



# National Newsletter

**January 2009**

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**Southern African Montessori Association**  
**Message from the President:**

Dear SAMA Members,

Best Wishes for 2009. May it be everything you wish for and more. As I write this message, it is also the start of the Chinese New Year – the Year of the Ox. So Happy New Year again!

At SAMA preparations are well underway for our Annual conference to be held in Cape Town from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> July 2009. Please reserve these dates in your diaries now – you don't want to miss this conference. I would suggest looking at confirming travel arrangements soon in order to get the best airfares. We will have some contacts for accommodation etc in the next newsletter. Booking for the conference will open by mid-March so start your planning now.

This year we are able to bring you not one, but TWO, keynotes speakers from overseas. Barbara Isaacs will return by popular demand and will bring with her a colleague, Berhane Dory, who has strong ties to Africa. Read about them and some introductory conference information in the newsletter.

The overall theme for this newsletter started out as School Management and has evolved into Management on Different Levels. We hope it inspires you at the start of the year.

My wish for SAMA and its members is that the support, connections, communication and commitment between ourselves continues to go from strength to strength in this year.

Warm Regards  
Sam Streak  
SAMA President

*"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."  
John C. Maxwell*

# 2009 Annual SAMA Conference

This year, the Conference is being held in **Cape Town** at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in **Mowbray** from **3<sup>rd</sup> July** to **5<sup>th</sup> July**.

The theme this year is "**Inclusion**"

We have had so much fun exploring what this could incorporate and have come up with more ideas and speakers than we could possibly present. In hind sight we have unconsciously focused on the main areas of influence on the child and in so doing come up with a few main ideas.

Here is a taste of some of the areas we are exploring.

## **Our Keynote speakers are Barbara Isaacs and Berhane Dory.**

Their main focus is "**Following the child and what that means in the context of Inclusive practice across all planes of development.**" They will also present related topics which we will explore in more detail in the February newsletter.

## **Including ourselves.**

The focus here is the "**importance of putting time aside for ourselves in our planning.**" As educators, we always include everyone else and often forget to make time for ourselves. We would like to propose that 2009 be the year we set aside to get ourselves organized, informed and create order in our lives. We aim to address admin issues, updates on relevant policies and present ideas on how to relax, have fun and care for oneself at the same time.

## **Including our Parents**

Without these important people we would not have a school. We intend to get speakers to give advice on how to nurture parents and form dynamic relationships with them. At last year's conference, parents asked for more talks geared just for them. This year we will be presenting a number of topics that go hand in hand with Montessori, aimed at encouraging effective parenting skills. Then we will also address children that have special needs, we explore what parents need to know if their child is sent for an evaluation and what all the various test mean. We also intend to give directresses the necessary skills to coordinate their observations, interviews, reports and various therapists as they attempt to care for each child. We hope to provide an open forum to discuss various topics regarding developmental delays and the various learning difficulties, offer support and ideas, as well as have some parents share their personal experiences in Montessori with a child that has special needs.

## **The nurturing environment**

What makes a favourable environment and what does inclusion mean to your school and what would allow for a more nurturing and safe environment whether it is a school in a township or one that is applying for accreditation and implements "Authentic Montessori Best Practices."

Our early bird offers are **R600** for full members and **R1 200** for non members.  
More information in the next Newsletter.

*"What we hope ever to do  
with ease, we must learn  
first to do with  
diligence."  
(Samuel Johnson)*



*So here begins the new  
path, wherein it will not  
be the teacher who teaches  
the child, but the child  
who teaches the teacher.  
(Maria Montessori)*

## **Keynote Speaker: BARBARA ISAACS**

### **Back by Popular Demand...**

Barbara Isaacs trained with Montessori St Nicholas in the early 1980's and since then continued to study both in the field of Montessori education and early years, achieving a Masters in Early Years under the guidance of Tina Bruce in 1999. Since her initial training, Barbara has continued to work with children, teaching at the St Nicholas nursery after graduation and running Seedlings Montessori in Wantage, Oxfordshire since 1991. Over the past 20 years, Barbara has trained and supported training of Montessori Teachers in her capacity of lecturer both at Montessori St Nicholas, London Montessori Centre and Montessori Centre International. In her current role of Chief Executive of Montessori Centre International, she has been involved with course development and promotion of Montessori education in the UK and internationally.

