

AIMS Conference
 The Association of Independent Michigan Schools (AIMS) is hosting a conference on **Monday, October 7, which is open to all teachers. Please check the website for more information:**
<http://www.aims-mi.org>

President's Corner

Pat Moore

As the school year winds down, we assess the successes of the past and possible improvements for the future. The Michigan Montessori Society has seen more schools affiliate this year. There are more memberships than recent years and our workshops have seen record attendance.

MMS is committed to supporting authentic Montessori programs in this state. A major concern is that the Star Rating system proposed for child care centers by the State does not take into account the philosophical differences between Montessori and traditional childcare and can result in low ratings for our programs and schools.

It is imperative that there be a Montessori "voice" in the development of the rating process. The MMS is working hard to fill that role at the local state level and is in contact with other states and national Montessori organizations. We are trying to find a solution for this issue, which Montessori schools across the country are facing. MMS may conduct some surveys of schools asking for raw data on enrollment figures. It is important to let "the powers that be" know how many schools and children are impacted by this rating issue as we seek various ways to work with the state in the best interest of our students and schools.

Mark your calendars. **November 2, 2013** is the date for the MMS Fall workshop. It will be held at MSU Educational Center in Troy, Michigan. Dee Coulter D.Ed. will be our speaker. Dee is a nationally recognized speaker, who is known for her "unique ability to present complex ideas in clear and humorous ways that are useful for

educators." She has a master's degree in special education from the University of Michigan and a doctorate in neurological studies and holistic education from the University of Northern Colorado. She is a strong proponent of Montessori education as supported by brain science. Check our website mmsoc.org in the fall for updated information.

Please renew your school affiliation and/or membership this summer! If you haven't received an application in the mail, please check the website or contact our office (1-800-308-4899).

It is only with your support that MMS can continue to work toward making Montessori stronger and more visible in the state.

Pat Moore



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How Brain Science Supports Montessori Wisdom

Join us on November 2 at MSU Educational Center in Troy, MI for Dr. Dee Coulter's workshop on brain development, neuroscience, and Montessori education. Dee will share her extensive background in neurological studies and education to shed light on the neuroscience gifts of Montessori education. She is known for her humor and ability to make complex ideas clear and easy to understand. She has been sharing her continuing discoveries with Montessori educators in training programs, workshops, and as a keynoter at major Montessori conferences for over twenty years.

Fresh discoveries in neuroscience are shedding increasing light on what seems to be missing in education today and how the Montessori approach embodies these qualities from the earliest years through the ideal Montessori high school. The morning keynote address will explore how to use Dr. Montessori's important ideas with an even deeper appreciation for their brilliance.

The afternoon session will look deeply at four qualities needed by all children, and ALL teachers!

Built into the Montessori approach are the keys to helping all children become more calm, more easily absorbed in their work, more able to choose activities and more able to control their impulses. We will explore the roots of these qualities, discover how to use the prepared environment to help children develop them, and learn how to nourish ourselves as well.

For more information about how to register for the conference, please see our website: <http://www.mmsoc.org/workshops/index.html>



Math Facts – How Important?

Ashley Buntrock

In the Montessori classroom students are working daily with advanced math concepts from first level on through sixth level. With the use of the Montessori materials, students not only learn how to complete these processes, but they are able to gain a deep understanding of the “why,” not just the “how.” As the students progress through the Montessori math curriculum, they are working from the concrete materials to being able to complete the mathematical process abstractly, without the use of the Montessori materials.

One area that helps the child in the ability to move from the concrete to the abstract is the memorization of his/her math facts. By having the math facts at a quick recall, the student is then able to focus fully on the process and not get held up by figuring out the individual equations.

Memorizing math facts is easy in philosophy, but the reality of the situation is that it is not always an enjoyable activity to do! In the classroom, the children are working on the larger processes of math, and thus we ask that the practice of memorizing math facts be left as part of the work of home. At school, each child takes math fact timed tests twice a week. The first level of timed math facts the students go through are 36 problems in 3 minutes in each of the families (addition, multiplication, subtraction and division). Once these are accomplished and mastered, the children then move to the next level of timed math facts. Starting with 20 addition problems in a

minute and a half, it increasingly grows to 40 or more addition or mixed problems in a minute and a half. The reasoning for this approach is for children to not only know their math facts in the short term, but also to be able to store them in their long term memory and have a quick recall of the math facts. It will then become a knowledge that they will hopefully hold on to for the long term. If your child comes home stuck on the same sheet for a few weeks in a row, it is most likely a timing issue. Below are a few math games or techniques that might encourage your child to love practicing math facts again!

