

President's Corner

"The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind." Dr. Montessori

As people who work with children we are by nature optimistic, but thinking about current affairs one can become disheartened by things happening in the world, our country, and our state. Dr. Montessori said "If help and salvation are to come, they can only come from the children, for the children are the makers of men." It is lovely to have a curriculum which at its base has Grace and Courtesy. It is lovely that peace education is given such respect. At a time when many people wonder what they can do to make the world a better place, as Montessorians we have that opportunity every day. We can remain optimistic for what is to come because we are helping the next generation prepare to step up. Great Work my fellow Montessorians!

You will be receiving your ballot for the election. Your vote matters. Please take the time to fill it out and return it. As always we are here to serve the Montessori community and we need to know what you think!

Our Seminar this Spring with Mr. Chick Moorman supported our endeavors. Chick always speaks to the heart and soul of educators and encourages us to speak to the spirit of our children. If you were not able to attend please take time to read the article about the great experience. Have a safe and restful summer. See you next fall!

Sincerely,
Heidi Gauger



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Montessori Mentoring –“ Speed Dating” Style

by Kirsten Dusseau

The AMS national conference featured a workshop that offered a new format. Mentoring for Emerging School Leaders was presented by Kathy Roemer, EdD, and Mary Ellen Kordas, and offered a “speed dating” approach to mentoring. When organizing the workshop, topics of interest were chosen and each assigned to an experienced Montessori school leader, who agreed to serve as mentor. A circle of chairs were set up around each mentor a sign identifying their topic of discussion. The participants were able to switch topics /mentors three times. The format allowed for 20-25 minutes with each mentor and small group to discuss and establish contacts between fellow teachers and administrators, as well with the guiding expert. Within each discussion group a mix of participants represented a diverse group of geographic locations and levels of Montessori training.

One of the mentor-experts was Mary Beth Ricks from Bowman School in Palo Alto, CA. Her topic was “Mentoring from Within”, and she focused on “in house” methods she used at her school to support teacher and staff development. Mary Beth described her experiences as a school leader working to develop positive and cooperative partnership among staff. Her ideas seemed workable for both large and small schools, and allowed for a mix of teachers from different training levels to work together. One successful program she instituted was “Brownbag Philosophy Lunch”. Teachers and support staff

would meet with her during lunch hour and discuss pages from her philosophy album. As an administrator, this offered a valuable opportunity to support authentic Montessori practices in her school as well as providing a lively discussion that promoted learning for both teachers and non-classroom staff. Requiring all employees to participate meant that the staff had a unified understanding of the program philosophy with a vision of what it looks like in practice.

Another way to support staff development is to pair each teacher with a mentor and a mentee. The pairs would vary from year to year, and the discussions would center on issues of interest. A more experienced teacher might mentor a newer teacher about a specific need, like conference preparation or observation methods. A younger teacher might mentor an older teacher on new research or technology, or a special area of interest or skill.

I attended two additional mentoring sessions, but I felt that this session was more easily communicated in this format. The idea of “speed dating” type discussion groups was very intriguing to me and wanted to bring this to your attention to gauge any interest in our members may have in MMS board organizing something similar at one of our conferences. This would be a way to address some of your specific concerns without organizing a lengthy workshop on one topic. If interested, please contact the MMS board with topic suggestions.

Dimensions of Discipline Seminar

by Heidi Gauger

Saturday April 23rd was a lovely day! Spending the day listening to Chick Moorman for all those who came to hear his message was affirming, informative and uplifting. Chick skillfully, with humor and insight, walked us through the often complex "**Dimensions of Discipline.**" Though not a Montessorian by training, he is definitely one from the heart and soul. His respect for the child and insight into the power we hold in our environments is right on target.

Using many points from both his Parent Talk and Teacher Talk seminars. Chick asked the group to consider statements about discipline. He outlined the effect of punishment versus outcomes - the positive lessons which can be given by letting children see the outcomes of their actions. Chick outlined the difference between them. Some difference he discussed are:

Punishment

- external authority -----internal authority
- adult is the cause ----- child is the cause
- anger ----- calm and serious
- arbitrary ----- consistent and predictable
- short term behavior change ---long term behavior change

Logical Outcomes

He invited the participants to "move up in consciousness before they moved in with action." Finally Chick gave 4 important question to ask about any method an educator intends to use in their practice.

