



National Newsletter

April 2009

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Southern African Montessori Association

Message from the President:

Dear SAMA Members,

As I write this message, it is Election Day and I have a rather large smear of indelible ink on my thumb just to remind me for the next few weeks that I cast a vote. I have been quite struck by how much the children in our school, from pre-school to the upper primary, have all been talking about the elections and how honest their discussions have been. It is so encouraging to know that from such a young age, they are enthusiastic about their country and show such a willingness to become involved in their futures. I have no doubt that being in a Montessori school has helped develop this attitude.

This leads me to ask you, the SAMA members to start considering people to nominate for the next Exco. You will be receiving nomination forms by the end of May and almost every position on Exco is up for nomination/re-nomination. Several members of Exco are willing to stand for re-nomination but we still need at least 5 new Exco members to help take SAMA into the future.

I will not even try to pretend that being on Exco is not hard work and a serious commitment. But I will say that the past six and a half years serving in some capacity on Exco has also offered me so much more than I ever could have imagined. I have viewed my work as a serious commitment and act of service towards the Montessori community and the children who benefit from our work. The work that the Exco does is entirely voluntary and it would seem the fairest, most "Montessori" thing to do if we shared that workload and gave ourselves the opportunity to do meaningful work.

I will be stepping down as president and a member of Exco on the 4th July, with immense pride at how SAMA has grown – in size and spirit – over the years and a sadness at releasing my responsibilities. I have absolute trust though that, you the members, will rise to the occasion and perform your act of service. Look out for the nominations forms and let's all make an effort to ensure SAMA's future.

Warm Regards
Sam Streak
SAMA President

CAPE TOWN CONFERENCE 2009 – Sibanye – We are One



Delegates at the Knysna 2008 Conference...

You don't want to miss Cape Town 2009!

For booking forms and info, visit the SAMA Website at www.samontessori.org.za or contact admin@samontessori.org.za

Early Bird Bookings close on 15th May 2009...

Advertising Opportunity for SAMA Members on Conference Bags

This is a call to all Training Centre Members and Supplier Members to advertise their business on the back of the conference bags that will be given to delegates at the Cape Town conference. Your advert including the company's logo, name and a contact number will be approximately A5 in size. A proof will be sent to you seven working days after the closing date. We anticipate approximately 300 delegates to attend the conference so this is an ideal advertising opportunity.

Cost : R4000.00 per advert

You will need to supply: Digital copy of your company logo, with your company name and a contact number.

Closing date: 22 May 2009

Adverts will be considered on a first come first served basis and first preference will be given to training centres and suppliers. Thereafter any schools who may wish to advertise will be given the option to do so.

Please send submissions/requests to: Heidi van Staden, academy@netactive.co.za

The Spiritual Preparation of the Directress

Submitted by Heidi van Staden

Dr. Maria Montessori taught her students about a special kind of preparation that they would have to do in order to fulfil their task as teachers in a Montessori school. She called this preparation a 'spiritual' one.

What follows are some thoughts on just what the spiritual preparation of the Montessori directress entails.

- Her duty lies in preparing herself as carefully as she prepares the environment.
- She should rid herself of the two 'deadliest sins' – pride and anger
- She can reflect on where she may be displaying pride. Too proud to admit a mistake? Too proud to admit that she is not 'getting through to a child'? Too proud to acknowledge that she is demeaning to her fellow colleagues?
- Reflect on where she can let go of anger. Towards children. Towards the parents. Towards fellow staff. Towards herself.
- Meditate on the things that cause her anger. How else could she possibly respond?
- Does she prepare herself to find the 'child who is not yet there' and 'have faith that he child will reveal himself'? These two Montessori phrases should be like a mantra that she uses on a daily basis.
- In her spiritual preparation – does the directress take time to reflect on the spirit of the child? How best can this be nurtured? How can she be of service to this 'spiritual embryo'?
- Can she see the positive side of situations, and is she willing to learn the lessons afforded her everyday?
- Can she let go of ingrained prejudice and bias? Is she willing to see all children as unique and special in their own way. (I don't believe that she should see all children as the 'same' – they are not!)
- In her spiritual preparation can the directress prepare herself to meet the needs of every child? Is she ready to observe patiently, present materials unflinchingly and stand back when necessary? Will she have the ability to know when to intervene and when not to?
- Does the directress understand that her role is so important, and the lives she touches so precious, that she cannot afford to be unprepared for her task?

- Possible ways in which she may prepare herself spiritually
 - Pray
 - Meditate
 - Read Spiritual texts
 - Take a walk in the garden – appreciating nature
 - Spending a quiet moment reflecting on good intentions for the day
 - Writing in a gratitude journal

Kids: they dance before they learn there is anything that isn't music.
~ William Stafford ~

In Chapter 27 of *The Absorbent Mind (The Teacher's Preparation)*, Montessori speaks about three stages of the teachers spiritual 'ascent'. These stages can be summarised as follows.

1. The directress understands the importance of preparing her environment to meet the needs of the children. She looks first to the faults in the environment when the children are restless rather than to the children themselves. She becomes the 'keeper and custodian' of the environment. Her own appearance should receive the same attention. Both she and the environment need to be attractive and inviting to the children.
2. In this stage the directress focus her attention on bringing the children together with the materials. She understands the importance of careful demonstration and keeps order in her class by directing children to purposeful activities.
3. The last stage of the directresses spiritual ascent is when she acknowledges that the child is concentrating on an activity. She stands back and allows the process to happen between the material and the child. She does not allow her own sense of accomplishment to interfere with the child's work.

