



# National Newsletter

## January/February 2010

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**NEWSFLASH – Remember that the SAMA Membership year has been changed to run from Jan to Dec which means your renewals are due now. Please remember to renew before 1<sup>st</sup> March to avoid have to re-register, and in order to qualify for member rates at the conference, your 2010 membership must be renewed and up to date.**

## Southern African Montessori Association

### Message from the President:

Dear Fellow Montessorians

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2010. I sincerely hope that you all have the most awesome year, and that the children in your care bring you as much joy as you will give them.

The SAMA conference information has been emailed to the schools, and already there has been a very positive response. More details will follow after the January Exco meeting, which will be held at the venue in the Magaliesburg, North-East of Johannesburg so that we can plan further in the Montessori way (with the concrete experience)! For now, just a reminder about the dates so that you can book them on your calendar: 24-25 April are the conference days and 26-27 April are the management training days. Our keynote speakers Larry and Pat Schaefer are looking forward to their African trip.

The theme of this newsletter is 'Suggestions for Parent Talks and Parent Involvement'. Being a parent is not easy feat, and although we are often challenged by the parents who are the clients in our schools, we do need to remember that they often face many of the same challenges we do, and always just want the best for their child. Consider the cartoon below, and think about how you would advise parents in the following situation.



How, for example could you encourage the parent who has put up the 'child of the month' sign to do things in a more Montessori way? Perhaps you could workshop similar situations within your school at staff meetings. How could you take this advice to your parents? Refreshing the Montessori philosophy with practical examples from everyday life may be a good way to start the year!

As Maria Montessori said, 'We must have faith that the child will reveal himself through his work.' We, as the Montessori adults, should motivate our parents to develop this same faith – because the children *do* all 'come out in the wash'. Having worked with Montessori children from the age of two, and having observed them go all the way through their school years, I can honestly say that they *do* reveal their true characters. Strong, empathetic and socially adept young people that are a credit to Montessori wherever they go.

Heidi van Staden

**South African Montessori Association Trust**  
**Invites You to be part of our 8<sup>th</sup> National Conference**  
**24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010**  
**Management Training**  
**26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> April 2010**  
**at the Cradle of Humankind**  
**(Ekudeni Resorts, Beyers Naude Drive)**

**Our focus for the conference:**

***Ses'fikile***

*We have arrived*

It has become a SAMA tradition to invite keynote speakers from the global Montessori community to inspire us in our work and for us to balance out the conference by drawing from the wealth of local experts in the field to enhance our skills and knowledge. This year is no exception. To whet your appetites for the 2010 conference, we present to you some background information on our keynote speakers: Larry and Pat Schaefer.



It is an absolute honour and privilege that Larry and Pat have agreed to speak at our conference. They are both internationally recognized speakers on Montessori education and have founded three successful Montessori schools. With their experience as teaching principals of these schools, Pat and Larry have more than 25 years experience in educational administration. Their combined teaching experience spans 70 years and covers all ages, from Children's House through college.

Larry received an AMI diploma from Bergamo, Italy, studying under Eleanora Honneger and Camillo Grazzini; he holds a M.A. and Ph.D. in History from Fordham University and a M.A. in Education from Fairfield University. Pat holds an AMI/AMS primary diploma, having studied under Elizabeth Stephenson, and an AMI elementary diploma from Bergamo, where she was trained by Eleanora Honneger and Camillo Grazzini. Pat also received a M.A. in History from Fordham University.

In 1964, Larry and Pat founded The Montessori School, now in Wilton, Connecticut, for their four children. In 1976, they founded Lake Country School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and in 1982, Larry created a Montessori adolescent program at Lake Country, a program that continues to serve as a model for other urban adolescent programs. Larry created the blueprint to obtain a grant from the Gates Foundation, establishing Great River School, a charter junior and senior high school founded in St. Paul, Minnesota in 2004.

Although now retired, Pat and Larry remain committed to Montessori's vision of education for peace, social justice, and the realization of human potential. This work and their 7 beloved grandchildren continue to inspire and motivate them.

The focus of the keynote addresses will be Montessori's Great Lessons hence choosing the venue of the Cradle of Humankind. This promises to be yet another inspirational SAMA conference.

**Look out for your booking pack – to be sent out during the first week in February. In the meantime, reserve the dates and start making your travel plans...Details on other speakers, transport, accommodation and management training will follow soon.**

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENT TALKS AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT

**Exhibitors:**

As it has become customary, the conference will also host a “one-stop-school-stock” shopping experience. Exhibitors supplying both specific Montessori materials and other educational accessories will be on display for the two days of the conference. If you or anyone you know of anyone who would like to exhibit at the conference, please let us know at [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)

Kind Regards from  
The National Executive Committee

**Please note that the conference fees include refreshments and meals – it is part of a fully inclusive package offered by the conference venue.**

