

COLLABORATIONS

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM MONTESSORI SCHOOLS AND CENTRES AUSTRALIA

Renilde Montessori

JULY 2021

NEWS & EVENTS

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- Farewell to Fiona Campbell
- Calls for Expressions of Interest

YOUR COMMUNITY

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- Implementing the Art of Mindfulness in a New Montessori Community

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- The Common Sense of Montessori Pedagogy by RENILDE MONTESSORI

MSCA UPDATES

FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Here we are in July 2021 and we still find ourselves dealing with COVID-19 and the implications of this insidious virus. It has become a part of our new normal and despite it wearing us down, we cannot allow it to defeat us! We must carry on, continue to find new ways of doing things, be creative, be adaptable and flexible, reflect, build our resilience and pivot! And that is what we continue to do at MSCA.

We persist to present a great variety of online learning for our community. Throughout this year we have offered wonderful sessions for educators, leaders, Board members, parents and those interested in Montessori education.

I, along with a few of my School Board members, and numerous other participants, attended the MSCA Saturday morning Governance workshop held in June, presented by David Spears. I currently sit on three Boards, and I have a keen interest in good governance practices and so I was very much looking forward to reflecting on the practices and processes of the Boards that I work with and also learning new things to incorporate into our procedures.

David Spear has a wealth of experience and honed expertise and skills in Governance. He spent the session skilfully presenting on the Director and Board Duties and Responsibilities for School Boards. The engagement with his online audience was superb and he commented afterwards how pleased he was that the conversations over the three hours were open and candid, and he was impressed that the group was so willing to share experiences, suggestions, support each other and work collaboratively. Despite having 25 years of Board experience, I walked away with new learning and a list of processes to reflect upon my current practice and share with my Boards.

I would like to remind members that if you are not able to attend the sessions on the day, most of our professional development events are recorded so that you don't have to miss out and you can watch the session at a convenient time to you.

We are thrilled to be hosting Alfie Kohn to present an online session in August. Alfie is an American author, lecturer and internationally renowned speaker who presents in the areas of education, parenting, and human behaviour. He is a proponent of progressive education and will be presenting a session on 'The Progressive Schools our children deserve'. I urge our members to attend this session and the Grassroots discussion groups that will be held on the subsequent evenings following Alfie's presentation. Another brilliant way for our community and educators to connect with each other particularly during these socially distanced and challenging times.

I encourage you and your staff to attend the upcoming planned events over the remainder of this year. Visit our website to see what is on offer; www.msca.edu.au It is MSCA's commitment to provide affordable professional development opportunities to build connections, collaborations and networks and we have some wonderful speakers and presenters.

I am delighted that following the Down to Business Forum for school Business Managers this year, MSCA is investigating a collective insurance deal for any interested Montessori schools around Australia. This will be an excellent benefit to our school members and demonstrates the possibilities and capacity when we work together to potentially achieve an improved insurance deal for all school members. I would like to thank MSCA Director David Anderson for coordinating this initiative.

I wish everyone in our community good health and strength as we continue to battle through this pandemic. Stay strong, we can do this!

Warm regards,



Cathy France
MSCA Board Chair



EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

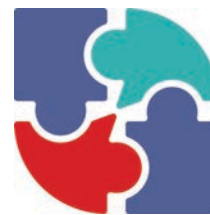
A vacancy currently exists on the MSCA Board for an Appointed Board Director.

Communication will be disseminated shortly seeking interested persons who will be asked to complete an expression of interest form and provide a short statement as to why they would like to join the MSCA Board.

Please keep an eye out for this communication or contact us for more information at admin@msca.edu.au.

UPCOMING EVENTS: BOOK NOW!

FOR DETAILS AND BOOKINGS: WWW.MSCA.EDU.AU



Did you miss it? Register for the recording.

COMMUNICATION IN THE FIRST PLANE

A workshop for 0-6 educators by Julia Hilson, 0 to 3 AMI Trainer.

Adults have a critical role to play in supporting early communication development. Let's talk about the key messages that we need to share with families with children in the first plane of development. Come along to this workshop to explore how we can create the ideal language environment from birth.



Thursday August 5th 1pm – 4pm AEST (Online)

LANGUAGE: SPELLING IN CONTEXT

A workshop for 6-12 educators by Peter Erskine, AMI Trainer.

The Montessori teacher is fortunate to be working within a pedagogy that provides a stable, coherent and consistent set of practices, materials and methods. Montessori pedagogy provides a map and signposts along with a shared language that has a strong explanatory power. Nevertheless aspects of classroom work such as spelling, grammar, and even reading and writing can, at times, become sources of anxiety for Montessori teachers and for children. Peter invites the Montessori 6-12 teacher to look with fresh eyes at our language work with children and to renew the connection between this work and the communal and cultural contexts that support it.



Wednesday August 11th 7.00pm – 8.30pm AEST (Online)

THE RITE JOURNEY PARENTING PLAN

A workshop for parents by Andrew Lines

This practical workshop is for ALL parents and uses birthdays as a 'transition template' for raising responsible adults. It will begin by exploring the world that our children live in, the effects of parenting styles of the 21st Century and will then move into providing parents with practical help on how to create responsible, respectful, resourceful, resilient young adults. Parents will leave with a template of their own...an action plan that they can start putting into place immediately!



Friday August 20th (Online)

MEETING IN THE MIDDLE FORUM

For educators working in Montessori Adolescent Programs

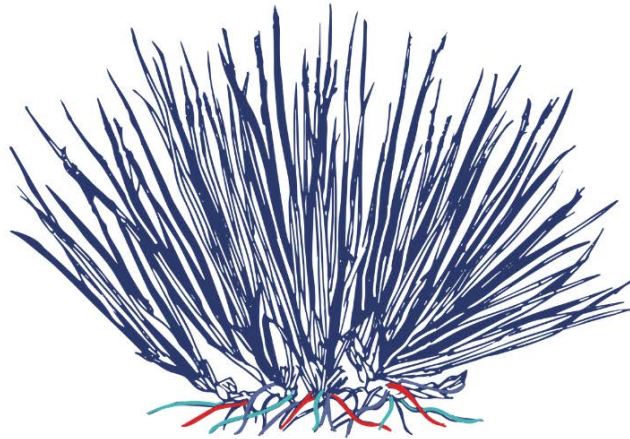
Meeting in the Middle (MiM) is a gathering of educators working in Montessori Adolescent Programs across the region, this forum is intended to be relevant, enjoyable and affordable. As always, MiM is a place for discussions to begin, continue and carry on beyond the event itself that build connections with colleagues and friends working in Montessori Adolescent Programs throughout Australasia.

HUB GROUPS

DUC Hub Group For School and Centre Deputies – Wednesday 4th August & 20th October

BM Hub Group For Business Managers – Tuesday 10th August & 9th November

LEAD4M Hub Group for New Montessori Principals – Tuesday 26th October



CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION!

Book a ticket to our [Alfie Kohn event on August 31st](#) and then continue the conversation with your colleagues from around Australia! Share your ideas while learning from others working in the same area as you in these one-hour discussion groups! Attendance to this Forum is included with your Alfie Kohn ticket.

