



August 2007

Message from the President

Dear Montessori Parents

An area of Montessori philosophy that often creates confusion is Maria Montessori's view on fantasy, imagination and reality.

Maria Montessori felt that children under the age of six need to experience their real world – engage with nature, have the opportunity to explore their world using their senses and learn to classify and sort the impressions absorbed unconsciously during the first three years of life.

For Maria Montessori, the “true basis of imagination is reality and its perceptions related to the exactness of observation”. (Spontaneous Activity in Education) She saw that there would be no progress without imagination and that it was something that helped the child to constantly enlarge the picture that he holds of his limited individual world. One of the most effective places to explore and create imagination is through the wonders of nature.

For the child entering the second plane of development (from 6 to 12 years old), he is beginning what Montessori called “The Age of Imagination” – where he uses creative and imaginative stories to spark the fascination with the past, and future. Cognitively children can differentiate between fantasy and imagination around the age of seven and become immersed in the wonder of their universe through their work.

Today's children and adults are bombarded with experiences of fantasy – on TV, Playstations and, more commonly, through “reality-based fantasy worlds” available on the internet.

The dangers of this lie in the complacency with which we accept these things as simply being “part of life”. We need to prepare our children to live in and contribute to a world that is advancing technologically at remarkable speed. But when we have no awareness of the influence of these things, and when we forget about the fundamental needs of children from a developmental perspective, we run the risk of changing the course of their lives negatively.

Children (and adults) need to engage with their real world often – play in the mud, plant and observe plants growing, explore the myriad of colours present in the outdoors, sit in silence. These moments allow us to just stop, pay attention to ourselves and allows

us the chance to see where we fit into the grand scheme of things. It is in finding the balance towards an integral way of life that we hold the possibility of changing the world.

Sam Streak
SAMA President

A wonderful website to visit is www.greenhour.com It comes packed with real activities to do with your children and gently reminds us how valuable it is for our children to be connected to nature.

A recommended book to read by author Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*. In this book he refers to our children as having ‘nature deficit disorder’. “The green space being replaced by the screen space as occupier of children's minds”. Through research we know that children who engage more in the outdoors are healthier.

The following pointers are from Greenhour and recommended by the National Wildlife Federation:

Children who regularly spend unstructured time outside:

- Play more creatively
- Have lower stress levels
- Have more active imaginations
- Become fitter and leaner
- Develop stronger immune systems
- Experience fewer symptoms of ADD and ADHD
- Have greater respect for themselves, for others, and for the environment

Experiencing the rains after a long drought



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