In conclusion my prayer for all aspiring Montessori Directresses is that they would use Dr. Maria Montessori's words as they work with the children placed in their care, "I have helped this (child's) life to fulfil the tasks set for it by creation.....I have served the spirits of those children and they have fulfilled their development, and I kept them company in their experiences."



Bibliography

Montessori, M; (2003); *The Absorbent Mind*; Clio Press, Oxford England

The Business of Wellness

Submitted by Dr Margo de Kooker

(Based on an article originally submitted to the Port Elizabeth Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry)

The global impact of chronic illness and the cost of absenteeism and ill-health has brought the issue of wellness into the workplace. PricewaterhouseCoopers, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum, issued a report detailing the prevalence and impact of chronic disease on productivity and economic sustainability. Their findings make a compelling case for workplace wellness initiatives.

One fact from the report that urges all businesses to take an interest in wellness is that productivity losses associated with workers who have chronic diseases are as much as 400% more than the cost of treating the diseases, not to mention preventing them! These productivity losses are as a result of absenteeism, disability, poor quality of work or customer service and increased accidents, issues that are of concern to both small and big business alike.

Globally chronic disease represents 57% of all deaths annually (this is expected to rise by 23% to 80% in the next 20 –25 years if the current trend continues.

The workplace allows access to over 50% of the world's population, and this presents a unique opportunity for business to promote wellness as a means to improve financial results, positively contribute to their human capital investments and ensure economic sustainability.

The scale of the impact of chronic disease is highlighted in the report where it is estimated that by 2030 the total number of productive years lost in Brazil, South Africa, Russia, China and India is expected to increase by 64% from 20.6 million in 2000 to 33.7 million in 2030 due to cardiovascular disease *alone*, as individuals leave the workforce prematurely due to ill health.

Wellness has taken its rightful place on the business agenda, and already companies are making a difference through integrated initiatives that build on general aspirations for a healthy workplace and a healthy world.

To find out more about best practice in the field contact Dr de Kooker on one@imagnet.co.za

How could these components be related to your school and staff?

Submitted by Heidi van Staden

Consultant Graham Lowe has identified **five components of workplace culture that directly affect employees' health and the health of the organisation** overall:

- credibility
- respect
- fairness
- pride
- camaraderie

The underlying idea is that companies must genuinely care about the well-being of their employees.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Compiled by Heidi van Staden from the website www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/

Disease	When and for how long is a person able to spread the disease?	How is the disease spread?
Chickenpox	2 days before the rash appears and lasts until all the blisters are crusted over. A child with chicken pox should be kept out of school until all of the blisters have dried – usually about one week.. NB : You don't have to wait until all the scabs fall off	Direct person to person contact – droplet or airborne spread of discharges from an infected persons nose and throat, indirectly by contact with articles freshly soiled by discharges from the infected person's lesions NB : A child may contract chicken pox after exposure to a person infected with the herpes zoster (shingles) virus
Hepatitis A	Two weeks before symptoms appear – minimal after the onset of jaundice	Putting something in the mouth that has been contaminated with the stool of a person with Hepatitis A. (faecal-oral route) Casual contact, as in the usual office, factory or school setting, does not spread the virus.
Hepatitis B	Several weeks before the onset of symptoms and several months after	Direct contact with infected body fluids from an infected person – usually needles or sexual contact
Hepatitis C	One or more weeks before the onset of symptoms In chronic cases a person is potentially contagious indefinitely	Blood or body fluids form an infected person entering the body of a non-infected person (N.B. Not spread through breastfeeding, sneezing, coughing, sharing eating utensils and drinking glasses, hugging or shaking hands)
Impetigo	Until 24 hours after receiving antibiotic treatment	Direct contact with discharge from the blisters
Measles	5 days prior to and 5 days after the rash onset	Direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected people. Measles is one of the most readily transmitted communicable diseases
Mumps	Three days prior to and four days after the onset of the symptoms	Direct contact with saliva and discharges from the nose and throat of infected individuals
Ringworm	No information given	Direct skin to skin contact or indirectly by contact with items such as hair clippers, hair from infected people, shower stalls or floors
Rubella	7 days before – 7 days after rash onset	Direct contact with nasal or throat secretions of infected individuals
Typhoid Fever	Some people become lifelong carriers – only people with severe acute diarrhoea should be isolated	By eating food or drinking water contaminated by faeces or urine from an infected person

What Do Adults Know?

Submitted by CJ Jansen from Benoni Montessori Centre

We are all created to God's image, in perfection, we are perfect. Do not let the world mislead you to believe that there is something wrong with your children; please do not poison them with labels and chronic medication. Consider that our children are being born perfect for the times we are in, and that we the adults might be old with old ways. Instead of forcing our beliefs and systems onto the child why do we not educate ourselves into a way, that encompasses all aspects of the child, the way of Maria Montessori.

The Montessori philosophy believes in the freedom of the child. This does not mean anarchy at home or school, rather a peaceful structured existence where we live in harmony and equality. In stead of ruling over children with fear the directress engages in conversation enticing the student to follow an exercise. In the Montessori system the directress follow the child whom through his interaction with his environment show interest in items he is ready for. This opportunity is then used to present the work and at this point the young mind is like a sponge absorbing, in a very short period, the full spectrum of the work presented.

It is therefore required that Montessori directresses, as Maria Montessori, be spiritually well prepared in order to engage with the students. She is required to be calm collected and disengaged from daily strife, in this manner can she serve the child to her maximum capacity. Montessori is not just for the school and serves the home environment with equal justice, the question remains, what kind of parent are you, a demanding teacher or engaging directress?

Whether you are a teacher a student or parent, Montessori is not an enrollment to another school, it is a journey that offers the opportunity to connect with your authentic self, an opportunity to rediscover and experience the freedom of your soul, a unique interaction between parent and child.

