

2011-2012 Membership Year

Summer 2012

President's Corner

Pat Moore

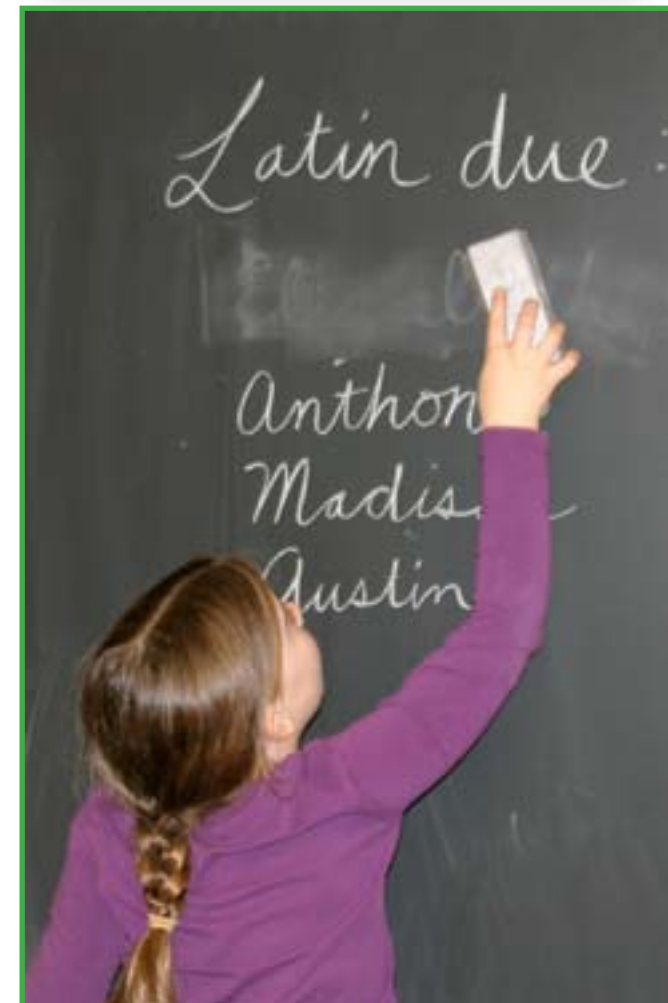
While listening to Dr. Kathleen Lloyd's presentation on Self-Regulation at our annual Spring Conference, I was reminded of the book, *The Reason for Flowers*, that I read to my students every spring.

The Reason for Flowers stresses that, even as it has many wonderful effects, the real purpose of a flower is to make seeds. Likewise even as Montessori has so many positive outcomes, Dr. Lloyd pointed out that the true purpose of Montessori is the development of concentration. This is what leads to self-regulation or in Montessori terms "normalization." She said the "children spontaneously self-regulate when concentration occurs, and all negative traits disappear." This is achieved through a prepared environment in which "children freely choose purposeful and meaningful work that is integrated into the community." She reminded us, as guides or teachers, that our role is that of "research scientists, observing and collecting information as to what might attract the child's attention based on their personal interests."

Over 240 Montessorians came to hear Dr. Lloyd and Judith Cunningham at our Spring Conference. Judith presented the Model United Nations Program in the afternoon to the elementary and middle school guides. It was gratifying to see so many people giving up a Saturday to improve their skills and perhaps be inspired. Michigan Montessorians rock!

The Fall workshop will be Best Practices IV and will be held Saturday, November 17, 2012, at Meadow Montessori in Monroe. The workshop will feature a variety of topics and speakers. This format has proven to be very popular in the past. Check our website (mmsoc.org) closer to the date (November 17) for further information. And remember, registering early coupled with membership in the Society provide a substantial discount in fees for our conferences.

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Childcare Licensing: Don't Change the Rule!

You may not know that a possible change in childcare licensing has been proposed in the Michigan State Legislature. The Child Care Center Rules Advisory Committee has proposed a rule change that will require schools to limit the group size to twenty-four children in any group that includes children age 36 to 47 months. (R 400.8179, Rule 179 (3c). If this particular provision is adopted as written, Montessori schools will be great affected. As all Montessori are aware, if we want to provide an authentic Montessori educational experience, we need to have large groups of children with an age-range of three years.

