



Southern African Montessori Association

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Message from the President

Dear SAMA Members

This is our last newsletter for 2007 and, on behalf of everyone at SAMA, we wish you a safe and happy holiday season. Although we know not every school closes during this time, most of you will be enjoying a well-deserved break.

I have been so fortunate this year to visit many schools around the region and am constantly amazed and inspired by people's commitment and effort in taking the work of Dr Montessori forward. Thank you to all of you who have hosted me, even for a short while. Visits to schools and training centres in Swaziland, Namibia, KZN, Gauteng and parts of the Eastern Cape have been incredible highlights of my year.

To the Exco and Regional Representations – thank you for your contributions over the past few months. It is our collective work that is allowing SAMA to go from strength to strength.

We are planning some great SIG meetings for next year so look out for your regional newsflashes in January with announcements. We are also planning a Centenary / Conference printed publication early in the new year so make sure you submit your centenary celebration stories to us soon. You can forward these to us at **admin@samontessori.org.za**

As this school year comes to an end, I salute each of you who have given selflessly to the communities in which you work and live. As Montessorians, we know the value of service and give endlessly to those around us.

I hope in this time of rest, you will get an opportunity to give back to yourself so that our collective work can continue in the New Year. In the words of George Bernard Shaw, "I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can."

May your holidays leave you inspired, rejuvenated and bursting with energy!

Warm Regards
Sam Streak

Senior Primary? . . . Now let me see!

Gone are the days of order. Shelf order, cubby-hole order and classroom order. But they try so hard! The only 'order' is that the 9 – 12's are in a constant form of change. Changing opinions, friends, ideas, dreams to name but a few. It is precisely this constant change that makes for fascinating and interesting results in whatever it is they do or put their minds to.

Coming over to the senior primary environment from the 6 -9 class, I have experienced great excitement and enthusiasm – a readiness for this new phase. This slowly grows and develops until their last year in the phase. I find that the parents are not as involved with their children during these years. It is as if the excitement of going to pre-school for the first time and being in grade 1 has dissipated by the time they reach grade 4.

Having taught grade 4 – 7's since 1998 I have noticed a pattern emerging in the grade 7's over the years. By roughly June of their grade 7 year the boys and girls alike are ready to venture into the next phase. Gone seems the days of being childish. Not only do their bodies go through changes but their interests change and this puts them into the next phase. Although we combine grade 4 – 7 at our school for logistical reasons, they should ideally be accommodated in a unique way so that they are not completely isolated but also separate when they want to be.

The energy in the senior primary class is endless. Their creative minds manifest in almost everything they do and it never ceases to surprise and amaze. To my mind the most important contribution a directress can make in this environment would be to accept and love these children unconditionally and to be there for them when they choose to invite you into their world. Help them to realize their valued contribution to the world now and in the future. I know this is important for all children but it seems even more important in this phase of a child's development.

Live the example, do not talk too much but know that you can never listen enough.

Hand over responsibilities to them - they'll rise to the occasion time and time again. During the last concert we had, the seniors took over everything from deciding on the title and theme to designing and painting the backdrop and ticket. Handling the advertising side of it and writing the script.

They appointed a narrator to string the concert together from our Infant Community (18 month olds) to grade 7's!

During circle time they seem to have a great need to communicate their feelings and to be listened to even if it is just for a few minutes. It seems as if the role that the senior primary directress plays in the lives of these children can be very big. As big as what they will trust you with and bigger than you can imagine. Being in this position is a huge responsibility and we need to slow down, take stock and be there for them because the rest of the world is spinning at the speed of light.

I realize and recognize the importance of technology and how we can use this to interest our children, remember that we can also use this to understand where they are coming from and give them lasting and true values to get through life.

Bee Muller
Senior Primary Directress
Hermanus Montessori School

**“Parents, educators, other adults and institutions – the culture itself – may say one thing to children about nature’s gifts, but so many of our actions and messages – especially the ones we cannot hear ourselves deliver – are different. And children hear very well.”
(Richard Louv, Last Child in the Woods)**

In Senior Primary the children are guided to:

- Find strategies and incorporate these for learning on their own
- Raise their expectations higher
- Integrate the subjects students learn on a more comprehensive scale
- Gradually raise higher expectations
- Develop analytical and problem-solving skills
- Recognise past learning experiences and build on and apply them for future learning

The Question...

... I get asked the most by parents is “What is my child going to get in a Montessori class that you cannot get in a traditional school?” I am sure we have all had this question at some time in our careers.

As Montessori educators we know that the benefits for a child in our system are endless. We espouse everything from the philosophy of the environment, the individual approach, the equipment, and the freedom of expression. Those of us passionate about Montessori Primary education cannot believe that parents would want anything else for their children.

Yet parents in pre-schools largely choose the traditional route. I personally feel that this is related to parents not always being able to shift paradigms towards an education system of which they have little knowledge or understanding. There are few parents who can “buy into” Montessori at a primary level when they reflect on their own schooling. Parents are looking for sport, that ‘real’ school experience, a big social circle and maybe even a uniform.