Christie-James (CJ) Jansen is a metaphysician and Neuro-Linguistic Practioner. He runs works in Gauteng designed to re-introduce one to the being within, the core of Montessori philosophy. For further information, please contact CJ on 076 732 6851 or metaphyx@webmail.co.za or <http://metaphyx.blogspot.com>

Healthy eating tips for physical wellness - especially for the 'too busy to eat' Montessorian!

Submitted by Heidi van Staden

Stock Up on Healthy Foods

- Create a small "stash" of non-perishable food you can keep in your desk, briefcase, vehicle or locker. This is food that you can snack on or use to round out a meal on the go.
- Examples of foods to stock up on include dried fruits (raisins, dried cranberries, dried apples or apricots), individual containers of canned fruit or applesauce, whole-grain crackers, mini-boxes of whole-grain cereal or trail mix.
- Replenish your entire "stash" at least once a month to ensure you always have a fresh supply of healthy foods on hand.
- Pack a water bottle. A lack of water can make it harder to concentrate and can affect your work performance. Keep a water bottle with you through the day. Avoid specialty coffees and teas and soft drinks. Instead, enjoy water with your workplace snacks and meals.

from : <http://www.healthyalberta.com/HealthyPlaces/205.htm>

Household cleaning products – Wellness in the Environment

By Tanya Wyatt

All commercial household cleaning products have the potential to negatively impact on the health of your child (and yourself, for that matter). They are poisonous if swallowed, leach toxins into air and are inhaled (affecting the lungs). Surface toxins are handled and absorbed by the skin, all of which results in a toxic load against which your child has not yet developed adequate defences.

There are many easy (and very cheap) ways to make up your own cleaning products and they usually require only a few ingredients. Below is a list of different recipes that will leave your house clean, fresh and safe!

All-purpose cleaner can be made from a vinegar-and-salt mixture or from 4 tablespoons bicarbonate soda dissolved in 1litre warm water.

Drain cleaner - Pour 1/2 a cup of bicarbonate soda down the drain, add 1/2 cup white vinegar, and cover. Do not use this method after trying a commercial drain opener - the vinegar can react with the drain opener to create dangerous fumes.

Disinfectant and Toilet Cleaner - Mix 1/2 cup borax and some lemon juice with about 3,5 litres hot water. Alternatively pour 1 cup borax into the toilet bowl and leave overnight. The next morning scrub and flush.

Washing Powder - use a cup or bicarb per load in place of detergent. To brighten clothes add one cup of vinegar OR half a cup of lemon juice to the rinse cycle. A quarter of a cup of vinegar in the rinse cycle will completely remove detergent from clothes (DO NOT use vinegar if you are using bleach - the resulting fumes are hazardous).

Fabric Softener - add ½ to ¾ of a cup of bicarbonate soda to the wash.

Furniture polish – 1 part lemon juice to 2 parts vegetable oil.

Floor cleaner can be made by adding a few drops of vinegar to the cleaning water. For vinyl or linoleum, add a capful of baby oil to the water to preserve and polish. For tiles, use 1 cup white vinegar in 1 litre of water and rinse with clear water.

Deodorise carpets by sprinkling bicarbonate soda on carpets ½-hour before vacuuming.

Window and glass cleaner can be made by mixing vinegar-and-water solution, or lemon-juice-and-water. Wipe with newspaper.

Air fresheners - Open windows, simmer lemons, vanilla pods or cinnamon sticks in water, use flower essence oils, or use fresh flowers. Install a ceiling fan or an extractor fan. Sprinkle ½-cup borax in the bottom of rubbish bins to stop mould and bacteria growth, which can cause bad smells.

Oven cleaner or **pot scourer** can be made by sprinkling bicarbonate soda and dry table salt on moist surface and scrubbing with steel wool or a damp sponge.

Bath and tile cleaner can be as easy as rubbing in bicarbonate soda with a damp sponge and rinsing, or wiping with vinegar first followed with bicarb as a scouring powder.

For more information, or to book a consultation, call Tanya on 041-5811679 or email her on tanya@thehappybodyco.com

Sustainability and Schools

www.ecoliteracy.org

The Center for Ecoliteracy has based most of its work in schools. The values, habits, and worldviews of individuals are often set, and hard to change, by the time that people become adults. Society gives schools the responsibility for passing on cultural values. The "hidden curricula" of schools convey the values that are really important to the school, even when they contradict the lessons of the classroom (for instance, a soda machine in the hallway can speak louder than any number of lectures about nutrition). Schools are systems, and they are communities. Schools are themselves important nodes in the web of institutions that constitutes society. Whatever happens in schools will have profound effects on the rest of society.

CEL has also identified a number of qualities and practices that characterize schools that are most effective in educating for ecological literacy:

Schools as communities

The most effective schools are often communities that model the traits of sustainable societies:

- They know that children's ability to learn, and what they learn, are greatly affected by the vibrancy and health of the culture of the school and the quality of the relationships within it
- They function as "apprenticeship communities" in which leadership is shared and members of the community see themselves and others as both teachers and learners
- They recognize that "the curriculum is anywhere that learning occurs" (whether or not it is intended or directed by educators)

Practices of effective schools

These effective schools often incorporate one or several of the following practices:

- They connect children with the natural world through programs and projects outside the classroom, such as school gardens, habitat restoration, and communicating their experience in nature through painting and poetry.
- They practice place-based education that teaches students about the people, history, culture, and natural features of their local community and region.
- They practice environmental project-based learning, involving students in local projects that are meaningful and make real contributions to their communities
- They integrate in-class learning with hands-on experiences and with all of the activities (including, e.g., lunch) of the school
- They address whole children, recognizing that children's ability to learn is affected by their health and well-being, and that these are in turn affected by such factors as nutrition, exercise, and the health of the natural environment
- They employ the best current understandings of how brains and minds develop and how children learn. They attend to children in all their dimensions, including cognitive, emotional, and aesthetic

Transforming education

Implementing this kind of education often requires changing educational institutions, relationships, and practices. Because schools are expected to pass on cultural values, they are among the more conservative of our society's democratic institutions, and therefore among the slowest to change.

