



Parent Newsletter

October 2014

Letter from the President

Dear Parent

As matters arise in our schools and questions from you as a parent are asked of us; this always brings about the opportunity for us to reflect on our practices as Montessori educators and share more with you all. One such question is “what are we doing about witnessed bad behaviour?”

Sometimes we have to remind ourselves that through the nature of our small sized schools we all have closer interactions with each other than that of larger public schools. This can sometimes create challenges for privacy or protection of those children who are experiencing some difficulty one way or another.

I have no qualms about certain ‘acting out’ or expressive behaviours of children, as the classroom environment is their space. Here they should feel safe to explore social boundaries or have emotional outbursts, which is then compassionately and sensitively supported by a teachers’ guidance. Unfortunately though when this behaviour is witnessed by adults who are not teachers, the incident tends to not be understood or can be

perceived out of context. Therefore a condemning judgement is made.

Thus, I encourage you to keep in mind that it is through the social setting of all school life and activities that children develop life skills in social interaction or community life. A few of these are self-concept, self-control, cooperation, choice making, problem solving and responsibilities. I am proud to say that in a Montessori environment the children are given the chance to do just that. They are not shamed or chastised to sit lengthy hours in their desks or made to follow exactly the teacher’s direction through external control and coercion. Here in our schools children have to make choices for themselves and we know that these are not always the best of choices!

Well how many adults consistently make good choices! And as Richard Bach quotes in his novel, *The Bridge Across Forever*: “There are no mistakes. The events we bring upon ourselves, no matter how unpleasant, are necessary in order to learn what we need to learn; whatever steps we take, they're necessary to reach the places we've chosen to go.”

So is it not through the choices we make which lead us to errors, do we truly learn real lessons and gain insights and experiences? Well it is the same for children too. They are impulsive, spontaneous and artless while in the midst of developing their emotional and social intelligence. They weave themselves through the diverse fabric of social community life. This they may do in various ways by relying on their personal experiences, family life style, abilities and personality.

We are a melting pot of cultures, languages, abilities and parenting styles. I understand our Montessori schools embrace inclusivity. But do we? To which point I would like each adult reading this to truly understand what that means. Building an inclusive Montessori community requires us to check in on the areas of a school that makes it truly inclusive.



Inclusion is evident in that the child has physical access to all the learning experiences offered by the school or where there is the ability for each child to learn, play and develop successfully in the school and the school's community. But my main point is around social inclusion; which supports each child's right to positive emotional and social status in the school community. *"The ability to gain social acceptance and or participate in positive interactions with "peers" during the course of a school community and is achieved when community is created. The highest form of inclusion therefore is the creation of community where all members regardless of their strengths or needs are valued, accepted and socially connected."* (Pam Shank NAMTA 2014)

I come back to the beginning of my letter to all. Regardless of our own attitudes as adults I implore all to think carefully on how you guide your children when they relay a fellow classmate's behaviour, are you able to direct them positively, can you see the other child's point of view, do you realise there are two sides or more to each story you may hear in your homes? My point here is to ask you to lead your children in ways that listen, embrace, support and create good communities with those that they work and play with each and every day. Demonstrate to your children at home empathetic listening and the art of placing ourselves in another's shoes before condemning behaviour that is not really or accurately understood.

We guide our children to truly look beyond the obvious and to find a way to reach out to include their peers in successful engagement and thus learning. Enjoy! *"Scientific observation then has established that education is not what the*

teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment."

— Maria Montessori,
Education For A New World

Yours in Montessori,
Jacky

Reference: Pam Shanks: Building the Inclusive School; NAMTA Journal Summer 2014.

Thank you to all our families who joined us for the Montessori Walk on Heritage Day.

Our new annual event.



MAKE THE ORDINARY COME ALIVE

Do not ask your children to strive for extraordinary lives.

Such striving may seem admirable, but it is a way of foolishness.

Help them instead to find the wonder and the marvel of an ordinary life.

Show them the joy of tasting tomatoes, apples and pears.

Show them how to cry when pets and people die.

Show them the infinite pleasure in the touch of a hand.

And make the ordinary come alive for them.

The extraordinary will take care of itself.

-GREG BADEN



SAMA office

041 367 4936

admin@samontessori.org.za