The practice need only be one to two minutes a day. It could even happen on the drive to or from school. Some children do very well with practicing math facts using flash cards. However, this is not a loved activity by all children. Here are some ideas and website links for math card and dice games.

- For each math family your child is working on, make a graph based on how many facts your child gets right. This way your child is competing against him/herself and will have the motivation to be faster the next time.
- Math Fact Card and Dice Games: http://www.granby.k12.ct.us/uploaded/faculty/wyzika/Dice_and_Card_Games_to_Practice_Math_Facts.pdf
- Games for Memorizing Math Facts from Scholastic: <http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/7-games-practice-math-facts>



- Making Math Fun – a variety of topics from all four operations to fractions: <http://mail.clevelandcountyschools.org/~ccselem/FOV1-0003FB70/Making%20Math%20More%20Fun%20Card%20Games.pdf?Plugin=Loft>
- Online games or programs for timed math fact practice.

Enjoy and find the love of math facts again!

Ashley Buntrock teaches in the lower elementary program at Seton Montessori in Chicago.

Practical Life over the Years

Meg Fedorowicz

Practical Life is the most Montessori of the Montessori curriculum areas. It is the way to develop concentration, coordination, order, and independence, and this applies from infancy to adulthood.

Observing the infants in their specially designed tables and chairs (shout out to L.O.R.D. Company) learning to feed independently always amazes me. The stand-up diapering and toileting and the concentrated efforts of the toddlers as they prepare for their community lunch is another sight to behold. I recall seemingly endless dressing and undressing during the winter months in the 3 to 6 year old classes, but I carry



images of five-year olds helping three-year olds with their zippers and mittens. Now that I am teaching at the Elementary level and dressing is so effortless, we still have a great need for Practical Life. The Middle School and, perhaps most of all, the High School students still have a great need for Practical Life.

What does it look like on older students? Yesterday an eleven-year old offered to make tea or coffee for an observer. Today a nine-year

old confidently answered the telephone, "Upper Elementary Class, Ammar speaking, how may I help you?" A twelve-year old made copies of documents for her fellow classmates as the other teacher in the room had not yet arrived. A fourteen-year old came into the room and checked math books for me because he was not able to go on a field trip with his class. A couple of ten-year olds helped the extended day class with its bake sale.

Practical life goes on all the time and while it is often outside of the academic curriculum, don't think it isn't worth every minute of your time. Those Upper Elementary students don't arrive just knowing how to put on a bake sale; we demonstrate the details of setting up, counting change, using plastic gloves, setting up an I.O.U. list – and collecting on it - and, of course, cleaning up. (Cleaning up is the same as it was in the Children's Houses: sweeping, wiping, scrubbing; folding, cutting, arranging, displaying, wrapping, etc.).

All of this is worth your time because Practical Life still develops concentration, coordination, order, and independence. These qualities are necessary to all students no matter the age, and they also empower students to tackle more difficult tasks, both academic and practical. I notice students using practical life as a soothing activity, and as a way to return to equilibrium after moments of "chaos." Today a nine-year old victim of spring fever, called out for running through the classroom, seemed almost relieved to put the shoes in order at the back of the classroom. Sweeping the porch, changing animal bedding, baking brownies – all activities that upper elementary students adore.

Independent and coordinated high school students still benefit from Practical Life. They are so competent! It is a joy and a pleasure to witness trees being planted, compost being turned, tree stumps being pulled out, chicken



coops being built by high school students. A school-wide talent show, a SPCA fundraiser, and a 5K run for reading are all complex Practical Life activities organized recently by high school students, who are building on the elementary skills acquired from the bake sales and the earlier lessons of digging, transferring, and sweeping to name a few.

From shoe tying and walking on the line, to cross country racing, Practical Life is essential for students of all ages.

Meg holds Montessori diplomas at the 3-6, 6-9, and 9-12 levels. She currently teaches in an upper elementary classroom in Monroe, MI.