Classrooms, schools, and districts are also systems; effective change agents often use systems thinking and ecological concepts when devising strategies for changing those systems:

- They create networks of students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community organizations working together for change
- They change hierarchical authority patterns to promote the development of learning communities
- They solve for pattern rather than try to address individual "problems"
- They recognize and direct change efforts toward nested systems at multiple levels of organization (classrooms within schools within districts within communities within societies, etc.)
- They build strategies on the understanding that it is in the nature of systems to maintain a dynamic balance (Outside intervention doesn't really "change" a system; it only disturbs it, creating an opportunity for reorganizing in a different, and not completely predictable, way.)



Why Is Physical Activity Important?

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/preschoolers/PhysicalActivity/importance.html>

Being physically active helps your preschooler learn healthy habits.

Health benefits:

- Active preschoolers are less likely to be overweight. Learn how to tell if your child is growing appropriately.
- Some physical activities, such as running and jumping rope, help bone growth.
- Active children are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

Developmental benefits:

- Physical activity helps children develop motor skills and coordination. Some activities that help are:
 - walking, running, hopping
 - balancing, dancing, stopping
 - throwing, catching, kicking
- Physical activity helps children learn to feel good about themselves. For example, they feel proud after learning how to bounce a ball or ride a bike.
- Active preschoolers are more likely to be happy..
- Physical activity can also help in mental development. For example, pretending to be wild animals lets children use their imagination and be creative.
- As preschoolers run, climb, dance or stretch they build endurance, strength and flexibility.
- Walking, running, and similar activities help build endurance.
- Climbing and lifting help build strength.
- Playing on playground equipment and stretching help maintain flexibility. If they don't make use of their flexibility, it starts to decrease as they get older.
- If you are concerned about your child's ability to move and play actively, talk with your child's doctor.



How Much Physical Activity?

Your preschooler loves to move!



Encourage your preschooler to play actively several times every day. Preschoolers' activity may happen in short bursts of time and not be all at once.

Physical activity does not always have to be led by adults.

- Free play is unstructured physical activity that is chosen by the child. For example, preschoolers are engaging in free play when they play on the playground, play tag with friends, or pretend to be wild animals.
- Adult-led activities are structured to have a purpose, such as encouraging flexibility, focusing on strength, or concentrating on endurance.

Do you wonder if your preschooler is getting enough physical activity?

Ask yourself the following questions as a general guide:

- Does your preschooler play outside several times a day or in a room inside where they are free to run around?
- Does your preschooler watch less than 2 hours of TV daily (including all screen time)?
- Do you make sure that your preschooler doesn't sit for more than 60 minutes at one time?
- When actively playing is your preschooler breathing quickly and/or sweating?
- If you can usually answer yes to these questions, your preschooler is probably getting enough physical activity.

How Can You Help with Physical Activity?

There are many activities you can do with your preschooler. As children grow, their motor skills and coordination improve. Here is a general guideline of when your preschooler may be ready for certain activities:

- Age 2: running, walking, galloping, jumping, swimming with adult help and supervision
- Age 3: hopping, climbing, riding a tricycle or bicycle with training wheels and a helmet, catching, throwing, kicking a ball
- Age 4: skipping, tag, sledding, swimming, obstacle course
- Age 5: riding a bicycle — wearing a helmet, somersaulting, rollerblading or ice skating, gymnastics, soccer, virtual fitness games (such as Wii)



Indoor Activities

Here is a list of indoor activities you can do with your preschooler:

- Duck-duck-goose
- Treasure hunt
- Ring around the rosy
- Follow the leader
- Hide and seek
- Simon says

Outdoor Activities

Here is a list of outdoor activities you can do with your preschooler:

- Games in the yard or park
- Playing catch
- Swimming at the pool or beach
- Freestyle dance
- Throwing a Frisbee



Healthy students are better learners. Not only *must* schools contribute to student health through policy and daily practice, but health promoting schools are safer, calmer and host students demonstrating higher academic engagement and success than schools that are not health promoting."
—J Schultz—

“Live with intention. Walk to the edge. Listen hard. Practice wellness. Play with abandon. Laugh. Choose with no regret. Appreciate your friends. Continue to learn. Do what you love. Live as if this is all there is.”

“Let us be about setting high standards for life, love, creativity, and wisdom. If our expectations in these areas are low, we are not likely to experience wellness. Setting high standards make every day and every decade worth looking forward to.”

True silence is the rest of the mind; it is to the spirit what sleep is to the body, nourishment and refreshment.
William Penn



Yoga for Kids

By Marsha Wenig (www.yogajournal.com)

Our children live in a hurry-up world of busy parents, school pressures, incessant lessons, video games, malls, and competitive sports. We usually don't think of these influences as stressful for our kids, but often they are. The bustling pace of our children's lives can have a profound effect on their innate joy—and usually not for the better.

I have found that yoga can help counter these pressures. When children learn techniques for self-health, relaxation, and inner fulfillment, they can navigate life's challenges with a little more ease. Yoga at an early age encourages self-esteem and body awareness with a physical activity that's noncompetitive. Fostering cooperation and compassion—instead of opposition—is a great gift to give our children.

