



July/August 2010

Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Dear Parents

This month, I would like to share some thoughts with you regarding the Montessori philosophy of the four planes of development.

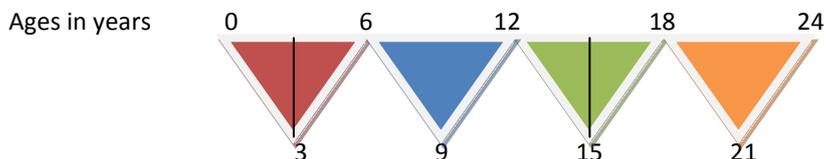
Human development follows natural laws. Montessori identified the different stages of development and called them, 'The Four Planes of Development.' Each plane of development has a different mind and a different personality.

These planes can also be seen as different stages of growth. The child is not just getting older and bigger. The child is constructing himself. It is the nature of child's work to work towards his or her development. Montessori also found that at the different stages of development, the child displayed different sensitivities (sensitive periods) and characteristics. These develop to satisfy the needs of the child. Children learn in different ways at different times of their development. A Montessori teacher is trained to observe for these sensitive phases as they are the outward expressions of the inner needs necessary for optimum development. By addressing the needs of the child during these times, we aid life.

Development is about changes and Montessori saw it as a process the individual goes through. Since human development is laid down by nature, it follows the laws of nature and has a schedule. We know for example that on average babies sit at 6 months, crawl at 9, and walk at a year. The adult can not go against these laws and needs to actively prepare a suitable environment and be responsive to the needs of the child. The adult therefore aids life.

Montessori stresses that education must be more than simply the passing on of knowledge. Her hope was that mankind would realise that we are one nation. We are all dependent on one another. We don't only have physical needs that need to be met, but social, emotional and spiritual needs as well. Montessori teachers understand that education is not about the adult imparting knowledge to the child, but rather being the catalyst that brings the child and the environment together. Each plane of development contributes to the whole and the successful completion of each plane lays the foundation for the next plane.

These planes of development can be shown in the following diagram:



The dividing lines in the first and third planes indicate the sub-planes. The first part of these planes are times of great internal work and absorption of the environment. The second half of the sub-plane is where the child/adolescent is assimilating the information gained in the first sub-plane and using the information in interaction with the environment and the construction of his or her character.

"The Four Planes, then, is only a framework, and yet, at the same time, it is extremely important precisely because it is Montessori's overall view of development. The development of the individual from the birth (or even before birth) right through to maturity. This vision of the whole of development provides, we could say, a *holistic* view of the developing human being, and it explains and justifies the constant Montessori idea of the importance of education as a 'help to life'." (Camillo Grazzini)

The SAMA newsletter this month has some articles on specific characteristics of these planes of development, and I am happy to share them with you if you are interested. Kindly just email me on president@samontessori.org.za and specify which plane is relevant to you.

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