



# National Newsletter

JULY 2013

## Letter from the President

By Jacquelyn Price

I love winter breaks. I find it gives us breathing space to reflect and rest (under our duvets) much more than those busy summer breaks. We may be aware that we still have another half-a-year ahead of us, but at the same time we have an underlying sense of making sure we complete all of our goals before we begin to wrap up the year.

What lovely stories arose from the efforts of most to ensure they gave their 67 minutes for Madiba's recent birthday. It was a difficult concept for our very young ones, yet some had made cards and spoke knowledgeably about Mandela. The cherry on the top came when one of our three-year-olds looked around for the cupcakes to arrive for this birthday we were all talking about! However, it was good to see South Africans rally together to celebrate our hero's birthday. And in the words of Maria Montessori: "*The child is the spiritual builder of mankind, and obstacles to his free development are the stones in the wall by which the soul of the man has become imprisoned.*"

Third term is "student term" Oh boy – under the spotlight once more! It is not enough that the children put us through daily tough observation, now we have eager, idealistic and impressionable students – whom I love, admire and hopefully inspire, yet still feel somewhat daunted by them. Don't you love those times when you go full throttle into a song and realise you are completely off key? Singing with children is one thing, but singing in front of wannabe idols is another! Anyhow, no matter; be patient, demonstrate all the principles we work by in our environments and our lives, and enjoy, as they often have many lessons to teach us.

In a couple of days I leave our shores to join many Montessori professionals from around the world in the 'rose' city of Portland. We recently heard that there would be three large, interactive glass classrooms constructed in an

open part of the city for parents and children as part of the conference hype. Wow! I cannot wait to see, watch, listen and experience and then to share this with you all.

In the meantime, practise your best in your endeavours with the children in your care.

Warm regards  
Jacky

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## HAVE CHILDREN CHANGED?



1942: Germany



2013: South Africa

## DID YOU KNOW?

2%

of living animals have the chance of becoming a fossil.

25.2 %

Of the total population of South Africa are Unemployed.

## CONTACT US

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# The Joy of 3 Years.

By Jane Cope

Having worked in preschools that mix age groups and (for a short while) in a preschool that did not I experienced first-hand how segregation alienates or disrupts natural socialisation. Regardless of the benefits of two thirds of the class being used to the rhythm and routine of the class at the beginning of the school year which assists any new little friend to settle more quickly because of the general atmosphere of calm, or the benefit of classmates being able to help with shoelaces and finding interesting bugs when the adults are engaged with other children etc.

I found the idea and experience of our babies the most endearing. Not all the children in a class will engage with each other either inside or outside and special friendships and groupings happen naturally depending on the children's interests and developmental stages - and that is the key - free association allows for natural groupings, which do change and are not without moments of "s/he won't play with me" ... but were totally different to whole groups of children running away shouting "the babies are coming", or "don't let the girls touch you" or other such sentiments that are inspired by segregation, competition and hierarchy. Having been a principal in a school with three preschool (3-6) classes I was interested to see if one class would ostracise another especially when playing outside during morning care, aftercare or any other time when they shared a space. Again natural groupings occurred including members of other classes and there are moments of "go away, we don't want to play with you". Sometimes children would reassign themselves to a different class which was accommodated when possible, but not often.

One of my sweetest moments was when two 5 year olds were leading a (recently joined the school) 3 year old to class and one of them informed me very seriously that "we had to fetch our baby because she was going to the wrong class".

Having friends that are older than myself still enriches my life due to their mentoring and wisdom. Having friends younger than myself reminds me to have joie de vivre and validates my wisdom, and, sometimes, the younger ones are wise and the older ones are just a little crazy.

## Regional Meeting Dates

### Gauteng South Johannesburg TERM 3:

8<sup>th</sup> October – Material Making workshop

### Kwazulu Natal TERM 3:

21<sup>st</sup> August - **Contemporary Educational Challenges**

### Western Cape TERM 3:

17<sup>th</sup> August - "Freeing up the body to enhance the learning process."