Children derive enormous benefits from yoga. Physically, it enhances their flexibility, strength, coordination, and body awareness. In addition, their concentration and sense of calmness and relaxation improves. Doing yoga, children exercise, play, connect more deeply with the inner self, and develop an intimate relationship with the natural world that surrounds them. Yoga brings that marvelous inner light that all children have to the surface.

When yogis developed the asanas many thousands of years ago, they still lived close to the natural world and used animals and plants for inspiration—the sting of a scorpion, the grace of a swan, the grounded stature of a tree. When children imitate the movements and sounds of nature, they have a chance to get inside another being and imagine taking on its qualities. When they assume the pose of the lion (Simhasana) for example, they experience not only the power and behavior of the lion, but also their own sense of power: when to be aggressive, when to retreat. The physical movements introduce kids to yoga's true meaning: union, expression, and honor for oneself and one's part in the delicate web of life.

A Child's Way

Yoga with children offers many possibilities to exchange wisdom, share good times, and lay the foundation for a lifelong practice that will continue to deepen. All that's needed is a little flexibility on the adult's part because, as I quickly found out when I first started teaching the practice to preschoolers, yoga for children is quite different than yoga for adults.

Six years ago, I had my first experience teaching yoga to kids at a local Montessori school. I looked forward to the opportunity with confidence—after all, I'd been teaching yoga to adults for quite a while, had two young children of my own, and had taught creative writing for several years in various Los Angeles schools. But after two classes with a group of 3- to 6-year-olds, I had to seriously reevaluate my approach. I needed to learn to let go (the very practice I had been preaching for years) of my agenda and my expectations of what yoga is and is not.

When I began to honor the children's innate intelligence and tune in to how they were instructing me to instruct them, we began to co-create our classes. We used the yoga asanas as a springboard for exploration of many other areas—animal adaptations and behavior, music and playing instruments, storytelling, drawing—and our time together became a truly interdisciplinary approach to learning. Together we wove stories with our bodies and minds in a flow that could only happen in child's play.

Benefits of Yoga for Kids

- Connects oneself and others
- Improves socialization skills and boundary awareness
- Improves focus and concentration
- Improves balance and coordination
- Increases strength and flexibility
- Improves overall physical fitness
- Improves motor planning skills
- Improves fine motor skills
- Increases sensory integration
- Improves memory and reading retention
- Improves speech via improved breathing and alignment
- Teaches tools to calm the body
- Teaches sequencing (often challenging for learning disabled children)
- Promotes creativity
- Reinforces the learning process
- Offers tools for living and growing up in the world today
- Offers children with special needs, and children of all ages, opportunities to expand their horizons.

http://www.yoga-with-jeanette.com/kids_yoga



Health Benefits of Laughter

"Angels can fly because they take things lightly" – Unknown

Humor and laughter can cause a domino effect of joy and amusement, as well as set off a number of positive physical effects. Humor and laughter strengthen our immune systems and help us recover from illness, as well as bring joy into our lives.

Laughter is a birthright, a natural part of life. The part of the brain that connects to & facilitates laughter is among the first parts of the nervous system to come on line after birth. Infants begin smiling during the first weeks of life & laugh out loud within months of being born. Even if you did not grow up in a household where laughter was a common sound, you can learn to laugh at any stage of life. www.helpguide.org/life/humor_laughter_health

Make Them Laugh

www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Make_Them_Laugh/

Make yourself and your child healthier and happier by making sure that humor is part of your daily life. Here are a few fun family activities.

Laugh Corner

Set aside an area in your home (*school*) where laughter is a requirement. Put out art supplies and silly picture books. Have your children use the art supplies to create their own silly pictures to decorate the corner. Help your child create funny hats for the whole family to wear as they share funny stories or make comic faces. Remember, the funniest thing for young children is the unexpected: Use nonsense words inside a real sentence; dress up and put on a silly hat; draw a dog wearing sunglasses and lying on the beach as a "hotdog."

Riddle Me

By age 5, most children are interested in riddles. Use them anytime to add to the conversation and keep everyone smiling. Challenge your children to tell riddles, even if the children repeat themselves. They may tell their riddles incorrectly, but they will still laugh and you will, too.

Laughter and Poetry

There are many funny books of poetry, silly rhyming, and pictures for children—from Dr. Seuss to Shel Silverstein. These wonderful books span all ages and often tell a great truth within their funny rhymes and stories.

*"A day without laughter
is a day wasted."
Charlie Chaplin*

LAUGHTER YOGA...

www.fifteenminutebreak.com

Laughter yoga, or hasya yoga, began in the public parks of India in 1995 as a program developed by Dr. Madan Kataria, a Bombay physician. This simple, but effective stress busting method has been proven to offer health and well being benefits.

Laughter yoga consists of a simple breathing and stretching routine, followed by 6-8 laughing exercises, like Royal Wave and Cell Phone Laugh, in a session lasting about 40 minutes. Laughter yoga is safe for almost everyone regardless of age, fitness level or physical limitations.

Laughter yoga for kids

What do preschoolers do hundreds of times a day, but adults typically only do fifteen times a day? Laugh.

The purpose of yoga is to create a mind/body balance, and laughter yoga, or hasya yoga, also has that goal. Laughter sessions are led by a Certified Laughter Leader and begin with simple stretching and breathing followed by 6-8 laughing exercises like Milkshake Laugh and Lion Laugh. Kids especially enjoy making the funny faces and silly movements that comprise the bulk of the session, which lasts about 40 minutes.