THE SESSIONS AVAILABLE ARE:

- 0-6 Educators & Centre Directors: Wed Sep 1st 8.00pm AEST (6.00pm AWST)
- 6-12 Educators: Thur Sep 2nd 5.30pm AEST (3.30pm AWST)
- 12-18 Educators: Wed Sep 1st 5.30pm AEST (3.30pm AWST)
- School Leaders: Thur Sep 2nd 5.30pm AEST (3.30pm AWST)

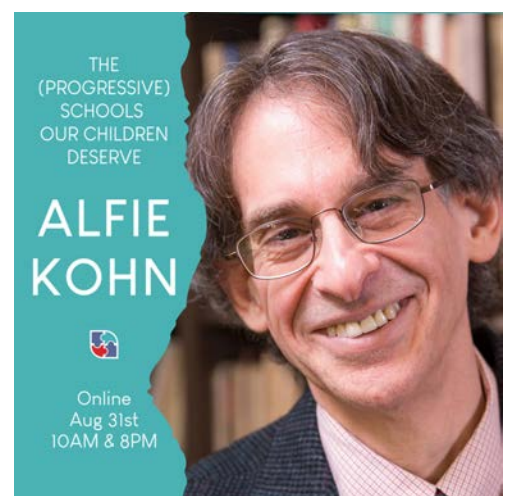
HOW TO BOOK:

First, get your ticket for Alfie Kohn's presentation [here](#).
An ACCESS CODE to book your Grassroots ticket will be provided to you in the Order Confirmation email. Then follow the instructions below to book in for your session! Links to join the online discussion group will be provided by email a week prior to the event.

Grassroots Access Code Instructions:

1. Click 'Get Tickets' on the Event Page;
2. Go to 'Access hidden tickets';
3. Enter the Access Code and click 'Apply';
4. Free Grassroots tickets will appear.

View a tutorial about using Access Codes to view hidden tickets [here!](#)



YOUR COMMUNITY

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS AND CENTRES



THE FARM EXPERIENCE:

Developing a farm program at Melbourne Montessori School

By Tim Dewar and Brendan Magee

The provision of opportunities in Montessori schools to involve students in farm programs are not new. Indeed, for the vast majority of schools, this is integral to their education program. Maria Montessori wrote of the opportunities that working on the land give to young people, and described it as "an introduction both to nature and to civilisation, and giving a limitless field for scientific and historical studies" (From Childhood to Adolescence, p. 80).



With the benefits of a farm program undisputed, the challenge became deciding what the program would look like for us, and finding solutions to the logistical challenge of having limited land in a residential urban environment. Several individual teachers had attempted a small 'urban farm' on the campus with mixed results. A green house and planter boxes were used by a small group of students to grow herbs and vegetables, and these were in turn sold within our Microeconomy program. The school also made use of a local NFP 'Children's Farm', and this provided a limited opportunity to experience 'farm life' through contact with animals and horticulture.

The feedback from staff and students is that they wanted a greater authentic experience – "an opportunity to learn both academically and through actual experience." (From Childhood to Adolescence, p. 80). A new proposal where students would camp and work on a local farm were developed. Tim Dewar used a contact to gain access to a property on the outskirts of Melbourne, and the 'Farm Experience' concept was born.

The two high level goals were: to allow students to experience authentic farm life, and to provide a prepared environment for an enriched academic experience. "Jonno the Farmer" worked with us to develop a program on his property. The logistics of taking 34 'city kids' to a farm and camping for a week were complex. Tents, cooking equipment, porta-loos and access to fresh water needed to be sourced. Risk assessments and insurance for activities such as feeding and learning about animals, wood splitting, fencing, tree planting, fire mitigation and woodwork were completed and approved. Teachers completed safety training on using equipment, and a program was developed.

The exciting part from the teacher's perspective was the development of educational opportunities in the prepared farm environment. Students completed three main activities around Maths, Science and Humanities. The Maths program involved students putting on the gumboots and completing a seismic investigation of the creek to enable an examination of volume and rate of water flow. Our Science teacher lead an experiment where they examined different burning rates and reactions of substances using the campfire. Our Humanities teacher really came out of left field, leading some interpretive dance as a way of looking at river processes and landform. Lesson plans for future excursions have been developed, with the farm living up to expectations as a rich source of educational opportunities.



Overall, we were happy with our first Farm Experience. We travelled to a local indoor aquatic centre every second day to use their showers and have some fun group activities with the students, and this 'return to humanity' was well received. Student reflections showed that they enjoyed the Farm Experience and were challenged in a range of areas. The challenge for the future is securing a continuing relationship with the farm which will enable long-term activities such as raising our own animals, or planting and harvesting fruit trees and crops. Whilst Maria Montessori talked about the farm being ideally a boarding school model, the academic, social and emotional outcomes of our week-long Farm Experience for our students have ensured a regular place in our school calendar. 🌱



ABOUT TIM & BRENDAN

Tim Dewar is the Cycle 4 Coordinator and Brendan Magee is Deputy Principal at Melbourne Montessori School.

FINDING MONTESSORI

Everyone has a story about how they came to be involved in the Montessori community; whether as educators or parents, leaders, trainers, business owners, and more! Each story is varied and unique, often involving some sort of chance stumbling across it, light-bulb moments, or feelings of finally finding your place. Here we share Sylvia Arotin's story...



Sylvia Arotin

*Sylvia is a MSCA Board Member,
Director of My Montessori in NSW, and
founder of Guide & Grow.*

It is actually an interesting story about how I came to discover and ultimately fall in love with Montessori. After a major car accident in January 2010 I had to reassess my path in life and understand what new direction I was going to take, unable to continue my prior career path in fitness and hospitality. I gathered with some friends and family to understand my strengths and interests to which the conclusion was 'something to do with teaching'. I was then encouraged to speak to a friend's mother, Susanne, who was a long standing Montessori teacher from Vienna who had worked in Egypt and many other countries before visiting Australia. After speaking with her and discovering what Montessori was, I immediately was drawn to it and remember feeling 'this is it, this is what I've been looking for' and never looked back. I fell in love with Dr. Maria Montessori and her teachings and it lit my passion and mission for Montessori education and our future generations.

My journey started working with Susanne in the field of Montessori and the elderly. She had pursued much of her Montessori journey to discover the benefits of applying Montessori principles and practice to those living with dementia and alzheimers, to help prolong their symptoms. We presented this work to a group of Directors and principals at ISMS (Inner Sydney Montessori School) where I then was offered to work at Castlecrag Montessori, as a directress, in the under 3's program. This is where my journey began.

During the years I worked in a number of schools including setting up Mosman Montessori under 3's program, Barrenjoey Montessori under 3's and Down Under 3. It was 7 years ago that I decided to set up my own Montessori under 3's program and preschool program in Sydney's North West called My Montessori. I also founded Guide & Grow, an education and training service to help support caregivers through their Montessori journey. We also established the largest online Montessori support platform in the world, free for caregivers, with almost 200,000 members in the last 2 years. My vision and mission is to continue to make Montessori accessible and available to as many families and caregivers in the world to help raise our future generations.



IMPLEMENTING THE ART OF MINDFULNESS IN A NEW MONTESSORI COMMUNITY

Melbourne Montessori School
and Headland Montessori Early
Learning (Grange Road)



Melbourne Montessori School (MMS) and Headland Montessori Long Day Care began their collaborative partnership in January 2020. A collaboration eighteen months in the making and brought together through the vision of MMS Principal Gay Wales and Headland Montessori Managing Director Yan Wu. At its heart is the desire to provide families with a high quality, authentic Montessori program with all of the benefits of Long Day Care. Now in 2021 and the collaboration has moved into its purpose-built centre at Caulfield whilst also retaining the initial centre at St Kilda. Beginning a new centre under a new operating model of course presented challenges, add a global pandemic and it makes life very interesting. It did however serve to remind us of the beauty of the Montessori pedagogy and its ability to prepare us for life. Through this collaboration of an outstanding Montessori school (Melbourne Montessori School) and outstanding Early Childhood Provider (Headland Montessori Early Learning), let us be a strong Montessori community for all families.

“It is through movement and freedom of choice that children build their confidence and happiness. Happiness is a form of mindfulness.”