As a parent who has two children who have to be in a traditional school, I cannot say I am desperately unhappy with what they are getting. I am assured as a parent of the qualifications of the teachers even if they are traditional. And again the one thing I am most sure of is that my children are meeting, at the very least, a minimum standard set by the education department. I would prefer much more and some schools give more. Are our Montessori school teachers getting peer review, are they extending themselves do they have checks and balances against which they can grow and self assess their teaching methods and outcomes?

I do not say this as a criticism but rather as a challenge to us who work in Montessori Primary schools to ensure that the children really are getting the best we can give them. My great sadness is when I come across children who have been in Montessori environments through preschool and primary with the rich abundance of concrete materials available and they hate maths...I always think WOW!

We need to check that teachers are utilising the courses offered by provincial education departments to continue upgrading their knowledge of new trends or developments. Let us not be in danger of becoming the dinosaurs of education. Montessori’s vision of education was dynamic, progressive and forward thinking. We need to continue this growth and not rest on our laurels.

I would love every child to have the benefit of Montessori education for as long as possible as I have no doubt they get the best out of themselves, both academically and socially.

Recently I was watching some Montessori primary school teachers involved in putting on a school play. I was struck by the amount of input the children had. There were at least 20 directors, and I admire an adult that can give children the space to have an opinion and express themselves. There is no way to get parents to understand this, and that is where our primary children are our best adverts. We need to be sure we are on top of our game, offering the children and the parents the best we can. We cannot compete with the big schools in our areas so we need to be sure we are offering extra-ordinary quality in other areas.

Good luck to all schools, as they get ready for the New Year. Have a relaxing and revitalising break.

Ally Connelly

Schools Representative

An interesting and helpful website for teachers, sent to us by Tracey from Clover Farm Montessori.
Deals with issues around bullying
<http://www.hurtfreeschools.org/>

Teenagers Learn What They Live

(By Dorothy Law Nolte and Rachel Harris)

If teenagers live with pressure, they learn to be stressed.

If teenagers live with failure, they learn to give up.

If teenagers live with rejection, they learn to feel lost.

If teenagers live with too many rules, they learn to get around them.

If teenagers live with too few rules, they learn to ignore the needs of others.

If teenagers live with broken promises, they learn to be disappointed.

If teenagers live with respect, they learn to honour others.

If teenagers live with trust, they learn to tell the truth.

If teenagers live with openness, they learn to discover themselves.

If teenagers live with natural consequences, they learn to be accountable.

If teenagers live with responsibility, they learn to be self-reliant.

If teenagers live with healthy habits, they learn to be kind to their bodies.

If teenagers live with creativity, they learn to share who they are.

If teenagers live with caring attention, they learn how to love.

If teenagers live with positive expectations, they learn to help build a better world.

Submitted by Sam Streak

“Over the years I have developed a picture of what a human being living humanely is like. She is a person who understands, values and develops her body, finding it beautiful and useful; a person who is real and is willing to take risks, to be creative, to manifest competence, to change when the situation calls for it, and to find ways to accommodate to what is new and different, keeping that part of the old that is still useful and discarding what is not.” (Virginia Satir)



Montessori High School

The adolescent years mark a new and very different stage of human development. There is rapid physical growth, resulting in a sense of insecurity in the child who is fast becoming an adult. There are newly developing intellectual abilities – abilities to abstract, conjecture, predict, and create.

Academic interests are integrated with a new set of needs. There is a strong need to be with peers, to be loved by peers, to be accepted by peers, as well as a need for mentor relationships with adults. Maria Montessori recognized – even in the 1930s – that modern society is complex and confusing, too complex for the vulnerable adolescent to be thrown full force into the task of finding a personal identity and a way to be valued. What adolescents need, said Montessori, is a real community experience that will offer them opportunities for meaningful work – work that will be valued by the community itself and that challenges both the mind and the body. Work that is made noble by doing it with integrity and passion.

“In the soul of the adolescent, great values are hidden, and in the minds of these boys and girls there lies all our hope of future progress.”

– Maria Montessori

“In a Montessori high school the formation of personality should be a central theme, and in this connection Dr. Montessori has impressed upon us the importance of cultivating the intellect; warned against the continual elimination of subjects for the benefit of easy-going schooling. The cramming of facts, however, into a pupil’s head should not have priority, but rather the acquisition of insight into what can best be learned from one’s own experience.

The school must allow a great degree of flexibility so that pupils, to an extent more than are customary and within reasonable limits, can indulge in free activities according to their own interests and at their own tempo. Moral strength is not increased by mutual rivalry based on false ambition to achieve good marks, but rather by living and working together freely in mixed groups, where mutual collaboration, readiness to help and a team spirit are fostered.

(Montessori High School by Dr H.J.Jordan, founder and rector of Montessori Lyceum, Holland).

Toddlers vs Teenagers

How they compare

You can do nothing wrong

You can do nothing right

Endless hugs and kisses

Only give a cuddle when you pay

Go where you want to go

Will only go where they want

Their crying keeps you up at night

Your worrying about them keeps you up at night

Happy with a small wooden toy

Only an X-box 360 will do

You always know where they are

You hope you know!

When all else fails, you pick them up and march them out of the shop

No chance

Top 10 Attributes that Students look for in their Teachers

There are many characteristics, techniques, etc. that make for a successful teacher. These may be as varied as the teachers themselves. However, there are certain time-tested attributes, characteristics, and practices which contribute immensely to teacher success. The following list contains items that students have used to describe their best teachers.