Up to now, childcare licensing rules governing Montessori programs (Rule 400.5105c) allowed for Montessori programs to have mixed age groups of children 3 to 6 years of age in the same room, or well-defined space, with a maximum group size of 35. Needless to say, we believe that it is necessary to include this provision in the new rules for reasons outlined below.

All Montessori classes are composed of three-year mixed age groups; we do not segregate children by age. This allows them to learn through observation and imitation of their peers. It is vital to our philosophy that children have a large number of multi-age peers to work with in the classroom.

In our multi-age classrooms, a child can



work with older children in one subject, younger children in another, and still have social interaction with children in his or her own age group. This allows the children to work at their own level and not be confined to work that the adult chooses and/or that may not be appropriate to the individual's needs. Younger children observe older children and easily learn from them; older children reinforce the knowledge they have attained by helping younger children. As Maria Montessori said, "There is nothing that makes you learn more than teaching it yourself."

The Michigan Montessori Society is reaching out to members of the Child Care Center Rules Advisory Committee to do what we can to make sure Montessori schools are exempt from any rule change. Please help us by contacting your State Representative and Senator to make sure he/she understands the importance of this rule change.

Why Summer Programs Are Essential

Did you know....

All young people experience learning losses when they do not engage in educational activities during the summer. Research spanning 100 years shows that students typically score lower on standardized tests at the end of summer vacation than they do on the same tests at the beginning of the summer (White, 1906; Heyns, 1978; Entwisle & Alexander 1992; Cooper, 1996; Downey et al, 2004).

Most students lose about two months of grade level equivalency in mathematical computation skills over the summer months. Low-income students also lose more than two months in reading

Children lose more than academic knowledge over the summer. Most children— particularly children at high risk of obesity—gain weight more rapidly when they are out of school during summer break (Von Hippel et al, 2007).

Parents consistently cite summer as the most difficult time to ensure that their children have productive things to do (Duffett et al, 2004).

Check out: the National Summer Learning Association (www.summerlearning.org) for more information on the importance of summer learning.

Many Montessori school have summer programs, which can be a great introduction to Montessori itself.

Math in a Montessori Classroom Means Materials

One of the tenets of the Montessori math curriculum is always to move from the concrete to the abstract. When quantities and numerals are laid out in any of the many math lessons, the quantity is always shown first, then the numeral: "This is one (point a gold bead), and this says one" (point to the numeral card that says "1"). This holds true for both primary and elementary children.

Another of our tried and true tenets is the three-period lesson. In math this is an invaluable tool.



The presentations given are generally considered the first period. This is where the teacher is showing the students a new idea. The second period is the synthesis of the new idea. It is where the teacher and student manipulate the concrete materials, and use the appropriate language, sometimes repeatedly, in order to affix the new concept.

One of my favorite second period tools is the memory game. We learn it in training as a way to assist the very youngest mathematicians in counting; they match concrete objects (seven beautiful stones) with the appropriate numeral card.

The students each pull a card (usually from 1 -10), look at it without sharing what it says, and then, leaving it face down on the rug (or hiding it under the rug for a little mystery and excitement!) they walk all the way to the other side of the room, where they find a rug with a box full of jewel-like

stones (or shells, or anything lovely that you may have) and count out the number that was on the card. They must remember the number all the way across the room. When they return and lay out the number of stones, say it is seven, then the other children in the group guess "7," which they know by counting the stones. The one who brought the stones turns the original card over as the check – "Yes! It was seven – see the card says seven!"

This game can be adapted to anything you may want the children to match up. I recently did it with 6-year-old children as a second period to a lesson introducing the two ways to write money (\$ or ¢). I also have used it with Roman numerals and Arabic numerals with some older children.

With lower elementary children, math materials are in constant use as they move through the materials of memorization, the four operations, and are introduced to fractions and decimal numbers. In the upper elementary class the materials come out with each new concept demonstrated. As children move to abstraction, pencil and paper take over. There is still need to give extensions in the second period, so games like angle dominoes, and the Percent Game (a version of "Go Fish" using fractions, decimals, and percents as matches) are favorites. Dominoes can be made with 3 x 5 cards or can be easily purchased. I have seen them with drawings of polygons and the names of polygons, and with math facts and their answers. Again, anything you want to reinforce after the students have had the presentation with materials can probably be made into a dominoes game, or a Go Fish game. Children manipulating material will learn new concepts faster and deeper than children doing workbook pages. Never give anything to the brain without giving something to the hand.

Meg Fedorowicz