	<b>Early Bird Specials Registration from 15<sup>th</sup> February 2010 to 12th March 2010</b>	<b>Late Registration – from 13<sup>th</sup> March to 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010 (closing date for all bookings)</b>
CONFERENCE: 2 DAYS SAMA Full Members	R800 – includes tea/coffee and lunch on both days.	R1000
SAMA Student Members (Proof of registration for 2010 with a SAMA Training Centre member is required to qualify for the reduced student rate)	R600	R800
Non Members	R1 600	R1 800
1 DAY ONLY – SAMA Member	R400	R500
1 DAY ONLY – Non Member	R800	R900
MANAGEMENT TRAINING: 2 DAYS (different topics/speakers on each day)		
SAMA Member	R300 per day	R400 per day
Non Member	R600 per day	R800 per day

**There is nothing sure in life except change...**

**And SAMA Administration is no exception (from Heidi van Staden)**

Following the unexpected resignation of Deirdre Gower, we have had to make some changes to the administrative side of things at SAMA. We ask members to please be patient while we get things in order. Between myself and Sam Streak (SAMA trustee based in PE where the office is), we have tried our best to keep on top of things – while running schools, training centres etc...No mean feat we can assure you, particularly at the start of a new school year!

Fortunately we have appointed a new administrator who starts work on 1<sup>st</sup> February. IRMGARD PRINGLE is a mom of two children and has experience working in an office environment. Irmgard will need some time to find her feet but she seems up to the challenge. We welcome her and trust members will extend their kindness and patience to Irmgard as she gets to know all of you and SAMA.

I would like to thank Sam Streak for stepping in during this time and helping out with administrative issues and also with putting the newsletter together this month. In the midst of school opening and the SAMA office to man, it is really appreciated that she assisted me in this way.

All of the other details of the office remain the same (on the last page of the newsletter).

## How to Encourage Parental Involvement in the Classroom by Cathryn Whitehead

[http://www.ehow.com/how\\_4523291\\_encourage-parental-involvement-classroom.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_4523291_encourage-parental-involvement-classroom.html)

Students do better in school when their parents are involved in their education. The younger children are when parents become active in their learning process, the more they excel. Most parents want to do whatever they can to help their children excel. But many parents are so busy with work and other obligations that they don't have much time, and others don't feel qualified. There are ways teachers, schools and organizations can encourage parental involvement in the classroom.

### Instructions

#### How to Encourage Parental Involvement in the Classroom

Step 1: Send home notes with forms to be returned encouraging parents to sign up for parent/teacher conferences, meet the teacher night and open houses. If parents have a scheduled meeting with a date and time, they're more likely to attend.

Step 2: Hold activities such as book sales, school stores, career days, Santa's secret shops and volunteer tutoring during both daytime and evening hours so working parents have the opportunity to volunteer. Not all parents can get a day off work to volunteer at their children's school, but they can volunteer if they can go before or after their work hours.

Step 3: Begin a program with incentives for children who regularly read to their parents and are read to by their parents. The Book-It program that offered children a free personal pan pizza from Pizza Hut for fulfilling reading requirements was very popular. Contact local businesses to begin others.

Step 4: Invite parents to help with field trips, school programs, school activities and holiday parties. Invite them to join and be active in parent/teacher organizations.

Step 5: Hold workshops to show parents how to encourage their children, help them build good study habits, provide them with a space and time to do homework, and help them with schoolwork. Send home printouts with instructions to parents who are unable to attend.

Step 6: Assure parents that their involvement is important and welcome no matter what their income level is and how much education they have.

Step 7: Ask parents of children in upper grades to monitor homework, attend school activities and help their children choose classes that will help them in college and in future careers. Go to their sporting events, concerts, plays, art shows, parent teacher conferences and other scheduled meetings.

Step 8: Avoid overwhelming parents by asking them to attend too many activities. Let them know their participation is welcome, but they won't be criticized if they have to miss some events.

*Mothers, fathers, politicians: all must combine in their respect and help for this delicate work of formation, which the child carries on in the depth of a profound psychological mystery, under the tutelage of an inner guide.*

*-Dr Maria Montessori-*

## Parent Involvement in the Classroom: A Win-Win Situation

[www.associatedcontent.com/.../parent\\_involvement\\_in\\_the\\_classroom.html](http://www.associatedcontent.com/.../parent_involvement_in_the_classroom.html)

Submitted by Heidi van Staden

### Parent Involvement

Educating children is a shared responsibility between parents and teachers. When parents participate in their child's school experience, everyone wins. Teachers can gain valuable resources when parents are involved in the classroom. Parents can enrich the classroom curriculum by their different cultures, their careers, music, sports, and other experiences in various areas. Teachers can always use an extra set of hands and adult role.

Parents can observe their children playing and working with other children, and they can see their child develop new skills, and get a better understanding of the appropriate levels of their child's development. Parents can get ideas for games and activities to do at home, network with other parents, develop skills through workshops and trainings; and feel good about their own abilities as parents. Parents can feel more comfortable with their interactions with the teacher.

Children feel "special" when their parents take part in their classroom experience. They want to share their friends with the parents, and their parents with their friends. They see their parents in a different role. Children want to show off their classroom and the newly acquired skills.

Not all parents can take the time to be directly involved in their child's educational experiences. Some parents are involved indirectly by communication.