## Headstart Mercy Montessori Teacher Training Courses 2014

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In 2014, Headstart Mercy Montessori Teacher Training Centre is offering:

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Website: [www.headstartmercy.co.za](http://www.headstartmercy.co.za) Follow us on 

## Save the Date!

### 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference

Prepare to join South African education professionals as they gather to explore the universal themes and *unique* facets of Montessori.

Trainers, teachers, and administrators from every province will be united to celebrate, learn, and connect on their shared commitment to the work of Dr Maria Montessori.

### **Renowned international Guest Speaker and Author Dr Paul Epstein**

- Conference Dates: 26 – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2014
- Observation workshops with Dr Epstein 29 -30<sup>th</sup> April 2014

All welcome, special rates for **SAMA members**.



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- Syrup of ipecac / activated charcoal (use **only** with instructions from Poison Control Center or physician)
- Anti-pyretic syrup (calpol etc)

Articles used for first aid purposes should always be replaced as soon as possible after it has been used.

The principal must perform regular inspections of the first aid boxes in the workplace to ensure that the boxes contain the

prescribed minimum contents.

Items contained in the box should also be inspected for expiry dates.

All expired equipment should be safely discarded and replaced immediately. A formal first aid register must be provided for the purpose of recording all incidents where first aid had to be provided.

A name list of the certified first aider(s) could also be kept in or near the first aid box.

***First aid kit contents:***

Adhesive strip bandages (1/2 inch, 3/4 inch, 1 inch strips)

- Bandage tape
- Bottled water
- Commercial cold pack
- Disposable latex gloves
- Eye dressing or pad
- Face mask or microshield (for use in rescue breathing)
- Flashlight with charged batteries
- Gauze pads (nonstick, sterile, various sizes)
- Hand sanitiser or liquid soap
- Note pad & pen or pencil

- Paper towels
- Poison Control telephone number
- Rolled flexible or stretch gauze
- Safety pins
- Scissors
- Small plastic cups
- Splints (if possible)
- Thermometer (non-breakable)
- Triangle bandages
- Tweezers

***These items should be available on site. They must be kept in a locked container.***



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# Montessori Community News

## MANDELA DAY PROJECT

The Randburg Montessori School has been working together with the Montessori Campus, Rotary international and 100 ABC'ers ([www.facebook.com/100ABCers](http://www.facebook.com/100ABCers)) to support the Zama Montessori Community school in Putfontein, Benoni.



Before



After

Together we have been able to help Zama with all the small things that keep a school going. Thanks to Rotary the windmill is working again and the children have access to fresh running water. The team from Randburg Montessori and the Montessori Campus have raised over R25 000 which has been used for general maintenance including fixing leaks in the roof, repainting and decorating the preschool environment. We were also able to purchase some much needed equipment for the practical life area and a brush cutter as well as many seeds for the vegetable garden. We are very grateful to Bryanston Montessori school and for their donations of tools, books, toilet paper, first aid supplies and balls.

Thanks to Sustainable.co.za for their wonderful donation of 4 solar lights and panel for the classroom. It has made a huge difference in the school that runs without electricity.



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*"Of all things, love is the most potent."*

Maria Montessori

## IKHAYA LABANTWANA MONTESSORI

Thank you to Montessori Centre South Africa for representing Ikhaya Labantwana Montessori at the National SAMA conference 2013 and to all the schools and individuals who supported our project. I have seen footage of the conference and the ILM table and it **really** touched my heart to see all the support that we have out there – Thank you!

Due to the conference and all your kindness, Ikhaya Labantwana now has **30** children sponsored at R300 per month and we received wonderful, brand new Montessori materials for all our learning areas.

The Montessori community's support is very valuable to our project and we cannot thank you all enough. Wishing you a lovely mid-year break, from Dawn, Nokuthula, Irene, Fundiswa and the abantwanas.



## LADDER TO LITERACY

The **ELF/Ubomi** Ladder to Literacy Project has begun. Your R130 will make a lifetime of difference to the children of Kosovo!

