

April 2012

# INSIDE THE WOODS

## A Big To-Do: Our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party was a smashing success

Ju Wotring and Patty Keys, the co-chairs of our big celebration – A Big To-Do – and their committee of keenly focused volunteers put together the best birthday party ever. If you weren't there, you shoulda oughtta have been.

It happened at the Marathon Oil Tower, Tanglewood Terrace, on Saturday, March 3. A lavish decorating theme featured fancy-wrapped small, medium, large and massive birthday present boxes all over the place, augmented by platoons of balloons. What's a birthday party without balloons?

Food seemed to be everywhere, too, served from several separate stations, starting with hors d'oeuvres, along with salad fixin's and assorted fruits right past the entrance. Then you had your choice of pasta with an array of toppings. Another station offered pan-seared chicken with choice of vegetables. Especially delicious was the roasted pork loin with a divine rosemary orange sauce to complement it.

Desserts were bite-size (well, maybe two-bites) tiny tarts of various sorts, plus chocolate and regular cheesecake morsels, and chocolate-dipped strawberries. All these comestibles were washed down with wines, coffee and iced tea.

Members of Woods High School and Woods Middle School performed a few songs from their recent musical show, "Once On This Island," a Broadway show loosely based on "The Little Mermaid."

A raffle drawing for an iPod2 was won by parent Diane Koonce.

Silent auction bidding and big board bidding attracted some heavy hitters all during the evening until 8:45. This year was a record-setter for our school – **every auction item was taken**. Cleaned out – nothing left.

A highpoint of the evening was very evocative video which played continuously, showing photos of people and events at the school during its 50 years. This video was masterfully created by Russell Herron.

Head of School Sherry Herron took the mike at 9 PM and presented a short round-up of happenings during the school's 50 years. "Paddles Up" came next. The Fatica family challenge – a \$50,000 Gift of Gratitude -- inspired matching contributions of \$65,000.

Ticket, underwriting and auction activity yielded \$165,000 – that's a whopping \$280,000 total.

This gala was the most successful of any we've had. HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

# Maria Montessori: The Later Years

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

*Scientific observation has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment. The task of the teacher becomes that of preparing a series of motives of cultural activity, spread over a specially prepared environment, and then refraining from obtrusive interference. Human teachers can only help the great work that is being done... Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be a victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society.*

--- Maria Montessori, *Education for a New World*.

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While in the United States in 1915, Maria Montessori gave her third international training course in San Francisco and set up a model classroom at the Panama-Pacific Exposition from August to November. Amazed observers watched twenty-one children, who were new to the method, from behind a glass wall.

Yet, a short time later, support organizations established to further the effort to bring Montessori to the United States dissolved due to lack of leadership. In 1914, an American educator at Columbia named Kilpatrick wrote a book in which he dismissed Montessori as outdated. These factors, along with Montessori's efforts to keep the use of the materials she developed true to her philosophical intentions, combined to end the Montessori movement in the United States for the time being.

In 1916, Montessori taught a training course in Barcelona and reestablished her

headquarters there. She made her last trip to the United States in 1917, to give a course in Los Angeles and attend her son Mario's wedding, where he stayed to maintain a Montessori class. She continued to train teachers, write, and lecture. Her headquarters remained in Spain for the next 20 years despite the fact that she lost government support in 1919, because she refused to take a political stand.



Montessori continued to write and lecture. Over the ensuing years she taught training courses in England and Milan and founded training centers in the Netherlands. She lectured in Berlin and Vienna. She continued to develop and expand her ideas and the number of Montessori schools continued to grow.

The fundamental needs spelled out by the Association Montessori Internationale, which she founded in 1929, reflect core concepts

of her philosophy: the need to explore, the need for orientation, and the need for order. These three basic needs compel us to use imagination and abstraction.

Also included in this list are the need for repetition, which gives exactness, and the need for perfection, the result of repetition. When these, and the additional needs for constructive activity, to learn by trial and error, for communication, and finally, for self-determination, are satisfied, we are able to reach our full potential.

In 1936, Montessori was forced to leave Spain when the Spanish Civil War began. During World War II she was exiled from Italy because she refused to have the students at her schools recite an oath to Mussolini. Her schools were closed in Italy, Germany, and Austria.

Montessori gave a speech in 1938, at the Sorbonne in Paris in which she called for a system of education that would accomplish peace. In 1939, she left her home in Holland to give a training course in India organized by the Theosophical Society in Madras. She ended up interred in India by the British for the duration of the war. While under house arrest, Montessori wrote some of her greatest books.