Barbara represents the Montessori Community on Early childhood Forum and is a regular contributor to Montessori International Magazine. Her book "Bringing Montessori into your Practice", to be published in April 2007, examines the Montessori early years curriculum in the context of the Guidance to the Foundation Stage Curriculum as published in England in 2002. Barbara is committed to bringing Montessori education to the children of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Keynote Speaker: BERHANE DORY**

Berhane is currently Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies at the London Metropolitan University's Department of Education and also serves as a Distance Learning Tutor.

Berhane's area of teaching expertise is in the field of Early Years education. She holds a Montessori International Diploma (St Nicholas Montessori College), Montessori Advanced Diploma 6-12 Years (London Montessori Centre) and has a Masters degree.

Berhane has been in the field of Early Years education for more than 20 years, during which time she has been involved in setting up nurseries in Ethiopia for deprived children & lecturing & examining on early years programmes.

She has published a children's story in her native Amharic language. Berhane's research interest is the impact children's emotional wellbeing has on their learning and overall development.

"The 'Children's House' is a garden of child culture, and we most certainly do not keep the children for so many hours in school with the idea of making students of them!  
Maria Montessori

*I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.*  
- Einstein -



## On the Theme of Inclusion

### Call Me by My True Name by John Snyder (from [www.jola-montessori.com](http://www.jola-montessori.com)) Used with permission of the author

There is a large and growing literature in the anthropology and sociology of so-called “learning disabilities.” Montessorians would be wise to acquaint themselves with this literature, its history and its goals.

One point of departure shared by virtually all of this research is the understanding that the categories used to sort the competent from the incompetent are socially constructed. In his book *Questions of Competence*, anthropologist Richard Jenkins writes:

“‘Competence’ is the capacity or potential for adequate functioning-in-context as a socialized human. [...] Neither incompetence nor intellectual disability—nor indeed disability more generally—are consistent, “natural,” or self-evident categories. This is not to ignore the fact that, for a range of reasons, individuals differ in their intellectual or physical capacities. Nor is it to overlook the likelihood that some distinction between competence and incompetence is drawn in all societies. However, where the line is drawn, and what it means, varies enormously.”

One line of research compares cultures all over the world with respect to:

- (1) what competencies are important to the culture,
- (2) where the line is drawn between competence and incompetence, and
- (3) what the culture does with those deemed incompetent.

A vast range of different answers to these questions has been found. The same person, if transposed from one culture to another, would be seen very differently, with very different consequences for their quality of life. The inescapable conclusion is that, as Jenkins goes on to say, “all models are local models.”

Having this perspective is therapeutic for those of us who work with complex, challenging children. It reminds us to recognize the somewhat arbitrary nature of our judgments of competence or normality. It hovers there in the background whenever we are sure we have seen and named the true nature of the child’s “problems,” asking, “Are you sure? Are you sure?” In Montessori terms, it gives us another way to understand why our work is always with the periphery of the Child’s being, not its core.

Jenkins notes that where he grew up, having a good ear for music, a good sense of rhythm or artistic talent, were considered positive but by no means necessary attributes. He then comments:

“The practical aptitudes that are identified as (in)competencies in any given local or cultural setting are always, at least to some extent, an arbitrary selection from the spectrum of aptitudes and potentialities that make up the human behavioural portfolio. The degree to which they are marked or emphasized is also—once again, to some extent—arbitrary.”

#### Language Misleads Us

Very much related to the issues of social constructedness of our views of (in)competence, is the issue of language. We can learn from anthropologists, linguists, and philosophers of language how much our thinking and our very perception of the world is conditioned by our language. Thinking is, to a great extent, “linguaging,” and this is yet another complicating factor in our work with complex, unusual children.

Consider the never-ending debate on labels in special education. James W. Trent, in his history of mental retardation, notes that in the United States, “defectives became mental defectives, imbeciles became high-grade and low-grade imbeciles, moron became the higher-functioning mentally retarded. More recently, the mentally retarded have become mentally retarded persons and now persons with mental retardation and, in some circles, persons with developmental disabilities or persons specially challenged.”

In this progression and in analogous progressions for all manner of learning differences and putative disabilities, we can see the labels shifting along with the shifting influence of medical, sociological and political points of view. The constantly shifting labels are the tip of the iceberg of controversy and confusion about the phenomena they are labelling.

In Trent’s progression we can also see a growing uneasiness with the acts of labelling and categorization themselves. But to have a diagnosis is already to have a label. In this sense, labelling is inherent in the medical model of learning differences. The rest is a degree of politeness.

