

October 2010

INSIDE THE WOODS

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Here are Parents' Organization Meeting dates for the year

The Parents' Organization requests the pleasure of your company at the following meetings. All of them are on Wednesdays.

At 8:45 AM November 3
 January 12
 March 2
 April 6

At 7:00 PM October 6
 February 9

In addition, the big Chili Cook-Off and Halloween Festival is coming up on October 24.

Read all about that on page 7.



Poinsettias and greenery for sale, October 4-18

It's called "Flower Power" – that time of the year when near-perfect poinsettias and aromatic greenery can be ordered for the holiday season.

The sale runs just two weeks, October 4-18, so "don't forget to be sure to remember not to forget" to put your order in. And, be on the lookout for flyers and such from the Parents' Organization

Recycling without pick-up service

If you want to recycle, but don't have a program for pick-up service, here are locations of neighborhood depositories for receiving your materials:

City of Houston – Accepts junk waste and recyclables; and motor oil; free to City of Houston residents –

2240 Central St. – 5565 Kirkpatrick – 5100 Sunbeam –
 14400 Sommermeyer – 9003 N. Main – 10785 SW Freeway

Recycling – No junk waste –

2240 Center St. - 1245 Judiway –
 Clearlake/Ellington Airport - Kingwood Park & Ride

The following are items accepted at the Neighborhood Depositories above:

- Newspaper, magazines, office paper
- Glass food and beverage bottles and jars (no ceramics or plate glass)
- Plastic bottles and jugs marked #1 through 5, and 7
- Aluminum and tin food cans
- Cardboard boxes (must be broken down with packing materials removed)

Recycling

The SWMD* has several permanent sites where residents can bring recyclables:

Westpark Recycling Center
5900 Westpark – incl. tires, BOPA, scrap electronics

Environmental Svc. Center
11500 S. Post Oak & 5614 Neches,
Building C – for HHW and scrap
Electronics only

Green Star, 1200 Britmoore

COH-Kirkpatrick Depository, 5565
Kirkpatrick

Central St. Depository

Sunbeam Depository, 5100 Sunbeam

North Main Depository,

Southwest Depository

Windfern Depository

COH - 3602 Center – Open 24/7

COH - 1245 Judiway – glass only

Kingwood Park & Ride, 3210 W. Lake
Houston Pkwy (open weekends)

Ellington Field (Clear Lake area) at
Hwy 3 @ Dixie Farm Road – open
24/7

Volunteers are available at the
Westpark Consumer Recycling Center
and the Environmental Service Center
drop-off sites to assist residents who
bring their recyclables to those
locations.

Ellington Field, Kingwood, Center
Street and the Vista Fiber Sites accept
all recyclables collected in the curbside
recycling program, with the exception
of used motor oil. Glass bottles and jars
are also accepted at these sites. Used
motor oil is accepted at the six
depository sites.

For more detailed information, go to
www.envirohealthouston.org.

*Solid Waste Management Dept.

Aspects of the Montessori Classroom **Building Community:**

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

Psychologist Abraham Maslow believed that most maladjustment and emotional illness in our society could be traced to the failure to satisfy the basic human need for belonging.

In her book about educational reform, *The Schoolhome*,¹ Dr. Judith Rowland Martin writes that her understanding of the value of the Montessori school was not fully appreciated until she realized that what Maria Montessori had established was not simply a classroom in which children would be taught to read and write.

The Casa dei Bambini (Italian for Children's House) represented a social and emotional environment where children would be respected and empowered as individual human beings. It was an extended family, a community in which children truly belonged and really took care of one another.

Dr. Montessori did not see the core of her work as a method or curriculum, but as a dramatic discovery that children around the world share common, or universal, characteristics and tendencies, even though each child is a unique human being.

Montessori described this sense of belonging as "valorization of the personality," in which the child gains a strong sense of self

respect and personal identity within a safe community. The child is able to retain a sense of curiosity and finds that mistakes are not something to be feared but an endless opportunity to learn from experience.²

The emphasis on respectful behaviors (modeled first by the adults), freedom to be active and explore within limits, and the multi-age grouping found in Montessori classrooms provide children with opportunities for broad social development.

It builds in each child a tolerance and appreciation for people's differences and brings opportunity for leadership roles. It means more small-group options relative to ability and interest. It means maximizing the potential of each individual child in an environment that has a place for everyone, providing a profound sense of belonging.

The classroom starts out each school year with students who have already established a heritage that they will pass on to the new children. Because of the mixed age groups, children can see what is coming next by watching older children and have the opportunity to reinforce knowledge by sharing it with younger children.

