

Happy Summer

MMS Members!

Summer...
One more
month and
counting...

We don't usually distribute an MMS Newsletter in during the summer quarter, but thought this might be of interest to our members now. The following article gives you a description of an enrichment program that Children's Place Montessori in Farmington Hills has enjoyed for several years. While I originally thought that this might be something that teachers might want to adapt for use in their classrooms, I was pleased to learn that the therapist that provides this enrichment program at our school is open to the possibility of providing the it for others. If this is something your school would like to offer, please contact Jessica Ravineala at The Therapy Spot in Troy or Farmington Hills. If you would like more information about implementing some of these activities, please contact Kathy at Kathy@mmsoc.org.

Enjoy your summer...we look forward to reconnecting this fall!

Karen Lumsden

Michigan Montessori Board of Directors 2022-23

Karen Lumsden, President
Children's Place Montessori
cpmontessori@gmail.com

Theresa Weber, Secretary
Adrian (ADMTEI) Training Center
tweber@comcast.net

Cyndi Iannuzzi, VP
Montessori Children's Academy
ciannuzzi@montessori-childrens-academy.org

Mary Lamos, Treasurer
Montessori Center of Downriver
Mary.lamos@gmail.com

Shannon Tyrybon
MMTEC
shannont@montessoriedu.com

Erin Compton
Adrian (ADMTEI) Training Center
erin.m.compton@gmail.com

Denise VanPelt
Grand Rapids Montessori
vanpeltd@students.GRPS.org

Maggie Bischoff
Brookview School
mbischoff@brookviewsschool.org

Sue Szczesny
Birmingham Community Montessori
suemariesez@gmail.com

Mona Ahuja
Maria Montessori Center
mrsahujammc@gmail.com

Cathé Calder
Meadow Montessori School
ccalder@meadowmontessori.org

Jasmin Reynolds
Ferndale Montessori Center
jasminh@montessoriedu.com

Kathy Smoko, Administrative Asst.
Kathy@mmsoc.org
MMS Phone (313) 405-0668

How to Encourage Motor Planning and Problem Solving

by Karen Lumsden

Experience 1

Johnny (4 years old): I left my water bottle in my lunch box.

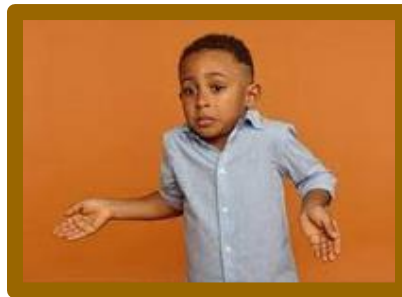
Teacher: What should you do?

Johnny: Go to the lunchbox bin and get it.

Johnny returns without his water bottle.

Teacher: Where's your water bottle?

Johnny: I couldn't get it. My lunchbox was in the bottom of the bin and there were lunchboxes on top of it.



Experience 2

Mary (16 years old): I want to make some brownies.

Mother: Here's the recipe, the ingredients are in the pantry.

Mother returns an hour later. No brownies.

Mother: What happened to the brownies?

Mary: The mixing bowl was too high...I couldn't reach it.

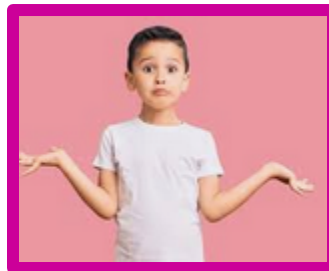


Experience 3

Sam (5 years old): An ant is coming close to my napkin!

Teacher: What can you do?

Sam: I don't know.



The above incidents actually happened recently...they are not exaggerations. And they are not isolated incidents.

Several years ago, a local occupational therapist, Jessica Ravineala, visited our school and gave our staff a continuing education presentation on nurturing independence in children. During the talk, she explained that simple physical problem solving (securing an out of reach object, navigating around an obstruction) is related to a skill called motor planning and has become a challenge for many children. Her examples were unimaginable to our staff, but she assured us that she was seeing this more and more in both her clients and the general population of youngsters. This realization was startling to me and I continued the conversation with Ms. Ravineala, determined that there must be something we as educators and therapists could do to promote problem solving, ingenuity, creativity, and confidence in the children we care for.

Our conversation generated a lot of brainstorming and ultimately led to the creation of a program we call Mighty Minds. Mighty Minds is a collection of activities designed to give children opportunities to exercise their problem-solving skills. The children are presented with a collection of objects they can use to either solve a problem, create a game, or discover a new way to apply the items. The activities typically promote group interaction (usually three children), but some are designed for individual exploration. The activities encourage the children to brainstorm, listen to ideas, share solutions and present the group's final result. Some simply encourage them to create. The activity usually lasts 30 – 45 minutes.

Our school provides daily enrichment classes during the summer months and we decided to add Mighty Minds to our class offerings. The activities give the children experiences in both problem solving and group dynamics. The presentation of a task is usually followed by a hum of activity and the exchange of ideas. The directions are clear and the goals are identified. The solutions, however, are left up to the children to discover or create. Finding a solution is only part of the activity. Learning to cooperate, include everyone in the group, and listen respectfully to all suggestions is just as important. In the years that we have had Mighty Minds at school, we have seen significant growth in a few children who initially displayed a need to control and an inability share decision making.