Many of these later works reflect the continuing development of her philosophy, deeply held religious feelings, and the significance of her discoveries concerning childhood: "Because you know if the child

can teach us something it is not really just the child, but it is the power of Love that constructs the man." ( Montessori, The Secret of Childhood, pg. 148).

Montessori refined her view of what she called the Cosmic Plan: "One side of evolution deals with the satisfaction of vital needs, defense, survival of the species and growth by modifications towards perfection.

Another and stronger factor in evolutionary processes is concerned with the cosmic function of each living being, and even of inanimate natural objects, working in collaboration for the fulfillment of the Purpose of Life" (Montessori, To Educate The Human Potential, pg. 41).

Maria Montessori was nominated three times for the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1949, 1950, and 1951. She understood that, "liberty never can exist where one struggles to stifle some other thing..." (Montessori, The Montessori Method, 1964, pg. 373).

In 1926, she gave a speech on education and peace at the League of Nations assembly in Geneva. In 1943, she published Peace and Education, which was based on her lectures.

In this book, she demonstrated her unique concept of peace as an active event, rather than the passive interlude between wars. She

always spoke of the significance her work had for humanity.

On May 6, 1952, Maria Montessori died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the house of friends in Noordwijk aan zee, a little village on the North Sea coast where she had gone for a brief rest. She was buried in a little cemetery of the Roman Catholic Church



in Noordwijk. She wanted to be buried wherever she died. Mario Montessori directed the

Association Montessori Internationale until his death in 1982.

Montessori's philosophy saw the whole world reflected in the life of the child, a microcosm in the macrocosm. In the macrocosm she found the potential that could open the world to the possibility of controlling itself and being self-determining, with humanity as the vehicle nature provided for this purpose:

"We must take into account a psychic entity, a social personality, a new world force, innumerable in the totality of its membership...for the children are the makers of men" (Montessori, The Absorbent Mind, Pg. 4).

## A is for Anger

Frustration over a broken toy, a sense of failure at not living up to parental expectations, a dessert denied . . . any of these can be the occasion of an outburst of murderous rage from your child. What's more, trying to deal with a child's anger can be one of the most distressing -- and enraging -- experiences of parenting, probably because most of us weren't taught to deal with this emotion in our own childhoods.

Here are some suggestions from the experts at the National Institute of Mental Health to help you in responding to and averting angry or aggressive outbursts.

**Let the child know you accept his feelings:** Say something like -- "I see that you're angry that we can't stay at the park." The idea is not to repress the emotion -- it will only get acted out inappropriately somewhere down the line.

**Teach kids acceptable ways of expressing anger:** The simple verbal expression of a feeling -- "I get very angry when you take my toy" -- can help a child feel in control of the situation, thus reducing the need to act out. If the anger is too strong for words, provide a pillow or laundry bag for punching.

**Set limits in advance:** Let your child know when he is not angry what the rules are -- no hitting, no throwing things, no breaking things.

**Explain the situation:** Remember that emotions are powerful and often incomprehensible in children. Try to help pinpoint the feelings that caused the outburst.

**Ignore behavior that you can tolerate:** If you point out every infraction of the rules, a child will end up feeling incapable of doing anything right.

**Use humor:** A judicious bit of kidding can offer a child a face-saving way out of a situation and avert a tantrum. But be careful not to use sarcasm or ridicule, which can be very damaging to a child's self-esteem.

**Use physical restraint.** If a child has really lost control, physically hold him or remove him from the scene to prevent him from hurting himself or others. It's very important to hold onto your temper at this point. The child should not see this as punishment or hostility.

**Catch the child being good.** As often as you can, enforce good behavior. This is much more effective than punishment in the long run.

**Model appropriate behavior.** Your actions are the most powerful influence of all. If you haven't mastered your own anger, you can't expect your kids to do better.

# PUT THE MEANING OF TESTING IN PERSPECTIVE

BY ELIZABETH STEPANKIW

Dr. Montessori provided teachers with a broad, detailed curriculum which contains, "a backbone of core materials that teach a core set of facts" (Lillard, 2005, pg. 344). Her comprehensive approach was unique in her time and remains so today.

The classroom encourages the full use of the constructive instincts of the child. Learning is geared to the child's interests and needs. The curriculum and materials equip teachers with the opportunity to give the child verbal feedback and make continual observations of progress. Thus, in the Montessori classroom, students receive evaluations and direction on a daily basis.

Traditional methods of education make heavy use of textbooks, formal tests, and lectures in 50 minute blocks of time. Whole class teaching forces teachers to tell children information in a set period of time with little flexibility to plan the timing and information to the developmental needs of the individual student. With this method a certain body of factual information must be transmitted by a certain date.