Our Montessori environment provides opportunities for children to slow down and practise the art of ‘mindfulness’. ‘Walking the Line,’ ‘Yoga’ and ‘meditation,’ or playing the ‘Silence game’ are some examples of the activities in the Montessori classroom that help children learn to quiet their minds. We demonstrate through Grace and Courtesy lessons and our own personal actions to our children to be kind, patient, respectful, and to identify their emotions. Slowly, with time and practise, our children learn breathing skills; to self-reflect; to show self-awareness; to build emotional self-regulation, resilience, and mindfulness. They learn to respect others and their environment. Dr Maria Montessori stated that the Silence Game can give children the appreciation of quietness, silence, and peace.

Dr Maria Montessori created the Practical Life activities to introduce children to real and meaningful life work. Children desire order, exactness, and repetition. The adults at Grange Road campus are often reminded how beautiful it is to observe our children grow and simply observe the children focusing on a single task with such concentration and joy. Watching the children find pleasure in their task and repeating it over and over again until their needs are satisfied, gives us the adults a sense of pride and joy for our children. Many of our new children are working towards ‘normalisation’ and increasing their concentration skills. The aim for Practical Life activities (preliminary activities and movement, care of self, care of environment, grace and courtesy) was for children to gain their independence, body control, concentration and sense of order. “It is through appropriate work and activities that the character of the child is transformed. Work influences his development... his abilities give him great satisfaction, and he smiles with a sweet and joyous smile.” (San Remo June 2021 Lectures, p. 28).

It is through movement and freedom of choice that children build their confidence and happiness. Happiness is a form of mindfulness. "The child who concentrates is immensely happy" (The Absorbent Mind, p. 249). Many of our older children in Cycle 1 classrooms have extended their independence and concentration level to more complex activities especially in the area of Mathematics and Language. They are opening their minds to greater possibilities in the future.

As parents and teachers, we can practise the art of mindfulness with our children, ourselves, others in our home environment and the world at large. Purposeful relationships with 'mindfulness' and a peaceful environment at home will benefit all adults and children. Dr Maria Montessori stated that nurturing our children and our own spiritual development is equally important to guiding them and ourselves intellectually. Our children, others and our own well-being are the most important elements in our lives today. Let our happiness and joy shine through the various activities that we choose and enjoy every day. Let us continue to be kind, patient and compassionate to ourselves and others, either as parents, teachers or other professions in our child's home and work environment. "True peace ... suggests the triumph of justice and love among men; it reveals the existence of a better world where harmony reigns" (Peace and Education). Let us take care of each other and practise the art of Mindfulness to gain more peace, calm, and well-balanced life. 🌍

"True peace ... suggests the triumph of justice and love among men; it reveals the existence of a better world where harmony reigns"

— Maria Montessori (Peace and Education)

BY YENNY HENSON

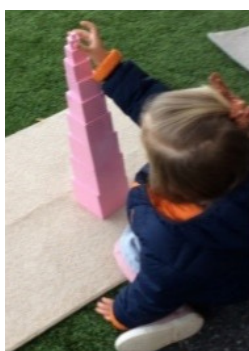
Yenny is a Melbourne Montessori Cycle 1 Teacher and Educational Leader

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"American Montessori Society- Maria Montessori". Amshq.Org, 2019. <https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/History-of-Montessori/Who-Was-Maria-Montessori/Maria-Montessori-Quotes>

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THE HILLS MONTESSORI SCHOOL'S RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The Hills Montessori School in the Adelaide Hills chose National Reconciliation Week to officially launch their Reconciliation Action Plan. National Reconciliation Week's theme 'More than a word. Reconciliation takes action' urges the reconciliation movement towards braver and more impactful action.

The Hills Montessori School observed Sorry Day with a special assembly which was attended by all students, from Preschool through to Year 10 as well as staff, board members and parent representatives. The school was extremely proud to launch their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) because it provides a framework for the school to support the national reconciliation movement. It is a formal statement of commitment to promoting reconciliation in the classroom, around the school and between the school community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At the assembly the Cycle 3 and 4 students who were part of the RAP committee spoke about the importance of a Reconciliation Action Plan and what the school's vision for a reconciled Australia looks like. Students also spoke about the meaning and significance of Sorry Day and Reconciliation Week. Mandy Brown, a local Peramangk leader, provided a Welcome to Country and shared her poetry about Reconciliation and Sorry Day. All classes in the school have been writing and sharing their own Acknowledgment of Country at each assembly. Ruth and Lauren's Cycle 1 Primary class presented their Acknowledgment of Country that they had written themselves at the Sorry Day assembly.



It was important that the whole school celebrated the launching of the school's RAP to ensure that everyone fully understands the significance of committing to doing what we have said we will do and working towards achieving our stated actions.

The RAP and the process of reconciliation does not just sit with one person or a committee, it is the responsibility of all members of the school community to play their part to recognise and respect the First Peoples of this land, to acknowledge the past injustices, and the ongoing inequalities, experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since colonisation, and to commit to working towards a more equal and respectful future.

Since The Hills Montessori School's RAP has been approved by Reconciliation Australia it has been published on the Narragunnawali website. Following the assembly, local Peramangk dance group, Imbala, performed dances, told stories and explained what reconciliation means to them.



VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

- For The Hills Montessori School, reconciliation means listening, recognising, acknowledging, speaking and acting.
- Reconciliation means listening to the stories of Aboriginal peoples, particularly Peramangk and Kaurna in the past, the present and the future, valuing Aboriginal voices and connecting with their experiences.
- Reconciliation means recognising and acknowledging what has happened in the past and the ways that this shapes the present and the future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal people in Australia.
- Reconciliation means speaking out what needs to be spoken to acknowledge the enduring history, cultures, experiences, knowledge, wisdom and sovereignty of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Reconciliation means acting on what we hear, what we recognise and what we say, to move forward with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples toward healing and unity.

THE WINTER WARMER AT SOUTHERN MONTESSORI ELC



After a very quiet social calendar in 2020, the families and staff at Southern Montessori ELC had a roaring time at their latest social event, which is sure to become an annual favourite. Last Saturday evening as the sun went down, our families joined us for an evening around the fire.

In the lead up to the event the children were taught about safety, warning signs and emergency services. We also learnt the difference between 'good' fires and 'bad' fires. Most of the preschool children said that they had experienced good fires before in the form of camp fires and heaters.

On the night itself, we served jacket potatoes to eat, and hot chocolate. The children could toast marshmallows on a smaller fire and there were some musical instruments for a bit of a sing along. On Monday morning the children were all chatting excitedly about the night and were all keen to do it again! We even used the burnt bits of charcoal to create some drawings and will use more of the charcoal to help fertilise our garden beds.



FAREWELL FIONA CAMPBELL

After more than 40 years involved with Montessori education, Fiona has retired from her position as the Principal of Barrenjoey Montessori School in NSW. However she is not leaving the world of Montessori completely behind! Fiona will remain on the Boards of MSCA and Farmhouse Montessori School, while also continuing her own education in Educational Neuroscience and the AMI 0-3 Orientation Course. Here, Fiona summarises her four decade career.



Casting my mind back to Oct 1977 perhaps it was fortunate that having just arrived from the UK I was young and naive with limited life experiences other than those gained in a somewhat privileged upbringing in the beautiful countryside of Sussex. However the hours of time in the countryside provided me with skills, knowledge and resourcefulness that cannot be underestimated and have been put to excellent use over the years.

What I did have however were the foundations of what was to become not only my profession but also my passion for the next 40+ years (not that this is the end!!). I left school – yes a boarding school – with a career in mind however during my gap year a few things changed. The speech therapy training now specified chemistry – not biology as a prerequisite and I had au paired for a family primarily to learn French however my interest had been piqued by the school that the family sent their child to – a Montessori school.