Because of their constant interaction, children learn to take responsibility for themselves and for each other. They learn to get along with children of different ages and abilities and to respect each other's work and work space. They learn to treat each other with courtesy. They

take an active role in maintaining the classroom by, among other things, putting materials away for the next person. The classroom becomes a thriving community.³

Sharon Caldwell of The Montessori Foundation states that “Montessori works best when the approach is adopted as an integrated whole, when the parts work together, and when the school community evolves as an organism that is stronger than the sum of its parts.”

Many of us were taught to value survival and struggle, one-upmanship, and succeeding when success is measured at the expense of others. The children in the Montessori classroom learn as a result of the structure to value cooperation and empathy, ingredients necessary to create belonging and community.

Caldwell begins by listing two essential ingredients needed for the adults of the school to support and create a whole school community:



1. A cohesive vision clearly communicated to the faculty, parents, and students; and consequently,

2) The “buy-in” from all groups in the community of that vision.

These two essential ingredients form to create intent, which puts us all together with a common goal and helps us transcend personal differences and challenges.

The next ingredient for building a strong school community is honesty of communication that is nurtured by openness.

Communicating in an open environment without being hurtful or insulting to others creates a safe place for expressing needs, feelings, and wants.



The last ingredient Caldwell discusses is work. Work is a strong factor that cements a community. It brings us together as a social group, it is a great equalizer in a community, and it allows all members of the community to bring their own set of unique skills to meet the needs of the community as a whole (of course, our school also provides opportunity to have fun together).

Caldwell makes one last point that brings us back again to the reason we are all here together: “Montessori school communities

start and end with the children. Their opinions are solicited and respected, their labor valued, and their participation and company are regarded as a benefit rather than a distraction. It is, after all, the children’s house!”⁴

¹ *The Schoolhome*, Dr. Judith Rowland Martin

² The Montessori Foundation: www.montessori.org.

³ David Kahn, What is Montessori Elementary?.

⁴ “Society in Cohesion: How parents can help in building a true community in their Montessori School,” Sharon Caldwell, *Tomorrow’s Child Magazine*, March 2010.

Flash! American Montessori Society has a new logo.



Out with the old!



In with the new!

In next month’s issue . . .