Communication between home and school is essential for the child's development. Parents want to be involved in the child's educational experience. Some ideas to keep that communication flowing are:

Have a communication board set up in a corner of the room where parents can see it, with important information posted just for the parents. You can post class activities, special events, classroom newsletter, and other pertinent information. You can also post what the children will be working on, and have some activities or ideas available for the parents, so they can work with their child at home.

Have a "Communication Notebook," available where parents can write messages or leave notes.

*Adults manifest contempt for children which they fail to realize. Though a parent may believe his child is beautiful and perfect, a secret urge makes him act as though his child is in need of filling and correction.*

*-Dr Maria Montessori-*



Antoinette van Winkel of Timlin Montessori School, Grahamstown, recently received the following award on 18 November 2009:

**Absa/Sowetan ECD Provincial Awards  
3rd position  
Category BEST ECD PRACTITIONER**

The ECD Best Practitioner category had 3 nominations:  
Transkei in 1st, East London 2nd and Grahamstown in 3rd.

The criteria for the award are detailed in the following extract from the ABSA Media Release:

Extract from: ABSA Media Release [27 October 2009]

Helping give children an early boost in life

A child's formative years shape the rest of his or her life, which is why Absa conceptualised and initiated the annual Absa/Sowetan Early Childhood Development (ECD) Awards in 2003. The awards are aimed at developing, recognising and rewarding organisations and practitioners in this crucial sector. Nominations for the 2009 ABSA/Sowetan ECD Awards closed on 30 September 2009, and the adjudication process is underway. Judges are expected to visit the various projects to witness first-hand the work individuals and organisations are doing to further ECD – the foundation phase that inevitably impacts the country's schooling system and ultimately literacy, numeracy and academic performance. During the course of November, finalists in each category will be shortlisted in the various provinces. They will attend workshops and interviews in Gauteng during the build-up to the national awards ceremony on 3 December 2009.

The categories are:

- Best ECD practitioner
- Best home-based care centre
- Best community-based care centre
- Best resources and training centre
- Best innovative project in ECD
- Best ECD publication (national award only)

The awards were born out of a need to raise awareness of the need for pre-school education for thousands of South African children living in poverty and deprivation.

According to a 2008 Statistics South Africa report, 84% of South African children below the age of four do not have access to formal ECD education, relying mainly on primary caregivers such as parents for stimulation and development. However, ECD is widely regarded as the most important of all education phases, as children's brains are growing rapidly, their language ability is evolving and it is at this stage that they need to be properly equipped to make the most of future schooling.

According to Mhloti Mathye, the General Manager for Corporate Social Investment Manager at Absa, the awards are part of a programme aimed at the training of ECD practitioners, enhancing organisational capacity and encouraging excellence in this sector. "Mobilising and enhancing partnerships to achieve measurable change is an important goal of this programme," she added.

Other partners in this initiative are the Sowetan, South African Congress of Early Childhood Development, Department of Education, Department of Social Development, SABC Education and the United Nations Children's Fund.

The organisations and practitioners who come out tops in the various categories win prizes that enable them to carry out minor renovations, engage in further training and purchase educational equipment and toys.

## Parent Helper Bags

Mymontessorijourney.typepad.com

Montessori classrooms, by nature, do not always lend themselves to parent volunteers in the same way that traditional classrooms do. Since the children in Montessori classrooms are largely self-directed and are often doing their work either individually or in small groups, there is not as much need for an "extra pair of hands" as there would be in a traditional educational setting where many activities and projects are completed with the "whole group." As a result, I fear that Montessori parents may feel left out or disconnected from their child's classroom activities. I feel that as a teacher, it is important for me to provide ways for parents to be involved as much as possible.

As one way to accomplish this goal, I came up with the idea of Parent Helper Bags. There are many things that need to be prepared ahead of time in order for Montessori classrooms to run smoothly. And of course, all that preparation takes lots of time. Even though much of the prep work is simple by nature, it can also be time-consuming. Therefore, to begin the school year, I have made up several Ziploc bags with materials inside that parents can take home, prepare, and bring back to me. This will serve a two-fold purpose: it will allow the parents to help out in a meaningful way AND it will reduce the amount of daily prep that I have to do which will allow me to spend more time planning new lessons and activities, documenting children's progress, and writing about it all on the blog. :0)

Following are some photos and descriptions of the things I have put into the bags.



This bag contains a spool of Rex-lace (plastic lanyard cord; purchased through Discount School Supply), a little baggie of white pony beads, and a sample string cut to about arms-length with a bead tied on the end.

The purpose for this project is to get the cords ready for me to put out with the seasonal [necklace work](#).



This bag contains pipe cleaners which are to be cut into thirds and coiled around a pencil. The little coils will also be used for seasonal necklace work.



And this bag contains a stack of construction paper (cut into 6X6 inch squares), a stencil, and a Sharpie pen. The parent will trace one shape on each paper, and the shapes will be used on the Art Shelf for pin-punching work. I will vary the shapes by season.

I made up 4 bags for each of the above activities. I typed up directions labels and ran them through the printer.