So on my return I contacted the 2 key Montessori colleges in London and had just missed the start date for one and so enrolled in the other – the AMI college in North London which ran the 3 – 6 diploma. Even now it is difficult to realize just how fortunate I was to be trained by a small group of extraordinary Montessorians – Hilla Patell and Muriel Dwyer included and interestingly there was an Australian connection – my fellow student and indeed travel companion was Pat Hilson. We both lived in South London and she would pick me up as she drove by my street and instill some semblance of a deeper understanding of the pedagogy – at times far beyond the comprehension of a fun loving London girl in her early 20s!

My second year was also an immersion – working with a wonderful mentor in a boarding school for 3 – 18 year olds just outside Cambridge. To this day I remember the youngest boarder being just 5 years of age. Living on site provided me with an insight into the development of a child who had the freedom to be themselves however also lacking the physical presence of their parents.

As I reflect I see these students having the opportunity to be independent whilst also being required to demonstrate a resilience – living with a ‘without’ that is beyond their control. This thought was and continues to be a key component in my approach whether in the classroom or as a leader – so much can be provided to assist the development of a child however each child comes with their own ‘without’ and rather than seeing this as an excuse or fixing this I feel that educators have a responsibility to create an environment that is accepting, non judgmental and assists the child to build up their skills of resilience.

So I arrived in Sydney in 1977 on a 1 year visa to catch up with some old flat mates and with the idea of picking up some casual work in Montessori preschools. Prior to arriving I had established that there was a Sydney Montessori Society and given that this was pre internet and websites I imagined that this would be similar to the London Society and have several schools under its umbrella. Imagine my horror when I realized there was just one school (Lindfield) that had recently opened and had a director!

So being young I advertised my skills and had 4 responses from small groups of parents who were keen to provide a Montessori preschool education for their children. I remember Tineke van Gassalt driving me to a meeting of what was to become Northside School. Keen parents were running cake stalls and local fundraisers and for whatever reason offered me a job! We started in a double garage in Pymble that belonged to a parent with 8 children in the morning and 8 in the afternoon. Parents rostered themselves to be upstairs to ensure that 2 adults were on site to meet the requirements of FACS/YACS/DOCS etc.

We did then move to a Kindergarten Union premises that was struggling with numbers with a KU classroom and a Montessori classroom on site – interesting and luckily only for a short time as a parent had an elderly client who wanted to bequest some monies to assist children and hence Northside could purchase their first property!



The school grew and soon employed American and Irish trained Montessori teachers and the first primary classroom commenced in the shed! Meanwhile as an 'essential' Montessori teacher my visa was converted to that of permanent residence.

Racing through the next few years I was the first full time director at the Inner City Montessori School – in a church hall in Drummoyne. At the same time 3 – 6 training had commenced in Sydney and soon more schools were created – all initially with groups of keen parents so determined to provide a Montessori education for their children. The first training course had an interesting demographic – many mothers of Montessori students but there was one lady whom I was lucky enough to work with who had already made her mark in the Department of Education and was heading up the very in trend 'demonstration' classes in varying schools. Kath Collins had realized that these classrooms were in fact reflecting a Montessori classroom but without the materials – once she had completed the course her teaching was truly inspirational. When my own children enrolled at their Montessori preschool Kath Collins popped up as their teacher – not that any strings were pulled!!!

Over the next 20 years or so I was involved in not just teaching in a classroom but also the Montessori community supporting and assisting in varying projects where I felt my knowledge and skill set was best placed.

One such project was the vacation care program in Arukun on the Cape York peninsula in Queensland. With a work colleague we would fly in armed with a suitcase of resources to make materials as required, trays, dishes, classified cards, golden beads etc. On arrival we would pack up the child care room that ran in the term time and set up a 'Montessori' environment. The next morning the doors would open and one waited – would any the local staff walk in the door and indeed any children? And they did however beautifully protected one on one presentations were not top of the list as we drew on all the subtleties of the philosophy – a safe and supportive environments specifically designed for young children. Meals and sleep were key components and the joy of providing a simple choice was continually evidenced – yellow or red paint / custard or not?

Over the few years we saw the students realize that whilst not always, sometimes one did have ownership of a decision making process. To this day I still suggest that all those training would benefit from even a week in such an environment.

Another highlight has been the opportunity to work with schools – particularly with a focus on providing an additional environment whether it be growing a primary environment or indeed a preschool environment to ensure that those students can extend their Montessori education and truly unfold to the person that they will become.

So there have been some wonderful opportunities afforded to me and some great highs however it would be remiss of me not to mention that not all has been a smooth journey. Whilst on the ground there is great collegiality amongst many, my concern around Montessori training of depth continues – there have been many missed opportunities and now we have Montessori schools at risk as the teaching in a Montessori environment is so much more than just the materials and presentations.

However not to finish on a low note my time in Montessori is still alive and well – with hopefully some projects that will come to fruition to support all teachers and learners – old and young. My readings of diverse literature as I complete my Masters in Educational Neuroscience convinces me that Dr Montessori was an extraordinary human being – a contemporary and authentic educator whose pedagogy will always be relevant however unpredictable our lives.

Thank you to all those and there in deed are many who have supported my Montessori 'school' life – I have so appreciated your time, energy and knowledge of both colleagues and students over the years.

“To stimulate life, leaving it free, however, to unfold itself – that is the first duty of the educator. For such a delicate mission great art is required... least one should disturb or lead astray rather than help the soul which is coming to life.”
—Maria Montessori (Discovery of the Child)



PUNISHED BY REWARDS?

A Conversation with Alfie Kohn

BY RON BRANDT

The following interview took place at ASCD's Annual Conference on March 27, 1995 in San Francisco. This transcript is available at www.alfiekohn.org and www.ascd.org.

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Alfie, we educators use punishment quite a lot, but we've come to understand that it's not a very effective motivation. We've been convinced that it's much better to use rewards instead. But now you come along and say that's wrong, too. Why?

First, let's make sure we agree on your first premise, which is that punishment is destructive. A number of people seem to think if we call it "consequences" or insert the modifier "logical," then it's okay. "Logical consequences" is an example of what I call "punishment lite," a kinder, gentler way of doing things to children instead of working with them.

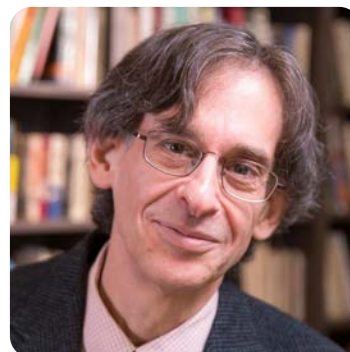
Having said that, I'll move on to rewards. Rewards and punishments are both ways of manipulating behavior. They are two forms of doing things to students. And to that extent, all of the research that says it's counterproductive to say to students, "Do this or here is what I'm going to do to you," also applies to saying, "Do this and you'll get that." Ed Deci and Rich Ryan at the University of Rochester are right when they call rewards "control through seduction."

And you're saying rewards are just as undesirable as punishment.

By virtue of being controlling, they're likely to be experienced as aversive in the long run. The reason is that while students would certainly like to have the goody itself – the pizza or money or gold star – none of us enjoys having the very things we desire used as levers to control our behavior. So it's the contingency of the goody – "Do this and you'll get that" – that accounts for its punitive status over the long haul.

You're saying that's the case even for kids who find a certain task rewarding for its own sake?

Rewards are most damaging to interest when the task is already intrinsically motivating. That may be simply because there is that much more interest to lose when extrinsics are introduced; if you're doing something boring, your interest level may already be at rock bottom.



