



November / December 2009

Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Dear Parents

As we reach the end of another eventful year, I would like to extend my thanks for the support and positivity that I have received from many of you. It is encouraging that so many parents find the newsletters useful, and your comments and suggestions continue to drive the content of your monthly issue.

For this issue, I am going to leave you with an extract from one of my favourite books of all time, 'The Little Prince' by Antoine de Saint Exupery. The message in the piece is clear, and I hope that all of us as adults, can take some time over this holiday to reflect on the times we have imposed our will and ideals on the child without taking the time to observe, listen and just enjoy the moment with him or her.

Our Montessori directresses embody the 'passive' adult, the non-interfering adult the 'keeper and custodian' of the environment. The idea being that we provide the opportunity for the child to be spontaneous, creative and expressive. We encourage freedom of expression and at all time try to remember that we are merely serving the spirit of that child. Perhaps during this time with your children, you can reflect on being more like a Montessori directress, and less like the adult described in the story below!

I wish you all a blessed and peaceful holiday with your children.

Heidi van Staden

Extract from: The Little Prince by Antoine de St Exupery

Once when I was six years old I saw a magnificent picture in a book, called True Stories from Nature, about the primeval forest. It was a picture of a boa constrictor in the act of swallowing an animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.



In the book it said: "Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing it. After that they are not able to move, and they sleep through the six months that they need for digestion."

I pondered deeply, then, over the adventures of the jungle. And after some work with a colored pencil I succeeded in making my first drawing. My Drawing Number One. It looked like this:



I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups, and asked them whether the drawing frightened them. But they answered: "Frighten? Why should any one be frightened by a hat?"

My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. But since the grown-ups were not able to understand it, I made another drawing: I drew the inside of the boa constrictor, so that the grown-ups could see it clearly. They always need to have things explained. My Drawing Number Two looked like this:



The grown-ups' response, this time, was to advise me to lay aside my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside, and devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. That is why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter. I had been disheartened by the failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.

So then I chose another profession, and I learned to pilot airplanes. I have flown a little over all parts of the world; and it is true that geography has been very useful to me. At a glance I can distinguish China from Arizona. If one gets lost in the night, such knowledge is valuable.

In the course of this life I have had a great many encounters with a great many people who have been concerned with matters of consequence. I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them intimately, close at hand. And that hasn't much improved my opinion of them.

Whenever I met one of them who seemed to me at all clear-sighted, I tried the experiment of showing him my Drawing Number One, which I have always kept. I would try to find out, so, if this was a person of true understanding. But, whoever it was, he, or she, would always say:

"That is a hat."

Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man.

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