I have to add here that I have THE most awesome group of parents ever (no offense to anyone). My parent night was last night and it went very well. It was well attended and the parents sat and listened to me blather on about one of my favourite topics, Montessori education, for about 40 minutes and seemed to enjoy it!! I put out my Parent Helper bags and EVERY SINGLE ONE was taken home. People were even "fighting" over the bags (not in a hurtful way, however!). Also, I think there are only 2 leaves left on my Giving Tree.

## The Giving Tree

I have really cut down the supply list that the students in my Montessori classroom are required to bring for school. In fact, the only things they are bringing are one two-pocket folder and a gallon sized Ziploc bag with a change of clothes. Each child will have their own little cubby in the room. In the past, they have all brought a pencil box, pair of scissors, pencil, and crayons to keep in their cubbies. However, I am planning to have all these supplies available on the art shelf, so they can just go to one place and grab what they need instead of getting in and out the cubbies all the time. To me, that arrangement just makes sense.

Some parents have already inquired about the shorter supply list and have asked what else they could do for the classroom. So.....in my entry area, I have set up a Giving Tree on the bulletin board. I purchased the tree (and the leaves) as a set at a teacher's supply store. I laminated the leaves so I could write on them with a dry-erase marker. On each leaf I have written the name of an item that could be donated to the classroom. Things I have on the leaves so far include: bottle of hand sanitizer, box of wet wipes, box of large Ziploc bags, cotton balls, watercolour paints, etc. If a parent wishes to donate an item, they remove the leaf, purchase the item, then return the item and leaf to a green plastic bin placed near the tree.



Here you can see the tree with the explanation sign (top right) and the tub below. As the leaves come down, I plan to hang some of the children's seasonal artwork on the tree (along with blank leaves) such as apple prints in September, watercolour leaves in October, etc. I don't like to change out bulletin boards, so the blue gingham fabric will stay up all year. I will just change the borders to match the season.

*What advice can we give to mothers? Their children need to work at an interesting occupation: they should not be helped unnecessarily, nor interrupted, once they have begun to do something intelligent. (Dr Montessori)*

## [Montessori Community - Promoting Parent Involvement](http://www.montessoriblogspot.com)

[www.montessoriblogspot.com](http://www.montessoriblogspot.com)

Developing and building a strong sense of community within your Montessori school is essential to the success of the school. This can be accomplished by having school events that include teachers, students and parents. For every Montessori teacher there are 20-40 parents. In my classroom alone, I have over 60 parents! As over 55% of families found out about their current Montessori school from a friend, happy and knowledgeable parents not only keep their children in the school, but become advocates for future families.

Here are some ideas of school activities and events:

**Morning Gathering** – Gather the entire school community every Friday morning to pledge to the earth and sing songs of peace. It can also have the occasional student performances.

**Talent Show** – This provides the opportunity to engage many families across cultures.

**Thanksgiving Feast** – With the help of parents, each class prepares a dish. During the feast, the whole audience sings songs of Thanksgiving. Individual classrooms can perform skits, songs, or dances.

**Class Quilts** – Each year, each classroom picks a theme and creates a quilt around this idea. Parents help sew the quilt.

**Annual Science Fair** – Invite scientists from the area to talk to students about being a scientist. Hold a science fair where classrooms choose experiments to present. Parents can help with the planning as well as teaching and helping with the experiments. Older students can choose to do individual projects.

**Annual Art Show** – at the end of the year, each student chooses 2 of his/her best work to put on display. Children act as docents and refreshments are served.

**Literacy Night** – Parents and teachers take turn reading stories to various age groups. There are then thematic projects related to the literature. Everyone, including adults, wears pyjamas.

**Math Night** – Children, parents, and teachers gather to play math-related games.

**Movie Night** – Dress in your pyjamas and eat popcorn while watching family movies.

**School Potluck** – The entire school comes together and families are encouraged to bring dishes native to their culture. Children perform cultural dances and songs.

**Carnival** – Parents run a carnival with carnival activities. The community is involved by police and fire departments having demonstrations.

Involving parents in your Montessori school encourages a stronger sense of community, and is an excellent way of educating parents, as well as fostering a sense of well-being.

**Electronic Communication with Parents**  
**Submitted by Sam Streak, Port Elizabeth Montessori School**

As part of a recent Montessori ListServ discussion, someone posed a question regarding using email as a means of communication with parents, and asked fellow Montessorians about policies in this regard. This really got me thinking as I have been finding more and more parents raising “issues” quite easily through emails but not wanting to actively participate in face to face discussions. I have included some of the answers that came up in the on-line discussion as well as the start of our own school’s policy in this regard. You are welcome to use it/adapt it in any way that suits your situation. But I do strongly encourage you to address this within your school. Other aspects of communication and the use of technology accessible by parents, staff and students are the use of Facebook, Twitter etc. We need to be careful how we use these incredible tools in the world...

Dear Listers,

I am interested in your school's policy for use of email between teachers and parents.