**We need your R130 NOW!**

GivenGain is a global movement connecting Activists and Causes.

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[www.elfmontessori.givengain.org](http://www.elfmontessori.givengain.org)



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Johannesburg: 3-6 October	Johannesburg: 15-18 January '14	Johannesburg: 5-8 April '14
Cape Town: 10-13 October	Cape Town: 6-9 January '14	Cape Town: 12-15 April '14

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# Montessori and Mixed Age Groups

by Kym van Straaten

An essential part of the learning environment is the other children in it.

The Montessori classroom should provide ample opportunities for making friends and interacting with others. Learning consideration for others and how to co-operate with others, fostering a sense of interdependence are vital life skills.

In a well-prepared environment co-operation and a sense of community are experienced. Individual differences are easily accepted and appreciated while each child is treated and taught as an individual. Children of different ages are together in the same group which provides abundant opportunities for learning and helps to create a sense of family while everyone contributes and takes responsibility for the functioning and maintenance of the environment.

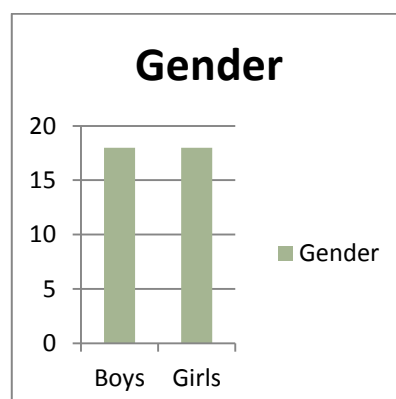
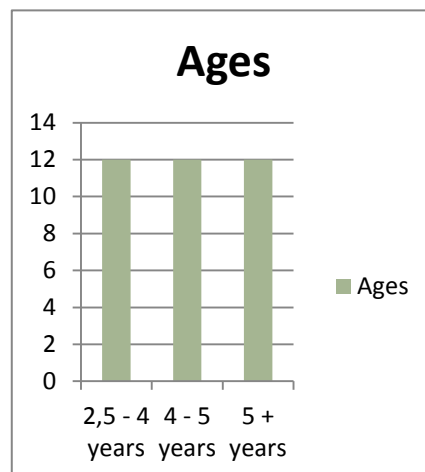


Courtesy Thuthuka Montessori

Montessori said that children should enjoy learning saying that *“one test of the correctness of educational procedure is the*

*happiness of the child.”* In a class that practices vertical grouping, the children see learning as a labour of discovery, exploration, play, excitement and joy. Learning does not just mean getting ready for the next grade. To become lifelong learners, children must see their work as rewarding, meaningful and absolutely enjoyable.

These mixed age classrooms should strike a heterogeneous balance of gender, race and ability within each age level. Each age group should be roughly equal in number, to avoid becoming "top" or "bottom" heavy. The following charts are based on a class of 36 children.



It is important to also provide a blend of cultures where possible for example:

- Race
- Language
- Socio-Economic standing
- Religion

*“Our method has the advantage of being able to draw together children of very different backgrounds. In our first Children's Houses there were children of 2 ½, still too young for the simplest exercises of the senses, and children over five who, because of their attainments, could have passed after a few months into the third grade. In our schools each child advances and perfects himself according to his own individual ability. ...Our experiences have shown that a single teacher can supervise children ranging from the ages of three to seven. ... As far as the teacher is concerned, she can remain a whole day with children of such different stages of development without exhausting herself, just as a mother at home passes the entire day from morning to night with her children without growing tired.”*

Montessori: The Discovery of the child

This environment provides opportunities for a variety of safe, lasting and meaningful friendships. Both social and intellectual development is enhanced by this method.

Each year holds a special significance for the child as the

roles they fill change. Because of the mixed age group the classroom has a heritage. In the ideal multi - age classroom the same group of children stay together for at least three years with the same directress. This three year span offers a greater opportunity for establishing the group as a "family" and provides each child with a three year time frame for development.



