

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship

March 2005

National Conference San Antonio, Texas June 23 – 25, 2005

“Montessori and the Fourth R”
Seeing Children Through God’s Eyes

Regional Conference Apache Junction, Arizona April 16, 2005

Milestone 200

Often when we first make contact with a Christian Montessori school their initial reaction is, like the school in Nebraska, “I thought we were the only one.” (And in Nebraska they very well may be.) But there are many schools scattered widely over the country who use Montessori and are concerned with the Christian spiritual nurturing of their children. Part of the purpose of the fellowship is to help network these schools so that we might encourage and strengthen each other.

Christian Montessori schools are not in competition with each other – even if they are in the same town. The better job that each of us does strengthens the public’s perception of Montessori and honors God with our labors.

There are parents all over the country who are looking for Christian Montessori schools. Some of them know about Montessori and are thrilled to find schools nurturing their children

spiritually. There are many parents who want their children nurtured spiritually and are thrilled to find out about Montessori. We also hold this treasure in earthen vessels and we need the encouragement from each other to “not be weary in well-doing.”

We have never formally defined a Christian Montessori school. And to some degree, just as in our approach to Christianity – liturgical, orthodox, evangelical, fundamental, charismatic etc – we all bear a family resemblance, have similar characteristics and all call God our Heavenly Father.

Each school will share God and the scriptures in their own way; each looking to fulfill their mission and calling while holding onto the scriptural promise that God’s Word will not return void. Therefore it is up to each of us to be the best stewards of our opportunities and understanding.

Two organizations that have risen over the last years that encourage hands on Bible teaching have been the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (www.cgsusa.org) and Godly Play (www.Godlyplay.org).

This month we have found the 200th Christian Montessori school. In fact, we’ve reached 207 – and still climbing. If you know of other Christian Montessori schools please let us know.

Membership

Your membership in CMF is vital. The work does not continue without your support. Please join today!

A Baker's Dozen Of Montessori benefits for the child Silence

Be still, and know that I am God”
Psalm 46:10

We have all heard the expression “a profound silence”. This usually occurs when something of an awe-inspiring magnitude has happened. It could be the result of a moving performance. Or it could occur because of a touching moment. It might happen in the face of a deep-seated insight. It often happens when we enter the presence of God – whether it is in worship, prayer or even nature. Silence has a special power to transform. But the silence of transformation cannot be coerced from outside. The command “Be Quiet!” is not the same as silence. Silence has to arise from within. Silence can be induced but not coerced. The environment, with its use of inside voices is a step toward bringing the benefit of silence to the children.

We live in a world of noise pollution both outside and inside. Preschools are traditionally thought of as noisy places of seemingly little control and purposeful self-direction, which leads to people's amazement on finding the quiet oasis of a Montessori environment. Please note that it is a quiet oasis – not a silent oasis.

Silence is what a traditional classroom confuses with control. Silence in this traditional sense is an abnegation of who the child is – it is a taking away of the actions, personality

and freedom of the child. In a Montessori environment, the quiet – not the silence - is an expression of the child's control, purpose and direction.

Allowing the child – encouraging the child to produce quiet becomes an exercise of will and thought. Montessori's “exercise of silence” was not a matter of control but a means to discovery. Montessori says, “Children are not only sensitive to silence but also to a voice that calls them almost inaudibly out of that silence.” That almost inaudible voice can certainly be that of the teacher but even more significantly, in the silence the child can hear his own voice calling to his spirit deep within. Ultimately the child can experience, like Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-12) the presence of God. “Then the Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by. Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper (a still small voice).”

It is only when the child begins to create his own silence can he hear the quiet voice of God. When God speaks, He speaks not only of heavenly things but of earthly things as well. He gives guidance and encouragement, joy and direction. He speaks to the child's gifts and talents – and like dry bones - He gives them life.

Observe the waves of silence that flow over a working environment as children find themselves within their work.

The inside voice is the tool of control for the child. When a child becomes loud, he may be excited, forgetful or out of his own control. Telling a child to be quiet is not often as effective as asking him, "Where do we use our outside voice?" or, "What kind of voice do we use inside?" These questions allow the child to "voice" the answer so he might actually hear it for himself.