However, that doesn't give us license to treat kids like pets when the task is uninteresting. Instead, we need to examine the task itself, the content of the curriculum, to see how it can be made more engaging. Regardless of what we do about it, though, one of the most thoroughly researched findings in social psychology is that the more you reward someone for doing something, the less interest that person will tend to have in whatever he or she was rewarded to do.

In Punished by Rewards, you cite a lot of research on points like that. You're saying this is not just your opinion.

That's right. There are at least 70 studies showing that extrinsic motivators – including A's, sometimes praise, and other rewards – are not merely ineffective over the long haul but counterproductive with respect to the things that concern us most: desire to learn, commitment to good values, and so on. Another group of studies shows that when people are offered a reward for doing a task that involves some degree of problem solving or creativity – or for doing it well – they will tend to do lower quality work than those offered no reward.

That seems so contrary to our everyday experience. Everybody is used to getting rewards and giving them. As educators we think it's only right to give rewards; kids who do good things deserve rewards.

What kids deserve is an engaging curriculum and a caring atmosphere so they can act on their natural desire to find out about stuff. No kid deserves to be manipulated with extrinsics so as to comply with what others want.

It's remarkable how often educators use the word "motivation" when what they mean is compliance. Indeed, one of the fundamental myths in this area is that it's possible to motivate somebody else. Whenever you see an article or a seminar called "How to Motivate Your Students," I recommend that you ignore it. You can't motivate another person, so framing the issue that way virtually guarantees the use of controlling devices.

Moreover, motivation is something that kids start out with. You don't have to bribe a young child to show you how she can count to a thousand million or decode signs on the highway. But research shows that by the middle – or certainly by the end – of elementary school, this intrinsic motivation starts to tail off sharply – by an extraordinary coincidence, around the time that grades have started to kick in.

Surely it's unrealistic to expect that all kids will find all the curriculum intrinsically motivating. There are some things that kids just have to slog through, aren't there?

Well, a given child is likely to be more interested in some things than others, but we're not talking about putting something on the chalkboard and expecting kids to jump up and down and say, "I can't wait to get at this!"

Skillful teaching involves facilitating the process by which kids come to grapple with complex ideas – and those ideas, as John Dewey has told us, have to emerge organically from the real-life interests and concerns of the kids. "Which is bigger, 5/7 or 9/11?" The correct answer is, "Who cares?" But kids care very much about how fast they are growing. Within that context, the skills necessary to figure it out become interesting to most kids. "What's the difference between a simile and a metaphor?" Same answer; few members of our species would find that distinction intrinsically motivating – but kids are highly interested in writing a story about dinosaurs or how a spaceship carries them away. In the context of a task that matters to students, the specific skills we care about can be taught naturally without sugarcoating, without games, and above all without offering kids little doggie biscuits for doing what we tell them.

Let me ask about praise, which is particularly tricky, because it's not a tangible reward. If I tell one of my staff members that he or she did a terrific job on something, am I giving a reward at that point?

That's an interesting question, and I wish more educators would ask it, regardless of what the answer turns out to be.

Positive feedback that is perceived as information is not in itself destructive and indeed can be quite constructive, educationally speaking. And encouragement – helping people feel acknowledged so that their interest in a task is redoubled – is not a bad thing. But most praise given to children takes the form of a verbal reward, which can have the same destructive impact as other rewards: it feels controlling, it warps the relationship between the adult and the child – and between the child and his or her peers – and it undermines interest in the task itself.

It's not a coincidence that coercive discipline programs rely to a large extent on getting compliance by slathering on praise. A typical example is the elementary school teacher who is taught to say, "I like the way Cecilia is sitting so nice and quiet and ready to work." I have multiple objections to this practice.

"Skillful teaching involves facilitating the process by which kids come to grapple with complex ideas – and those ideas ... have to emerge organically from the real-life interests and concerns of the kids."

Why?

First, the teacher hasn't done Cecilia any favors. You can imagine some of the other kids coming up to her after class: "Miss 'nice and quiet' dork!"

Second, the teacher has just turned a learning experience into a quest for triumph. She has introduced competition into the classroom. It's now a contest to see who is the nicest, quietest child – and the rest of you just lost.

Third, this is a fundamentally fraudulent interaction. The teacher is pretending to speak to Cecilia, but she's really using Cecilia to manipulate the behavior of the other people in the room – and that's simply not a nice way to deal with human beings.

Fourth, and possibly most important, I ask you to reflect on what is the most important word in that expression. I believe it's *I*. Even if such a practice "works," it has worked only to get Cecilia and the other people watching to become concerned about what I demand, regardless of what reasons I may or may not have for asking her to do something. Cecilia is not helped one iota to reflect on how her experience affects other people in the room or what kind of person she wants to be.

On that point, I like to think about the questions that kids are encouraged to ask in different kinds of classrooms. In one dominated by consequences, kids are led to think, "What do they want me to do, and what will happen to me if I don't do it?" In a reward-oriented classroom, including one that is characterized by praise, kids are led to ask, "What do they want me to do, and what will I get for doing it?" Notice how fundamentally similar those two questions are, and how radically different either one is from the questions, "What kind of person do I want to be?" or "What kind of classroom do we want to have?"

What about less successful students? A lot of educators feel strongly that they need even more praise than other kids. They need to be praised when they make the slightest bit of progress.

No research supports the idea that praising children for inching up the adult-constructed ladder helps them develop a sense of competence. Indeed, praise for success at relatively easy tasks sends a message that this child must not be very bright. Moreover, children are not helped to find the material itself important or interesting if they are praised for doing it.

In general, the more kids are induced to do something for a reward, whether tangible or verbal, the more you see a diminution of interest the next time they do it. That can be explained partly by the fact that praise, like other rewards, is ultimately an instrument of control, but also by the fact that if I praise or reward a student for doing something, the message the child infers is, "This must be something I wouldn't want to do; otherwise they wouldn't have to bribe me to do it."

What you're saying is not going to be readily accepted by most people. It seems to go against our everyday experience.

It does and it doesn't. For example, parents come up to me and say things like, "You know, it's funny you say this, because just yesterday I asked my kid to clear the table after dinner, and he said, 'What are you going to give me for it?'" What I find remarkable about that is not what the child said, but that the parent is asking me to shake my head and commiserate about These Kids Today. What I want to ask is, "Where do you think the kid learned this?" And if I do ask that, with very little prompting, people understand.

There's even some research in Missouri showing that when undergraduates were asked, "Do you think rewards lead to higher or lower interest in a task?" they guessed wrong. But as soon as the research results were explained, everyone said, "Oh yeah, I knew that." A lot of people have had the experience of having done something just because they loved it – until they started to get paid for doing it, after which they wouldn't dream of doing it again without getting paid. The phenomenon whereby extrinsic motivators cause intrinsic motivation to evaporate is not on the tips of our tongues, but it's not that far from consciousness, either.

All the same, it's a different way to think about things. For example, I like it when people recognize me for an accomplishment of some kind.

Yes, of course. We all want to be appreciated, encouraged, and loved. The question is whether that need must take the form of what often looks like a patronizing pat on the head and saying "Good boy," to which I believe the most logical response is, "Woof!"

Now, I know a lot of adults who are praise junkies: sadly unable to think about the worth of their own activities and actions and products, and utterly dependent on someone else to tell them they did a good job.

That is the logical conclusion of being marinated in praise for years. But maybe there is a more empowering and respectful way of sharing one's opinions than what amounts to a verbal reward.

