmontessori@telkomsa.net

Centurion Montessori school has a position available for a pre-school Directress in our 3-6 year environment. Please email:

school@centurionmontessor.co.za or call Tel: 012 653 4177

Musgrave Montessori in Berea, is looking for a qualified Directress or Student teacher for their very small 3-6 environment to join them on a part time basis. Please contact Chandra on Tel 031 208 0912 or email chandra1@telkomsa.net

If you would like to advertise in the SAMA Newsletter, please send the relevant information through to admin@samontessori.org.za

Focus for February issue: Focus on the Importance of Montessori Materials and ideas for making our own. Deadline for submissions: 20 February 2011

All articles are contributed by SAMA members. We would love to hear from our readers. Please send interesting snippets, valuable insights and amusing anecdotes to share with others and help make this newsletter an exciting and interesting one. If you feel you would like to contribute, please send to Irmgard via: admin@samontessori.org.za

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Available SAMA Products:

- **The SAMA Recommended Curriculum** – an integration of A Montessori Recommended Curriculum with the Revised National Curriculum Statement. For queries and to order, contact the SAMA office. The curriculum is printed and bound, and is available to paid up SAMA Institutional Members for R250.00 and to all other categories of membership for R1000.
- **SAMA Policies and Procedures CDs** – a comprehensive compilation of government laws, acts, and policies on CD 1 and examples from various Montessori schools and resources to use in school management on CD 2, at R50.00 each. These prices are for school members only. All other categories of membership may purchase the CDs for R500 per set.
- **SAMA Parents Handbook** – a full colour, beautiful publication, useful to parents as an introduction to Montessori Education. This booklet covers basic Montessori philosophy and is the ideal starting point for parent education. These handbooks are available to SAMA School Members only at R25 per copy. For orders of 30 or more, additional postage will be added.

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