This is much more than a philosophical point. Labels have consequences; sometimes they imply whole lives. Anthropologist Michael Angrosino describes the operational meaning of diagnostic labels in our culture:

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“Because the United States lacks universal health insurance, virtually the only way many people—particularly the indigent, but also the working poor—can receive medical and associated services is by accepting a designation of disability. [...] It is simply not in the best economic, legal or political interest of most persons defined as disabled to contest their designation.”

In our work, we see many parents who end up seeking a label for their child because it is the passport to the bureaucratic maze of social and educational services.

For English speakers, there is an even deeper problem: English is a label-making language. Marshall Rosenberg, the developer of Non-Violent Communication, tells of a communication workshop he held in Malaysia. The interpreter, with whom he was working, came to him before the workshop expressing some concern about how to translate much of what Rosenberg meant to talk about. Apparently, in the language of Malaysia, there is no way to directly translate “So-and-so is such-and-such”; e.g., “John is lazy.” Surprised, Rosenberg asked what they would say instead. The interpreter explained that it would have to be translated something like “John rests a lot and does not do as much work as others.” This sort of non-judgmental description was, of course, exactly what Rosenberg had intended to advocate in place of labels.

When we say in English (or in many other languages) “John is lazy” or “Sue is a borderline personality disorder” or “Mark is dyslexic,” structurally, the utterance appears to be defining something essential about the named person. The copula “is” is the verb of definition. “Snow is frozen water” and “John is lazy” are two very different speech acts, but they can both be taken as definitions. If we stop to think about it, we know that John is not our judgment of his work ethic; he is much, much more. But the language obscures that.

Labelling language reinforces the medical model’s view of the labelled condition as belonging to the individual. (Dyslexia is of the essence of Mark.) But Montessorians and many non-Montessori critics of the medical model know that the individual is always an individual-in-context, that it makes no sense to speak of “learning differences” in a context-free way. That was the message from the cross-cultural studies mentioned above.

### **Call Me By My Name**

Sophia Cavaletti tells the story of a physically handicapped boy who participated in the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, the Montessori-inspired religious education curriculum. There he heard the story from the Gospel of John in which the Good Shepherd “calls his own sheep by name.” This made such an impression on the boy that from that day on he would never wilt under the teasing or cruel name-calling of other children, but would reply with great dignity, “The Good Shepherd has called me by my name.”

This touching story speaks to the importance of being seen, accepted and valued for the totality of who one is. As Montessorians, we have a chance to see who the child is even more clearly than other observers because in our free environments filled with materials that appeal directly to the child’s inner needs, they reveal themselves as in no other place. Having seen the child for who he is why would we ever then fall back on the misleading labels assigned them by those whose only perspective is that of a diagnostic test? Instead, let us call them by their true names.

***John R. Snyder is an upper elementary guide at Austin Montessori School in Austin, TX***



"What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to a human soul"  
(J. Addison)

## **“Good ideas that helped ensure a smooth transition for first time children.”**

Submitted by Gayle Thompson

### **The first one was from Mariana Van Niekerk of Somerset Montessori.**

This year, the day before school opened, Mariana invited only the new children to come in and plant flowers. This then provided a wonderful incentive to return the next day, to water and take care of the plants. I thought it was a beautiful idea of how to enlist the co-operation of new children and immediately allow them to feel a vital part of the environment. Because the school is next to her home, another thing Mariana does is to ask one of her parents to set up a tea for the new moms in her kitchen. This takes place one hour before home time and all the new mothers are then invited to enjoy some refreshments while they get to know one another and network. This takes place without Mariana, as she is busy with the children in the school and the parents organize it all themselves. They are all there then at home time, to greet their children. Mariana believes that this is one of the many things done at her school that contributes to her strong parent community.

### **The next one was from Jacky Price of Blue Moon Montessori.**

Jacky was sharing how happy she was to be back at school with a few of us and told of how she let the new children come in two days before with their moms for an hour. The moms were filling in forms while Jacky spent time with the children. Jacky's school is still young and for her this relaxed interaction worked very well. When Jacky heard that one of her new children did not want to come to school, what was especially helpful was that Jacky then visited the child at home. That action encouraged the child's attendance the following day and she has not looked back since.

We were all reminded of when home visits were part of what we did. Some directresses did it before a child was accepted into their school and some did it just to get to know the family more over a cup of tea. The children would invariably be so excited to show you their bedroom and introduce you to their pets etc. that you came away with a very good idea of home circumstances and an important part of their lives. It also contributes to strong parent involvement as your bond grows and you become part of the family.