I'm struck by teachers who say over and over to me, "You don't understand the kind of backgrounds and home lives that these kids have; they come from loveless, sometimes brutal places, and you're telling me not to praise them?" My answer is, "Yes." What these kids need is unconditional support and encouragement and love. Praise is not just different from that; it's the opposite of that. Praise is, "Jump through my hoops, and only then will I tell you what a great job you did and how proud I am of you." And that can be problematic. Of course, with positive feedback, it's a matter of nuance and emphasis and implementation. That is not the case with gold stars, candy bars, and A's, which I believe are inherently destructive.

One of the central myths we carry around in our heads is that there is this single entity called "motivation" that one can have more or less of. And of course we want kids to have more of it, so we offer them A's, praise, and pizza. The truth is that there are qualitatively different kinds of motivation. We need to stop asking "How motivated are my students?" and start asking "How are my students motivated?" The kind of motivation elicited by extrinsic inducements isn't just less effective than intrinsic motivation; it threatens to erode that intrinsic motivation, that excitement about what one is doing.

So what are you suggesting instead?

I sometimes talk about the three Cs of motivation. The first C is content. Far less interesting to me than whether a student has learned what he was supposed to is the question, "Has the child been given something to do worth learning?" If you ask me what to do about a kid being "off task" – one of our favorite buzzwords – my first response is going to be, "What's the task?" If you're giving them garbage to do, yes, you may have to bribe them to do it. If the kids have to endlessly fill in the blanks on dittos, you're not going to get rid of rewards or threats anytime soon.

The second C is community: not only cooperative learning but helping kids feel part of a safe environment in which they feel free to ask for help, in which they come to care about one another as opposed to having to be manipulated to share or not be mean. Some of the outstanding work on creating caring communities is being done by the Developmental Studies Center in Oakland, California.

The third C is choice: making sure that kids are asked to think about what they're doing and how and with whom and why. You know, kids learn to make good choices not by following directions but by making choices.

You show me a school that really has those three Cs in place – where students are working with one another in a caring environment to engage with interesting tasks that they have some say in choosing – and I'll show you a place where you don't need to use punishments or rewards. 🌈

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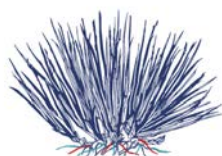
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THE COMMON SENSE OF MONTESSORI PEDAGOGY

BY RENILDE MONTESSORI

Previously published in AMI communications 1996, 2/3. The sons and sole heirs of Renilde Montessori, Pelayo and Saulo Matute have kindly granted permission to publish this article.

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Since the beginning Montessori pedagogy has been appropriated, interpreted, misinterpreted, exploited, propagated, torn to shreds and the shreds magnified into systems, reconstituted, used, abused and disabused, gone into oblivion and undergone multiple renaissances. Followers have lamented, detractors have vociferated. Throughout all the furore, year after year, decade after decade, the sane and sensible principles and practices of Montessori education have blossomed here and there, now and again – frequently partially, rarely totally – allowing a glimpse of their immense potential. Mostly, their vitality has remained dormant as wheat in the pyramids, ready to germinate in fertile ground when the time is ripe, when the moment arrives that humanity as a whole, and not in isolated pockets, becomes adequate to perceive the wholesomeness and common sense which underlies Montessori education as an aid to life.

"Help me to do it by myself" is not a marketing slogan, it is a phrase well-known amongst Montessori teachers and parents. A myriad of children have repeated it over and over again, throughout time, all over the world.

There is another phrase, equally significant, this one particularly well-known to Montessori trainers. It is voiced by students in Montessori training courses as they listen to the theory lectures and as they work with the materials and little by little enlightenment dawns: "This is all pure common sense." A revelation indeed for those who come with little knowledge and, perhaps, a faint disquiet arising from an inchoate attraction exerted by what is still considered in many circles an esoteric mode of education. The underlying principles of Montessori pedagogy are rooted in the common essence of our species. Maria Montessori was a scientist and as such a master in the art of observation. Observation is a cyclical phenomenon. Interest, contemplation, study, knowledge, understanding – ergo, awareness. Each point of awareness reached awakens new dimensions of interest and the cycle is repeated. The premise for interest to be awakened in the first place is that vital energy called love.



Renilde Montessori, Maria Montessori's youngest grandchild lived and travelled with her grandmother as a child. She attended schools in Spain and the Netherlands during her primary and secondary years. In her late teens she audited one of Dr Montessori's courses in Adyar, India. Renilde Montessori worked in various fields of endeavour before joining the Montessori movement as personal assistant to her father, Mario Montessori in 1968. She went on to graduate from Washington Montessori institute and was actively involved in Association Montessori Internationale as a lecturer, trainer and examiner and later as the position of General Secretary and President. She died in 2012.

In Education and Peace Dr. Montessori writes:

“ The child has given us striking revelations of different kinds of love, all of them directly related to work. Most of us experience the kind of love that causes us to be deeply attached to others; but this is a passing love. There is ample reason, however, to believe that the human spirit is inherently capable of another kind of love that is not transitory, that does not change, that does not die.

This love is the essential fire in man, without which he cannot live. It is not simply tender affection. I assure you that I have seen this love; I have been amazed by it; I have called it 'love for one's environment'.

The love of one's environment is the secret of all man's progress and the secret of social evolution.

Love spurs man to learn. It leads to intimate contact between the thing that is loved and the human spirit, which in turn leads to production. Labour, life, and normal human development result. Love leads human beings to study things. Love is the instinct that guides our actions. ”

In his foreword to *The Year of the Graylag Goose*, Konrad Lorenz, a great proponent of the common sense of science, writes:

“ In any kind of descriptive study, whether it deals with the spatial arrangement of organic structures or with the temporal patterning of movement in a living organism, our perceptual mechanisms play an important part. Such study thus involves a genuine cognitive process that underlies all our scientific knowledge. However, since the process takes place at a subconscious level and is inaccessible to introspection, it is mistrusted by research workers who place too much faith in rational thought. They will not concede that their own hypotheses, and the questions they tackle experimentally, depend on that same perceptual process. The contempt for the descriptive sciences that is so widespread today can be attributed to this very denial of perception as the source of scientific knowledge – a denial that has been elevated almost to the status of a religion.

It is possible that perception if treated with suspicion by some scientists – those who wish to keep their research 'free of value judgments' at all costs – simply because perception is inseparable from sensations of beauty. It is a common error, but a pernicious one, to think that only what is gray and boring can be 'scientific'... A special gift for observation is virtually identical with a talent for perception, and indivisible from a hypersensitivity to the beauty of living organisms.

The harmony inhabiting all living things is what attracts our interest, and it would be utterly unscientific, if not downright dishonest, to deny this. A strictly objective description or illustration of an animal or plant departs from the truth in one crucial respect if the beauty of the living organism itself is not made evident.”

Both quotations are a paean to humanity's potential for perception – for the exercise of an element common to all human beings, our senses – source of our individual intelligence and therefore of the collective intelligence of our species.

Both quotations confirm the fact that life is a joyful phenomenon, and the contemplation and study of its myriad of expressions, a cause for endless delight. They also make clear the equation that perception with delight begets truth. Truth and reality are the essence of Montessori pedagogy, the common sense necessary for education to indeed be an aid to life.



William Blake has a deeply disturbing verse.

*Every night and every morn some to misery are born.
Every morn and every night some are born to sweet delight.
Some are born to sweet delight –
some are born to endless night.*

The desolateness of this is that whether a child is born to endless night or to sweet delight depends entirely on the awareness of its progenitors and educators, on their unquestioning faith in the wholesomeness of the human spirit, the capacity to perceive the clear guidelines for its own construction inherent in every child, and the willing of each child's good.

The conclusion to be drawn from these seemingly disparate statements is that the common sense of Montessori pedagogy springs from a scientifically inseparable trinity – love, perception and awareness. Having said all that, let us select at random some of the concepts in Montessori pedagogy that best illustrate this common sense.