Benefits of laughter yoga for kids

- Boosts self confidence
- Enhances lung capacity and increases circulation
- Creates mind/body balance
- Builds social bonds
- Lessens anxiety and stress
- Strengthens immune system
- Massages internal organs
- Encourages release of endorphins

Laughter yoga is a great ice breaker and is beneficial to mind, body, and spirit. It calms the mind, strengthens the body, and lightens mood. It helps kids cope with anxiety and aids in social interaction. Laughter yoga is non-political, non-religious, non-competitive and non-threatening. It is adaptable to any age or any physical limitation. And it's really fun!

Laughing Meditation: Different Kinds of Laughter

http://www.kidsrelaxation.com/relaxation_activities/laughing_meditation_kinds.htm

This activity is perfect for stimulating laughter in kids. As we know, laughter is contagious. You only have to observe the merriment of others in order to begin to feel it yourself. Experiment with these different kinds of laughs to get the giggles rolling.

1. Laugh like a hyenna.
2. Laugh like Santa Clause.
3. Laugh your squeakiest laugh.
4. Laugh your snort laugh.
5. Laugh like you're stuck in a hole in the ground.
6. Laugh your best echo laugh.
7. Laugh your silliest laugh.
8. Laugh like your nose is plugged.
9. Laugh like you are tied to a tree and someone is tickling your toes with a feather.
10. Laugh like you're the jolly green giant.

Mums Mail May 2009

New Resource Books for Environmental Education

Submitted by: Lucy Watson, Ocean View Montessori School, Durban North

We have all heard the Term “**Ecological Footprint**” being used, this refers to a way of calculating how much land and water a human population needs in order to produce its resources and absorb its wastes. Environmental Educators are now also using the term ‘**Ecological Handprint**’ too as the positive flip side of the coin. This refers to a way of calculating the level of environmental action and education that is going on in the same human population.

I have just read about a new series of books called “**The Handprint Resource Books,**” designed to give teachers lots of environmental education ideas to use within the framework of the National Curriculum from Grade R to 12. These books include everything that the teacher will need to plan a series of lessons on a particular theme: stories, activities and support materials. The books work from real stories of environmental learning and change. Many stories and examples come from schools following the Eco –Schools Programme and are practical and cost effective

Titles Include:

- ❖ Creative Garden Design
- ❖ Worming Waste
- ❖ Recycling, Waste Reductions and Creative Re-use
- ❖ The Buzz on Honey Bee Economics
- ❖ Re-Using Shower And Bath Water
- ❖ Have you Sequestered your Carbon?

These books are available from Share-Net, a branch of WESSA (Wild Life and Environment Society of South Africa) along with many other titles in the area of Environmental Education and all very reasonably priced.

Contact: WESSA 033 3303931, sharenet@wessa.co.za

Some book ideas for kids...

Health...

The Monster Health Book: A Guide to Eating Healthy, Being Active & Feeling Great for Monsters & Kids! by *Edward Miller*

Storytime Yoga – Teaching Yoga to Children through Story by *Sydney Solis*

The Treasure of Health and Happiness by *Carol Goodrow*

Eat Healthy, Feel Great by *William Sears, Martha Sears, Christie Watts Kelly*

Humour...

Ribticklers: Funny Stories by *Michael Rosen*

Revolting Rhymes: *Roald Dahl*

Runny Babbit, a Billy Sook by *Shel Silverstein*

(Author: *Eve Pranis*) Submitted by Lucy Watson, Ocean View Montessori School

Food – one of our most basic human needs – is vital for healthy bodies and minds. But what messages about food are our kids absorbing? The media, fast-food culture, and school meals that promote fats, sugars, salt, and additives, help set the stage for diet-related diseases. Health and nutrition experts agree that young people are not eating enough plant-based foods. Our response? Get 'em growing! There's something about planting, nurturing, and harvesting peas, radishes, and other garden trophies. It makes fruits and vegetables seem, well, worth eating. What's more, several research studies point to the value of school gardens for increasing students' nutrition knowledge and preferences for fruit and vegetable snacks.

School gardens can also inspire students to try creative classroom cuisine; experience foods and growing techniques from other cultures, past and present; or uncover the life stories of particular garden crops. Consider how a nutrition theme could also push students to think beyond their own food choices and work toward improving nutrition and stemming hunger in their own communities. We hope you find inspiration and tips in the following classroom stories, articles, and Web sites.

Nutritious Lessons Snack Food Garden

"A parent volunteer in my multiage class was appalled with the sugary snacks he saw the children eating during mid-morning break," reports Westminster, VT, teacher Irene Canaris. "As a farmer concerned about children's awareness of healthy eating, he offered to help us create a 'snack garden' that now nourishes the entire class throughout the school year."

Irene's students plan and plant the garden each spring, then with their families take turns caring for it during the summer. When children return in September, their first fall snack preparation adventure is harvesting and canning 85 pints of dilly beans. And that's just the beginning of the garden snack menu.



In math class, students multiply a recipe for pickle brine, then make crock-style cucumber pickles. "Children who initially refused to sample a fresh green pepper were clamoring for them after watching their friends eat them in class," reports Irene. Other snack foods include fresh cherry tomatoes, carrots, apples, and peas, and transformed vegetable treats such as carrot cake, carrot soup, roasted pumpkin seeds, baked potatoes, and mashed potatoes with rutabagas. To increase the quantity and variety of nutritious snacks, the class decided to write letters to local food businesses, describing the program and asking for donations. Locally produced cheddar cheese, apples, peanut butter, and crackers are now regularly featured foods.