What might you do to help the child who is not yet able to create his own silence? We found that having headphones (the kind used for shooting or at airports) without the attached wires works very well. The child who has trouble hearing his own voice and volume is greatly benefited by the availability of headphones. Experiment by putting your hands over your ears and listening to the volume of your voice. The headphones educate the child as to the volume of his own voice and he begins to lower his voice automatically. The headphones are also wonderful for filtering out much of the extraneous noise of the environment and allowing the child an even deeper ability to concentrate.

We made the headphones available to all the children (with a special emphasis to the child that needed them.) We recently suggested this at our regional conference in Corpus Christi in regards to a student who was having trouble flowing in the environment. We received an email the other day from Sister Elizabeth Close of Incarnate Word, "We tried the earphones and they are working beautifully. The noise level in the classroom has decreased considerably. Our little Student is blossoming too!"

Silence is not the absence of noise. It is a chosen state that allows great discoveries and development but its benefits do not come from coercion but from choice. Let us be careful how the silence in the environment is created.

Educational Principles

Of Montessori

9. Joy of Learning

Learning is hard work but it does not take the joy away from it. It is only when we remove the joy from the work that we turn it into drudgery. Watch a little boy building a fort (or a man at his hobby) both will spend hours and great energy to accomplish their goal. Is what they are doing work? Yes, but the work is transformed by joy.

Not everything we do is "joy-filled". Some tasks are difficult and onerous but part of the transformation of work into joy is the attitude we bring to it and the satisfaction we take away. Too often children are denied both lessons because work is portrayed as a four-letter word that nobody wants to do.

Easy is not the same as joyful. My wife loves jigsaw puzzles – a thousand pieces, two thousand pieces, the more the better. If I gave her a puzzle with twelve pieces, it would be easy but it would be no "fun".

The appropriate level of challenge, with the appropriate attitude begins to bring joy to our endeavors. Children like hard work. They like carrying heavy loads, both physically and mentally. When we try to rescue them from the struggle, we destroy the joy they receive because we stop them from experiencing all facets of the process.

When my children were growing up, we would play board games. When they

would lose a game, they would pout or get upset. So, I told them, “Let’s play again, you go first.” They would roll the dice and make their first move. I would then declare them the winner. They’d look at me puzzled. “Let’s play again.” I’d say, “You go first.” Again, they would throw the dice and I would declare them the winner. It didn’t take long for them to understand that winning was not the only joy involved in the game. And so it is with learning. The process, as well as the achievement can be joyful.

You still cannot minimize the effort required but you can frame it (even in your own mind) as a series of joyful discoveries. The novelist, Joseph Conrad, wrote, “I don’t like work—no man does—but I like what is in the work—the chance to find yourself.”

And what could be more joyful, than to discover the gifts, talents and calling that God made expressly yours. The fulfillment that comes when we operate in the realm that God designed for us brings great joy. That is why in Montessori we look to find the keys to discover who God made the child to be.

If in our preparation we fail to consider the joy of learning—not just whether it is easy or “fun”—but if it can help the child to discover his God-given gifts, then we have missed a significant lesson on nurturing our children.

Let us remember Galatians 5:22. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy ...”

The 10 P’s of Ministry Pain

Ironically, we follow the joy of learning with a discussion about pain in

ministry. I don’t know why we should be surprised about pain. Hebrews 12:2, states, “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross ...”

All we ever want to do is good. We want to bless people, especially the children but invariably our walk takes us into pain. One of the pains we encounter is betrayal. Most of our betrayals are not as dramatic as that of Judas but they sting just the same.

A common betrayal is that of confidence. Often, to make sound judgments we need sounding boards. And sometimes our sounding boards sound off in the wrong direction or at the wrong time or to the wrong people. They create hurt feelings and sometimes-unredeemable relationships.

Another betrayal is one of vision. You feel that you have expressed clearly the vision for your program. You get staff and parents who seemingly buy into the vision only to find that often their actions are at cross-purposes to the effective attainment of the goal.

The worst betrayal seems to be when people gang up on you, whether it is teachers against teacher, parents against teacher or teachers and parents against administrators. Little good ever happens out of betrayal. You see this predominantly in Churches but it happens in schools as well. Whatever progress was being attained is stopped—sometimes never to be rekindled.

