



National Newsletter

April 2011

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South African Montessori Association
Message from the President:

Dear All

It has been an interesting two years in the President's chair. I would like to thank the members who took an interest in the Exco's efforts and leant support and encouragement during this time.

Moving ahead, the think tank weekend has provided impetus for the coming year. Those present will agree that there is a strong desire to make authentic Montessori more widely practiced, and to find some way of bringing all schools using the name of Montessori in line, through using the best practice principles and absorbing them into some kind of accreditation process. I have been encouraging members since the Cape Town conference to become more involved in SAMA. At every SIG meeting, my message has urged members to come forward with ideas and input. In these newsletters, and through our general administrator and newsletter co-ordinator's efforts, we have beseeched members to share. If SAMA is to continue growing and is to be seen as a serious, professional organisation, there will need to be more drive and sustenance from members and member schools.

As stated at the think tank weekend. If every school gave one hour a week to SAMA, we would be far ahead of where we are today. Up to this point, the Exco are volunteers taking time out of their busy schools, training centres and families to keep the organisation going. If the load was shared and members helped sustain the energy of the work, we would have a stronger SAMA. Consider the following aspects of SAMA that your school could contribute with:

- Newsletter contributions: these include anecdotes, photos, philosophy questions or discussions, interesting articles that you have come across, interesting books that would be of interest to Montessori teaching, observations, music, art, baking ideas etc.
- SIG meeting ideas and ideas for guest speakers
- Organising mini-workshops that address key issues of best practice such as 'No rewards or punishments – What does this mean?'

(Trainers and more experienced Montessorians could be called on to chair such workshops which would strengthen our understanding of Montessori in practice.)

Imagine if all our schools could present a unified front, implementing the best practice principles, remembering that we serve the children and walking toward the same goal...these were the underlying ethics that supported all the targets we explored at the think tank in February. Imagine Montessori in our country becoming the preferred method of education. Imagine the role you are going to play, imagine the contribution you can make. Imagine....

My best wishes go to the next Exco...know that you will not be abandoned...we must continue working together and holding in our hearts the vision of Maria Montessori – “The child is the father of man...”

Heidi van Staden
SAMA President (2009-2011)

Website:
www.samontessori.org.za

THANK YOU

Past Presidents

May Selkirk, Jenny Miller, Christine Clarke, Sam Streak

Each one of you have played a role and contributed to the SAMA that we have today. Thank you for that time when your hard work laid the cornerstones and foundations for our organisation.

2009-2011 Exco

Your encouragement and support over the past two years has been absolutely amazing. Thank you for taking the attending of meetings seriously and for contributing what you could to our work. Your generosity of spirit and the grace and courtesy with which you attended to the tasks at hand a reflection of your Montessori –ness!

Conference Committee 2011

Susanne van Niekerk, Lucy Watson and Rose Lowry – thank you so very much! The efficiency and timeliness of all your work does not go unnoticed. We understand that this effort was monumental, and from myself and all the members we thank you for this.

Newsletter Coordinator 2010-2011

Thank-you Jacky Price, for compiling the newsletters on a monthly basis for us. I know that this is one SAMA benefit that members are truly grateful for and the thanks that come in every month are testimony to your hard work. Your work has kept inspiration alive in many, many members!

NAISA/ Umalusi representative 2010-2011

A lot of the critical work that has been done this past year has been in this department. Thank you Sharon Caldwell for taking the time to engage with these bodies. SAMA has a well established and respected presence on NASIA, and your input has been vital to maintaining that!

Administrator 2009-2011

Last, but by no means least, many, many thanks go to Irmgard Pringle for her unwavering support and commitment to SAMA. Irmgard is truly the backbone of the organisation, and her efficiency and good-natured willingness to go beyond the call of duty when required have rendered her indispensable! Ndiyabulela, ngiyabonga, dankie and thank-you.

**South African Montessori Association Trust
Invites you to be part of our 9th National Proudly South African
Conference!**

28th and 29th April 2011

Management Training 30th April 2011



At the Durban Botanic Gardens situated on Eastern slopes of the Berea Ridge

Watch this space to hear about all things heard, felt and learnt!