1. **Enthusiasm**
 - Students can feel the excitement
 - Students easily detect the teacher's love for job and subject
2. **Preparation**
 - Teacher knows the subject
 - Teacher plans and prepares lessons daily
3. **Punctuality**
 - Always arrives on time
 - Begins and ends class on time
 - Expects and encourages students to arrive on time
4. **Support and concern for students**
 - Lets students know that he/she cares about their success
 - Takes time with students
 - Allows for creativity
 - Is friendly and courteous
 - Is supportive and encouraging
 - Is smiling, caring and loving
5. **Consistency**
 - Does not miss class
 - Is consistent in attitude and dealings with students
 - Is always well prepared to teach class
6. **Politeness**
 - Treats students with respect
 - Does not condescend
 - Avoids embarrassing students in class
7. **Firmness and control**
 - Is firm in a kind manner
 - Avoids tangents in teaching
8. **Does not play favourites**
9. **Provides personal help**
 - Takes time to explain concept
 - Gives individual attention
10. **Accepts individual differences**

Taken from: <http://teacher.co.in/2007/04/18/top-10-attributes-that-students-look-in-their-teachers/>

When kids perceive they aren't trusted, as is true in the micro-managed pedagogy of modern life, when restrictions and administrative triviality weigh them down to the extent they feel cornered, they run away into fantasy, torpor, indifference, and often, bad behaviour". John Taylor Gatto, "The Paradox of Extended Childhood", *Journal for Living*, No. 23, 2001.

THE THIRD PLANE – ADOLESCENCE: AGE 12 – 18

An excerpt from AN INTERNET BASED MONTESSORI COURSE, MAMMOLINA PROJECT – www.mammolina.org. *Written by Sharon Caldwell*

In her 1937 essay, *Erdkinder*, Montessori outlined only a general programme for this age group. She envisaged that this type of environment would enable young people to develop into well-balanced, self-sufficient adults.

There are certain critical components:

- The environment would be on a farm, where the children would be able to perform real work. This is not to be confused with idyllic notions of country life, but rather seen to provide “productiveness and earning power”.
- The school would provide boarding facilities. It is interesting to note that Montessori’s reasoning on this aspect mirrors that of A. S Neill, the founder of Summerhill, in some ways. Montessori felt that the routine of the home was different to that needed by the adolescent. The boarding period could be flexible, however, and need not mirror the harsh separation imposed by traditional boarding schools.
- Real life working experience would be provided by the farm, and possibly a hotel and shop. This would be a genuine study of commerce and exchange, of the art of ascertaining the demand and being ready to meet it, of the strict and rigid rules of bookkeeping. It is clear that a great variety of productive and profitable business ventures could be incorporated into the Erdkinder concept.
- Montessori outlined an academic programme briefly. (*This description of Erdkinder is based on two articles by Michael Dorer which appeared in the Public School Montessorian, and which are available on-line at AskMaria: “The Adolescent Program (1) and the Adolescent Program 2.”*)
- An over-reaching aim of this plane of development is what Montessori called “valorisation” of the personality. This could be seen as similar to the development of personal goal or vision within an understanding of the interconnectedness of all things.

“The strongest force at this moment in life is the search of an identity”. (*Maria Montessori, Erdkinder, quoted by Cam Gordon, “Where’s the Montessori?”.*)

Montessori identified the needs of adolescents as follows:

- The greatest need is for independence, particularly financial independence.
- There is a need for meaningful work.

It is important to note at this stage that the legislation of most countries, and indeed the United Nations Bill of Children’s Rights, would seem to deprive young people of the right to paid employment, and of meaningful labour until at least half-way through this plane of development. If you are interested in exploring this aspect, an internet search on “working children” reveals a wealth of information, both for and against allowing children and adolescents to work. Balancing the evils of forced labour and exploitation against the benefits of meaningful and profitable work provides a complex set of problems.

- A healthy environment with good food and fresh air.
- Adolescents need time – large chunks of uninterrupted time – for “solitude and quiet” which she regarded as “essential for the development of the hidden treasures of the soul”.
- Freedom is essential to allow the adolescent to “act on individual initiative”.

It is clear that being cooped up in a regular school would be contrary to these needs. Busy schedules in a tightly time-tabled day, rigid rules and unnecessary institutional requirements are in stark conflict with the natural inherent needs of 12 – 18 year olds.

- There is a deep need for respect and the adolescent should not be treated as a child.
- Many adolescents display a deep need for opportunities for creative expression through art, music, drama and writing. According to Dorer, as much as one third of Montessori’s suggested syllabus is devoted to creative expression. (*Michael Dorer “The Adolescent Program 2”*)
- There is also a true need for “academic” content, but this takes a very different form to that offered up by regular Middle- and High Schools. Montessori identified areas which would answer realistic needs, but it would seem that the maxim of “follow the child” could be extended to “follow the adolescent” in this regard. Topics explored by young people at the so-called “Free Schools”, Sudbury Valley and Summerhill would indicate an almost universal interest in topics relating to philosophy, politics, religion, sexuality, sustainable living, various aspects of technology and economic independence.

Conversations with Montessorians



This month's interview is With Pru Ramsey, a well known and much loved person in the Montessori field

How did you become involved with Montessori education?