For the most part, these activities have been successful with the children either presenting their solutions to the group at the end of the session or participating cooperatively throughout the session. One time, however, one group was unable to come to a conclusion. The three children involved argued about what direction their project should take until the class time ended. When the therapist dismissed the children, that group was quite surprised and announced that they hadn't even started their solution. Why? They reluctantly admitted they just couldn't agree on anything. A lesson learned.

We are very fortunate to have therapists conduct our Mighty Minds classes. They observe the groups as they work, offer suggestions to those groups that seem stuck, or clarify the activities to help them continue their deliberations. But these activities can be introduced and supervised by Montessori teachers who are trained to observe children and avoid interrupting, providing minimal guidance when needed.

Below are a few of the activities we have enjoyed.

1

Materials: A cotton ball, a paper cup, a blow-out party favor.

Directions: Design a game/activity using these objects.



2

Materials: Mini marshmallows, toothpicks.

Directions: Create a 3D structure using these objects

3

Materials: An object for all three children to hold so that only one hand is free. Tasks requiring two or three hands to complete. Ex. A sewing card, opening a closed jar and retrieving the contents.

Directions: The three children must hold onto an object with one hand and perform an operation requiring two or three hands with their available hands.



4

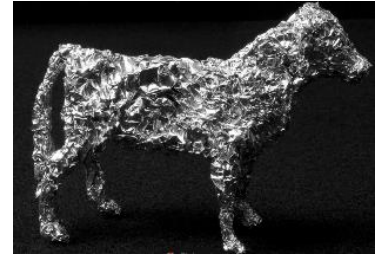
Materials: A large number of stuffed animals spread out on the floor. A hoop and length of rope for each group.

Directions: Standing a distance from the pile of animals, the task is to identify a category of animals to collect (color, size, type, etc.) choose the individual animals that will match the category, create a way to retrieve the animals from a distance. Each child must complete a different task.

5

Materials: Tin foil

Directions: Provide pieces of tin foil to the children and have them make creations.



6

Materials: Inflated balloons and tape

Directions: Challenge the children to build the tallest tower they can without it falling over.

7

Materials: Objects to create an obstacle course (Ex. Blocks, step stools, chairs, tables, pillows, sleeping mats)

Directions: Place a circle at the start and end of the obstacle course and challenge the children to use the items provided (anything they can walk, stand, climb on) to get from the start to the finish without touching the ground.



8

Materials: Small 4-wheel square scooter (one for each group), five objects to transfer for each group (average sized objects about the size of a baseball or larger), containers to put the objects in.

Directions: Line the objects up on one side of the room. With three children on a team, one child balances on the scooter (on his/her tummy, sitting cross-legged, however they can manage without falling off) one child controls the direction of the child on the scooter by pushing or pulling (holding onto the child's feet, ankles, arms, hands, back), one child holding one of the containers to collect the objects at the opposite side of the room. The child on the scooter may "toss" the objects and the child holding the basket may maneuver the basket to try to catch the object, but may not move his/her feet. If the object doesn't go in the container, the "scooter" child must retrieve it. Only the scooter child may touch the objects. Each team must move all five objects into the basket. When finished, they may change jobs so each will have an opportunity to do the jobs. The object is to transfer the objects before the other teams complete their transfers.

Jessica Ravineala is co-owner of The Therapy Spot in Farmington Hills and Troy. If you are interested in exploring the possibility of including a Mighty Minds program in your school, please contact her.

MMS Members Only*



Summer Raffle

MMS's 2nd Annual Summer Raffle - Join and Win!

Teaching Timbers, creators of wooden Montessori furniture and materials, has donated several items to be raffled off this summer. Start your school year with new small stools, demonstration/floor tables, or a book stand when you join MMS in June to qualify for the raffle...and check out their product line at www.teachingtimbers.com!*

Demonstration / Floor Tables

Extra Large



23 x 18 x 11

Large



21 x 16 x 11

Medium



19 x 15 x 11

Small



17 x 13 x 11

Stools



Bookstands



**Membership for the 2022-23 school year begins July 1, 2022.*

Only members that renew their membership for the 2022-23 school year prior to the August drawing are eligible to win in the 2022 MMS Summer Raffle.

MMS - What's in it for Me?



Individual, Member School and Affiliate School membership in the Michigan Montessori Society help you keep in touch with other active Montessorians! Networking with others committed to promoting authentic Montessori programs is vital to your professional growth. Don't miss the opportunity to join our vibrant organization.

- MMS presents two professional development seminars every year. Members enjoy a significant reduction in seminar fees.
- A newly designed website has launched! We continue to work on ways to make your experience as an MMS member timelier and more exciting!
- You can register for seminars and become a member online using your credit card.
- MMS publishes a newsletter online, posts job openings, promotes educational opportunities and disseminates other helpful information.
- New! You will receive at least two activities you can reprint and use in your classroom.
- We have also assumed the important task of advocating for Montessori education at the State level. There is power in numbers; your membership supports our efforts.
- You will be notified when affiliated schools offer mini workshops that may interest your staff.

The Michigan Montessori Society's objectives are to:

- Broaden understanding of the Montessori method
- Encourage the growth of Montessori education
- Act as an information center
- Support existing schools
- Provide professional development

In order to continue to receive these benefits and more, join MMS today! *



*Because most MMS communication will be sent electronically, it is imperative that you provide us with your email address. Please be assured that we do not sell or share our electronic list with anyone.