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

– Helen Keller



Occupations: Opportunities for Collaboration

Montessori Middle Schools offer a host of opportunities for students to collaborate and learn from and with each other. Community work and the Occupations that each student is involved with allows for the development of respect, cooperation within the group, the opportunity to work at something independently, but with the collective goal in mind and the chance to socialise – a vital part of this plane of development. This is an excerpt from “Montessori Life” explaining occupations...I encourage you to find the article and read it in its entirety.

“Montessori adolescent programs provide a project-based approach to education that puts students in charge of their environment, taking on occupation such as gardening, bee keeping, and food preparation, as well giving them tools for economic independence through the micro economy. As they take on adult-like roles and responsibilities within the various areas of the program, they learn the science, math, and practical skills necessary for them to become as progressively more independent in their ventures. They learn how to view an occupation mathematically by taking measurement, collecting data, and tracking change.”

They learn the science behind their occupation, whether it be the physiology of the plants in the garden, the molecular properties of beeswax, honey, or a bee sting, they are learning chemistry, biology, and physics. They read about and discuss social or historical issues related to this occupation, all while taking responsibility for something in the real world such as gardens, bee keeping, or food preparation.



This page links to specific occupation pages which contain downloadable documents for you to use when creating or enhancing your own occupations. I encourage everyone to carefully document your occupations and share your frameworks so that they can be available to other Montessorians working to develop their own adolescent programs.”

http://montessorilife.org/?page_id=154

“The need that is so keenly felt for a reform of secondary schools is not only an educational but also a human and social problem. This can be summed up in one sentence: Schools as they are today are adapted neither to the needs of adolescence nor to the time in which we live.”

— Maria Montessori

Learning from Peers

“There is nothing that makes you learn more than teaching it yourself.”
Maria Montessori



“To understand what the older ones are doing fills the little ones with enthusiasm.”
Maria Montessori

The Science Behind the Genius - Learning from Peers Montessori

http://www.lexmontessori.org/ftpimages/268/download/download_group10932_id370604.pdf

Lexington Montessori School

This article is the fifth in a series discussing Montessori educational principles and how these principles are supported by current educational research. This topic is discussed in great detail in Angelina Stoll Lillard's book, "Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius".

Peer learning can take many forms. Those discussed here include learning from peers by observation and imitation, peer tutoring, and collaborative learning. This type of learning is inherently a part of Montessori education. Children in Montessori schools are free to work together, and often do, especially as they become older and more socially inclined.

Research shows that children often learn from observing and then imitating others. In one study, toddlers were shown how a special stick could be used in a particular way to retrieve an object from a tube. Children as young as two years old could then repeat the precise actions necessary to retrieve the object. Other findings demonstrate how effective subliminal modelling can be, such as observing and then imitating yawning or scratching. Even thinking about particular things leads people to behave in particular ways.

The hands-on nature of Montessori work enables learning by observation and imitation. Children learn, by observation, the steps taken with the materials. By manipulating these concrete objects, the children are led to discover more abstract concepts. Many children entering a Montessori pre-school or 3-6 year old classroom spend a lot of time watching older children work. By observing and imitating others, children eventually gain an understanding of the concepts associated with specific materials. Studies have also shown in multi-age classrooms where interaction with different age peers occurs, children benefit greatly in terms of motor, cognitive, communicative and overall development. The three-year age grouping in Montessori schools offer a wide spectrum of ability level in peers from which to observe and imitate.

Educational research has found that situations in which children learn from their peers, via peer tutoring, are beneficial to both the tutor and the child being tutored. In a study comparing a peer tutoring model to a standard teaching method,

children who participated in the peer tutoring program performed significantly better in reading, math, and language than those participating in the standard method of teaching. Studies have also found that students who expected to tutor or teach gained a better understanding of the topic, as well as becoming more actively engaged and more interested.