Optimal Environments Pt. 2

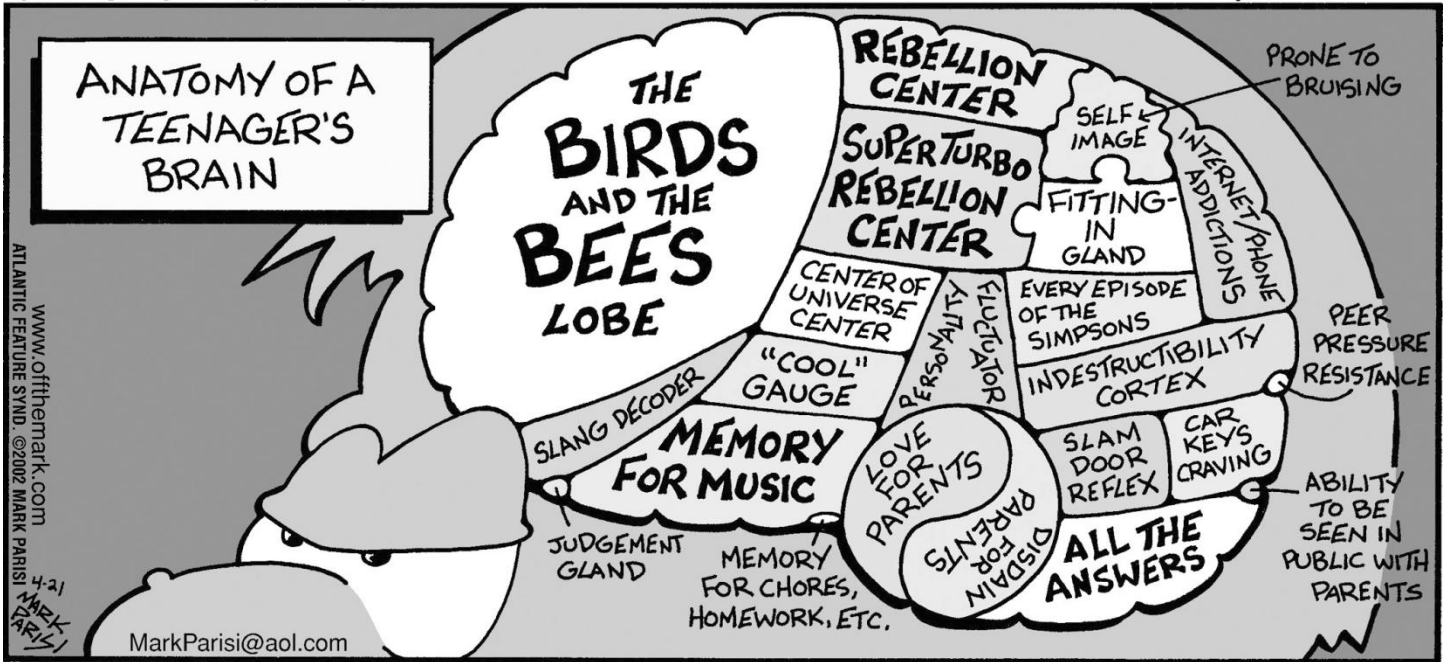
Meet the Board of Trustees

Montessori Up Close

Hooray! It’s Raffle Time

Sensitive Periods

Positive Behaviors



Creating Optimal Environments for Adolescents

by Dr. Betsy Coe

School of the Woods began its secondary programs 28 years ago by adding a few 12- to 14-year-old students to its late elementary class. During our school's history, each level has been added after the faculty felt that the previous level was well-developed.

In developing Woods Middle School then and Woods High School in the late '90s, I remembered Montessori's appraisal that "Schools as they are today are adapted neither to the needs of adolescents nor to the times in which we live," and the Carnegie 1989 report statement that there is a volatile mismatch between the psychological and intellectual needs of adolescence and the curriculum and structures of schools today.

I sought to provide an environment that met the needs of this unique age group, based on my experience and certification in Montessori classes, on rereading Montessori's works from the perspective of the adolescent, on adolescent psychology, research on brain theory and learning strategies, and current trends and issues in education.

The Adolescent Period

Montessori Secondary School Vision. Adolescents need:

4. Inside the Woods / October 2010

1. Activities that encourage self-construction – exploring oneself and one's place in the world. Realizing ones cosmic task.
2. Opportunities to work and learn in a trusting community that foster deep connections with others.
3. Academically rigorous and transdisciplinary curriculum that illustrates the interconnected nature of the world and prepares our young people to solve current and future challenges.

Adolescence is a time of applying previous knowledge to action projects and developing more independence and interdependence.

Adolescents are seeking to find their cosmic task and where they will fit into the world. They want the curriculum to be relevant and meaningful to their lives.

Developmentally, early adolescents are going through rapid physical and cognitive changes. This then has an impact on their psychosocial and moral development.

Around the age of 12, due to their new brain development, students are able to reflect, plan ahead – and easily get overwhelmed. They are also egocentric, have ups and downs of moods, and experience physical changes.

. Continued on page 6

*Maria Montessori said . . .
But, above all, it is the education
of adolescents that is important,
because adolescence is the time
when the child enters on the state
of manhood and becomes a
member of society . . . a transition
from the child who has to live in a
family, to the man who has to live
in society.*

Montessori, M. (1973), *From
Childhood to adolescence*, New
York, Schocken Books, p. 98,

Key Elements of a Montessori Secondary Program

- **Community building/student leadership/Activities in social life**
- **Large periods of time for in-depth learning**
- **Balance of personal work and work in small groups**
- **Time and activities for self-construction**
- **Student-led family conferences**
- **Multiage grouping**
- **Teachers as facilitators**
- **Interdisciplinary curriculum/meaningful work**
- **Strong academic program**
- **Practical life skills/field studies**
- **Global/peace education**
- **Service learning**
- **Career education**
- **Economic exploration**
- **Technology as a tool**
- **Creative expression/electives**
- **Erdkinder/Outdoor education**
- **Immersion weeks, change in pace and renewal opportunities**

ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Early Adolescence (12-14 years)

Middle Adolescence (15-17 years)

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Many toddler-like experiences (teething, don't know body spaces
Growth of feet and hands, then limbs, finally trunk; clumsy
Noses, ears grow before face enlarges, matures matures
Increase in weight, height, heart size, lung capacity
Unrefined muscular strength
Bone growth faster than muscle growth; vulnerable to breakage
Bodies change faster than ability to use them
Mature at varying rates of speed/rapid growth spurts
Need for motion/activity
Ravenous appetites, may overtax digestive system
Sexual characteristics; voices change

Most girls have completed their physical growth
Boys will experience most of their growth spurt
Increased sexual drive, learning to express and control this drive
Conscious of self and body
Concerns about sexual attractiveness, sexual identity

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Potential for new and different way of thinking (transitional formal operational thinking) which can create worry
Reasoning with hypotheses involving 2+ variables
Can plan ahead to anticipate/formulate goals
Working on organizing thoughts, work, time, self
Understand analogies, puns, metaphors & symbol system
Question previously unquestioned attitudes, values
Intensely curious; need to experiment safely
Prefer active learning experience with peers
Operate in the present
Want to learn things they consider useful, real
Practice metacognition (thinking about their thinking)
Have new interests they want to explore