Sometime in the early 70's, while I was Head of the Geography Department at King David High School, Victory Park, Johannesburg, I met someone at a luncheon who mentioned the Land and Water forms. I was fascinated, as many of the Standard 6 (Grade 8) children whom I was teaching had difficulty differentiating the land from the water on a black and white outline of a world map. I was struck by the idea of giving children the concrete form before the abstract concept. In 1975 I went over to California to tend to my sister who was not well. I looked up Montessori in the telephone book and came across a school in the Bay area of San Francisco. I then went to observe in the school – from that moment, I was hooked! As luck would have it, the head directress was Dr Lena Wikramaratne, who was trained by Maria Montessori in Sri Lanka while Dr Montessori was interned in India during the Second World War. Lena expressed an interest in visiting South Africa and asked me to arrange a lecture tour for her. As she was an Indian woman I asked whether she was aware of the politics of our country. She said she was prepared to face whatever she found in order to come to South Africa.

Miss Lena, as we fondly called her, came to SA. She stayed with us in our cottage in Rivonia, sleeping in our lounge behind a curtain we hung up to give her privacy!! She later came back to SA as the guest of Strilli Oppenheimer and offered short courses at the Inanda Montessori Training Centre. I decided that I wanted to do a Montessori training and finally went to the USA in 1979 to attend Miss Lena's training course.

Describe your involvement in Montessori over the years. Has it evolved? Stayed the same? Declined? What is your involvement today?

I set up the Grade 0 Montessori class at the Ridge School in Westcliffe, Johannesburg in 1980. The interesting thing about this was that it was a class of 24 four to five year old boys – hardly mixed ages and genders!! So from the outset I had to adapt my Montessori training to suit the circumstances in which I found myself. In 1981, the Montessori Society of Southern Africa was formed. I was on the first Committee and remained a Committee member until it disbanded in the mid 1990's. I left the Ridge shortly before my first son was born in 1982. My second son was born in 1985 – a planned three years between them in keeping with Montessori's three year cycles. During this time I worked from home with a few children who had learning problems. In 1987 I took over as the Principal of the Montessori Country School in Diepsloot, north of Fourways, Johannesburg. At that time, the Country School was one of the few racially integrated nursery schools and children came to us from as far a field as Soweto and Kagiso on the West Rand. Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Tutu's grandchildren also attended our school. During this time I was invited to speak at a school in the Eastern Cape. Whilst there, I also gave a lecture to a group of African women receiving training from the Border Early Learning Centre.

This was a pivotal moment in my Montessori life. While I spoke about Practical Life activities, someone translated this into Xhosa whilst a third woman drew pictures on the black board to illustrate what I was saying. The reception from the jam packed room of women, who were all working in crèches, was extraordinary and humbling. I returned to the Country School and realised that we had five highly qualified Montessori staff who were only impacting on the lives and families of the 85 children who attended our school. I knew then that I had to get involved in taking Montessori to a much wider community.

The opportunity soon presented itself when I was asked by Supedi, to work on a curriculum to train teachers who were working in crèches in the townships and in the informal settlements near Tembisa. I started working on Saturdays, teaching them about Montessori philosophy, concentrating on the sensitive periods and showing them

how to set up practical life areas using waste products, sensorial areas adapting educational toys they had been given by various organisations, and language areas making most of the materials from cereal boxes. This work with women working with children in overcrowded under resourced class rooms, sometimes in the main room of a four roomed house, or in the larger room of a two roomed shack, continued into the nineties. During this time I met Bukelwa Selema who asked me to come and run a training course with her at Zama Care Centre, in Daveyton. This was incredibly rewarding work. I was constantly in awe of these women who managed to make such a difference to the lives of the children in their communities. Whilst my counter parts in the suburbs in Johannesburg worried whether the basins in the bathrooms were the correct height, these women set up prepared environments in dwellings which leaked and from which the shelves and materials had to be removed every day to accommodate their own families. At this time I linked up with Eve Annecke and wrote the Caregivers Learning Programme, which later formed the basis of the learning programme which was aligned to the SETA requirements for Level 5 and Level 4 unit standards in Early Childhood Development training. In the mid 90's, we started The Learning Project, which teamed up with two other Montessori NGO's, Woz'obona and Zama Care Centre to form the Southern Consortium. Together we offered Montessori training to about 250 women, as part of Impilo, the National government funded ECD training pilot.

No doubt about it, the Montessori training I am involved in has definitely evolved. While the Montessori philosophy and theory has always stayed the same, initially we added sessions on World View, Changing Attitudes, Conflict Resolution and World Change as we realised that before people could work with children, they had to understand what had moulded them, as well as work on themselves. We also wanted the adults to understand the importance of living sustainably, so included sessions on understanding life and living from an Ecological Perspective. Later we added another dimension as we realised how wounded and traumatised so many of us living in South Africa are. We wanted to give the women the skills to heal themselves, their children and their communities so now include in our training a strong spiritual component on healing in which many techniques are learnt and practiced. We have also added a strong practical part to assist the women in the day to day running of the schools, such as simple bookkeeping, running committees, fundraising, etc.