- Does it work?



- Is it respectful?
- Does it help you become the teacher you want to be ?
- What does it teach ?

The participants walked away able to impact their classrooms with a consistent, caring style of discipline that holds children accountable for their actions without wounding their spirit. Outstanding!

Birmingham Community Montessori

**By Sue Szczesny owner and
Directress**

All good Montessori programs share some things in common. A trained and dedicated teaching staff, a full array of Montessori materials and the implementation of the Montessori philosophy are a few of the necessary ingredients of a successful and “authentic” school. Aside from the core components though there is plenty of room for different kinds of schools. One type of Montessori is not necessarily better or worse than another, each has something to offer families.

Birmingham Community Montessori began back in 1974 when Arlene Ross decided she wanted to start a small business and partnered up with her friend, a trained Montessori teacher. Arlene’s husband Ron built the shelves, tables and a beautiful reading loft. They pooled \$5,000 to buy materials and

rented space from a local church. The beginning was tough and a lot of hours went into discussing and implementing policies and drumming up business. Over 40 years later this business is still going strong with many of the same policies (and shelves!) from 1974.

Birmingham Community Montessori is a small school. We only have one classroom with a morning and afternoon session for children 3 to 6 years old. The younger children choose a half day and the Kindergarteners have the option to come for a full day. All of the children attend five days a week. We do not offer any before or after school care and we are closed for the summer. Obviously this schedule does not work for all families. We attract a lot of families with stay-at-home moms or dads, but also many families that work part time, have a nanny or babysitter and many families where the grandparents are very involved caregivers. Many of these types of families are not

initially looking for a 5 day a week program and it often takes lots of talking about Montessori philosophy and a visit to the classroom to convince them that our school is the right place for their family. Word of mouth is our best advertisement. What parents lose in convenience and child care options they gain in the community of a small school. We form a tight knit group and really get to know the children and families well. We are able to assist families in need and accommodate allergies and special needs or requests easier than a bigger school may be able to.



Another difference between Birmingham Community Montessori and many other Montessori schools is we have always rented space from a church. In 40 years we have had 3 different locations. Of course, relying on a church board to maintain the property up to State Licensing codes and renew our lease each year could be seen as a drawback, but there are many positives to this system. First, it is possible to start a business without much money up front. We have always been very lucky and especially at our current location as the church members love having a school with young children on the premises. They maintain the grounds, provide classroom cleaning, and allow us to use the fellowship hall for parent nights. Last year when a water main going out to the street burst they spent \$20,000 to replace the pipe, but our rent stayed the same.

One thing that is vital for a small Montessori school to be successful is a trained, caring and reliable staff



with a strong work ethic. What I pay my teachers never seems like enough to me but it is always the most the budget allows. Without the staff this whole thing falls apart. Right now Birmingham Community Montessori has 3 MACTE certified teachers; myself, Anne Kern and Kara O'Connor, and a Music teacher, Linda Christensen, who comes in weekly. We work as a team! We team teach and all have respect and love for each

other. No one ever misses a day of work unless they are really sick, their child is sick or it is a planned in advance trip. When one of us needs to be out we sub for each other. We are happy to sub for each other because we know that person will be there for us next time. We all love our jobs and wouldn't want to be doing anything else.

Our school doesn't have the fanciest new building and our pink tower might be chipped but we have a lot to offer the families who choose us. We don't have a big budget for advertising and we don't buy new things unless we need them. We never skimp on teacher training, staff pay or materials for the children. We believe in the Montessori philosophy and do our best every day for each child and family we are lucky enough to serve.