Anne Nephew

Interesting that this very issue came up at our staff meeting today! We have an unofficial policy that we only send factual information via e-mail. Misunderstandings happen very easily with e-mail, as we all know from this list! So, we do send reminders of upcoming events, days off, how to check for weather closures, things like that. If a parent sends an e-mail with issues that need to be addressed in a conference we reply with a kind, understanding note requesting an in-person or phone conference. I just recently had such an e-mail exchange – parent sent a long, detailed e-mail of many issues. I replied that I understood her concern and would be happy to discuss all the issues and gave the days and times I was available. I quickly followed up at drop-off time that I was looking forward to hearing from her about a time that would work. We have gone to e-mailing our newsletter and billing this year. If a parent requests paper instead we do it. We make it very clear to parents at intake that if they give us an e-mail address we assume they want communications that way and will expect responses. Paper and postage savings are considerable. You can also send messages that send a confirmation when the e-mail is opened.

Good luck! It can be a sticky issue.

Betsy Martin

Yakima, WA USA

We have the policy that restricts teachers from providing/requesting email/phone numbers from parents without authorization from Director. Teachers have a form that they will submit to us for any messages/reminders/photos/other information that they want to share with parents which will be sent via official email address. Same way parents can email to the same email addressing to any teachers that will be communicated by the admin to the respective teachers immediately. We also have a password protected portal where parents and teachers can share information. Both our parents and teachers are very happy with this arrangement.

Thanks,

Athirai Baskaran, Director

Children’s Garden Montessori Academy

8565 Gratitude Tr, Plano TX 75024

Newsletters, reminders and general school notices will be emailed to parents wherever possible OR provided in hardcopy if email is not available. Parents should provide the school with an email address that is accessed at least twice a week and keep the school updated with any changes.

We would ideally like to move to paperless communication so please provide us with an email address where possible. The School undertakes to use email ONLY for general communication about school related matters. We will not forward emails, nor will the email addresses of parents be sold or distributed in any way to a third party, including other parents.

Parents may email questions, concerns and general queries through to the school about their child/children. However, responses from the teachers regarding progress and detailed feedback will not be done via email. Face to face meetings will be arranged to discuss any specific matters/concerns related to a child.

Reports and assessments will not be emailed to parents and will only be provided in hardcopy. This is a recommendation of the Department of Education as all reports must be signed by the principal and teacher. There have also been numerous cases of reports being altered by parents who have received them electronically (not in our school!).

A bulk SMS service will be used on a trial basis in 2010 and will be used for simple reminders for things like parents meetings, school opening/closing dates and times etc.

Parents are requested to provide us with the cell phone numbers they would like us to use for the bulk SMS service (i.e. both parents, one parent, step-parents etc).

### **Another Idea for Parent Involvement in the School**

I am not 100% yet about the practicalities of this idea but I thought I would share it with you anyway. At the time of looking at budgets for this year (and considering fee increases), the recession in 2009 was starting to hit quite hard in much of our school community. Many parents own their own businesses and many others are employed by the numerous car manufacturers in the Port Elizabeth / Uitenhage area – an industry hit very hard by the global credit crunch. I spent a lot of time surfing the internet looking for ways and ideas to cut costs in the school and found many smaller ideas that ended up being consolidated into one...

Some of the biggest expenses in a school, after bonds and salaries, are the things we don't always consider like maintenance, keeping our gardens attractive, repairing damaged furniture or simply restoring it, fixing equipment and even if we do consider these things, we don't have time to do them ourselves. In our school we put forward to the parents a proposal that, in lieu of an increase in fees, we would offer them the opportunity to do two hours per parent community service in the school, doing the things that cost money but don't necessarily need 'specialists' to do. They have given us a list of their strengths/gifts which can also include things like sharing a talent or a skill with the staff, parent body or students. An example of this is that one of the parents gave an incredible lecture to some of our staff on Stereotyping and Prejudice. If the parents choose not to do community service, they are able to pay a levy of R300 instead. At this stage two out of about 150 parents have chosen to pay the levy. The rest responded overwhelmingly to being able to make a contribution to our school community. The logistics are big but I think the greater, long term sense of community will be well worth the effort. If you have tried something similar in your school, please feel free to send me any tips and advice to [sam@pemontessori.co.za](mailto:sam@pemontessori.co.za)

## Member's Page

From: Antoinette van Winkel: "This article was written without my knowledge and the details regarding the SAMA should have been Knysna School as the link established for the Char Char."

Article as it appeared in Rhodos, the Rhodes University Community Newspaper: <http://www.ru.ac.za/static/rhodos/rhodos20090303.pdf>

### Char Char Trust gives back to children

By Bronwyn Jacobs

Life has a strange way of throwing curve balls at us, often forcing us to deal with experiences when we least expect it. How we use these life lessons, determines the way our lives play out. The choice is ours.

Mr Kelvin Parker, a married father of one came to experience this adversity early in his marriage when his wife Veronica and 10-year-old daughter Charlotte were killed by stampeding elephants two years ago in Zimbabwe. It was after his tragic loss that he chose to use his life, time and efforts fundraising for children from disadvantaged communities. Mr Parker started the Char Char Trust in honour of his daughter Charlotte. He chose to donate largely to schools in South Africa where his family had spent many years, Malawi where his wife was born, and Zimbabwe where his family had died.