There is an insecurity generated throughout the whole school. Parents who may not have been involved often leave. Everybody has enough with their own problems they seldom want to add the schools woes to their own burden.

Even if you do everything within your power to keep everyone happy (which is an impossibility) there still can arise people who will betray you. If it happens, you must first examine your own heart and actions, changing those that need to be changed, whether you stay or go within the situation you will need the miracle of forgiveness liberally spread throughout your life otherwise the betrayal will destroy you and all of the good that you can do.

There will be all kinds of betrayals in your life, some more severe than others but all of them can be used to drive you to your knees so you can pray like Jesus, "Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing."

The Secret of Childhood

Chapter 20 Outlined

Numbers in parenthesis are page numbers from Ballantine Books edition.

The "Method"

"There was no method to be seen, what was seen was a child. A child's soul freed from impediments was seen acting according to its own nature. The characteristics of childhood which we isolated belong quite simply to the life of a child, just as colors belong to a bird and fragrances to flowers. They are not at all the product of an "educational method". (136)

"A child's psychic life is so fluid that its natural manifestations can completely disappear in an unfavorable environment and be replaced by others. Before elaborating any system of education, we must therefore create a favorable environment that will encourage the

flowering of a child's natural gifts. All that is needed is to remove the obstacles. And this should be the basis of, and point of departure for, all future education." (136)

"The first thing to be done, therefore, is to discover the true nature of a child and then assist him in his normal development." (137)

"If we examine the special circumstances that accidentally occasioned the flowering of these children's normal traits, we can recognize some of particular importance. The first of these was the pleasant environment ... A second favorable condition was the neutral character of the adults..This lead to a kind of intellectual calm. This calm consists in a spiritual humility and intellectual purity necessary for the understanding of the child, and which, as a consequence, must be found in a teacher. Another important circumstance was the fact that the children were given special materials with which to work." (137)

"We can now describe some of the ways in which children respond to these external influences. The most striking, and the one that is almost like a magic wand for opening the gate to the normal expression of a child's natural gifts, is activity concentrated on some task that requires movement of the hands guided by the intellect." (138)

"These reveal the true child. We see him kindled with joy and indefatigable in his toil since his activities are like a psychic metabolism with which his life and growth are intimately connected.

Choice is now his guiding principle.”
(138)

“He further shows us that he has a need of order and discipline as mirrors of his inner life.” (138)

“We can draw up a list of his preferences and of the ways in which he spontaneously manifests himself.

What he likes.

Repetition of the exercise

Free choice

Control of error

Analysis of movements

Exercise of silence

Good manners in social contacts

Order in the environment

Care for personal cleanliness

Training of the senses

Writing separated from reading

Writing before reading

Reading without books

Discipline in free activity

What he rejects

Rewards and punishments

Spellers

Lessons in common

Programs and examinations

Toys and sweets

A teacher’s desk (139)

“The environment itself is moreover something special. Though it is provided by adults, it is in reality an active and vital response to the new patterns manifested in the life of a growing child.” (140)

“The extraordinary rapidity with which this system of education has been adopted for children of every race and social condition has provided us with an

abundance of experimental data and enabled us to identify common features and universal tendencies and thus to determine the natural laws upon which the education of children should be based.” (140)

“The change wrought in these children made a profound impression... It was then that the term “conversion” was first employed... Despite its paradoxical expression, this concept made a deep impression on many minds. Conversion may seem to be contrary to the innocent state of childhood, and yet this term emphasized the spiritual character of the remarkable phenomenon that was apparent to all. The children had experienced a spiritual renewal which freed them from sorrow and abandonment and gave them a new birth of joy.” (141)

“If we take sin and sadness as a kind of alienation from a more perfect state, then the recovery of this state implies conversion. Sin and sadness then yield to joy.” (142)

“The goodness of a child was measured by his adaptation to the conditions of adult life and vice versa. Because of this erroneous opinion the natural traits of children lay hidden. Adults no longer recognized what was good for, and in, the child as nature intended it to be.” (142)