Once a year I used to visit parents homes in order to do their verbal feedback reports. Some of these parents remain friends to this day. These interviews lasted about half an hour or so. They took place in the afternoon, after school and preferably with both parents present. I think that as schools get larger, it is often not that easy to schedule home visits. But we all strongly agreed that it is truly something we should re-introduce and encourage.

### **“Advice for the first term”**

I would like to wish all our members a wonderful 2009 and remind them to especially enjoy the first term. So much growth takes place in this term which can often not be seen by those directly involved everyday. A good example is to ask the children to draw a picture of themselves for you to keep, in the beginning of the first term. Repeat the process each term and observe their progress for the duration of their stay with you. As you expose them to various games, songs movements, and knowledge so the pictures reveal what information has been internalised.

Remember to stay relaxed, have fun and remain consistent and predictable. This is the time for Practical Life and Grace and Courtesy and the effort spent will save you valuable time later on. It takes three weeks to develop a habit, so a child needs to see everything in the same place and done the same way for at least three weeks in order to succeed. Children are also motivated more by praise than punishment and should always be encouraged and recognized for their efforts. If your children are difficult look to your leadership style. It is vital that directresses use Practical Life and especially Grace and Courtesy to help focus and lead their children to normalization through work and concentrated effort. This needs to take place in the first term before they go onto Sensorial and all the other wonderful equipment. When this is done effectively there are normally few discipline and disruption issues. Children that have been encouraged to take responsibility for their environment by folding cloths, dusting, cleaning, sweeping, polishing, walking on the line and taking part in the silence game, etc. normally have a calmness about them. Practical Life also needs to be kept as real as possible. Encourage orange squeezing; cracking nuts, scrubbing tables, gardening, wormeries, composting.....the list goes on. Encourage children to have their hands in water, its very calming. Encourage messy work and then give them the skills to tidy up and restore order. Movement and physical activities must be incorporated into the daily routine and directresses need to be involved and observing at all times.

Best idea of all is to allow individual snack. It alleviates hungry children having to wait while everyone packs away and allows the older children that essential uninterrupted work cycle and concentration, which after all is what we are trying to achieve. If you would like more ideas on how to implement individual snack in your environment please feel free to email or contact me. With that said remember we are all here for you, our members, so you can contact the Exco for help, advice or just to share and not just when you have a crisis.

**“Man is a sculptor of himself, urged by a mysterious inner force to the attainment of an ideal determined form.” Maria Montessori**

**Self-Management...**  
**Caring for our children by caring for ourselves by John Snyder**  
**(from [www.jola-montessori.com](http://www.jola-montessori.com)) Used with permission from the author**

On the occasions when I slow down enough to actually think about it, it occurs to me that my job as a Montessori teacher is too hard for someone of my limited abilities—i.e., someone who is still dependent on food, sleep and occasional recreation. The demands never seem to stop, and if they do happen to slow down from time to time, I have a huge backlog of practice-improvement projects to fill the gaps.

Parents sometimes ask with a certain awe, “How do you do it?” How, indeed? How does one not only keep going, but do so with good cheer, grace, a sense of perspective and, more often than not, a calm presence in the classroom?

I am happy to share at least part of “how I do it.” I suspect that behind every successful teacher is a similar practice of self-care and reflection, although we seldom talk about these things with each other. Perhaps we should.

The crux of the matter is that less is more. At the centre of the hurricane of teacherly activity, there must be a still centre, a place of repose in the heart and the mind. This, I am convinced, can only be maintained through the regular, disciplined practice of stopping, paying quiet attention to one’s inner voices and reconnecting with one’s highest self. One could call it a practice of prayer or meditation or affirmation or self-reflection—the point is it must be a regular period of quiet time, free from interruptions—an appointment one keeps with oneself.

I think of this quiet time both as a gift to myself and as a period of spiritual conditioning that keeps me emotionally prepared for whatever comes my way in and out of the classroom. Although the children do not know of my practice of reflection, I am certain they could tell you which days I have failed to keep my appointment with myself.

My anchor, the backbone of my daily preparation for the classroom, is a prayer found in Thich Nhat Hahn’s book *Teachings on Love*. It is his version of a 1,500-year-old prayer from Sri Lanka.

*May I be peaceful, happy and light in body and spirit.*  
*May I be safe and free from injury.*  
*May I be free from anger, afflictions, fear and anxiety.*  
*May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding and love.*  
*May I be able to touch the seeds of joy and happiness in myself.*  
*May I learn to see the sources of anger, craving and delusion in myself.*  
*May I know how to nourish the seeds of joy in myself every day.*  
*May I be able to live fresh, solid and free.*  
*May I be free from attachment and aversion without being indifferent.*

Just as a good weightlifting routine works all the major muscle groups, I find that these nine lines exercise all the psycho-spiritual “muscles” I need to strengthen for my work with children, parents and colleagues. I start my day with it, and I keep a copy in the front cover of my lesson planning book so that when I feel myself slipping away, I can read it to re-centre and refresh myself.