But Irene's snack garden does more than just provide healthful foods: It nourishes students' bodies and minds while also supporting the curriculum. Students design garden maps, conduct pH tests, take soil temperatures, and conduct investigations in their classroom GrowLab. "When our children are planning to triple a carrot cake recipe so 40 of them can eat it for a snack, 3 times 1/2 cup of raisins becomes a meaningful math problem," explains Irene. "As they keep journal entries about their garden, they are becoming articulate writers. If they are sitting beside their garden on a warm September day with sketch paper and pastels, capturing the last yellow of the sunflowers, surely they are having an intimate aesthetic experience."



Is the snack garden encouraging students to make healthier food choices? Here's some feedback straight from a parent: "When I pick him up, inevitably the first unsolicited bit of information I get from him concerning his day is about what he had done in the garden and/or what he ate for snack. He has an awareness of the process of getting food to the table and also a wider range of food he will eat."



There are no seven wonders of the world in the eyes of a child. There are seven million.
~Walt Streightiff~

Other articles featured on Kids gardening website...

[Cultivating Nutrition Awareness](#) - Kids eat up garden-focused nutrition lessons and make healthy food choices.

[Thematic Nutrition Gardens](#) - Nutrition garden consultant shares healthy theme garden ideas.

[Citrus Fest: A Food Inquiry](#) - Students appreciation for healthy foods grows with their mini-citrus grove and "fruitful" investigations.

[Food Stories: A Drama Unfolds](#) - Cross-curricular explorations of garden crops culminates in an student-produced educational puppet show.

[Nurturing Literacy and Community](#) - When at-risk first graders asked, "Why can't we give some of our harvest to poor people?" learning blossomed.

[Stalking A-Maize-in Lessons](#) - Science, nutrition, and history lessons abound as third graders explore this important native crop.

[Digging Deeper with Nutrition](#) - A smorgasbord of ideas for launching nutrition inquiries.

[Resources](#) - Web sites and free materials to feed hungry minds.

Web Sites with information & lesson plans for schools on Nutrition

- [The Food Museum](#) - Honors the foods that sustain us and features colorful online exhibits with histories of plant foods, a question and answer section, book reviews, and food links. (www.foodmuseum.com)
- [Leafy Greens Council](#) - Arugula to watercress, this site sings the praises and describes the nutritional and healing value of leafy greens. Also includes lesson plans and offers for free materials. (www.leafy-greens.org)
- [Team Nutrition](#) - This USDA site is dedicated to supporting healthier children. It features a database of participating schools, grant information, and teaching resources, including tips on linking gardening and nutrition education. (www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Educators)
- [USDA for Kids](#) - An entry point for federal sites for kids that deal with food, gardening, agriculture, nature watching, and science. Includes food guide pyramids for two age ranges. (www.usda.gov/news/usdakids)
- [5 A Day](#) - Scads of vegetable and nutrition information, lesson plans, links, and student activities. (www.5aday.com)
- [Feeding Minds, Fighting Hunger](#) - This unit helps students grasp the complexity of global hunger and malnutrition, and encourages creative problem-solving. (www.feedingminds.org)



“Wellness is a connection of paths: Knowledge and Action.”

Joshua W

**The best six doctors anywhere
And no one can deny it
Are sunshine, water, rest, and air
Exercise and diet.
These six will gladly you attend
If only you are willing
Your mind they'll ease
Your will they'll mend
And charge you not a shilling.**

~Nursery rhyme quoted by Wayne Fields, What the River Knows, 1990~



Permaculture Gardening Kit

Submitted by Lucy Watson, Ocean View Montessori School

Albert Einstein once said: **“We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive.”** With the global challenges that we now face, 2009 should become the landmark year for thinking green and looking at sustainability.

With that in mind I was really excited to come across a new product for children, families and schools, put together by Gavin de la Mare of the Ballito based organization called “Grow Ur Own.”

Gavin has designed a permaculture organic gardening kit that promotes the values of:

- Care of the Earth
- Care of the people
- Sharing resources

The kit includes a very informative booklet on all aspects of permaculture, along with instructions on how to plan your garden, and the basic essentials needed for start up. All of this is contained in a box that doubles as a seed germination tray. The ideas can be implemented in a simple way at schools with pre-school aged children and in a more in – depth way throughout the primary and high school phase. It is also a fabulous family activity and supports school work across the National Curriculum, and with that in mind it would be a wonderful tool for Home-Schoolers. The approach links into the learning areas of Life Orientation, EMS, Science, Geography, Literacy and Numeracy with the exploration of eco systems, composting, making a wormery, solar power, water conservation, planning, mapping and team work.

Getting involved in the garden with children is lots of fun and can be so educational: a very positive way towards changing ways of thinking and leading to a more harmonious and sustainable way of living.

Gavin is currently in Australia with his wife and young son on a mission to research more ideas for sustainable living that will work well in South Africa.

If you would like to order one of the kits in the meantime then please contact:
Lucy Watson on **083 286 0318** or lucy@montessorisa.co.za.
The price of the kit is R200 and this includes postage and packing.



By: [Creamer Media Reporter](#) Edited by: Mariaan 30th March 2009

South Africans who participated in Earth Hour on Saturday saved about **400 MW** of electricity, **400 t of carbon dioxide**, **224 t of coal** and about **576 000 l of water**, power utility Eskom reported on Monday.

Earth Hour was organised by the World Wildlife Fund in an effort to get one-billion people worldwide to switch off their lights for one hour.

“The **400 MW** translates to **about four-million 100 W bulbs or 6,7-million 60 W bulbs** switched off on Saturday. This shows a concerted **effort by about one-million households**,” said Eskom MD corporate services and Eskom climate change champion Dr **Steve Lennon**.

