

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
May 2006

National Conference San Antonio, Texas July 27-29, 2006

“I’ll Walk the Line”

Those words are more than a Johnny Cash song, they are a vital part of what makes the environment work for the child. The more complex our lives become, the more we need to return to simple basic principles and operations. Every football coach would call them the “fundamentals”. What works in football, works in Montessori (maybe not the tackling) and works in life. Return to the fundamentals.

Our purpose in the fellowship each month (and at each conference) is to help focus on the fundamental things to encourage you to look again at the foundation on which you build.

Foundations are not the pretty part of building. Few people marvel (or even note) the foundations of the Eiffel Tower or Notre Dame or the Empire State Building, yet without a solid foundation the beauty that you admire cannot exist.

The most famous – make that infamous foundation – is the one under the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Even though it has created a phenomenon, it requires constant observation and major tinkering to keep it being a phenomenon rather than a ruin. Now that we’ve had an

architectural lesson let’s apply it to the environment.

What is essential for what we call “Montessori” to happen? First we have a philosophy of life that is ultimately expressed in an environment. Can you do Montessori without an environment? (This is a discussion for another time.) The answer is no! But an environment by itself (pink towers etc.) doesn’t make Montessori happen. It is the fundamental principles –observed and applied – that creates the learning.

Montessori notes (Discovery of the Child, page 89, Ballantine Edition), “One single idea runs through every complex activity, and this single idea must be sought as the key to any general problem.” This is a basic tenet of Montessori – find the principles then cooperate with them. She then goes on to say, “There is also a secret key to the perfecting of the most varied types of movement. And this key is balance.”

Anyone who has observed toddlers knows that balance is the physical challenge of the age group. As they master balance they move on to greater physical challenges but it is this essential balance, this control that begins their abilities to master themselves. Mastering balance is a microcosm of mastering life.

Isn't "balance", in all of its meanings, the essential ingredient in mastery, whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual?

One of the most significant Montessori apparatus – that you can't even get from Nienhuis – is the "line". Montessori describes it as "A line in the shape of a long ellipse is drawn in chalk on the floor, or painted to make it more durable." Because of the line's simplicity, we might tend to under-appreciate its value. The line serves as the first key in self-control.

A child is shown how to walk on this line, covering it with the axis of his foot so that his heel and toe are both on the line. Walking like this gives the child the feeling that he is falling and therefore he has to make an effort to keep his balance. He has to concentrate.

After he masters this movement with confidence, he is given a further challenge – to walk the line with the forward foot placing its heel in contact with the toe of the rear foot. (Anyone for walking a plank? Every child will raise their hand to do it.) Music can be played to animate their movements.

A further challenge for the line is to walk holding a flag aloft. It requires multiple attentions – the position of the feet, the hands, the arms and the body.

The complexity of the exercises continue as the children gain greater control. They may walk the line with a drop of water in the middle of a tray. They may walk the line with a glass of water filled almost to the brim. They may walk the line with a bell, controlling their movements so the bell doesn't toll! (Maybe that should be so the bell doesn't toll. "Who does the bell toll for? It tolls for thee." John Donne)

Montessori also noted that children would walk the line carrying a stack of blocks without letting them fall, while others would walk with a basket on their head. All exercise that help children gain control of, first their bodies, and then their wills – all necessary to ultimately gain that "balance" that makes life flow. Not a bad days work for a line on the floor.

Summer Safety **Barbara Fidellow**

Come summertime, everyone wants to take off their socks and shoes and don flip flops and sandals. It's a bad idea in school. Children need to wear tennis shoes or play shoes with socks to protect their feet and to assure their safety. Flip flops and sandals are for the beach and inside play. Outdoor play demands shoes and socks. Climbing monkey bars, running on the playground and going in and out of forts, play houses, etc. in flip flops or sandals is an accident waiting to happen. Protect the children from tripping and falling because of their foot ware.

While coats, sweaters, and long sleeves are put away until the cold weather returns, the children still need protection from the sun and insects. Have the parents send to the school sun screen and insect repellent for their child. Label each with the child's name. Apply both before going outside to play. We found Avon's "Skin so Soft" worked well as a gentle insect repellent

Water is a must. Water fountains DO NOT provide enough water for the children. When outside for a long period of time, fill a large water cooler with ice water (igloo type which holds 5 to 10 gallons of water and has a spigot so each

child can get his own water.) Provide small paper cups (Sam's has these). Set this up on the playground. Give a lesson on how to get your water and show them how to drink it. At first it is a novelty, but soon they use it properly and thus their need for water is satisfied.

We had water fountains in the environments, but to assure that the children get enough water we provided plastic cups with handles and painted flowers, animals, etc. on them so each child would recognize his cup. The teacher served water with every snack and at lunch. A half glass of water for each child to drink and then milk was served at lunch.