Peer tutoring occurs naturally in Montessori classrooms, both formally and informally. These types of interactions are built into the structure of the classroom. Informally, children learn from peers by asking questions while watching them work. More formally, at the teacher's discretion, children can teach one another a specific lesson. As children work together, as they often do in the Elementary Classrooms at LMS, there is ample opportunity to teach and learn from one another.

Another way to learn from peers is through collaborative learning, where a group of two or more children work together. Several studies have shown that people learn better when working together than when working alone. Researchers have found that children participating in collaborative learning programs engage in higher levels of reasoning and learning and score significantly higher on conceptual understanding than students in traditional programs. Additionally, research has found that children learn the most in collaborative exchanges when they collaborate with those whom they have a deeper and more positive relationship.

At LMS, children in the Elementary Program often choose to work with others on topics or projects that mutually interesting. These topics can be inspired by a prior lesson, or motivated by an interest outside of the classroom. Whether these children are working on classification of plants, constructing models, researching animals, mastering multiplication facts, or analyzing the grammatical structure of sentences, they are often working in self-formed groups of two to four children. The structure of the classrooms and the design of the materials are extremely conducive to working and learning together.

In summary, children at LMS have a wonderful opportunity to learn from their peers by observing and imitating others, tutoring one another and working collaboratively. Educational and psychological research has shown that these situations provide an excellent environment for development and learning.

Collaborative Learning/Cooperative Learning

What follows are two internet articles – **one** giving some strategies for collaborative learning, and **another** explaining cooperative learning. Both techniques can be utilised very effectively in a Montessori environment, bearing in mind that not all children want to work in groups and don't always want to be part of collective efforts. While cooperation and being able to work effectively with others is indeed a desired characteristic, we would do well not to push children into work that they are not ready for, or to work in groups where there are conflicting personalities. Montessori children have plenty of opportunity to show cooperation independently, they should not be compelled to join groups they are not interested in. Both articles are directed at elementary, middle and high school students.

4 STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

THINK-PAIR-SHARE: (1) The instructor poses a question, preferable one demanding analysis, evaluation, or synthesis, and gives students about a minute to think through an appropriate response. This "think-time" can be spent writing, also. (2) Students then turn to a partner and share their responses. (3) During the third step, student responses can be shared within a four-person learning team, within a larger group, or with an entire class during a follow-up discussion. The calibre of discussion is enhanced by this technique, and all students have an opportunity to learn by reflection and by verbalization.

THREE-STEP INTERVIEW: Common as an ice-breaker or a team-building exercise, this structure can also be used also to share information such as hypotheses or reactions to a film or article. (1) Students form dyads; one student interviews the other. (2) Students switch roles. (3) The dyad links with a second dyad. This four-member learning team then discusses the information or insights gleaned from the initial paired interviews.

SIMPLE JIGSAW: The faculty member divides an assignment or topic into four parts with all students from each LEARNING TEAM volunteering to become "experts" on one of the parts. EXPERT TEAMS then work together to master their fourth of the material and also to discover the best way to help others learn it. All experts then reassemble in their home LEARNING TEAMS where they teach the other group members. (In Montessori schools, this is a perfect way of demonstrating how vertical grouping works effectively!)

NUMBERED HEADS TOGETHER: Members of learning teams, usually composed of four individuals, count off: 1, 2, 3, or 4. The instructor poses a question, usually factual in nature, but requiring some higher order thinking skills. Students discuss the question, making certain that every group member knows the agreed upon answer. The instructor calls a specific number and the team members originally designated that number during the count off respond as group spokespersons. Because no one knows which number the teacher will call, all team members have a vested interest in understanding the appropriate response.

Again, students benefit from the verbalization, and the peer coaching helps both the high and the low achievers. Class time is usually better spent because less time is wasted on inappropriate responses and because all students become actively involved with the material.



<http://www.gdrc.org/kmgmt/c-learn/strategies.html>

COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Cooperative learning is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it.