I am currently Head of ECD Training at the Sustainability Institute outside Stellenbosch. Next year we will be involved in Recognition of Prior Learning for the Childhoods Network, a loosely structured network of the Sustainability Institute, Woz'obona, Wonderkids Montessori Training College and Operation Upgrade, as we realise that there are many who need recognition of their work and experience which will lead to Seta accredited qualifications.

The work that we have been involved in since the mid 1980's has been driven by the needs of those from the historically disadvantaged areas, and we have adapted our own Montessori training to suit the means, and meet the needs of those living and working in these communities.

Did your Montessori training have a significant impact on your philosophy of education? A significant impact on who you are now?

Without a doubt – yes to both questions! I had always known that learners should be respected for who they are and that as far as possible within the main stream, in high school, should be allowed to learn at their own pace. Being a geography teacher meant that I was also very aware of the importance of hands on learning and being in the outdoors, of learning from doing rather than from being told. I can go so far as to say that my sons were born because of my Montessori training, as I had decided I did not want to bring children into this world. Once I had been introduced to Montessori philosophy and methodology, I knew I had the knowledge and understanding to raise a child.

Has experience in the classroom altered your philosophy or view of yourself?

It has added to my awe of the child. I have learnt so much from the children and from the women who work with children. I have learnt to trust that the child will reveal herself in her own time and that everything depends on following the child, being non prescriptive, flexible, responsive, being aware of and able to learn from the feedback loops – Montessori has shown me how to see with new eyes – to view old horizons with new eyes, rather than to look constantly for new horizons.

What do you see as the most significant accomplishment of the Montessori movement in South Africa in the past 50 years?

The formation of the Montessori Society of Southern Africa and what it achieved, particularly in the early days when we were subjected to Christian National and so called Bantu Education. The Society was a unifying umbrella

body where Montessorians from many different training backgrounds could meet without being excluded or judged. One of the highlights, was the International Conference, “To Educate the Human Potential” held at the Johannesburg College of Education in 1985 and organised by Clare Collecott. I believe the ripple effect from this conference was significant. The Society ran out of steam in the mid 90’s – a natural process that happens when needs are no longer there. Some years later SAMA was birthed, as new needs emerged. The dedication and energy of all those who have served, and continue to serve on SAMA is laudable and I applaud and thank you for what you are doing for the children of Southern Africa.

Probably the most significant accomplishment of the Montessori movement has been the influence on the content of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) unit standards for Early Childhood Development. Many Montessorians sat for many hours in the early 1990’s giving input into and shaping the specific outcomes of the draft unit standards.

The most significant failure?

In keeping with Montessori philosophy and the principles of our current education system, we can rather refer to what we might be ‘not yet competent’ in, than how we might have ‘failed’. I would ask whether we in the “Montessori movement” are inclusive enough. We have to be careful of excluding people in our efforts to set and maintain standards. We can achieve more by making it easier for people to be a part of our systems, than by excluding people by setting standards that are impossible or very difficult to achieve. By working together from within we can bring change by supporting and learning from each other, particularly in our diverse multicultural country. I also ask whether we are open enough to learn from other theories and philosophies.

What is your favourite book written by Maria Montessori?

The Secret of Childhood and specifically the section on “what they (the children) showed me (Dr Montessori)” which is the basis of the Montessori principles of interacting with the children in the prepared environment.

What is your favourite book or resource of any type that you use or refer to often?

Books by Deepak Chopra, Wayne Dwyer and Caroline Myss.

What is your favourite children's book?

Am a little out of touch here!! But my favourite as a child was a series about Pookie, the flying rabbit and anything by Enid Blyton, especially stories about Mister Pink Whistle.

Describe a favourite Montessori memory (from class, conferences etc)

I have two favourite memories – one personal, the other from a video called “Follow the Child” that was released while I was doing my training. There is a wonderful scene of a group of children working on the hundred board, and as they near the point of placing the 100 tablet, the excitement mounts. They then all count out the numbers from one to a hundred. The scene ends when a little guy, who was not involved but was watching, looks up at the older chaps with incredible admiration and awe – as if he could not imagine what it must be like to be able to complete the 100 board! Eve and I now have an expression based on this little guy – that when something we have undertaken, or are thinking of getting involved in, seems daunting or even impossible – we say “this is definitely hundred board stuff!”

The personal memory was at the Country School. A little chap called Khagiso had spent about an hour carefully drawing metal insets. He coloured them, he pricked around them, he cut them out, he pasted them on another paper. He then very methodically tidied up and carefully threw all his scraps into the bin, whilst leaving one of his masterpieces on the table. When he had finally pushed his chair in, he picked up the masterpiece, walked to the door to go outside and on his way casually dropped it in the bin!! I have used this example many times to illustrate that Montessori is about the process and not the product.

Did you have a mentor, supervisor, teacher or student who has significantly affected you?

Very definitely my trainer, Dr Lena Wikramaratne – I can still see her dainty brown hands as she held a jug and very carefully and with great concentration, poured from one jug to another. Her incredible attention to detail, her ability to make theory come alive by linking concepts to experiences and practice as she related anecdotes from her own experience and her time with Maria and Mario Montessori in India. Her energy and the way she continued training and working into her 80’s.

Do you have any particular memories of your first day(s) of teaching?