The child's desire to learn and sensitivities are not part of the considerations made when traditional tests are designed. They are geared to an inert view of

knowledge (D.K. Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2002) as a "set of formulas and facts that can be applied on circle tests" (Lillard, 2005, pg.13). The physical format breaks learning into components that are tested in a way that discourages the child from integrating knowledge and is designed to performance learning rather than self-mastery.

Because most of us have been victims of the focus on learning facts to "make the grade" on a test, it is hard for us to completely comprehend other forms of evaluation. The following chart taken from the work of Angelina Stoll Lillard in her book Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius (pages 168-172) allows us to view the learning goals we have for our children compared to those of a traditional approach.

Children at School of the Woods often approach the IOWA testing as a different kind of practical life activity. Testing gives the child prior knowledge of an experience that is a part of our modern life. Teachers and parents can influence the student's attitude about learning by focusing on the meaningful aspects of activities, emphasizing learning goals over test scores, and by providing opportunities to develop responsibility and independence (Lillard, 2005, p. 171).

## MASTERY (LEARNING IS THE GOAL)

Characterized by:

- 1.Mastery of learning goals
- 2.Project-based work-individual and Collaborative
- 3.Verbal feedback from the teacher to the student

Resulting in:

Self-egulation and academic achievement  
More creativity  
Higher motivation  
Better ability to focus on task  
Deeper conceptual learning  
Continuing interest  
Child controls self-image  
Positive view of school

## PERFORMANCE (TEST GRADES ARE THE GOAL)

Characterized by:

- 1.Competition-grade and test dependent
- 2 Teacher led lessons followed by seat work
- 3.Test scores as feedback to the student

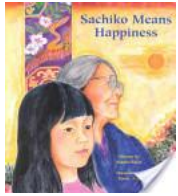
Resulting in:

Negative impact on learning-poorer performance  
Less creativity  
Learning is not retained after testing  
No deeper conceptual learning

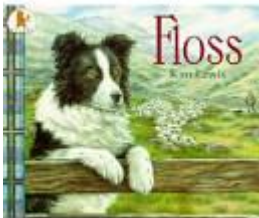
# Recommended Books

The following titles are a selection of both shorter picture books and longer-text books, all of which introduce the young reader to the concept of inference.

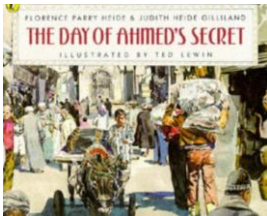
## PICTURE BOOKS



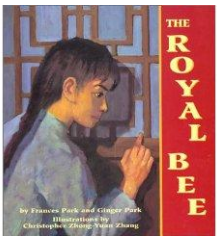
***Sachiko Means Happiness*** by Kimiko Sakai. Although five-year-old Sachiko is upset when her grandmother becomes forgetful, difficult, then no longer recognizes her, she grows to understand that they can still be happy together. 32 pages.



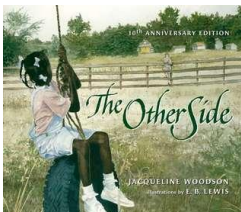
***Floss***, by Kim Lewis. When she lived in town, she loved playing ball with the children. When she lives on a farm; but will she make a good sheep-dog? A story of warmth, charm, and love with a happy ending." 32 pages.



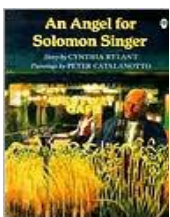
***The Day of Ahmed's Secret***, by Florence Parry and Judith Gilliland. Ahmed, a young Egyptian boy, describes Cairo as he goes about his daily work delivering propane gas. He has a special secret he can't wait to share with his family. 32 pages.



***The Royal Bee***, by Frances Park and Ginger Park. Young Song-ho is not allowed to go to school in Korea a century ago because his family is poor. One day he discovers a beautiful school among golden rain trees. Then he does something that changes his life forever. 32 pages.

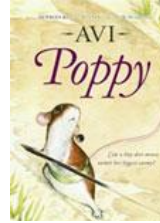


***The Other Side***, by Jacqueline Woodson. Clover's mom says it isn't safe to cross the fence that separates their African-American side of town from the white side where Anna lives. But the friends get around that by sitting on top of the fence together. 32 pages.