Courtesy Thuthuka Montessori

Grouping in a Montessori environment is based on the developmental planes and is designed to allow development at the individual's pace. Because of this we can cater for a wide range of developmental needs for each child. It makes sense that every child will advance more quickly in some areas than others. For example; if a child is mastering material quickly the teacher will simply give a lesson on more complex materials which will already be in the classroom for the older children. If a child is having difficulty grasping a particular concept, the child is allowed to focus on that area until he is ready to move on.

It is imperative that Montessorians are trained in child development in the given age range they work with. The toddler environment is not a watered down 3 – 6 class. The needs and style of learning of the primary children are not the same as those of the plane before.

Appropriate Montessori training enables the adult to present the curriculum in a manner that best fits the child, rather than making the child fit the curriculum.

The Montessori curriculum is a sequential programme designed for independent learning. From the moment a child enters a Montessori environment, we are concerned with the on-going development of the "whole child": intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual and social.

In the final year of the Montessori pre - primary classroom, the five year old blossoms. There is an explosion of learning and intense working knowledge of the advanced materials. The five year old leads the class with dignity, self-esteem and self-confidence; three qualities which enable a child to approach new social challenges in life.

Parents need to be made aware that the cycle is completed in the third year and not the second. If the child leaves before he has not received the full benefit of our programme nor has he had time to complete his learning in our curriculum. To deprive the five year old of this experience is to deprive him of his year of leadership.

Because of the three year period the adult does not have to dissect the child's learning into

curricular pieces, but rather is able to support each child's natural learning rate with the gift of time. This time together makes the adult aware of each child's academic, social, physical and emotional strengths and they are therefore able to offer the child greater support because they know how to work best with each child and are better able to guide the child's learning and provide appropriate challenges. In return the child grows more comfortable and secure with the guidance of the adult. This stresses the importance of the commitment of the adult to remain with a group of children for a minimum of three years.

Throughout the extended life of a mixed - age classroom, the adults (Guide and parent) have more time to get to know one another and can become true partners in the child's education.



Courtesy Randburg Montessori

Another phenomenon in the vertically grouped Montessori environment is that the children have to co-ordinate the use of the materials with each other, they learn to co - operate and negotiate with each other.

The benefits for the older child include the opportunity to provide guidance and act as mentors for the younger children. They reinforce their skills and knowledge as well as benefiting from the satisfaction of helping

others when they help those younger or less capable than themselves. This heritage of responsibility and helping others is passed down in the class.

It is not only the older children who benefit from this type grouping. Vygotsky (1976) envisioned a "zone of proximal development". This zone is the distance between the actual development that can be enhanced by adults or more capable peers.

Meltzer (1991) uses the term "scaffolding" to describe the process when adults or more capable peers can encourage younger children to use more sophisticated approaches to tasks. Meltzer suggests that adults or more capable peers can give children temporary support to help them accomplish tasks beyond their current independent capabilities. (I.e. Journal writing, the presence of an older child might prompt a younger child to use words, spelling or concepts that the younger child would not ordinarily use on his own.

later work as he watches and begins to absorb the activities of the older child. The younger child need not wait for the Adult for assistance as he is able to consult a more experienced peer.

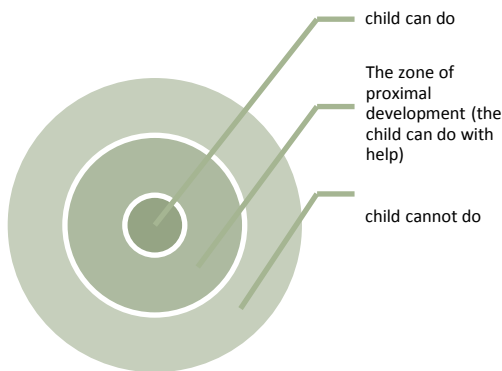


Courtesy Zama Montessori

Younger children usually want to do what the older children are doing. A vertically grouped Montessori classroom offers an inherent motivator for children to constantly challenge themselves.

