

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
March 2003

National Conference
June 26th – 28th
San Antonio, Texas

**“He who gets wisdom loves his own
soul; he who cherishes understanding
prosper” Proverbs 19:8**

**The most important study is
not the how but the why.**

Our biggest challenge in Montessori (and in life) is not to just master the technical skills but to understand the heart of the matter. Not just how to use the materials but why - and when. And heaven help us if someone chooses not to use a specific material or procedure. Could there ever be a reason not to follow the protocol that we have been taught? There certainly is a vast difference between winging it and understanding the materials and philosophy so well that you go beyond your training and “let the child lead you”.

A Baker’s Dozen
Of Montessori benefits for the child
Work Ethic

There are many reasons that people work as adults. They may work for money, they may work to survive, they may work out of fear, they may work for prestige, they may work out of guilt, they work for humanitarian reasons or they may work for the pure joy of it.

Work is such a complex issue in our society that we have thousands of laws that prescribe it, describe it and define it. But to the child his work is his play. His work helps define and create his world. To the child work does not have a negative connotation. Work is pure joy. And he can do it tirelessly for hours. And even if he cannot articulate his goal it is nevertheless present within him pushing, leading, exciting him on.

The Bible gives us an interesting story about work when it details Jacob’s service for Rachel. “So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.” Genesis 29:20. This also is the picture we have come to expect in a Montessori classroom where children work tirelessly, with great concentration and great joy. For the child everything is “new” and fascinating. They have not experienced red rods or table washing before. Therefore each experience is a door to another experiences. And they are eager to enter in. After the joy of discovery comes the eager joy of putting our experiences into their proper “files”.

It is this very eagerness that provides the seminal (the seed) impetus for all work to follow. Fortunately God has instilled in us both faith and a love for order. What we have to do is to encourage both of them so they may grow and bear fruit. It is this love for order that drives work. Let me explain this jump in logic. The child (and even we as adults) is trying to

“order” his world. He is trying to take in all of random experiences, facts, situations, emotions etc and trying to make order (sense) out of it all. And that takes great work. It is through this work that the child constructs his life.

Montessori talks at length of the child building his own life and that” we teachers can only help the work going on.” The child enjoys the work of creating themselves, of mastering the environment of “filling up and ordering the files of their experiences ” in his own life.

There is a classic interchange between Dennis the Menace and Mr. Wilson. Dennis: “Things must have been pretty dull when you were a kid. No TVS, no VCRS, no video games, no nothing.

Mr.Wilson: For your information I had lots of fun as a child.

Dennis: Like what?

M. W. Well, we rolled hoops, whittled wood, played marbles...

Dennis: Big Deal.

M. W. ...went fishing, played checkers listened to the radio...but first we had our chores to do. Like feeding the chickens, watering the horses, milking the cows...

Dennis: Wow!

M.W. ...gather eggs, paint barns, chop wood...

Dennis: Neat!

To his Mom. Mr. Wilson was sure mixed-up when he was a kid!

Mom: Oh?

When he played, it was boring and when he worked it was FUN!”

Our challenge is to take this seminal joy of work and build on it. You take the gift; just like you would take any talent and you train it, enhance it, develop it and enjoy it. It is hard work to bring talent to maturity. But the child never flinches from “hard” work. It is only the negative experiences around the child that bring the joy of work into question. Now how do we come from this “joy of work” to a developed work ethic? By maintaining an almost sacred regard for work. The big punishment in a Montessori environment is NOT to be allowed to work. Work is not only a pleasure – it is a privilege. Work itself is not part of the curse on Adam in Genesis. The serpent was cursed. The land was cursed. And yes Adam would eat his food by the sweat of his brow. But work was not part of the curse. God had ordained that Adam would work in the Garden of Eden. His job, his work was to take care of the garden (Genesis 2:15). Adam’s work also included naming the animals (2:19). Work IS sacred. And when we are redeemed God even redeems our work.

Work therefore becomes a stewardship of God given talents and abilities. The four primary things we do for our children to build this work ethic in their life is: one, to make sure our attitude toward work is Godly. Second instilling the idea that work is God honoring. Third, helping our children to see their stewardship responsibilities for not only their gifts but their opportunities. And

fourth, to train them in excellent work habits.

The first three are critical, the fourth is essential. We have an opportunity in a Montessori environment to deal with mastery. It is not good enough to get by. Excellence is the gift we return to God. Most of us were raised in school that if you got a 70, or God forbid, even less you moved on. Nowhere were we challenged to go back and strive for excellence and mastery. In a Montessori environment the child already knows that “good enough isn’t good enough unless it IS good enough”. Passing is not a Godly goal – excellence is. When our children are raised with these expectations they begin to demand them of themselves, knowing that doing less than your best will require you to do it over again. Excellence becomes a habit; habit comes from training. And Paul exhorts us (1Tim 4:7) “train yourself to be Godly”. Can it be Godly to turn out inferior work or to turn out no meaningful work? God is honored by the work of our hands. Nurturing the children in our environment is a respect for the gifts and opportunities that God has placed in our hands.

The 10 P’s of Ministry

7. Possibilities

In determining the order of the 10 P’s there was a debate about putting perseverance before possibilities as both are essential to effective functioning in ministry. Spiritual experience and reality calls for possibilities – dreams and visions before the hard task of perseverance. Scripture tells us that without a vision the people perish. (Proverbs 29:18)

If you don’t have a vision of where you want your ministry to go, if you don’t have dreams that you long to see fulfilled for God, than the storms that come (and sometimes they come everyday) will cause you to turn back.

But if you have latched on to the possibilities that God has put in your hands you will derive power from your God given dreams to continue through whatever “the world, the flesh and the devil” throw at you. Jesus tells us “In this world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33) but He overcame the world because He had a vision of what God wanted Him to do.

An important point about possibilities in ministry is to remember that ministry is not an organization, it is not a place, it is not a time – it is a relationship with Him. Matthew 25:40 tells us: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

One further critical point to remember is that YOU are God’s ministry. You are what he is fulfilling in every day life. You are His workmanship. So you also have to ask, “What are my possibilities?” “Where am I going?” and even more importantly “Who am I becoming?” What talents, what skills, what hidden longings have you not opened up to God to fulfill?

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National Conference

San Antonio, Texas

June 26th – 28th

It's time to plan to attend. There will be many great seminars and the people you meet will be some of the greatest people you'll ever know.

This year's conference will have one day devoted to a pre-school and elementary track covering such topics as classroom management, record keeping and other specific classroom needs.

Conference cost is \$325 (\$300 if paid by May 1st.) and covers 3 lunches, 2 continental breakfasts, Banquet and morning and afternoon breaks. More details are available on our website www.crossmountainforum.com

Christian Montessori Fellowship
22630 East Range
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teach. You may not preach the gospel with words but your life is a living testimony. The topics covered will enhance your teaching ability and give you a greater understanding of the role that you play in your children's lives.

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**A Question About the National
Conference**

What if I don't teach in a "Christian" Montessori school? How useful is the seminar? You are a Christian Montessori teacher no matter where you