Sue Szczesny, questions and comments suemariesez@gmail.com

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MMEAN Update

by Karen Lumsden & Sue Fitzpatrick

As many of you know, the Michigan Montessori Educators Advocacy Network has been focusing on a number of fronts to advocate for you and all authentic Montessori programs. The most recent initiative is to request appropriate recognition of your Montessori Certificate. To that end, a letter has been sent to Mark Jansen, Child Care Licensing Division Director at the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing, requesting that the Pre-Primary credential be recognized as equivalent to an Associates' Degree, and a Credential plus any Bachelor degree equivalent to an Early Childhood BA degree. Susie Hyatt, chair of the MMEAN committee, received correspondence that a meeting will be scheduled within the next few months to discuss our proposal. This is the first step in the legislative process. If the proposal is approved by the Office of Regulatory Reinvention, it will then be sent to the Joint Committee on Rules.

Several MMS Board members attended the advocacy workshops offered at the recent AMS conference in Chicago and made important connections with several people from other states working toward the same goals. Some have achieved success and have offered to help us move our proposals forward.

So that our purpose can be easily communicated to those inside and outside the Montessori community, we needed a Mission Statement. The following statement was created at the last meeting:

We advocate for the validation and advancement of Montessori Education in the State of Michigan.

This statement was presented to the MMS board for revision and is being disseminated through this newsletter to our general membership.

Another aspect that MMEAN is focusing on is the PQA. The HighScope Preschool Quality Assessment environmental rating scale, used in the Great Start to Quality (QRIS) 5 star rating system, is currently being revised. Members of your advocacy group were invited to provide HighScope researchers with input on language changes that would better indicate Montessori quality practice. Several meetings were held last summer, including a visit to a Montessori classroom. The High Scope representatives were very amenable to looking into the problem. A MMEAN representative will draft a letter to HighScope to inquire about the current state of the revision and to again offer to provide Montessori orientation training for QRIS validators.

As you can see, this ad hoc committee of MMS has been very busy. The committee would like to open its membership to any of you that might be interested in helping complete the tasks we have ahead of us, especially any of you that may have connections in state government. We will continue to attempt to connect with state officials and policy makers to inform them of the dilemma of recognizing Montessori quality within the QRIS system. In addition, members of MMEAN are working on documents to demonstrate how the Montessori Curriculum aligns with the Michigan Early Childhood Standards of Quality. We will all benefit from the work done by this tireless group of Montessori advocates and hope you may see a way you can support our network.

New Licensing Requirements

by Karen Lumsden

Recently, our school had its biannual unscheduled visit by our LARA (formerly DHS) consultant. Our school has been in operation since 1985, so this is not our first go round! In addition, I availed myself of the online copy of the new rules booklet and thought I was prepared for the visit. However, I was surprised by a few things and thought I would pass them along to you so that you might be able to avoid the difficulties we encountered.

We all should know by now that the minimum number of continuing education hours required is 18 per calendar year, not school year. I was aware of the change and so had all my Professional Development Records (Form 4591) filled out appropriately for all staff members with supporting certificates for the previous year, 2015. What I did not realize is that they now evaluate the two previous years, in our case, 2015

and 2014. While it was not an impossible task, our consultant had to exercise a great deal of patience while I searched through all the staff files to organize the appropriate form and supporting certificates for every staff member. So, if your files need a little organizing, make sure you look at the past two years of documents.

Another new rule is that your volunteer requirements need to be posted where the parents can see them. While it is possible to simply state that volunteers will never be alone with the children, chaperones on field trips may be put in the position of assisting children in the rest room away from a staff member. To alleviate such difficulties, you may find it easier to submit a Central Registry Clearance Request for all volunteers and chaperones. This free search, unlike the ICHAT, assures you that the person in question has never been convicted of the abuse or neglect of children in Michigan. In addition, a signed statement attesting to the fact that the

volunteer is aware of your policy on reporting suspected abuse, has never been accused or convicted of neglect or abuse and has not been arrested for anything other than minor traffic incidents should also be signed.

The third rule we discovered was the requirement to record annual staff evaluations. While a dated, signed statement that the evaluation took place is often sufficient, we felt that it was important to create an evaluation form and procedure that would help everyone involved in the process. To that end, we asked our staff to complete a self-evaluation, responding to two questions. 1. Looking over the past year, please comment on an area that you believe you could have improved your performance. It could be in relation to the children, coworkers, attitude, commitment or whatever you wish you could have a "do over." 2. Looking forward to next year, what would you like to set as your personal goal for improving yourself in relation to your work at our school? The

program director also completes a checklist form and the results are shared during individual meetings. While many of you may have your own procedure to improve your job performance, the instrument we are currently using can be found at the end of this newsletter.