The mixed - age classroom naturally entails different levels of ability and therefore offers diversity, stimulation and a path for growth integral to the success of the Montessori philosophy

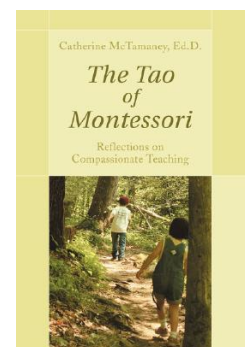
The younger child learns through observation of the older child. He receives indirect preparation for



## BOOK REVIEW

By Jacky Price

**BOOK:** The Tao of Montessori; reflections on compassionate teachings  
**AUTHOR:** Catherine Mc Tamaney  
**ISBN:** 1583482989



Catherine has taken the series of eighty one verses of the Tao Te Ching written either in the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> Century. This book takes these verses which inspire themes of Maria Montessori's teachings and quotes. The author here has used these to reflect in context experiences of both Montessori educators and parents.

While this is not a new book, it is however wonderful to have as part of your schools resources. I find it especially useful for staff meetings to read one of the short passages in helping us to contemplate on our daily experiences with the children in our care.

Pick it up at any time to find a verse that will resonate with you. I find it often allows me to step back a little to breathe and be inspired.

# Classifieds

In honour of the 2013 International Montessori Congress, a second paperback and Kindle edition of **Montessori for You and Your Child** is now available. This new edition of the question and answer format parent education book contains updated citations, a more streamlined format, and a table of contents.

Purchase the new and improved *Montessori for You and Your Child* today for summer recruitment! Both paperback and Kindle editions are available through:

[www.themontessorimysteryunveil.ed.weebly.com](http://www.themontessorimysteryunveil.ed.weebly.com)

## WANTED

Rustenburg Montessori school is opening a 3-6 year environment in January 2014.

Sharon is looking to **buy the equipment** second hand. Does anybody want to sell?

Please contact Sharon Klichowicz on cell. 0729060282

## EMPLOYMENT

### WESTERN CAPE

**Chameleons Montessori** School, in Durbanville, Cape Town is currently seeking an experienced Montessori qualified Directress for their 6-12 year environment.

The applicant should have a solid understanding of the Montessori curriculum and philosophy, passion for working with children, good class management and administration skills, as well as accountability and integrity. SACE registration required.

Please send your CV or contact Janielle at 021 976 9611 or [info@chameleonmontessori.co.za](mailto:info@chameleonmontessori.co.za)

I am **Sarah-Beth McAdam** and am busy studying at the moment as well as managing a pre-school. To be able to complete my course and take the pressure off I am looking for a half day position as a P.A to a principal of a Montessori school, or of a member of SAMA. I am seriously motivated and dedicated.

I am a free-lance photographer focusing on child photography. Therefore, any position where I can surround myself with the people that are making a difference with Montessori in S.A and around the world. Where I can learn more and

more each and everyday. Please email me at [sarah-b@live.co.za](mailto:sarah-b@live.co.za).

## GAUTENG SOUTH: JOHANNESBURG

A small Montessori Pre-School in Sandton is looking for a mature Directress in the toddler group (2 years to 3 years) from January 2014. Committed and reliable candidates need only to apply. Please email your CV to: [gorham@connix.co.za](mailto:gorham@connix.co.za)

## KWAZULU NATAL

Hilton Montessori is a small, well-resourced foundation phase school situated in a small leafy village outside Pietermaritzburg. A mature Montessori directress is required to oversee the day to day running of the school. If you enjoy a country style environment and are well qualified we look forward to hearing from you. Send your CV to Shellaine at [shell@hiltonmontessori.co.za](mailto:shell@hiltonmontessori.co.za)



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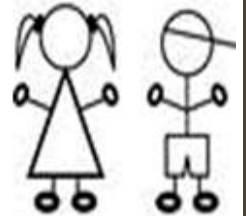


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The AUGUST/SEPTEMBER newsletter will focus on Montessori Basics: Principle **Rewards and Punishments in the Montessori context**. We value your contributions so please send any interesting snippets, funnies, quotes, photos, article ideas and questions to Irmgard at [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za) or post them on our Facebook page.