**Regional Seminar
Apache Junction, AZ
Mountain Brook Montessori
Academy
201 N. Ironwood Dr.
Apache Junction, AZ 85220**

Pat Barton
(480) 983-0883
Regional Conference
Cost and Registration

Seminar Fee	\$150
Early Registration	\$125
(By April 4th)	
Membership discount	\$25

Next Month

Insider Montessori Myth #1
If a child is not in Montessori by the time he is three it is too late?
Job Openings

Go Like the Wind! Montessori School

Director of Admissions

The candidate must be an effective communicator, able to share with prospective families the philosophy of the Montessori method of education. They must also strongly support the school's Christian mission. The ideal candidate must positive, mature, professional, team oriented, and have excellent relationship-building skills. The qualifications are Undergraduate degree; Montessori certified; teaching experience; school administrative or leadership experience; Strong knowledge of child development; business and management skills. For complete details, see www.golikethewind.com.

Lower and Upper Elementary Teachers

The school seeks certified, experienced Montessori teachers devoted to elementary-age children. The candidates will have an opportunity to work closely with the co-teachers of the existing classrooms. A Bachelor's degree, along with Montessori Elementary certification (6-9 and/ or 6-12, AMS or AMI), are required. Please forward your cover letter and resume to Doug Collier, Administrator. Go Like the Wind Montessori School, 3540 Dixboro Lane, Ann Arbor, MI. 48105, 734 747-7422 doug@golikethewind.com

Christian Montessori School at Lake Norman

**ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR
TODDLER (18 MOS. – 36 MOS.), PRIMARY
(3-6 YRS.), ELEMENTARY (6-12 YRS.)
LEAD TEACHERS AND ASSISTANTS.**

Program: Christian Montessori School is seeking individuals with a true commitment to Christ and educating children. We are a Christian Montessori school that boasts and exceptional Montessori trained staff and multicultural community. We are located on 20 acres of picturesque farmland in the beautiful Lake Norman area, 20 miles north of the city of Charlotte, NC. We are looking for unique individuals, with a true commitment to Christ, Montessori excellence, and professional growth. Our vision is to become a foreign immersion school representing at least 5 (five) continents.

Position Requirements: Montessori Certification; Associates or Bachelors degree preferred but not required for Lead Teachers. At least one year experience in a childcare setting preferred.

Salary Range: Based on education and experience.

Benefits: (F/T only) Medical and Life Insurance, 401-k; paid personal/sick and vacation days, professional development funds, and training sponsorship available.

Contacts: Submit resume and cover letter by fax to (704) 875-9799 or e-mail to scurry@christianmontessorischool.org.

Incarnate Word Academy Director Wanted

Incarnate Word Academy in Corpus Christi Texas is looking for a Montessori Coordinator to direct their Montessori program of 141 students in three primary, three lower el and one upper el environments. Need to be degreed, certified, experienced and Catholic. Contact Sister Camelia Herlihy at 361-883-0857, sherlihy@iwacc.org.

Missionary Opportunity India

**22630 East Range
San Antonio, TX 78255**

We are in need of \$2500 to buy a set of Montessori equipment for the classroom. Will you be able to depute a short term Missionary to come and set this up for us. We will provide clean place for the person to live in. May I hear from you soon.

Please note our contact address: Bethany Educational Society, Vennikulam Post, Thiruvalla, Kerala 689 544, India, tel. # 0469 265 0578 (Office), 265 1675 (Residence), e-mail. pta_bethany@sancharnet.in, website. www.bethanyacademy.com ..Thank you. God bless you.

Mathews Chacko

Chairman

**National Conference
June 23-25
Respecting the Child
His spirit and his life**

The conference begins at 10:00 A.M. Thursday June 23rd and runs through Saturday evening.

Conference cost is \$325 (\$300 if paid by May 1st, plus an additional \$25 discount for CMF members) and includes 3 lunches, 2 full breakfasts, morning and afternoon breaks and Saturday dinner.

More details are available on our websites:
www.christianmontessorifellowship.com

www.crossmountainforum.com
Or call 210-698-1911
Send in your registration Now

Make your reservations at
The Crockett Hotel
Across from the Alamo
1-800-292-1050
Lodging costs \$98.28 (tax included)
Double or single
Rates are good if you register for the hotel by May 23rd