The thing that stands out most clearly for me is the difference between being the adult in a traditional classroom,

and directing in a Montessori prepared environment. In a traditional classroom one is often the one giving out all the time, trying to inspire; the one on stage, the active one so that by the end of the day, one is usually quite exhausted while in a Montessori class, the adult is the passive member. Far less energy is expended; the children are ‘on stage’. So my memories of those first days in a Montessori class were that I felt energised by the children rather than exhausted by the end of the day. I loved waiting for them to reveal themselves rather than feeling that I had to draw ‘it’ out of them as I had done in traditional high and primary school teaching.

What are we as Montessorians not doing now that we should be doing?

I don’t think I, or anyone other than ourselves, can answer that question. First of all, I don’t believe in ‘shoulds’. We need to be doing something because we choose to, because we want to do it, not because someone else expects us to do it. As long as we spend time reflecting on what is happening in our classrooms, in our lives, we will be able to find the answer ourselves. So maybe we could ask ourselves if we are reflecting.

What do you think the future holds for Montessori education?

I believe we need to work within the existing systems. I believe our training institutions need to align our training to the unit standards developed by the Early Childhood Development standards generating bodies of the South African Qualifications Authority. Whilst it is true that much of the language and terminology used in the unit standards is ‘user unfriendly’, the outcomes and concepts are very Montessori. We owe it to our directresses/directors (practitioners/teachers) to ensure that their qualifications are not only nationally recognised but internationally accepted by the formal education sector. This does not mean that we need to compromise our standards but can mean that we extend our training to include more than we traditionally offer.

In addition we have the unique opportunity to develop Montessori to meet the needs of our very diverse people – putting into action what Dr Montessori advocated in her Education for Peace – truly living the spiritual element of her philosophy in humility, so that we reach out and learn from each other, marry our strengths and so eliminate our weaknesses.

Phew! Thank you Pru for sharing. It continually interests me (and hopefully our readers) to hear of the paths we each travel to get to where we are as teachers today and each and every person like you have a rich and fascinating story to tell, having been inspired by Maria Montessori’s teachings and mentors alike.

The strong will of the three year old is once again apparent as it brings the pre-adolescent into conflict with authority and the remedy is the same: we must look at the environment for the restrictions it is placing on the freedom of these emergent young adults and try to remove them. As before, the greatest limit to freedom can be ourselves and we need therefore to try to avoid feeling threatened ourselves by the challenges to our authority and to respond with patience humor and truth as we did with the little ones when they first came to us. H. Wheatley, “The Age of stability”.



Treasury

Some 'cheery' news from the Treasury – we (Lorraine and I) have spent much of the current membership year putting a new (and hopefully improved) membership administration system in place. Thank you all for your cooperation with us in getting this process under way. The biggest challenge we have faced, and still face, is not being able to tie up bank deposits with membership applications as many deposits are simply referenced as 'SAMA'. Understandably, this makes life rather difficult for us as our crystal ball seems to be quite murky when it comes to identifying which deposits belong to which applications! It also does not help when large amounts of money are deposited into the bank account, with no reference AND no paperwork, as this gives us no clues to work with whatsoever!!! We do really enjoy playing Sherlock Holmes and Watson, but would appreciate having the extra time to spend on more productive issues! PLEASE may we ask you to fax or email your paperwork WITH a copy of the deposit slip attached for every deposit made.

There are also still a couple of membership applications that are in 'limbo' as we are awaiting further details that have been requested on numerous occasions by email or telephone and have not been responded to. If you are still waiting for your membership cards, please contact Lorraine on 082 732 3266 or lorraine@ilm.co.za.

School members – please note that part of the school membership condition entails that child levies are to be paid to SAMA either on an annual or a term basis. Invoices are issued quarterly and mailed (by conventional Post Office mail) to all school members. Please ensure that you keep these payments up-to-date as defaulting members will be removed from the SAMA website school listing until the invoices have been settled. Please understand that it is simply not fair to the schools that comply with the child levy payments if we do not enforce this condition of membership. We trust that all our school members will be attending the various regional Heads of School complimentary networking breakfasts. Please contact your regional representatives for more details if you have not yet received any information.

A courteous reminder to the schools that have organised and participated in the 100-Steps Centenary Walks this year – if you would like to donate any of the proceeds from the funds raised from the walk to SAMA, please be advised that any monies received will be put into the Conference Outreach Fund, thus allowing directresses from disadvantaged areas to attend the 2008 Conference at minimal or no cost to themselves. Thank you for your generous support in continuing to support our outreach ventures.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to all our members – without you and your continued support, none of the incredible work that SAMA is doing would be a reality.

Susanne van Niekerk

Regional Reports

Eastern Cape

Another year draws to a close and Montessorians in the Eastern Cape have communicated well and worked together to promote Montessori and remain unified.

Our SIG meeting in August was well attended and again had one of the highest attendance rates in spite of distances in the area. Miemie Bosman gave an interesting talk on Brain Gym and a discussion was held on issues related to training and qualifications.

The fourth term started off with schools arranging for the 100 steps walk which was held mid- October. Most schools arranged their own dates and events applicable to their situation.

The Eastern Cape did not have a head of schools breakfast in the fourth term as it all got a bit chaotic with 100 steps, reports and school plays. We decided to hold this breakfast in the first term next year in PE.

We look forward to conference in Knysna where we can all meet, share laughs and ideas again and are to proud to host this in the Eastern Cape.

