



## Message from the SAMA President

Dear Parent,

What exciting news! A Montessori “Big Walk” with all of our schools from across South Africa joining up, on the 24 September our National Heritage Day.

In an address marking Heritage Day in 1996, former President [Nelson Mandela](#) stated: *“When our first democratically-elected government decided to make Heritage Day one of our national days, we did so because we knew that our rich and varied cultural heritage has a profound power to help build our new nation.”*

I love that we have a day to celebrate our country’s diversity and can proudly say that each and every day we do celebrate our mixed cultural heritage in our Montessori schools. Diversity is a core value in Montessori and thus essential to our collective schools’ ethos when nurturing and guiding the child’s development as an individual.

Each of our school communities reflect the diversity of the areas in which we live and work. The children explore from an early age the richness of cultures not just of our own city or country but also others from around the world. We question why, for example, food, clothes, language, homes, to name a few, are different from ours and thus we go on to explore the geographical or historical influences to find the answers. Children are prepared to care not only for themselves, but others and the earth through these explorations.

As Maria Montessori began to form very revolutionary ideas about the way children learn and education, she discovered and pointed out: *“The needs of mankind are universal. Our means of meeting them create the richness and diversity of the planet. The Montessori child should come to relish the texture of that diversity.”*

Even within our Montessori community we have differences and the time is now to reach out, offer support and celebrate our commonalities. And in the words of Maria Montessori; *“Averting war is the work of politicians; establishing peace is the work of education.”*

For further details of where your school will be walking, please contact your school’s administration.

Warm regards  
Jacky



**041 367 4936**

SAMA office

[admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)



## Let's make a place where no-one cries

*Written by a Montessori Mum*

As a family we are new to the Montessori way of engaging children when they are disobedient and initially found their way of disciplining children to be quite foreign, even ineffective at times, dare I say. So as a family we believed that children need a well-deserved hiding when reprimanding fails and their behaviour repeatedly becomes unacceptable. I do wish to add that we felt a measure of hypocrisy when we spanked our children for hurting their siblings and add "as a family we need to love and be kind to each other". However in our defence although our disciplinary methods seemed inconsistent and questionable in hindsight, we are BIG on communication. We have never had a television in our home, so we have no choice but to talk to each other. We hold regular family meetings and anyone at any point of grievance, joy or desire has the freedom to call a family meeting.

So, three months ago after my husband became intrigued with the way of discipline outlined at one of our school's parent evenings on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, he started to do his own research. He found a YouTube video by a Montessori teacher on "Discipline vs Punishment" The impact must have been revolutionary, for he called a family meeting to discuss the differences between discipline and punishment. We facilitated the discussion and did not simply tell the children what the difference was, but asked them in order to determine their understanding. What they shared really astounded us. Belinda, our eight year old who is in the primary class, simply said that with punishment you learn nothing, whilst with discipline you learn something.

*Were we losing control? Are they now in charge of the discipline? Who is running the home here? Panic was starting to set in.*

So with those words of wisdom, we embarked on a new journey. That of discipline, and introduced a "no hidings policy" in our home. We were all thrilled, especially the kids. Things were going well and the peace was truly gratifying. However, after a few months we noticed that our children were not as responsive to us or our instruction as they have been before. Comments like "well you can't spank us for that" and "no hidings remember" were frequently flung at us when we spoke about their behaviour and doing their chores on time. Were we losing control? Are they now in charge of

the discipline? Who is running the home here? Panic was starting to set in.

After a few months of increasing anxiety over the possibility of raising defiant children, my husband felt that we needed to review the "no hidings policy" as it appears to be ineffectual. He called a follow-up family meeting. In the meeting Jay suggested that we cast a vote for or against hidings. The voting count was predictable with three votes against and only one vote for hidings. The children were delighted and happily exclaimed that their father was outvoted and things will stay as they were. But that did not address the struggle we as parents were experiencing with unresponsive kids.

My husband then asked the children how to fix the challenge of them not listening to us as parents. The fact that we were now looking to the children for answers, was an indicator of our desperation.

Then Richard my almost five year old boy, said "*I have a great idea. Let's have a peace corner like we have at school*". We asked him to explain how it works. This was his reply: "*A peace corner is a place where you talk about your problems. The one that gets hurt gets to speak first.*"

We asked him and his dad to role play what happens in the peace corner:

Richard: *Dad you need to go first*

Dad: *Richard I feel really sad when I speak to you and you do not listen. I also feel angry when you do not do your chores on time.*

Richard: *I am sorry dad, I will listen and I will also do my chores on time.*

Richard: *Let's make a peace corner right here in our house! It is a place where there is no shouting.*

Richard: *Let's make a place where no- one cries.*

We are continuing our new parenting journey, which is filled with excitement and challenge and although our children did not get hidings every day, the threat of a hiding was always present.

As parents we are constantly learning that our children are not able to take responsibility for their behaviour when the discipline is extrinsic. Introducing punitive methods to address undesirable behaviour, have resulted in no learning. However over the past three months both children have suggested new methods of addressing challenges experienced in the home. They have co-owned the process. To quote Belinda; "*they learn with discipline.*"