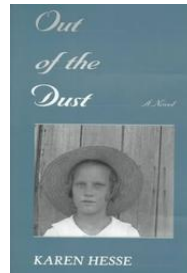


***An Angel for Solomon Singer***, by Cynthia Rylant. Unhappy and lonely living in a New York City hotel for men, Solomon yearns to return to his Indiana roots. When he wanders into the Westway Cafe, he meets a waiter whose cheerful friendly attitude changes Solomon's outlook on life.

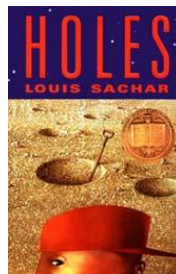
## BOOKS WITH LONGER TEXTS



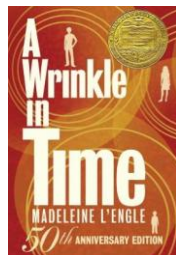
***Poppy***, by Avi. At the edge of Dimwood Forest stood an old charred oak where a great horned owl sat waiting. His name was Mr. Ocax. With his piercing gaze, he watched for the creatures he considered his subjects. None of them dared to cross his path, until the terrible night when two little mice went dancing in the moonlight. 160 pages.



***Out of the Dust***, by Karen Hesse. A poem cycle that reads as a novel, *Out of the Dust* tells the story of a girl named Billie Jo, who struggles to help her family survive the dust-bowl years of the Depression on her Oklahoma farm and her mother's tragic death. 227 pages.



***Holes***, by Louis Sachar. The author received great recognition for his story of Stanley Yelnats, a boy with a history of bad luck. It's a story which features a far-reaching family curse, friendship, adventure, endurance, and finally, a generous helping of good karma. 233 pages.



***A Wrinkle in Time***, by Madeleine L'Engle. Meg Murry and her family encounter unearthly strangers and a search for Meg's father, who disappeared while engaged in secret government time-travel research. They learn that Mr. Murry was captured by the Dark Thing, they time travel to Camazotz, where they face the leader IT and a battle between good and evil that threatens our universe. Wow! 211 pages.



***The Lost Years of Merlin***, T.A. Barron. There has never been a magic like Merlin's. Barron reveals how the legend was born in this epic. A young boy who has no identity nor memory of his past washes ashore on the coast of Wales and finds his true name after a series of fantastic adventures.

## “Help Me Help Myself”

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Children from about age three are asking us to help them learn independence. Children want to learn how to do things on their own without adult supervision or permission. Even though at times we feel we have to help children constantly, in reality, children are asking us to help them help themselves.

Much of what we classify as "misbehavior" in the three- to six-year-old, upon closer inspection, is children trying to do things by themselves, and not being successful. In our hurried world, it's easier to do it ourselves than to stop and show our children how to do a task, and patiently wait as they complete it. Do we really have 15 minutes every morning for our three-year-old to put on her shoes and socks?

Visiting friends a few years ago, I asked their nine-year-old if he'd like to help me cut apples for a pie. Jimmy's eyes widened.

"Oh, no, I can't. Mom won't let me use a knife."

"Why is that? Were you irresponsible with a knife?"

"No. Mom's afraid I'll cut myself."

After getting an okay with Jimmy's mom, I began

showing him how to cut the apples into chunks after I'd peeled and quartered them. Within half an hour, Jimmy had learned how to peel, quarter and cube apples. And not a mangled finger in sight.

At dinner Jimmy was so proud of "our" pies. He thanked me for taking the time to show him how to use a paring knife. "I knew I could do it if someone just let me." Help me help myself.

We can begin to show our children how to use serious tools such as knives, scissors, hammers, and screwdrivers around age three, with 100-percent adult supervision.

First, we need to feel confident that the child will listen and follow our direction. If not, he or she is not ready for these kinds of tasks.

Secondly, we need to find tools that are safe. For helping in the kitchen a small butter knife or canapé knife will cut bananas and apple slices, but won't cut small fingers.

There are scissors available that will only cut paper, and not hair or clothes. Small hammers can be used to drive 16 penny-nails into a log end. For hammering, invest in a pair of child-

sized safety goggles. A short three-inch screwdriver and ratchet can be used to loosen and tighten screws and bolts on boards.

As a child's level of skill and responsibility grow, we can introduce new levels of difficulty with different tools and materials.

Giving our children "real" work with real tools will help them gain independence. Self-esteem is based on having skills, meaning you can act in ways that benefit yourself and others. Too often, adults think that just telling someone that they are wonderful develops a feeling of self-worth. Self-esteem is based on the self-confidence of knowing how to do something, not on what someone says to you.

"Help me help myself" is the young child's cry for independence that leads to true confidence and self-esteem. Don't do for your child what they can do for themselves. Remember, any unnecessary help is an obstacle to a person's independence.

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