Coral Yelseth

Gauteng

Montessori Academy in Pretoria hosted the last SIG meeting for 2007. I used this opportunity to introduce myself as the newly appointed Regional Rep and received a very warm and positive response from the members.

A total of 29 people attended!

The '100 Steps' was briefly discussed and I did remind members to submit their efforts towards the scrapbook planned for next year.

The core topic of the meeting was "Celebrations & Festivals" we had exceptionally good ideas put forward by the members.

Members contributed a special festival celebration presentation and even discussed concerts and parent evenings that they had put together around this topic.

The Heads of Schools Breakfast was held on the 10th November at Die Werf Restaurant in Pretoria. A lot of effort was put into the co-ordination & planning for this event particularly by calling members and booking spaces. The response was overwhelming! Instead of a formal speech, our guest, Clinical Psychologist Jacqui Van Staden led a discussion based on questions and concerns from the group. The following areas were dealt with:

1. Children's Rights and the New Children's Act
2. Communication with Parents – especially regarding divorces
3. Sourcing help with children with learning disabilities.

It was a wonderful morning of sharing and discussion, and I am sure that the Heads of Schools felt that they had indeed been treated!

Everyone is looking forward to next years Breakfast already!

Sumaya Tar Mahomed

Kwa Zulu- Natal

Having hosted the Annual Conference in April-May, our first year as Regional Reps got off to a busy start. Our first SIG meeting was held in May and in order to celebrate World Environment Week, we had a lecture on making art from recycled materials, given by Lesley Deg of Durban Girls College. Our second meeting was held in August and at the request of members we focused on practical life exercises and language extensions and each member bought an idea from these two curriculum areas.

There was good attendance and enthusiastic response at both meetings.

The highlight of the year was the 100 steps walk which the KZN branch of the Southern African Montessori Association held during mid-October. All schools made a great effort to make their respective days a huge success and included a lot of special activities besides the actual walk

In total approximately R19 000 was raised for helping needy children throughout Kwa-Zulu Natal.

The participating schools were

Ocean View Montessori School donating to CHOC Wonderkids Montessori who raised money for Outreach Projects.

Little Learners & Follow-me Montessori who raised money for a new Outreach School.

Sunshine Coast Montessori, donated monies collected to the "Parents Initiative".

Buzz Montessori raised money to go towards establishing a library at an underprivileged school on the North Coast.

Montessori at the Sands raised money for pupil bursaries.

The Hilton Montessori School donated their money to a local girl with leukaemia.

We will be finishing the year with our Heads of Schools breakfast to be held at Oscar's, Durban North on 24th November. Grade 0 Portfolios will be the topic for discussion. Our focus for next year will be to increase membership and particularly to encourage those individual members who are school owners to become Institutional members.

At our own school Ocean View, we have lots of fun this year being members of the Eco-Schools organization and have worked towards gaining our green flag, which we have found out today that we have achieved! It has been a lot of work and a very worthwhile experience. The impact it has had on the children has been extra special as they are truly more aware of the importance of preserving their planet and have been educating their parents in the process.

The environmental learning opportunities have been extremely beneficial and easy to integrate into both the Montessori and National curriculum. It will also be a focus of ours next year to encourage other schools to join.

Rose & Lucy

Western Cape

The year began with a get together at Headstart Mercy Montessori to welcome in the Centenary year. Schools then held a collective Open Day during the first term, uniting us once again in the name of 100 years of Montessori education. In the second term our Sig meeting took on the form of a Feedback of some of the insightful ideas which were shared at the KZN SAMA Conference. At our third term's meeting we explored the Eco School's project as a way to assist schools to address environmental issues pertinent to their particular environment.

We also had a music ring workshop where many easily implemented ideas were shared. Schools participated individually in the 100 Steps project, which was a lot of fun and really brought the Centenary celebrations home to the children and parents of schools. The charming Centenary Scrapbook slowly made its way around many of the schools this year. Each school added a colourful and vibrant page defining their Montessori school. If your school has not had the scrapbook and you would still like to add a contribution please contact me. Our Heads of schools Breakfast has been postponed until early in the New Year, 9 February, when we will be all energized and able to attend. We have had very positive feedback about the Breakfast and it seems members are really looking forward to it.

Emma Medell

Centenary Celebrations

“100 Steps for Montessori” is a sponsored walk to raise awareness of Montessori during the Centenary year. It is an invitation to every Montessori school in the world to take part in a global sponsored walk.



Due to the overwhelming and positive feedback from the 100 Steps walks and other centenary celebrations held around the country, SAMA is going to publish a special Centenary memento commemorating all the events. We will keep all of the stories submitted to date for this publication (expected to be ready for the Conference) and invite others to send their stories to admin@samontessori.org.za Share your stories! "