Antoinette van Winkel of Grahamstown's

Timlin Montesorri came to learn of the funding through the Montesorri Schools Association and together with parents Anne Taylor and Susan Powers, undertook to identify pre-schools in Grahamstown that were most in need of equipment.

Items listed by the pre-schools ranged from a carpet for the children to sit on for story time, educational toys and puzzles, grass and outdoor equipment, to environmentally friendly toilets as well as a flush toilet.

The task was undertaken throughout 2008 with the help and guidance from Ms Jean Schafer of the Centre for Social Development at Rhodes and an amount of R45 000 was requested and approved by the Char Char Trust in October 2008. Proudly, on 3 February 2009 Mr Parker was present to witness the hand over to the following pre-schools: St. Phillips Nursery School, Noncedo Primary School, Luzuko Pre-primary School, Bavumeleni Pre-Primary School, Uzukolwakhe Pre-Primary School and Grahamstown Seventh Day



Mr Kelvin Parker from Char Char Trust spends some time with Noncedo Primary School children. Pic: supplied.

Adventist Pre-Primary School.

It is hoped that these assistance projects will become an ongoing effort that ensures an ethos of development within the community is cultivated.

Hi There

Please advise your members that there is a Facebook Group called - Montessori - South Africa which can be found at the following URL:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=170463399903&ref=ts>

I have also posted a link to SAMA's website on that group.

Warm regards,  
Dianne Heart of Classroom Creations

## From a student at The Montessori College, Pretoria

We recently had a 'Drug Free' day at our school. The South African Police, and the Organised Crimes Unit came to our school with sniffer dogs to give us more information about drugs and their dangers. I learned a lot about drugs and the importance of staying away from them. We were given a slide show with some really disturbing pictures of the effects that drugs can have on you. The police planted drugs in some of our bags and the dogs gave a demonstration in retrieving them. Even though they were packed in paper and plastic, the dogs could still sniff them out! We got to see real examples of the different types of drugs, so that we would know what the stuff looks like and what we should stay away from. We all had to be drug tested and all of my peers and I came out drug free, which was awesome! I would suggest to all other Montessori schools that have primary classes or a high school to consider doing this. It was really a great experience!

Erin van Staden  
A level class  
Montessori College



## IDEAS FOR PARENT EVENINGS from Montessori Academy and College

- Look at getting speakers that support the philosophy of your school. Perhaps you work hand in hand with great therapists, who could explain their work to the parents?
  - Educational psychologists – when does your child need one?
  - Play therapy
  - Speech therapy
  - Occupational therapy
- The extra mural teachers would also make for a good information evening. They can tell parents why the children will benefit from their programme. Once again, you would be sure that they support Montessori philosophy and treat the children with the respect that they deserve.
  - Playball/action ball
  - Gymnastics
  - Swimming
  - Movement programmes
  - Yoga
  - Mini cricket/soccer
  - Pottery
  - Art
- Parents in our school always arrive in their droves when we have our homeopath come to speak to them. She gives them ideas for building the immune system, the importance of a balanced healthy diet, why junk food is so harmful to their young systems, what they can do to help develop concentration etc. Look for a nutritionalist/homeopath or similar that could speak to your parents.

## **A Formula for Parental Involvement**

### ***By Julia Butterworth (Montessori parent and student)***

First let me introduce myself: I am a mother of two children, a boy aged 7 and a girl aged 9. I qualified as a social worker and have over 12 years experience working with children and families. I also ran a mother and toddler group for a few years and am in the process of completing my diploma with Headstart Mercy Montessori. My children attended a Montessori preschool and I served on the school board of the preschool. I now share my expertise and experience with others through training and talks.

I would like to attempt to share a formula for involving parents in the education process, based on my professional and personal experience. A colleague who ran a Montessori preschool before making a decision to resign and focus on her own family and children, when asked if she would go back said that she felt such a sense of relief at not having to deal with difficult parents that she would only return if she could have a school with no parents. Of course this is impossible so it is important to develop strategies to involve parents effectively and avoid common problems that parents have. No-one wants to reach the point of not wanting to work with parents because it has become a tiresome, emotional and conflictual interaction.

**New Enrolments:** Begin to create an atmosphere of co-operation and mutual respect at the point of enrolment. As experts in Montessori education we know that the Montessori Method can meet the developing needs of every child but it does not always meet the needs of every parent. Interviews with parents who wish to enrol their children should include questions around their motivation for choosing the Montessori Method, how much they know and understand about it and a clarification of their and our expectations.

Parents need to have the opportunity to explore how enrolling their child in a Montessori school will meet their expectations and desires for their child. A parent should enrol their child with full knowledge of what is expected of them and what they can expect their child to gain from the school. Enabling the potential parent to make an informed decision ensures that their needs will be met by the decision that they make.

An orientation morning can provide further opportunity for parents to become informed and ensure that a decision to enrol their child in the school is one that they will be able to commit to. This is also a further opportunity to present and clarify the expectations the school has for parental involvement.

