



Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Pack a Picnic

The month of August is at its end, the long awaited warmer weather of spring can be smelt in the air. It is time to lose the extra kilos that winter parked at all those strange places and to bring out the fish salads loaded with omega 3 and 6.

So often parents ask teachers what they can do at home to help their children. So often the teacher reply with an answer in the direction of educational toys, assisting with homework and reading together. We often forget that children between the ages of 6-12 are in the 'Sensitive Period of Herding and Exploring'. This means that children of that age like to be with friends and they like to go outside to explore. Just think about how when you go on holiday, your child wonders off to explore the area.

I have wonderful parents, and every Sunday we used to go for an afternoon drive. In spring we often packed a picnic basket, with biscuits and coffee. I think back on those times when they allowed me to explore the world through my own experiences and eyes, running ahead to see what was around the corner. My fondest memory is when my mom forgot the sugar for the coffee and we had to stop at the little shop of Zuurbraak, an old missionary station close to Swellendam, to buy sugar. I was always amazed by the small packet of sugar! I often

wonder if she did not do it on purpose to amuse us. Those days were special, exploring the mountains, and exploring a little shop where you could buy eggs loose and 250g of sugar while the cows walked down the narrow street.

What can we do as parents to assist our children at home? The answer is simple; give them a good home full of fond memories for when they are old. Yes, it is difficult to make time to spend with your child, and going away is very expensive, I know, remember that I am a teacher! Packing a picnic basket does not need to be expensive.



Take your children out to explore the town you live in.

And by this I do not mean the local shopping mall that teenagers (and moms) love to explore. So often when we take children on school outings we are surprised by how few children have actually been there before. There are a number of educational sites in all the cities and towns which are not expensive, and can be explored by the whole family. Just think, you can shed a few kilos while walking in the botanical gardens, or your children can play in the park around the corner that you drive past every day. I go to the Union Building in Pretoria at least once a year, free of charge, and allow the children to charge around on a treasure hunt. They must try to find small things like a yellow

flower, or a white stone. They read up when they look at the plaque of people who died during the World Wars to find someone who had the same surname as their own. We make it fun by counting all the steps and I get my workout for the day.

When Montessori described the Sensitive Period of Exploring, she said that elementary children prefer spending time outside, and that this should be harvested by taking children outside on nature walks, explaining what is seen along the route.

“Let the teacher not lose sight of the fact that the goal sought is not the immediate one-not the hike-but rather to make the spiritual being which she is educating capable of finding his way by himself.”

You as a parent have the opportunity to assist the teacher in their daily work by helping to open your child’s eyes. Take your child out to places of interest and talk about what you see. When you drive somewhere leave the portable DVD player and PSP for

later. Discuss the vegetation and the mountains. Read the names of the rivers you cross and show the borders of provinces. You can even look at the farming activities of the area and explain the climate regions. Discuss the names of towns, and explain why Winburg is called Winburg, or why Warmbath was changed to Bella Bella. You can even make up little games like naming as many animals that start with the letter A.

Start by exploring your own town this spring on weekends when there is no sale at Woolworths. Allow your child to explore, and take friends along to stimulate his Herding Instinct. You would be the coolest parent if you take a few friends to play in the park. And one day, when you are a grandparent, your children might repay you by taking you along on outings as they recall many memories of those picnics they had with you. Who knows, 250g sugar packets might still be around.

Charl du Toit
SAMA President

Montessori said: *“Let us give the child the vision of the whole Universe...The Universe is an imposing reality, and an answer to all questions. We shall walk together on this path of life; for all things are a part of the Universe, and are connected with each other to form one whole unity. This idea helps the mind of the child to become fixed, to stop wandering in an aimless quest of knowledge. He is satisfied, having found the universal centre of himself with all things.*

(1) .Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence, Clio Press, Oxford, 2004. 13.

(2) E.M. Standing; Maria Montessori, Her life and work, Plume, U.S.A., 1984, 363.



SAMA OFFICE:

Cell no: 072 609 6979 **Office:** (041) 367 4936

Fax: 086 561 8774

e-mail: admin@samontessori.org.za

Website: www.samontessori.org.za