FESTIVALS AND HOLIDAYS FOR 2008

JANUARY	ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	DATE
New Year's Day		1 January
Handwriting Day	www.teachervision.fen.com	23 January
FEBRUARY		
World Wetlands Day		2 February
Chinese New Year	www.chinesefortunecalendar.com/NewYearDays.htm	7 February
Toothache Day		9 February
Valentines Day	www.everythingvalentinesday.com	14 February
International Mother Language Day	webworld.unesco.org/imld/	21 February
MARCH		
Share a Smile Day	www.familycrafts.about.com	1 March
World Book Day	www.worldbookday.com/	6 March
St. Patrick's Day	www.st-patricks-day.com	17 March
National Water week		19 March
Good Friday / Human Rights Day	www.sahrc.org.za/sahrc_cms/downloads/Human%20Rights%20Day.pdf www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm#21march	21 March
World Water Day	www.worldwaterday.org	22 March
Easter Sunday	christianity.about.com	23 March
World Meteorological Day	www.wmo.ch	23 March
Family Day		24 March

APRIL		
International Children's Book Day	www.ibby.org (section on books from Africa / for Africa)	2 April
Passover	www.holidays.net/passover/	3 April
World Health Day	www.crayola.com/calendar/detail.cfm?event_id=188&year=2008	7 April
Earth Day	www.earthday.net/earthday2008.aspx	22 April
Freedom Day	www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm#27april	27 April
MAY		
Workers Day		1 May 2 May is a holiday
Deaf Awareness Week	www.deafcouncil.org.uk/daw/	5 - 11 May
Mothers Day	www.dayformothers.com	11 May
International Day of Families		15 May
JUNE		
World Environment Day	www.un.org/depts/dhl/environment/	5 June
Fathers Day	www.fathersdaycelebration.com	15 June
Youth Day	www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm	16 June
International Picnic Day	www.first-school.ws/theme/mini_theme/picnic.htm	18 June
AUGUST		
Arbor Day	www.arborday.org	8 August
Women's Day	www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm#09august	9 August
Maria Montessori's Birthday	www.samontessori.org.za	31 August
SEPTEMBER		
Spring Day		1 September
International Literacy Day		8 September
Grandparents Day	www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson136.shtml	12 September
International Day of Peace	www.internationaldayofpeace.org/	21 September
Heritage Day	www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm#24september www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heritage_Day_(South_Africa)	24 September
OCTOBER		
World Habitat Day		1 October
Eid	www.islam.about.com/od/ramadan/f/eid_fitr.htm	2 October
World Space Week	www.spaceweek.org	4-10 October
World Teachers Day	www.festivals.iloveindia.com/teachers-day/world-teachers-day/celebrations.html	5 October
World Food Day	www.un.org/Depts/dhl/food/	16 October
Marine Day	-	20 October
Diwali	www3.kumc.edu/diversity/ethnic_relig/diwali.html	28 October
NOVEMBER		
International Day for Tolerance	www.un.org/depts/dhl/tolerance/	16 November
Universal Children's Day	www.un.org/depts/dhl/children_day/	20 November
DECEMBER		
Eat a Red Apple Day		1 December
Aids day		
International Day of Disabled Persons	www.un.org/depts/dhl/dispersons/	3 December
Day of Reconciliation	www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm#16december	16 December
Hanukkah (Chanukah)	www.history.com/minisites/hanukkah	22 December
Christmas Day	www.history.com/minisites/hanukkah	25 December
Day of Goodwill / Boxing Day	www.factmonster.com/spot/boxingday1.html	26 December

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For Sale: Wooden boxes and trays in all sizes
(painted and unpainted) for storing and
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Craft classes offered: relating specifically to the
Montessori curriculum and craft materials in kit
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Shahida Asmall – Phone: 0312090675,
0848177867. Email: shaber.asmall@huletts.co.za

Print your own Montessori materials. I have
permission to sell an unused Classroom
Creations CD containing PDF versions of the full
set of nomenclatures and language cards. Once a
license has been purchased by a school, they are
granted permission to print as many copies as
they wish for the exclusive use of that school
only. Please contact Jacqueline on 083 626 6421
or jacqueline.wetselaar@gmail.com

If you would like to advertise in
the SAMA Newsletter, please
send the relevant information
through to

admin@samontessori.org

Vacancies

The Field and Study Montessori Pre-School,
Parkmore Sandton is looking for a Montessori
Assistant. Contact **Julia 083 600 6833** or email your
CV: nebula@global.co.za

New Beginnings Montessori School, Paarl is
seeking an assistant for their 3 - 6 class to start in
January 2008. Contact Sophie on: Fax: 086 502 7793
Tel: **021 872 7599**, e-mail:
newbeginnings@lantic.net

Clover Farm Montessori, Randburg. A small 1/2
day preschool requires a qualified preschool
directress to start January 2008. Needs to have
approximately 5 years experience and preferably
have children of own. Contact Tracey:
0828720119 or send C.V. to
traceypahl@cloverfarmmontessori.co.za

The Cottage Montessori School in Radiokop JHB,
is looking for an assistant directress for the 3-6 group.
Position would suit a student or someone who has
experience in a Montessori Environment. Contact:
Janet Clarke **011 679 5397 or 082 448 3829**

Hilltop Montessori Preschool in Constantia Kloof.
Assistant directress required for January 2008.
Recently qualified or in the process of training. No
experience required.
Contact: Dureya Mia: **082 928 1364 or 011 675 0224**

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

Please ensure that all your SAMA staff members have the opportunity to read this newsletter.

The following products are available:

- **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.

For more details contact: admin@samontessori.org.za

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Focus for February issue: SAMA Conference Edition

All articles were 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 Jacky via: admin@samontessori.org.za