



August / September 2009

## Newsletter for Parents of SAMA Member Schools

Dear Parents

To start this newsletter, I would like to express my gratitude to past president Sam Streak, who spent the last two and a bit years taking SAMA to new heights. Our organisation has grown from strength to strength throughout her time in office. The newly elected Exco hope to continue this work with the same passion and dedication that Sam modelled for us.

Our annual SAMA conference in Cape Town this year was a huge success. Our keynote speakers from the UK, Barbara Isaacs and Berhane Dory certainly inspired us by reminding us of key elements of the Montessori philosophy like the importance of observation in our daily work, and how to 'follow the child' in the context of inclusive practice across all planes of development.

As Montessori educators, we often find ourselves wrapped up in the doing of stuff with our children. We want to have tangible evidence that we have achieved some level of success. On an academic level this is not too difficult, as we could produce something that a child has written, drawn or made out of cardboard boxes. We may be inventive and take photographic evidence, and when we are really applying our Montessori philosophy, we can produce work curves that detail the child's work cycle and concentration levels.

Physical progress is also quite simple to assess, a careful observer, and a trained Montessorian will be familiar with developmental milestones and has the support of occupational therapists to help on that plane when necessary.

There are however, other aspects to your child's development that Montessori cautioned against neglecting. Social, emotional and spiritual aspects are less easy to quantify. After all when a child knows their numbers from 1 – 10, we can tick a box on a list of Maths materials. Ticking off social, emotional and spiritual development is a little more complicated...

As parents, you too will find yourselves in a position where you are trying to balance your attention on all planes of your child's development. It is not always easy to juggle work, school, therapy, extra- murals and then still find time for quality family interactions!

According to a new study in 'Journal of Marriage and Family' it would appear that the issue of quality time is hotly debated, and that many parents disagree on what quality time actually means. I leave you with an excerpt from that journal, with the hope that it at least sparks some thoughts regarding your child's whole development – physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual – and how the precious time that you spend with your child may affect it.

Enjoy the beginning of spring with your children! Until next month,

Heidi van Staden  
SAMA President

*"Parents define 'quality time' in a way that helps them to feel that they have met both their job responsibilities and their family's needs," says study author Karrie Ann Snyder. "These quality time strategies help parents to reconcile their job and home responsibilities because parents are prioritizing certain types of time and interactions they have with their families as more important than others."*

*Snyder categorizes several distinct parental types and how they define quality time; for so-called Structured-Planning parents, quality time is family-based activity scheduled in advance, most often outside the home and away from the stresses of school, home and work. Child-Centered parents saw quality time as moments of emotional closeness they shared with their children during everyday routines and chores. Time-Available parents described how they spent as much time as they could with their children; quantity time was more important than "quality time" for these parents.*

*This study also found important differences between mothers and fathers. While both mothers and fathers valued spending time with their children, they often had different views of what quality time should be. In general, mothers seemed to be more responsible for ensuring that a family spent quality time together and this was especially true in families where mothers and fathers disagreed on a quality time approach.*

*The study included 110 educated, suburban, middle-to upper-middle-class families with teenage children, suggesting that these differences happen within homogeneous groups, not just across cultural or social groups. The findings could have implications for employers trying to provide family-friendly workplace policies. "Though the parents in this study had similar professions and work environments, each family had unique priorities regarding family togetherness," says Snyder. "Some parents may place higher value on extended vacation time in order to spend more time with their families away from the stresses of daily life, while others who emphasize the amount of time they spend with their children may be more interested in flexibility options that would allow them to work from home."*

Excerpt taken from:  
<http://www.sheknows.com/articles/801904.htm>