*May I be peaceful, happy and light in body and spirit.*

I appreciate that this prayer starts with a clear statement of the desired state, the end-result of the practice. Sitting quietly, following my breath, I can bring my body and mind back from its habitual agitation and anxiety to the place of peace, happiness and lightness that it is gradually learning to inhabit through years of this practice. Like a tennis player mentally rehearsing her stroke, I can mentally rehearse noticing the places of tension and disconnection in me and shifting them to calm connectedness. What could be more useful and important to someone working intensively with children?

*May I be safe and free from injury.*

I have come to realize over the years that every kind of progress in the classroom depends upon all members of the community feeling safe and free from injury. This line reminds me of that and allows me to renew my intent to provide that physical and emotional safety for myself so that I can better provide it for the community. This hallows the many mundane things I do every day to ensure the safety of the community, from lessons on safe use of science equipment to keeping the first-aid kit well-stocked to mediating conflict on the playground to honouring the children’s efforts instead of their products. Looking a little more deeply, I also see that part of my practice is to know how to take care of myself and others when injuries do happen. Having the confidence that comes from being prepared, I believe, allows me to take appropriate risks on behalf of the community. So, far from being an invitation to always “play it safe,” this line stretches me and allows me to walk away from fearful states of mind.

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*May I be free from anger, afflictions, fear and anxiety.*

It is so helpful to have such a clear list of the major obstacles I face in my relationships with children, parents and colleagues. It is even more helpful to have time to envision myself free of them and to look calmly at the roots of these problems. I can, for example, rededicate myself to my practice of noticing when anger and fear are arising in me and not acting on them until I have had a chance to calm myself and inquire into what the emotion is telling me. My experience has been that simply acknowledging the presence in myself of anger, fear, anxiety, craving, jealousy and the like greatly diminishes the urgency and force with which they batter my body and mind. The function of these emotions is to call my attention to something I need to take care of, and when I calmly give them my full attention, their job is done and they can relax.

*May I learn to look at myself with the eyes of understanding and love.*

This line is priceless because it goes straight to the heart of so much self-inflicted pain, and it also helps to remove one of the biggest obstacles between me and the relationships that I need to build in a peaceful classroom. Behind this line is the wisdom that until we understand, accept and love ourselves, we cannot adequately understand, accept and love others. Indeed, whenever we think that other people are making us miserable with their foolishness and bad behaviour, it is very likely that we are projecting onto them some self-criticism or fearful insecurity that has taken root in us. To our chagrin, we find those hypercritical, perfectionistic voices that chatter in our own heads speaking through our mouths to inflict harm on others. How wonderful to be able to practice stepping out of that cycle of injury by beginning to extend to ourselves the compassion that will allow us to connect compassionately with others.

*May I be able to touch the seeds of joy and happiness in myself.*

This line comes from a view of human nature as being like a garden in which are planted all kinds of seed—each one representing a capacity of body and mind. In each of us are the seeds of great evil, suffering and destruction, side-by-side with the seeds of great goodness, joy, courage and the highest states of being. Some of these seeds we inherited; some have been planted by our culture and personal history. The seeds we water and tend, whether wholesome or otherwise, grow to crowd out the others, coming to dominate our internal gardens and our very lives. I find this outlook to be completely aligned with Dr. Montessori's views on the richness and essential goodness of human nature and the importance of the environment in the self-construction of the human being. The salient point in this line is that, although it is easy to lose sight of it when we are in the grip of some negative emotion, the seeds of joy and happiness are still there. We do not have to wait for our lives (or even just our classrooms!) to be perfect before we can be genuinely happy.

*May I learn to see the sources of anger, craving and delusion in myself.*

Now we go beyond a clear intent to be free of anger, fear and anxiety to search for the roots of these negative forces in our lives. Quietly, deeply, consistently looking at these things, while we are not being carried away by them, gives us the chance to see the patterns, to understand the ways these things work in our particular minds. Seeing clearly, we have a chance to reorient our thinking and rebuild our habits into something more positive and free. To me, this line moves beyond wishing and visualizing to doing something about the situation.