The primary one is the Prepared Environment.

Every living thing can only thrive in an environment which responds to its vital exigencies. Children come into the world with unlimited potential for delight and immediately commence the awe-inspiring task of self construction. The prime matter for this great work they find in their environment.

Therefore, common sense dictates that from the moment of conception environments have to be provided for every stage of the child's development, responding to the physical, intellectual and spiritual characteristics appropriate to each.

The small person comes into the world disposed to learn the arts of life following inner dictates common to all infants of our species. Hence the first environment is all important for, as is now universally accepted, it is during the first three years of life that the personality is formed. If the environment is mean and poor, the fabric of this personality will be threadbare. If it is rich and wholesome, a rich and wholesome foundation is laid for life.

Further environments will be more or less appropriate depending on the adequacy of parents and educators to perceive and be enchanted by the phenomena typical of each plane of development, on the companionableness between the adults in charge and the children in their care. This care should be mutually enriching thereby becoming a most gratifying responsibility, for there is no greater satisfaction than to learn from the children, to see the world anew through their wise and innocent eyes. They know so much that we have lost under the debris of our daily enterprises.

In our schools, the environments are clearly delineated and prepared for each stage of development. Maria Montessori once said "If we have done nothing else, we have at least introduced mixed age groups in our classrooms". And it is indeed an outstanding example of common sense. Beyond the more obvious reasons why it is sensible to group the ages three by three years, such as "the little ones learn from the older children and the older ones learn by teaching the younger", "every child can work at his own pace and rhythm eliminating the bane of competition" there is the matter of order and discipline easily maintained even in very large classes with only one adult in charge. This is due to the sophisticated balance between liberty and discipline prevalent in Montessori classrooms, established at the very inception of a class. Children who have acquired the fine art of working freely in a structured environment, joyfully assume responsibility for upholding this structure, contributing to the cohesion of their social unit.

Another consequence is the comfort of remaining in one environment throughout a cycle of development. There is a perspective both toward the future and toward the past. The young children see what work awaits them, the older ones can contemplate the path they have completed and by the time they have outgrown this first environment, before the restlessness sets in of confinement in a space become too small, they go on to become the younger ones again in an environment where they can explore new dimensions of what they have made their own. Tenderness, compassion and respect for each other's work flourish in a mixed age group, as does delight in one another's achievements, particularly in classes where children with difficulties are admitted.

If a three-to-six environment is furnished with enlightenment, the Practical Life area will be a place of beauty and, again, explicit common sense. The phrase "children learn through spontaneous, meaningful activity" is not merely a statement of fact, it contains an instruction for the choice of appropriate material. The very first consideration when creating Practical Life exercises is that they should have a clear and lucid, purpose. This will establish a habit of the intelligence – that of discriminating between what has meaning and what has not, between essential and non-essential.

The beauty of the materials is not merely to attract the children's attention, it is a courteous response to their tendency to find beauty in all that surrounds them, a tendency which springs from the passionate love of the environment that is part of their human condition. The deliberate creation of beauty is a call to aesthetic awareness, which, to paraphrase Maria Montessori, goes hand in hand with moral awareness.

Another kind of awareness is called forth by the fragility of the materials. The need for delicate handling is one of the many subtle means in the area of Practical Life that help the child to develop and strengthen his will – defined by Maria Montessori as the intelligent direction of movement.

Purpose, beauty and fragility are but three aspects of the Practical Life environment which most sensibly encourage the children's development.

In the Sensorial Materials there are again many silent and powerful teachers, *Il Signor Errore* [My Lord the Error] being one of the most significant from the point of view of the child's physical, intellectual and moral development. This multifaceted master is introduced with elegance through the control of error inherent in the materials. There are obvious advantages to allowing the child to become aware of his mistakes and to be allowed to correct them without interference. The materials judge not, nor do they condemn. They do not praise, nor do they punish. They mutely demonstrate that any action has consequences.

This raises errors to a level of benevolence rather than allowing them to become a malevolent source of guilt and fear, a tool for evil in the hands of proud and angry educators. By eliminating guilt, the children are freed from the vicious cycle of imposing guilt. Becoming comfortable with their mistakes, coming to realize that they are a necessary part of the process of learning, gives the children a sense of security. By eliminating insecurity, they will grow straight and free and rich, not beggars mortified by the mercy, or ridicule, or disapprobation of others.

The independence gained leads also to an awareness of one's solitude as beneficial rather than as a source of loneliness, and therefore evokes respect for the solitude of others. This makes possible an interdependent society based on the dignity of the individual rather than on the need to cling to others for security and support.



Another eminently sensible tenet in a Montessori environment is that everything within it, including the adults in charge, should be limited in scope and quantity.

To begin with the adults, one trained person and perhaps one assistant are sufficient for a Casa class of thirty-five to forty three to six-year-old children. Their mandate is very clearly delimited and their duties are well-defined. "How can the teacher get to all the children?" is the anguished cry we hear from our students. We then reply "The reason for this ratio is precisely so that the teacher will not 'get at' all the children", who are therefore free from unsolicited onslaught and can, indeed, learn at their own pace and rhythm, in their own fashion.

Many excellent side-effects accompany the limitation in scope of the materials. If they are to be keys to the environment, they must provide just so much possibility for work and exploration and no more. Once these possibilities are exhausted, the child is gently weaned and able to go forth into his world with a wealth of new awareness and capabilities. The simplicity and beauty of the purposes Maria Montessori gives for the Sensorial Materials are to be pondered: refinement of the senses, and classification of sense impressions.

Implicit in these purposes is that the child has been using his senses since he is born, and that he has accumulated an immense amount of sense impressions. The child is taught, in essence, nothing new. He is allowed to explore, enhance, enrich that which is already part of his human constructs. He becomes a scientist of his own experience.

The limitation of the materials as such is of optimum importance from the point of view of clear and simple common sense. One of the more obvious benefits is that it allows the children to develop respect and courtesy towards others. Another is that if a child finds the material of his choice in use, he has several options.

He can observe the child who is working with the material thereby learning something new perhaps, in silence, uncritically critiquing the others' activity and planning how he will do it himself; he can choose another piece of material; or he can do nothing at all. The freedom to do nothing at all is a privilege possibly unique to Montessori classrooms, unfortunately granted at times reluctantly and at times not at all, thereby depriving the child of the opportunity for his mind and spirit to lie fallow. Maria Montessori's concept of the centre and the periphery merit close scrutiny. Frequently children are forced into peripheral activities without taking into account that time is an essential dimension if their experience is to be centrally integrated and become fertile.



In Montessori pedagogy language is approached with unique common sense.

Language is a specifically human phenomenon and a striking example of the child's self-construction, used by Maria Montessori as the most evident manifestation of the absorbent mind. When the child comes into the classroom at around three years of age, he is given in the simplest way possible the opportunity to enrich the language he has acquired during his small lifetime, and to use it intelligently, with precision and beauty, becoming aware of its properties not by being taught, but by being allowed to discover and explore them himself. If not harassed, he learns to write, and as a natural consequence he learns to read, not remembering the day he could not write or read in the same way that he does not remember that once upon a time he could not walk.



This is but a sketch, composed of a few randomly selected samples from the treasury of Montessori pedagogy. For the ultimately magnificent exponent of common sense we must look to the child himself. Children are sensible creatures, who must of necessity follow the instruction of the most sensible of teachers – nature herself. Children are disposed from birth to follow her commands with joyful obedience. It is our mandate as parents and educators to become adequate to heed, with the child, his inner dictates, providing a sane, safe place where his unique human potential can be fulfilled, thrive, and flourish.