Next, our consultant advised that the inventories of the equipment we have needs to be updated every year. This can be accomplished by creating a space at the bottom of the inventory sheet for the person verifying the equipment is still in use to sign and date. The same inventory sheet can be used for several years as long as it continues to be signed and dated for the current year.

While it is required that hand washing directions be posted by every sink, they are often only for adults. We made a “child friendly” hand washing posting that our consultant liked very much. (See right)

And finally, your process for reporting illness, injuries, accidents or incidents

needs to be stated in your policy statements. This rule is most helpful to the consultants that field numerous calls they receive from unhappy parents when they are not called immediately for minor injuries. If your policy states that you will inform parents when they come to pick up their children for minor injuries, you are covered and the consultant does not have to open an investigation.

Our consultant was most helpful and offered several suggestions that will help us improve our program. Adhering to the guidelines established by the state is one way to assure all children are in a safe environment while in our care.



Practical Life Revisited

by Karen Lumsden

The Foundational Importance of Practical Life workshop at the AMS Conference given by Joan Schuler and Elizabeth Norman presented a new perspective for me on this sometimes overlooked area. Many parents (and some teachers) see practical life activities as mere preparations for the “real” work in language and math. The session opened my eyes to a new vision of practical life and I was inspired to share what I learned with our MMS members that were unable to attend.

The workshop started with the presenter noting that Maria Montessori gave very little information about practical life area presentations, instead providing information about the equipment contained in this area. Most of the presentations we all were shown in our practical life training were developed by creative teachers that followed Montessori’s lead. The presenter believes that practical life as Montessori envisioned it, was more an extension of a kitchen pantry, housing the necessary tools and cleaning products a person would need to accomplish every day “practical life” tasks. Rather than presenting a polishing activity with an applicator, buffing cloth, bottle of polish, apron and the item to be polished all on a color coordinated tray, the presenter suggests a different approach. The children gather items needed to accomplish the polishing task from a supply cabinet, place them in a container and choose the item to be polished from the classroom. This, they believe, gives the child an opportunity to develop executive functions as they must decide what they need for the task at hand. The presenter suggested that utilizing color coordination for each different material is appropriate here. (i.e.



oil for wood and polishing rags for wood would be color coordinated, silver polish and silver polishing rags, a different color) Key to the success of this plan is to introduce the children to the various materials throughout the classroom. What does wood look like, how do we identify it and what is used on it? What does brass look like? Glass? Leather? All these materials require a different polish and possibly a different technique. This initial instruction is crucial to the child’s success. Although the presenters didn’t suggest this, I would think that bringing out one type of material to polish at a time would increase the child’s chance of success. Perhaps wooden items might be used initially to decorate the shelves giving the child an

opportunity to recognize wood and learn how it is oiled. Recognizing that some of the trays and shelves in the classroom may also be made of wood will give the child many more opportunities to perfect their skill in recognizing when wooden objects should be attended to. This, the presenters assert, is meaningful, practical life activity. This work gives the child the understanding that s/he is doing work that is necessary to enhance the classroom’s beauty.

The presenter also pointed out opportunities for “deep cleaning.” Moving shelves and cleaning the floor molding, removing all the items from a shelf and using a paint brush to remove dust from corners, cleaning a boot tray that has collected dirt, cleaning the child’s coat cubby are a few of the deep cleaning experiences the child can engage in. This is truly work the child will recognize as important and real.

Another idea that impacted me was the assertion when children master a tool, for example tongs, to encourage them to continue to use the tongs by introducing a new item to transfer is pointless. The

goal of the activity is to develop skill. When we change the items, we are appealing to the child's interest in "novelty", not skill acquisition.

rather than provide a narrative explanation. Hopefully, there will be some ideas that will be of use to you.