*May I know how to nourish the seeds of joy in myself every day.*

Continuing the metaphor of seeds and the intent to learn to view and treat ourselves with compassion, this line invites us to take concrete action on our own behalf. The positive seeds are there, so how can I water them? I have gradually developed a mental list of very concrete ways that I can touch the seeds of joy and peace in myself, and I try to do some of these things every day. Here are a few of my touchstones: taking a slow walk in nature; really seeing and experiencing a blue sky, a flower, a stone or a child's face; thinking of someone I love; enjoying a quiet cup of tea; giving my full attention to a great piece of music or art; holding my dog in my lap; reading a good poem or science magazine. Your list might be very different, but you can make one by noticing the things that give you joy. In particular, instead of reacting mindlessly out of anger, irritability or fear, I try to stop and do one or more of my "joy things" to ground myself again in my best nature before responding to the situation.

*May I be able to live fresh, solid and free.*

As a teacher, I often think of this line as a description of the opposite of burnout. Surrounded as I am by the freshness of children, may I be able to find that freshness in myself. May I be solid enough to withstand the wind and waves of experience, stable enough to provide the consistent strength of purpose it takes to build a good community. May I live as a free person, not a thrall to my faulty perceptions, fearful attachments, public personae or life history.

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*May I be free from attachment and aversion without being indifferent.*

Montessorians are passionate people, the idealistic followers of a passionate and visionary leader. We have great expectations and bold plans. We have strong feelings about many things, strong likes and dislikes, long lists of both shibboleths and taboos. And yet, these attachments and aversions are often our undoing, the very things that get in the way of our realizing our vision. This line, when regularly rehearsed, helps me let go of my certainties, both positive and negative, and helps me live instead with the kind of openness to experience that Montessori herself exhibited at San Lorenzo. It reminds me that the opposite of passionate attachment and ego investment is not indifference but mindfulness, holding my perceptions and beliefs lightly, and being fully present to whatever the moment brings.

Now for the best part. Having taken good care of myself, I take the time to traverse these nine lines again, but this time the energy is directed outward to the community.

*May the children [or a specific child] be peaceful, happy and light in body and spirit.*

*May the children be safe and free from injury.*

*May the children be free from anger, afflictions, fear and anxiety. Etc.*

For me, this closes the circle, and I am ready to enter the classroom again to see what great good can be wrought from whatever raw materials the day brings.

**John R. Snyder is an upper elementary guide at Austin Montessori School in Austin, TX.**

"When teaching, light  
a fire, don't fill a  
bucket."  
(Dan Snow)

We must, therefore, quit our roles as  
jailers and instead take care to  
prepare an environment in which we  
do as little as possible to exhaust the  
child with our surveillance and  
instruction.  
Maria Montessori

**Back to School - Survival Kit** (<http://www.yesiteach.org/back.htm>)

<b>Toothpick</b>	<b>Pencil</b>	<b>Mint</b>
<b>Rubber band</b>	<b>Eraser</b>	<b>Candy Kiss</b>
<b>Band aid</b>	<b>Chewing gum</b>	<b>Tea Bag</b>

**Here's why:**

**Toothpick** - to remind you to pick out the good qualities in others.

**Rubber band** - to remind you to be flexible, things might not always go the way you want, but it will work out.

**Band Aid** - to remind you to heal hurt feelings, yours or someone else's.

**Pencil** - To remind you to list your blessings everyday.

**Eraser** - to remind you that everyone makes mistakes, and it's okay.

**Chewing gum** - to remind you to stick with it and you can accomplish anything.

**Mint** - to remind you that you are worth a mint to your family and friends.

**Candy Kiss** - to remind you that everyone needs a kiss or a hug everyday.

**Tea Bag** - to remind you to relax daily and go over that list of your blessings.

## Website Review: [www.ednews.co.za](http://www.ednews.co.za) Submitted by Sam Streak

Like many of you, I have found keeping up with Education Law and policy quite overwhelming but am very aware of my responsibility to do so. I have found the publication, School Management and Leadership to be of great help as well as Alan Clarke's book, The Handbook of School Management.

Although some criticize the newsletter and Alan's book as being irrelevant to Montessori schools, I would disagree. Developing policies and ensuring our schools are held accountable to both ourselves and the relevant authorities is imperative. Many of us were not fortunate enough to have these areas covered in our training programmes (although this is not the case today) and so need all the help we can get.