The most sensible advice Maria Montessori gives is 'Follow the Child'. It will take many generations for humanity to understand the common sense of this injunction. When it does, and only then, humanity itself will begin to fulfil its potential. 🌍

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THIRD PLANE

BY KAREN BENNETTS

Maria Montessori's view of human development encompasses four stages or 'planes of development': 0-6, 6-12, 12-18 and 18-24 years. The third plane is the time of adolescence, a period of rapid growth and change.

The third plane has much in common with the first plane. We hope each newborn child has been nurtured in a healthy prenatal environment that has everything needed for the young child to develop. Similarly, we hope that children of 12 years have been provided with everything they need to begin building a fully formed adult. If all goes well, the adolescent will leave the third plane at 18 years, ready to enter society and make a strong adult contribution.

Who is this adolescent? What are the characteristics associated with the third plane of development? Montessori saw the adolescent as a social newborn, experiencing physical, social and emotional awkwardness and vulnerability. Adolescence is a delicate period, worthy of our respect and presenting itself to us as our adult responsibility. At the same time, there are practical aspects:

'Adaptability' – this is the most essential quality; for the progress of the world is continually opening new careers, and at the same time closing or revolutionising the traditional types of employment. (Montessori 1994, p.61)

The adolescent asks 'Who am I?' and 'Where do I fit in?' and even 'How may I serve others?' These give us clues about what opportunities might be required in a prepared environment that serves adolescent needs. Work is a vital human instinct. Adolescents crave physical work that gives the right level of challenge to their growing strength. They also value exploration of the social and economic world; exploration of the balance between freedom and responsibility at adult level; and exploration of the self. Creative work in language and the arts becomes significant in the third plane. Adolescents need opportunities for self-expression, moral development and service. Variety of opportunities is essential.

The adolescent also has a need to be protected. The transition to adulthood is sprinkled with 'doubts and hesitations, violent emotions, discouragement and an unexpected decrease of intellectual capacity' (Montessori, 1994, 63). Concentration can be difficult and there is a need to fortify the adolescent's self-confidence. Adolescents are adult-like, but also child-like – we can support the valorisation of their personalities, an internal strengthening, so they feel capable of succeeding in life by their own efforts.

When we see adolescents passing successfully through the third plane, we see the development of spiritual equilibrium through their collaborative interactions with others, through their compassion. No community is without conflict or tension, but adolescents can walk the balance of individual development with group ethics and responsibility, if they have our support.

For teachers who work with adolescents, it can be a joy to observe their purposeful debates and philosophising; their risk-taking; their loyalty to their tribe; the unfolding of their noble adult characteristics. The third plane can bring a sense of disconnection; a period of self-focus; an occasional lack of judgement. These come from third plane neural development. But the adolescent is getting ready to understand the role the adult self will play in society...and needs mentors. Who will have faith in the adolescent? Who in these strange times, will help the adolescent build optimism about the future?

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Friday August 20th (Online)

MEETING IN THE MIDDLE FORUM

For educators working in Montessori
Adolescent Programs

So many of you voted for an in-person Meeting in the Middle Forum, which was scheduled for two days at Melbourne Montessori School. Unfortunately COVID has thwarted our plans once again, so we are back to hosting this event online on Friday only.

AUSTRALIAN TRAINING

MSCA is proud to support the quality delivery of Montessori teacher training in Australia. With the ongoing global pandemic, both SMTC and Montessori Institute continue to provide flexible training delivery. Please view their websites for more information on the courses and workshops available.



SMTC is excited to invite expressions of interest in its AMI Montessori 12-18 Diploma planned for commencement in the second half of 2022 in a blended format with online and in-person components. Discussions are underway about the possibility of offering two options for the in-person components – an east coast and a west coast option. Contact our Training Centre Manager to register your interest now. More details will be available soon on the SMTC website.



2021 / 2022 COURSES PERTH,
BRISBANE, SYDNEY, MELBOURNE
& ONLINE

THE AMI MONTESSORI REFRESHER 0-3
July 2021 (ONLINE)

THE AMI MONTESSORI REFRESHER 3-6
July 2021 (ONLINE)

THE AMI MONTESSORI REFRESHER 6-12
July 2021 (ONLINE)

AMI MONTESSORI 0-3 ORIENTATION CERTIFICATE
Part-time, commencing August 2021 (ONLINE)

AMI MONTESSORI 3-6 ORIENTATION CERTIFICATE
Part-time, commencing August 2021 (ONLINE)

AMI MONTESSORI 3-6 DIPLOMA
Part-time, commencing September 2021 (MELBOURNE)

APPLICATIONS CLOSING SOON
INSTALMENT PLAN AVAILABLE

02 9395 2799
admin@montessoritrainingcentre.com.au
www.montessoritrainingcentre.com.au/study/courses



AMI MONTESSORI 0-3 DIPLOMA
Block mode, commencing September 2021 (BRISBANE)
(Blended Format)

AMI MONTESSORI FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE
Full time, commencing October 2021 (SYDNEY)

AMI MONTESSORI 6-12 DIPLOMA
Full-time / Block mode, commencing November 2021 (SYDNEY)

AMI MONTESSORI 3-6 DIPLOMA
Block mode, commencing January 2022 (PERTH)
(Blended Format)

AMI MONTESSORI 3-6 DIPLOMA
Block mode, commencing January 2022 (SYDNEY)



COVETED
TEACHING
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CONTINUOUS
LEARNING



ASSOCIATION MONTESSORI
INTERNATIONALE (AMI)
ACCREDITATION



PROGRESSIVE
PEDAGOGY



GLOBALLY
RECOGNISED

JULY/AUGUST 2021 WORKSHOPS

Open to students and non-students
Contact Bernadette Hendry for details.
bhendry@mwei.edu.au

JULY	WORKSHOP	PRESENTER
NSW	0-3yrs Care of Self 0-3yrs Care of Environment	Deirdre O'Reilly Deirdre O'Reilly
SA	3-6yrs Practical Life	Anna Golab
VIC	3-6yrs Practical Life	Stella Mandas
WA	3-6yrs Mathematics	Naomi Stuckey
ONLINE	Introduction to Montessori Theory & Philosophy	Meghan Hicks & Hali Halphen
AUGUST	WORKSHOP	PRESENTER
NSW	Special Needs	Deirdre O'Reilly
QLD	3-6yrs Sensorial 0-3yrs Care of Self 0-3yrs Care of Environment	Eva Nislev Gemma Kuras Gemma Kuras
SA	3-6yrs Sensorial	Anna Golab
VIC	3-6yrs Sensorial	Stella Mandas
WA	0-3yrs Education of the Senses 0-3yrs Fine & Gross Motor Develop.	Naomi Stuckey Naomi Stuckey

ACECQA and AITSL Accredited Montessori teacher and early childhood educator courses, Australia wide



**Flexible external studies with face-to-face workshops.
Enrolments open all year around.**



**Graduate Diploma of Education (Montessori)*
Diploma of Education (Montessori)* 3-6, 6-12
Certificate in Montessori Studies
Diploma of Montessori Leadership & Practice**

The Montessori Institute is a not-for-profit organisation and a TEQSA accredited Higher Education Provider. Founded in 1983, we have dedicated our work to the sustainability of Montessori education in Australia, making knowledge, training, information and materials relating to the Montessori approach to education, accessible to everyone.

* Only the Graduate Diploma (AITSL & ACECQA) and Diploma (ACECQA) are accredited courses

W: www.mwei.edu.au P: 08 6296 7900 E: info@mwei.edu.au

COLLABORATIONS

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM MONTESSORI SCHOOLS AND CENTRES AUSTRALIA

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS AND CENTRES AUSTRALIA
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