Cooperative efforts result in participants striving for mutual benefit so that all group members:

- gain from each other's efforts. (Your success benefits me and my success benefits you.)
- recognize that all group members share a common fate. (We all sink or swim together here.)
- know that one's performance is mutually caused by oneself and one's team members. (We cannot do it without you.)
- feel proud and jointly celebrate when a group member is recognized for achievement. (We all congratulate you on your accomplishment!).

5 Elements of Cooperative Learning

1. Positive Interdependence

(sink or swim together)

- Each group member's efforts are required and indispensable for group success
- Each group member has a unique contribution to make to the joint effort because of his or her resources and/or role and task responsibilities

2. Face-to-Face Interaction

(promote each other's success)

- Orally explaining how to solve problems
- Teaching one's knowledge to other
- Checking for understanding
- Discussing concepts being learned
- Connecting present with past learning

3. Individual & Group Accountability

(no hitchhiking! no social loafing)

- Keeping the size of the group small. The smaller the size of the group, the greater the individual accountability may be.
- Giving an individual test to each student.
- Randomly examining students orally by calling on one student to present his or her group's work to the teacher (in the presence of the group) or to the entire class.
- Observing each group and recording the frequency with which each member-contributes to the group's work.
- Assigning one student in each group the role of checker. The checker asks other group members to explain the reasoning and rationale underlying group answers.
- Having students teach what they learned to someone else



4. Interpersonal & Small-Group Skills

- Social skills must be taught:
 - Leadership
 - Decision-making
 - Trust-building
 - Communication
 - Conflict management skills

5. Group Processing

- Group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships
- Describe what member actions are helpful and not helpful
- Make decisions about what behaviours to continue or change

Taken from:

<http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/cooperativelarning.htm>

Creating Independence

While doing my Montessori training at Inanda, Johannesburg in 1983, I was fascinated by the “free snack” set up on the outside patio in the pre-school downstairs. It was unsupervised and had a table set up with the bread that the children had baked in the morning, fruit that they had cut up in class, and a washing up area. There were seven neck tags on a hook just inside the door, and as you went out, you took one, hung it around your neck and went for snack. This controlled the number of children who had snack at a time. I observed a boy with Downs Syndrome going through this process six times throughout the morning! On the seventh time, another child gently reminded him that he had already had snack and that he could not keep coming back, and gently led him back to hang up his tag.

Years later, I also saw this neck tag/necklace system being used at another Montessori pre-school for the library corner, thereby controlling the number of children in that area at a time.

A non-Montessori school used this necklace system for grade one children leaving the classroom to go to the loo, which was down the passage. They found their name card label, which was in a box, placed it into a plastic holder on the wall (one for boys, one for girls), put their necklace on, and went off to the loo. The teacher could glance over at the plastic holder, see the name, and know who had left the classroom.

This same teacher had set up many other wonderful systems, but struggled to relinquish

control! There was a tray with a jug and glasses at the sink, but the children had to ask her for permission to help themselves to a drink. They had to show her each piece of completed written work/worksheet, although she had placed a box for them to put it in when completed. They were not allowed to go onto the next piece of work until everybody had completed theirs.

As a result, she had a continuous line of children at her desk, and children misbehaving out of boredom. She was laid off work for two weeks from stress, and I was called in as a relief teacher to her classroom of 30 grade

ones. I immediately allowed them to drink water whenever they were thirsty; to go to the loo whenever they needed to, using the wonderful name tag system already set up; to put their work immediately into the box as it was finished (I would check it at the end of the day, and speak to the child the next day about any corrections, etc); and to go onto the next piece of work as they needed to.

The one child, who previously had only been

allowed to do four worksheets a day, proceeded to finish 10 maths cards, and read four books, on top of his daily quota of work! Some children moved up very quickly in the level of reading books (of which their teacher had set up a wonderful library card system, but again, they were not allowed to move on to the next book until the whole class could read the book!). The teacher probably had another breakdown when she came back and saw what I'd done!