For those running primary and high schools, all of these things are emphasized in our Umalusi accreditation and I found the School Management and Leadership newsletter as well as Alan's book particularly useful with that. In addition a website has been developed to complement both publications. On the website they have made available sample school policies as well as other interesting information related to school management. Much of it is aimed at government schools but there remains a lot for us to learn too. You can order Alan Clarke's book directly from Macmillan Telephone: 011 731 3335 Fax: 011 731 3500 E-mail: [customerservices@macmillan.co.za](mailto:customerservices@macmillan.co.za). I understand that a CD of all the policies is now available from them too.

I have extracted the following information from the website:

**Ednews** is the companion website to School Management & Leadership, the only South African publication that focuses specifically on issues of school management, leadership, governance and policy. It is written primarily as a resource for school principals and others who hold leadership positions within the South African school sector.

**SM&L** was launched at the start of 2007. Its subscriber base has grown considerably since its launch and now includes many of the country's leading public and independent schools - testimony to the value these principals place on staying informed. We are proud of the fact that we have subscribers in all nine provinces and that they are representative of the full socio-economic spectrum of South African schools. Included in our subscriber network are departmental officials, academics from tertiary institutions and institutional subscribers such as libraries. Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, mentioned in a presentation to the top performing schools in the 2007 SC Examinations that she reads **SM&L** from cover to cover.

Managing Editor Alan Clarke is author of the recently-published The Handbook of School Management. He is a former principal of Westerford High School and also served as General Secretary of the South African Principals' Association for a number of years. Alan continues to read widely on education-related matters and uses his years of practical experience to source and select current and relevant material for inclusion in **SM&L**. He is assisted in this task by consulting editor Clive Roos, who has diverse and extensive experience in education and who is particularly knowledgeable about issues of policy and education law.

We aim to keep our readers informed about current and relevant education-related issues - particularly those relating to the South African school system - and with sound practical and specific advice on the management, leadership and governance of South African schools.

**It has been said that management is about doing things right. Leadership is about doing the right thing." Imagine if we did them both...**

"The adult works to improve  
his environment while the child  
works to improve himself."  
*María Montessori*

# THE CONCEPT OF STRESS by Dr Margo de Kooker (MB.BCh)

What do we mean by stress? It can be thought of as a natural phenomenon. Demands are made and we need to rise to the occasion, stretch ourselves a bit and meet the demand. This leaves us with a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction, and we would say that the stress was “good stress” (or eustress).

Often, though, our response to a situation does not appear to meet the demands of the situation we encounter us and we feel overwhelmed or get frantic, and we would think of this as “stress” in the common use of the word (more accurately distress or **strain**).

In reality stress is neither good nor bad, it exists as part of various dynamic systems interacting and adjusting. What is important is the internal make up of the individual who is operating in this changing system. So it’s more about WHO has the stress than WHAT the stress is.

For this workshop I suggest that we take another view of stress. What if the stress response that we all experience regularly is simply **feedback** from the bodymind system?

**What if it’s a physical, mental and emotional response that reminds us that the strategy we are trying to use in a particular moment is not meeting the needs of the situation.**

The consequence of ignoring this feedback is that we don’t change our strategy, but rather get bogged down in responses that might perpetuate the stress even further. To put it another way - when we are “stressed” we are “out of control”.

There are 4 basic ways in which we generally try to respond to this situation of “stress” or being “out of control”:

1. We drive ourselves to do more or work harder (become frantic and over-driven) and get a feeling of control back.
2. We try harder to control ourselves (especially emotionally) as well as the people involved (over-controlling).
3. We give up (feel helpless) “ I can’t anymore”.
4. We blame and feel like victims (feel hopeless) “Why bother”.

These are classical responses to stress (which often result in distress or strain). The drawback of these natural tendencies (though they may work in the short term to alleviate the feeling of internal distress and thus “solve” the problem) is that they are, in themselves, stress-inducing responses when over-used or when built into our coping in a stable way.

How do we manage stress healthily? We need to know what we are managing, and what tools we have at our disposal. We then need to learn to manage the internal systems effectively, making our response to challenges or threats appropriate and health/life enhancing. In order to do this we need to draw on (or develop) the internal capacities that help us manage stress creatively and with emotional intelligence.

*Dr de Kooker is a medical doctor specialising in Stress Management, Wellness and Mind/Body Medicine. She has a practice in Port Elizabeth and runs training programmes related to all aspects of Wellness both nationally and internationally.*

## Just for fun...some stress management!

### THE 12 WARNING SIGNS OF GOOD HEALTH\*

(If several or more appear, you may rarely need to visit a doctor.)