The presenters gave a number of suggested activities in the areas of care of self and care of the environment. For brevity, I will list these

Care of Environment

- Use cloth napkins and launder, iron and fold
- Cut down auto polishing mitts.
- Provide tool kit for the children to be used to accomplish repairs
- Grow tomatoes for making tomato sauce that can be canned.
- Grow vegetables for eating or canning
- Grow flowers for table setting
- Provide outside clothes line for drying

Care of Self

- Care of Hair
 - Provide individual combs in envelope for children's use
 - Provide barrettes and other hair accessories
- Care of hands
 - Cuticle brush, cuticle cream and orange stick
 - Nail clippers and nail file
 - Scented hand soap and hand lotion
- Care of clothing
 - Utilize hangers for their coats
 - Exercise for putting on gloves and mittens
 - Provide tools for children to clean their own shoes or boots

Classroom Management

- Have children prepare a picnic at the beginning of the school year
- Pair an experienced cleaner with a new student for cleaning tasks
- Provide a stethoscope and egg timer. Child runs in place and then listens for heart to slow.
- Children can assist in adult tasks (setting up for nap, snack, lunch)



Staff Evaluation Example

Name _____

O=Occasionally F = Frequently C = Consistently

Friendliness – Maintains a friendly, professional manner. _____

Honesty/Responsibility – Is truthful and takes responsibility for actions. _____

Voice Modulation – Has a pleasant tone. _____

Punctuality – Arrives at work on time . _____

Integrity – Respects confidentiality. Maintains accurate personal attendance records. _____

Presentable – Appropriately dressed, proper phone skills. _____

Patience – Maintains self-control in dealing with others. _____

Active and Energetic – Displays a high energy level _____

Direction – Is able to take direction, is comfortable asking for guidance. _____

Completion of task – Cleans up after projects. _____

Flexibility – Is willing to take on a job responsibility not accustomed to. _____

Responsibility – Understands when to approach parents and when to “hand it _____

Loyalty – Supports the philosophy of the school _____

Realism – Receptive to suggestions, able to accept responsibility for own mistakes _____

Relationship with Children

Knowledge – Provides appropriate activities, understands ground rules. _____

Personal Manner – Smiles at child, uses eye contact. _____

Discipline - Uses non punitive methods of discipline and offers guidance in a positive manner, _____

Interaction – Knows the difference between assistance and interference. _____

Involvement – Engages children in activities. _____

Tolerance – Treats all children equally, with respect and empathy. _____

Language – Consistently uses proper English. _____

Facilitates Social Skills – Encourages appropriate social interactions between children _____

Relationship with Parents

Professional Relationship- Avoids gossip. _____

Sensitive Subjects- Refers sensitive subjects to teachers. _____

Positive School Image- Speaks of school programs and policies in a positive manner. _____

Staff Support- Speaks of staff in a positive and supportive manner. _____

Demonstrates Concern for and Awareness of the Total School Environment

Safety and Health Consciousness – Reports unsafe conditions, knows emergency procedures _____

Orderliness – Maintains orderly and inviting appearance. _____

Commitment – Is committed to the improving the school environment and program. _____

Collegial – Willing to share ideas, materials, & time. _____

Demonstrates Willingness to Cooperate with Coworkers

Dependability – Is present physically and supports coworkers _____

Team Player – Shares in all the jobs _____

Supportive – Offers help when needed to coworkers _____

Collegial – Maintains a congenial attitude toward coworkers _____

Classroom Skills

Maintenance – Cleans the classroom _____

Assists Children – Actively assists children that are wandering _____

Teacher/Assistant Coordination – Works in consort with coworkers _____

Activity Level – Moves about the room as needed _____

Recognizes Potential Hotspots - Anticipates problems. _____

Observation Ability – Documents observations _____

Encourages Challenging Work – Motivates children to challenge themselves _____

Verbal Interaction – Engages children in meaningful conversation, _____

Re-Presents Work- Is able to demonstrate materials _____

Maintains an Inviting Atmosphere – Is inclusive of all. _____

Respects Children’s Feelings – Cares, but keeps perspective. _____

Playground Supervision

Alertness – Watches the children at play. _____

Involvement – Interacts with the children at play. _____

Position – Places oneself in a position for optimum supervision _____