Cané Lake



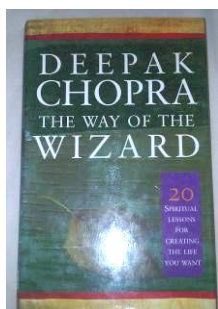
Book Choices

Three of my favourite 'self-help' books!
Heidi van Staden

Deepak Chopra

THE WAY OF THE WIZARD

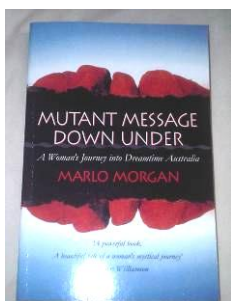
ISBN: 9 7807 12 672078



Marlo Morgan

MUTANT MESSAGE DOWN UNDER

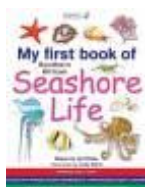
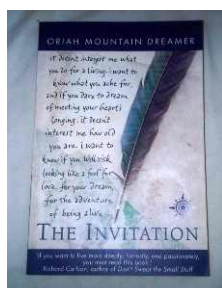
ISBN: 978 1 85538 484 2



Oriah Mountain Dreamer

THE INVITATION

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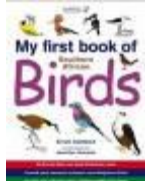


Author: Roberta Griffiths

Publisher: Struik Nature

Illustrator: Judy Mare

ISBN: 9781770078222



Author: Erroll Cuthbert

Illustrations: Schaum, Jennifer

Publisher: Struik Publishers

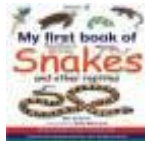
ISBN: 9781770072831



Author: Charmaine Uys; Sally MacLarty

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ISBN: 9781770072138



Author: Bill Branch

Publisher: Struik Publishers

Illustrator: Sally MacLarty

ISBN: 9781770075429



Author: Peter Apps

Publisher: Struik Publishers

Illustrator: Jennifer Schaum

ISBN: 9781770075191

<http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2011/02/collaboration-among-montessori-teachers.html>

This is a good blog for collaboration among Montessori teachers.

23 April was World Book Day
and the theme was:
“Books, Pathway to the
Future”

I have listed here some valuable to have books, that our children spend hours viewing, reading, discussing and going in search of real live specimens. The books have large graphic detail on each page of an animal and say if it is nocturnal, what it eats and a scale of its size. Each description is in 3 languages. Even early readers process the information set out.

- Jacky

Host Schools Term 2 Regional meetings:

Gauteng North: Little Oak

Montessori, 14th May 2011

Gauteng South: O'Summit

Montessori, 4th June 2011

Kwazulu Natal: Montessori

Life, 14th May 2011 –

‘The importance of the creative subjects in a Montessori School.’

Western Cape: Blue Moon

Montessori, 14th May 2011 –

‘Reporting back from conference, insights learned and the discussion thereof.’

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



Vacancies

- **The Poem of Celebration / Feesgedig Montessori School (Paarl)** requires a fully bilingual qualified Montessori Directress (3-9 years), with at least 2 years' experience, to start in the 3rd term, 18 July 2011. Please send a detailed CV to montessori.poet@gmail.com before 15 May 2011
- **Blue Moon Montessori Preschool (Cape)** requires an experienced 3-6 Directress starting August 2011. Please send your CV to bluemoonmontessorir@telkomsa.net
- **Kyalami Montessori Preschool (JHB North West)** has a position for a Pre-school Directress in our 3-6 year environment. Please send your CV to info@kyalamimontessori.co.za or call 0826446965
- **Village Montessori School** is seeking a Experienced Montessori Directress in our 3 to 6 year environment. Please send your cv to info@villagemontessori.co.za or contact Daleen on 012 664-2944.
- **Alex Blaikie Montessori (Cape)** has 2 assistant vacancies in our 3-4yrs and 3-6yrs class. Please contact Bronwyn at admin@puremontessori.com or call 021 556 8564.
- Family living on a farm outside Nelspruit is looking for a directress with a love of nature to home school their four children aged 10, 7, 5 and 3. Please send cv's to bee@bellarosebirthing.co.za

Focus for April issue: Conference 2011 Report back

Deadline for contributions: 20 May

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

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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