Putting in the extra effort with parents who wish to enrol their children will reap rewards with parents who commit to being involved with the school from the start however these parents need support to sustain commitment. However these efforts do not guarantee co-operation from all parents and additional encouragement is an ongoing process.

**How to Encourage and Support Parental Involvement:** Parents need large doses of empathy and acceptance and they need to be listened too, all the time. Accept and embrace parents as partners in education and give them opportunities to express themselves. Parents need to feel that they are being heard and that their contribution matters to the school. Naturally sometimes parents want that which a school cannot provide. This is where it becomes useful to have clarified expectations up front. Parents do sometimes need to be reminded of what the school can provide, that this was agreed upon at the time of enrolment.

Parenting is a task that is fraught with tension and when it comes to their children parents can become emotional and even at times irrational. Feelings of guilt, frustration, fear and anxiety can cause parents to react in ways that are often difficult to handle. Teachers need to learn not to take things personally and not to respond in a defensive tone.

Practice assertiveness and avoid defensiveness. When faced with an unhappy parent who complains defensiveness exacerbates emotionally charged situations and parents are always emotionally charged when it comes to their children. The most effective means of handling difficult situations with parents is to listen and acknowledge what they have to say and respond with empathy. In an assertive, not aggressive and defensive, manner tell the parents what you are able to do for them. If a situation is becoming too difficult request that the parents give you time to process what they have said and set a time for feedback.

Setting a time for feedback is crucial; parents need to know that you are serious and that you are committed to responding to them. Confirming a date for follow up sends the message that you are serious about finding a solution or compromise and that you will do so within a specified time frame.

Thank parents who demonstrate commitment, co-operation and involvement as often as possible. A special one on one thank you to a parent for their involvement motivates them to continue to be involved. A letter thanking them and special mention in the newsletter increases commitment and co-operation. Parents get involved in the interests of their children but it would be foolish to assume that this is their only motivation. Whether they are conscious of it or not parents also expect special recognition for their involvement so give it to them even when they do not appear to need it.

Provide regular written communication and give verbal feedback as often as possible. Parents need to hear positive things about their children and it is an encouragement to them. Everyone needs positive feedback as often as possible. Taking the time to give verbal feedback to parents reinforces your commitment to them as partners in the education process. Communication is a two way process, communicating effectively with parents encourages their reciprocation.

**Parental Observations, Events and Talks:** Parents who were educated in traditional schools understand from personal experience what is involved. How many parents really understand what the Montessori Method entails? Set a regular day and time when parents are invited to come and observe in the environment. Parents want and need to know what their children are doing at school. Parents are amazed when they observe their five year old doing arithmetic into the thousands or reading. They leave feeling immensely proud and vindicated for making the right choice in placing their child in the Montessori environment and they have a visual representation of what their child does at school.

Working with Montessori materials reveals the beauty in their simplicity and many “aha” moments are experienced. Invite parents to work with the materials themselves and inform them of the qualities and purpose of the materials. Taking the time to do this with parents will increase their understanding of the value of the materials and can assist in motivating them to get involved.

Having a special morning for Mother’s Day? Utilise the opportunity to talk to the mother’s about pertinent issues and to thank them for their support and involvement. View every event where parents are invited as an opportunity to impart information. Special talks to which parents are invited may be poorly attended and often it’s the same parents who always attend. The saying “preaching to the converted” applies all too often. Without being obvious events such as a Mother’s Day presentation presents an occasion to give a brief talk.

Invitations to talks are worthwhile despite the sometimes less than ideal attendance as parents who are willing to give up time to attend deserve to have the opportunity. The obvious topics for talks centre around educating parents on the Montessori Method, include what parents can expect their children to achieve in the environment and how they can help at home or explanations of what the curriculum encompasses. Parents do need to know what Sensorial education entails and the scientific basis for presenting Sensorial material if they are going to understand and appreciate the significance of their child’s progress. The same applies to Practical Life, Mathematics, Language and Cultural.

Other topics should be relevant, current and respond to expressed needs. Perception of benefit to them and their ability to be skilled parents will assist to motivate attendance. Parents can tire of listening to talks presented by the same person so try to invite experts to give talks in their field. An expert who has knowledge of the Montessori Method and will present the topic in light of this knowledge is obviously an ideal candidate to present talks to parents. Finally be guided by parent’s feedback in planning further talks, events and communication.

**Fundraising:** Parental involvement in fundraising activities is essential to successfully raise much needed funds. Providing parents with information on the reasons driving the necessity for fundraising and feedback on how the funds were spent can help motivate them to get involved.

Fundraising to upgrade the environment or purchase new materials? Securing parental involvement begins with equipping parents with the necessary knowledge on the importance of the materials in meeting the educational needs of their children. Involving parents in talks, observations and personal experience of the materials provides them with this knowledge. Inform the parents of how money that has been fundraised has been spent to enhance the educational experience for their children. Knowing the money they helped to fundraise has been spent wisely and for the benefit of the children is essential feedback to keep parents motivated and involved.