Lights on average consumed about 10% of household electricity, whereas geysers used as much as 40% of the total electricity bill, commented Lennon, highlighting the difference that could have been made if South Africans had also turned off their geysers during Earth Hour. “We believe that the Earth Hour initiative has created incredible excitement around the need for efficient use of energy. As South Africa’s primary supplier of electricity, our hope is that all South Africans harness this excitement and use energy wisely every day of the year,” said Lennon.

City of Johannesburg member of the Mayoral Committee for Environment **Prema Naidoo** also on Monday applauded the Earth Hour initiative. “We hope that this symbolic gesture has demonstrated to the world that people everywhere are concerned about this issue, and are willing to act,” he commented. Naidoo expressed the need for people to take action against climate change and global warning now, saying that it hoped government’s National Energy Efficiency Campaign would be supported by every individual, business and energy player.

“Here in South Africa, we have unique reasons to be concerned about the energy issue. It is not widely understood that the production of electricity produces enormous amounts of carbon dioxide, one of the main greenhouse gases. As a result of our habits of energy wastage, we have become the eleventh highest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the world, he said.

Regional Meetings Update

Submitted by Sumaya Tar Mahomed, Host Schools Representative, Exco

Please diarise the dates for the Regional Meetings & take note that they will be held at the New Host Schools for 2009

We have planned exciting & interesting topics for our Regional Meetings this term.

As a matter of Montessori Grace and Courtesy, we would like to remind you to PLEASE RSVP for these meetings! It is essential for planning purposes and simply good manners! Your co-operation is sincerely appreciated.

- **Gauteng North:** Village Montessori School
Regional Meeting: 9th May 2009
Guest Speaker: Rose Graham
Topic: The Importance of Music & Movement for children
- **KZN:** Wonderkids
Regional Meeting: 23rd May 2009
Topic: Health & Wellness for the Directress and for the Children
- **Gauteng South:** Little Star Montessori School
Regional Meeting: 23rd May 2009
Guest Speaker: Celia Coburn – Self Esteem Practitioner
Topic: The Importance of Self Esteem in a Montessori School
- **Eastern Cape:** Greenwood School
Regional Meeting: 16th May 2009
Guest Speaker: Taddy Beyleveld - Head of Knysna Montessori
Topic: Comparing Reuven Feuerstein's theory with Montessori's Theory.

Reuven Feurstein studied under Jean Piaget and worked with Jewish refugee children after World War 2. Taddy attended a workshop sponsored by SETA for teachers in the Western Cape where they were promoting Feurstein's theory and encouraging government teachers to implement it in their classrooms.

- **Western Cape:** Auburn House
Regional Meeting: 6th June 2009
(details to follow)

"Experience is a blessing in disguise. It taught me to keep on no matter how hard the going may be. A lesson I needed to learn before I could succeed in anything" R.Darby

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Focus for May 2009 issue:
SAMA National Conference and the
Value of Continued Professional
Development
Deadline for submissions: 20 May 2009

*All articles are contributed by SAMA members.
We would love to hear from our readers. Please
send interesting snippets, valuable insights and
amusing anecdotes to share with others and help
make this newsletter an exciting and interesting
one. If you feel you would like to contribute,
please send to Deirdré via:*
admin@samontessori.org.za

Just for fun...

How to Write by Frank L. Visco

My several years in the word game have learnt me
several rules:

- Always avoid alliteration.
- Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
- Avoid clichés like the plague. (They're old hat.)
- Employ the vernacular.
- Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
- Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
- It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
- Contractions aren't necessary.
- Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
- One should never generalize.
- Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
- Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
- Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
- Profanity sucks.
- Be more or less specific.
- Understatement is always best.
- Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
- One-word sentences? Eliminate.
- Avoid footnotes.*
- Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
- The passive voice is to be avoided.
- Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
- Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
- Who needs rhetorical questions?

* They're annoying, typically irrelevant and hard to find.

Kids Are Quick

Submitted by Diane Niland

TEACHER: John, why are you doing your math multiplication on the floor?

JOHN: You told me to do it without using tables.

TEACHER: Donald, what is the chemical formula for water?

DONALD: H I J K L M N O.

TEACHER: What are you talking about?

DONALD: Yesterday you said it's H to O.

TEACHER: Millie, give me a sentence starting with 'I.'

MILLIE: I is..

TEACHER: No, Millie..... Always say, 'I am.'

MILLIE: All right... 'I am the ninth letter of the alphabet.'

TEACHER: Clyde, your composition on 'My Dog' is exactly the same as your brother's. Did you copy his?

CLYDE: No, sir. It's the same dog.

TEACHER: Harold, what do you call a person who keeps on talking when people are no longer interested?

HAROLD: A teacher

Available SAMA Products:

- **The SAMA Recommended Curriculum** – an integration of A Montessori Recommended Curriculum with the Revised National Curriculum Statement. For queries and to order, contact the SAMA office. The curriculum is printed and bound, and is available to paid up SAMA Institutional Members for R250.00 and to all other categories of membership for R1000.
- **SAMA Policies and Procedures CDs** – a comprehensive compilation of government laws, acts, and policies on CD 1 and examples from various Montessori schools and resources to use in school management on CD 2, at R50.00 each. These prices are for school members only. All other categories of membership may purchase the CDs for R500 per set.
- **SAMA Parents Handbook** – a full colour, beautiful publication, useful to parents as an introduction to Montessori Education. This booklet covers basic Montessori philosophy and is the ideal starting point for parent education. These handbooks are available to SAMA School Members only at R25 per copy. For orders of 30 or more, additional postage will be added.
- **SAMA Centenary Scrapbook.** A beautiful full colour compilation of Southern African Centenary and 100 steps Stories and photos. Cost R250 per book plus R25 package and postage.

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