1. Regular flare-ups of a supportive network of friends and family.
2. Chronic positive expectations.
3. Repeated episodes of gratitude and generosity.
4. Increased appetite for physical activity.
5. Marked tendency to identify and express feelings.
6. Compulsion to contribute to society.
7. Lingering sensitivity to the feelings of others.
8. Habitual behaviour related to seeking new challenges.
9. Craving for peak experiences.
10. Tendency to adapt to changing conditions.
11. Feelings of spiritual involvement.
12. Persistent sense of humour.

## Members' Page

### Speak softly to the children

Speak softly to the children.  
Let your words be winds of  
promise, not of peril.

Words that sweep with one vast blow  
the pain of hunger,  
the loneliness  
the fear of Life not fully lived.

Speak softly to the children.  
For what you say to children  
Lingers

It is imbedded and entrenched  
in the very depths  
of our Planet's being.

Speak softly to the children.  
And as you do,  
Say words that prompt  
The world to action  
So they can see that you mean  
Exactly what you say.

Speak softly to the children  
The children of the world,  
The children ravaged  
By famines and by wars  
Speak the words of Love and Hope  
Through Work and Knowledge,  
For they need to learn  
That they, too, can reach the stars.

Whisper words of wisdom.

Speak softly to the children

Keep your promise:  
Do your part!

By Ina Esteva

(From the Montessori Made  
Manageable, Inc website:  
<http://www.mmm-inc.com>)

## REGIONAL MEETING DATES

Invitations will be sent out as usual with further details. For now, please diarise the dates of your regional meeting.

Western Cape (Stepping Stones) 21<sup>st</sup> February 2009

Kwa-Zulu Natal (Oceanview) 7<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Gauteng North and South (combined at Maria Montessori House) 14<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Eastern Cape (Port Elizabeth Montessori School) 21<sup>st</sup> March 2009

Look forward to seeing you there!

### Interesting...

"Aoccdrnig to rsereach at Txeas M&A Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteters in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a total mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe." (Anonymous)

## Vacancies / Positions Wanted

**Morning Star Montessori** in Faerie Glen Pretoria has a vacancy for an experienced, Montessori qualified 3-6 Head Directress to start January 2009. The vacancy has arisen due to staff relocation overseas. Top salary offered to the successful applicant. Please contact Jenny on 082 602 4427.  
**Fax CV to 012 991 0228.**

**Hilltop Montessori Preschool** in Johannesburg is looking for a qualified 3-6 year Assistant Directress to form part of a well established, small Preschool – starting February 2009. Little or no experience is required. Please forward your CV to Dureya at [miafamily@absamail.co.za](mailto:miafamily@absamail.co.za) / **082 928 1364**

A family looking for a dedicated full time Montessori teacher for **homeschooling/au-pair position** for twin girls aged 4 in the Morningside area. Position available immediately. Salary is high and negotiable. Contact Jem on 079 526 0209 or e-mail CV to [Jem.patel@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Jem.patel@hotmail.co.uk).

Village Montessori School, Centurion is looking for a qualified **9 to 12 year directress**. Please email your cv to Liselle at [montessorivillage@gmail.com](mailto:montessorivillage@gmail.com)

Village Montessori School, Centurion is looking for a qualified **12 to 15 year directress**. Please email your cv to Liselle at [montessorivillage@gmail.com](mailto:montessorivillage@gmail.com)

**Montessori Student – POSITION WANTED** – looking for morning position in Montessori school as an assistant. Contact Caren at [carendavidson@gmail.com](mailto:carendavidson@gmail.com)

"The classroom - not the trench - is the frontier of freedom now and forevermore."  
Lyndon B. Johnson

## Marketing

We are importers and distributors of a **COMPLETE RANGE OF MONTESSORI EQUIPMENT**  
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website: [www.rdm.co.za](http://www.rdm.co.za)

**Childrens House**  
Official Distributors of Nienhuis Montessori Materials  
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**Edu Equipment**  
High quality locally manufactured Montessori Equipment from  
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Cell 0722116940 Fax 041-3791595 or  
[eduequipment@absamail.co.za](mailto:eduequipment@absamail.co.za)

If you would like to advertise in the SAMA Newsletter, please send the relevant information through to [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)

For more information on Job Vacancies, Associate Member (suppliers), Member schools and more, visit SAMA website [www.samontessori.org.za](http://www.samontessori.org.za)

**Focus for February 2009 issue:  
Montessori in a Global Community and  
Alternative Approaches to Education  
Deadline for submissions: 20 February 09**

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

## 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.

For more details contact: [admin@samontessori.org.za](mailto:admin@samontessori.org.za)

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