Hand washing is a must. Train the children that every time they want to put food into their mouth, they must first wash their hands with soap. You will be amazed how quickly the runny noses disappear.

The Icon of Faith

God gives us the child as an icon, a model of what faith is in its purest and most simple form.

In Luke 18:16-17, Jesus says, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

To begin to understand how the child becomes this icon of faith – this representation – we need to explore what the kingdom of heaven is and how we enter into it.

In Matthew 13:52, Jesus says, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who

brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

Each child represents that homeowner, each of them bringing out the gifts – the treasures - that God has given them. God has placed within them old gifts – faith, love, devotion and he has given them new gifts of adventure, creativity and hope. We need to continue to be like the child, who doesn't segregate the old gifts from the new but enjoys all of them with thankfulness to God.

As we get older (and become less childlike) we put away "childish things" such as dreams and visions, justice, fairness and play. We concentrate on the old (adult) gifts of security, comfort, responsibility and reality. Maybe we forget to play, where play represents the joy of life and where play represents absolute trust that God will take care of everything – and sometimes I just need to relax and trust Him.

A Call for Help

We are pressing on with the creation of a Christian Montessori training program where the philosophy will reflect the Biblical and Christian foundations of Montessori's teachings. To do this effectively requires the input of the Montessori community. It has been suggested that since each Montessorian has developed spiritual insights both from their training and their experience that need to be shared, that we should ask you to share these insights so we can include them in this training.

Attached is a copy of training topics we would like to present. Hopefully, with summer coming on, you may find a little time to reflect on the topics and be

able to send us your insights and thoughts.

Topics

Aesthetics, Grace
Character Building
Child as teacher
Choice
Christ centered
Classroom Management
Coherence
Community
Concentration
Confidence
Control of Error
Development of Initiative
Deviations and obstacles
Discipline
Discovery
Empowerment
Encouragement
Exploration
Freedom
Grace and Courtesy, Manners
Group Work Interaction
Hands on experience
Help for the Strong-willed Child
Imagination
Independence – dependence
Individualized
Mastery
Meeting the needs of the child
Movement
Normalization
Observation
Order
Outdoors
Parenting
Practical Life education
Prepared environment – physical, teacher, curriculum
Principles
Repetition
Respect for others
Respect for the child

Responsibility - consequences Reality
Accountability
Science
Security
Self-discipline
Self-esteem
Sensitive Periods
Silence
Spiritual Education
Spiritual preparation of the teacher
Teacher-servant
Spontaneity
Stewardship
Success
Teacher Interaction
The work of the child
Time
Work, Work Ethic
Working out Mistakes
Writing and reading

National Conference

Cost and housing details

Conference cost
\$350 (an additional \$25 discount for CMF members). Conference includes 3 lunches, morning and afternoon breaks and Saturday dinner,
Location
Menger Hotel
1-800-345-9285
www.historicmenger.com
Lodging costs \$119.09 (tax included) per night
Double or single
Rates good if you register by June 27th
Alternate Hotel
Crocket Hotel (across the street from The Menger \$99.24 per night (tax included)
1-800-292-1050

Membership

We need your support to continue the work of the fellowship. Go to

www.christianmontessorifellowship.com

Have You Visited the Store?

As part of the ministry of Christian Montessori Fellowship we have established Cross Mountain Press (www.crossmountainpress.com) where you will find materials to enhance your ministry. A book every parent should have is “Getting your Money’s Worth – Your Investment in Christian Montessori” which is a great explanation of the “indirect aims” and values of a Montessori education.

For those in non-parochial schools we have published a non-parochial version as well.

If you have a toddler program or are wanting to start one, “The Lakemont Toddler Handbook” is a great resource.

Also available are seminar titles from past national conferences. Visit the website today.

Coming or Going?

Are you looking for a position or do you need to fill a position? As a service to our members we will be happy to list you on the web site. Send us your info.

Management for Montessori

As a part of our ministry to schools we offer a three day management seminar, “The 10 P’s at the Heart of Ministry and Management” go to our website www.crossmountainforum.com for more details and information. It is a dynamic three days with a small group

who share and understand your challenges. Attending a forum becomes a transforming experience.

Available dates:

June 15 -18

June 22 - 25

June 29 - July 2

July 6 – 9

July 13 – 16

July 20 - 23

Have you Met “Monty”?

Visit www.crossmountainpress.com to meet Monty. Monty is here to help start the celebration of the Montessori Centennial. In fact Monty can help you raise funds. Take a look and give us a call 210-698-1911

National Conference Topics

The Icon of Faith
Classroom Management
Personalities
Hands on Bible
The Secret of Childhood
“Cosmic” Education
Stress
Toddlers
Exercise
Favorite Presentations
And more

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Christian Montessori Fellowship
22630 East Range
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