



February / March 2010

## Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Dear Parents

In the last parent newsletter, I focussed on the importance of being involved in your child's education. Thank you for the positive response. In keeping with the theme, of 'how parents can optimise their child's learning experiences', I would like to share some insights into various terminology that we use in Montessori. This will help you understand what your child is being exposed to on a daily basis. Below are just two key points of the Montessori philosophy. We can explore others in future newsletters.

### Respect

We are taught that respect is earned, and while that may be true to some degree, I believe that Dr. Montessori is very clear on the respect issue being about human dignity rather than respecting something, such as someone's outlook on life or passion for their work. Dr. Montessori believed that we should give the best to the smallest. Not only in terms of the physical environment, but in terms of the child's right to be spoken to respectfully, their needs administered to respectfully and their spirits nurtured with the utmost respect. If we as adults model this to our children, they will absorb this attitude, and the respect will be mutual. Montessori directresses speak gently and politely to the children in their environments. The respect is further noticed in the way a directress allows a child who is working purposefully on a piece of material to repeat the activity as often as s/he wishes. She practises non-interference, putting aside her own ego and allowing the child to reveal themselves through their work. Dr. Montessori says, "Respect all the reasonable forms of activity in which the child engages and try to understand them." Parents too, can practice respectful behaviour in the home by reflecting on how they speak to their children. Use gentle language and provide opportunities to talk through difficulties without emotive language so that the respect for the dignity of the child and (yourself as the adult!) remains intact.

### Independence

"Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed," said Maria Montessori. In our classrooms, we see the interference of an adult taking away the opportunity for a child to do something independent as an unnecessary act. I would even go as far as saying that it violates the child's growing ability to become self-determining. By doing things for children that they are capable of doing for themselves, we send out the message that because we are bigger, we can do it better and faster. We undermine the motivation that the child naturally has and take away opportunities for self construction. Soon the child will stop trying and just expect the adult to assist all the time. This will become cumbersome when your child is still expecting you to do rudimentary things for them and they are in high school! So, parents – don't carry your child's bag (and certainly not the child!) to their classrooms. Slow down your pace, and walk with your child instead. Be patient when they are tying their shoe laces, help when asked! Exercise self restraint when you see your 4 year old struggling with a puzzle – let them struggle until they ask you to intervene. Imagine the satisfaction, and joy when they eventually get it right all by themselves! Consider also the other skills that the child will have practised in this exercise; problem solving, spatial orientation, and part to whole relationships to mention a few. This is how humankind learns – trial and error. Be careful of taking away these opportunities that build character and promote independence.

I welcome your feedback, and wish you all of the best with coming to terms with these ideas.

Heidi van Staden  
SAMA President



**Our SAMA conference this year, with the theme Ses'fikile (we have arrived) will be held on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of April at Ekudeni Lodge just off Beyers Naude Drive in the Magaliesberg. There will be many interesting talks that will be of value to parents, and we urge you to please look at the website ([www.samontessori.org.za](http://www.samontessori.org.za)) for further information should you be interested in attending.**

**Our early-bird special closes on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March – don't miss out!** 

**SAMA OFFICE: Cell no: 072 609 6979 Office: (041) 581 2874  
Fax: 086 561 8774 e-mail: [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)  
Website: [www.samontessori.org.za](http://www.samontessori.org.za)**