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Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

The following is extracted from our National Newsletter (July 2008)

"The Process of Normalization"
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In Montessori education, the term "normalization" has a specialized meaning. "Normal" does not refer to what is "typical" or "average" or even "usual." "Normalization" does not refer to a process of being forced to conform. Instead, Montessori used the terms "normal" and "normalization" to describe a unique process she observed in child development.

NAMTA website

Montessori observed that when children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration, working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and contented. Through continued concentrated work of their own choice, children grow in inner discipline and peace. She called this process "normalization" and cited it as **"the most important single result of our whole work"** (The Absorbent Mind, 1949)

She went on to write,

"Only "normalised" children, aided by their environments, show in their subsequent development those wonderful powers that we describe: spontaneous discipline, continuous and happy work, social sentiments of help and sympathy for others.....An interesting piece of work, freely chosen, which has the virtue of inducing concentration rather than fatigue, adds to the child's energies and mental capacities, and leads him to self mastery..... One is tempted to say that the children are performing spiritual exercises, having found the path of self perfectionment and of ascent to the inner heights of the soul. (The Absorbent Mind, 1949)

E.M.Standing (Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, 1957) lists these as the characteristics of normalization: love of order, love of work, spontaneous concentration, attachment to reality, love of silence and of working alone, sublimation of the possessive instinct, power to act from real choice, obedience, independence and initiative, spontaneous self-discipline, and joy. Montessori believed that these are the truly "normal" characteristics of childhood, which emerge when children's developmental needs are met.

From Lesley Britton's book - **Montessori Play and Learn** – page 25 a chart here shows the behaviour problems on either side of Normalisation that occur when children with weak or strong characters have poor interaction within their environments.

Vital creative forces within the child

interacting with

Environmental Conditions

<u>Strong character</u>		<u>Weak character</u>	
Poor interaction		Normalised Good Interaction	Poor Interaction
Behaviour problems Strong	Normalised Child Harmony and unity	Behavioural problems Weak	
1. Badly coordinated	1. Love of order	1. Untidy	
2. Mental confusion	2. Love of work	2. Idle, bored	
3. Extravagant imaginings	3. Attachment to reality	3. Shows fear	
4. Noisy, disturbs others	4. Love of silence and working alone	4. Always wants to be helped to work	
5. Disobedient	5 Not possessive	5. Often steals	
6 Possessive, selfish	6. Obedient	6. Obedient from fear	
7 Unable to concentrate	7. Concentrates	7. Unable to concentrate	
8 Aggressive	8. Exhibits independence and initiative	8. Clinging, passive	
9 Poor self-discipline	9. Self-disciplined	9. Poor self-discipline	
10 Unkind to others	10. Has joy	10. Crying, nightmares, fear of the dark	

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