If you would like to further information contact me via e-mail [julia@3w.co.za](mailto:julia@3w.co.za)

Freedom without organization is useless. The organization of the work, therefore, is the cornerstone of this new structure. But even that organization would be in vain without the liberty to make use of it.  
Dr Maria Montessori

**Montessori International School**  
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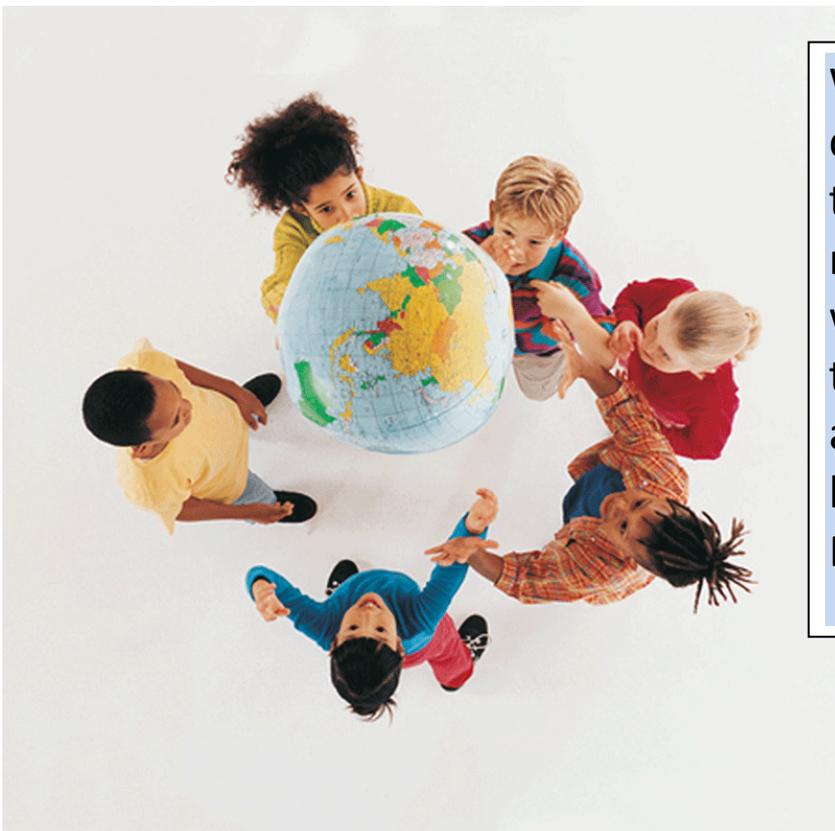
The school seeks to appoint a suitable candidate to the position of principal which will become available in February 2010.

The position calls for an experienced Montessori teacher with relevant leadership experience and strong interpersonal, educational and managerial skills.

The school is a leading independent Montessori school located in Maseru, Lesotho.

Over 15 years it has gained a reputation as a school with exceptional standards offering a fully Montessori programme in its lower school with a conventional programme that creatively incorporates the Montessori philosophy into its senior school.

Reporting to the Board of Governors, the principal will assume responsibility for management and development of the school. He/She will provide educational leadership strongly rooted in the Montessori ethos to deliver a full curriculum and ensure academic excellence that runs through the preschool to the senior school.



We seek to sow life in the child rather than theories, to help him in his growth, mental and emotional as well as physical, and for that we must offer grand and lofty ideas to the human mind.

Dr Maria Montessori

## Marketing

We are importers and distributors of a  
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### Edu Equipment

High quality locally manufactured Montessori  
Equipment from Toddler to Primary contact Dougie at  
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[eduequipment@telkomsa.net](mailto:eduequipment@telkomsa.net)

## Vacancies

MIDRAND MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL is looking for a qualified 3-6 Montessori Directress. Position available immediately. Salary negotiable. Please contact Sian on 083 473 0300 or Michelle on 084 480 3311

CHAMELEONS MONTESSORI SCHOOL seeks assistance in their Junior Primary Class. If you would like to apply, please email your CV to [info@chameleonsmontessori.co.za](mailto:info@chameleonsmontessori.co.za).

STEPPING STONES MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL is urgently looking for a directress in the 2 ½ to 5 year age group. The appointment is with immediate effect. Please forward your CV to [bev@steppingstones.org.za](mailto:bev@steppingstones.org.za) For further queries contact Bev Haywood on (021) 461 3253 between 8am and noon or Principal Deepa Kassen on 082 457 2222 after 2pm.

If you would like to advertise in the SAMA Newsletter, please send the relevant information through to [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)

### Focus for February 2010 issue: SHARING IDEAS WITH ONE ANOTHER...

*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 BY 20<sup>th</sup> of each month to: [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)*

### ATTENTION ALL SCHOOL MEMBERS

Among our members, particularly heads of schools, there is a WEALTH of knowledge and experience. This is why we have chosen the conference slogan of "We have arrived." For the next newsletter, we would like each school member to submit just ONE thing that has worked well in their school, and perhaps one thing that hasn't worked so well. That way we can all learn from one another. Please send your submissions to [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)

## 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.

For more details contact: [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)

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