



March 2011

Dear Parents

At a very successful meeting of Montessori school principals and staff in Gauteng North recently, the members of the group suggested that the discussion was a good topic for the next parent newsletter! My thanks go to Sian de Jong for taking minutes that were so useful in putting this newsletter together.

In our efforts to normalise the child, the dircetresses in the Montessori environments use certain strategies and have expectations from the children which help instil a sense of order. An example may be the simple routine that is followed every day in the classroom, the order that the materials are placed on the shelf, the order in which a piece of material is worked with. Parents can help maintain their children's development of order (and thereby their normalisation) in the following ways:

- Have a routine that you try and follow in the evenings when preparing for the next day.
- Have a routine in the morning that can help the child organise and plan their time more effectively.
- Communicate with the staff at school if any routine has been disrupted. (Staff, who are forewarned, are forearmed!)
- Clearly express your expectations regarding what you want your child to do - e.g. "When you are finished eating, you need to put your plate in the sink before you can go to play."
- The concepts of reward and punishment are foreign to the Montessori philosophy and should not be confused with withdrawal of natural consequences (if you drop the glass it breaks) or affirmation of the child's efforts. Bribery and threats are to be avoided at all costs as they are opening the doors for manipulation - the adult manipulating because they have the advantage of life experience and clever words, children because they are trying to protect themselves.
- Be consistent, while acknowledging that you too are human!

The meeting suggested that parents may like to explore the possibility of offering some kind of Montessori training for domestic staff and au pairs who often look after children in the afternoons and over busy weekends. Their understanding of the Montessori method will go a long way in helping your child sustain the independence they are learning at school. Often well meaning caregivers are doing too much for the children like cleaning up behind them or dressing smaller children etc. Discipline issues can also be explored in these sessions. If you are interested in this kind of training, speak to your school. They may be willing to host a Saturday morning session in conjunction with other schools. It is important that all the adults directly involved with your child's day in any meaningful way have some idea of your expectations as parents. Choosing Montessori for your child means that you have established a very specific philosophy, rooted in freedom within clear boundaries and respect between all.

For those parents on holiday now, enjoy this break with your children!

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