Developing and using abstract thinking
Understand cause and effect well
Beginning to understand consequences of behavior
Can imagine the future and begin to make plans for the future, higher level of concern for the future
Increased intellectual ability and creativity, intellectual interests gain importance
See the impact of academic success on the future
Greater capacity to set goals and follow through
More defined work habits

PSYCHOSOCIAL

Test out many roles; push limits
Egocentric (everything revolves about them and their needs; "everyone's picking on me")
Pseudo-stupidity (overwhelmed easily & shut down)
Imaginary audience (they're always looking at me)
Personal Fable (it will happen to everyone but me); unique and indestructible
Meaningful relations with peers; peers important
Interested in social order and justice
Autonomy: independent / interdependent
Want significant adults to accept them; adult rejection can drive them into the relatively secure social environment of the peer group
Experience conflict due to loyalties to peer group and families
Defining gender roles and identity/valorization
Making new friends based on interests instead of proximity
Saying goodbye to old friendships

Experiment with different roles
Answering the question, Who am I?
Stress on personal dignity and self-esteem
Sorting out values and beliefs in relation to those of family, friends and community
Able to accept criticism and advice
Personal fable continues
Experiment with different behaviors
May have more conflicts with parents
Feeling of love and passion, tenderness and fears shown toward opposite sex
Frequently changing relationships
Efforts to make new friends
See self as member of a peer group, need for belonging

MORAL/SPIRITUAL

Idealistic; want perfect friends, school, parents, self
Not always able to follow the logical actions to create idealistic results; thus, apparent hypocrisy
Seek information about big ideas and questions
Can begin to see multi-perspectives
Confront moral and ethical questions for which they may be unprepared to cope
Cosmic task of self-perfection and their place in the world
May make poor judgments due to lack of life experiences

Development of ideals and selection of role models
More consistent evidence of conscience
May temporarily reject family values
Interest in moral reasoning
Examination of inner experiences, capable of useful insight
Thoughts about one's role in life

Creating Optimal Environments for Adolescents

These changes can inhibit focus and concentration and spawn needs for movement and sleep in school. They are changing their friends from those in proximity to those in same-interest groups and exploring new activities and passions.

Research indicates that there are eight developmental years in each group of 13-year-olds. Psychologically, Montessori expresses it this way: there are doubts and hesitations, violent emotions, discouragement, and unexpected decrease of intellectual capacity.

The difficulty of studying with concentration is not due to a lack of willingness, but is really a psychological characteristic of this age.

Older adolescents are in a different place in their development, having moved through many of the changes. They have a greater ability to see the points of view of others, to focus and concentrate and they have developed their new interests and desires.

However, we have to remember that they are still in need of adult guidance, even though it may not be evident in their personae. They still remain greatly influenced by the media and peers. They are clarifying their sexual identities, values and goals for the future.

High school students are very independent and able to drive automobiles to go places, can focus for long periods of time, are community oriented, and care about others. They work with much depth and critical thinking at a college level in most disciplines and are very creative in their projects.

I have remarked many times that it is wonderful to see the fruits of our labor from the other levels of the school.

I would like to identify some of the elements that I believe are necessary in a Montessori secondary program and differences that I have found between implementing middle and high school programs. I have found the elements (see list, pg. 5) to be the same; however, the depth, time and amount of student responsibility are expanded for the high school program.

(This article first appeared in *Montessori Life Magazine*, Summer 2003 and will be continued in subsequent issues of *Inside the Woods*. Next: Community Building and Student Leadership.)

Space Management for the Montessori Child

A child who participates in the arrangement of an environment, at school or at home, and learns to select a few significant things instead of piles of unused toys, books, clothes, etc., will benefit in many ways by creating good work habits, good concentration powers, and a clear, uncluttered, and peaceful mind.

Think out the activities and the materials for all living spaces and arrange the environment to include the child's activities.

Help your child develop a routine to keep track of things that need to go to and from school, perhaps on a small table by your usual exit door.

Have a place in each room for the child's few, carefully chosen belongings appropriate to that room. For instance, in the living room, create a place for the child's books and toys-neatly, attractively organized.

Don't put out too many toys and books at one time. Those being used by the child at the moment are sufficient. It is a good idea to rotate-taking out those books and toys that have not been chosen lately and removing them to storage for a time.

Children grow and change and they need help to keep their environments uncluttered and peaceful.

Encourage children to always keep their things in the same, pre-designated places.

For older children create a space for them to work on and store homework materials. This place should be away from other household distractions.

The adult model is always the most important element in the environment. It is from observing what we do, not what we say, that the child will learn.

Adapted from *Child of the World*, Michael Olaf's Essential Montessori for ages 3-12+

**MONTESSORI
IS WHERE IT'S
AT**

Don't throw that stuff away!
**Art Teachers Request
Donations of Creative
Scraps**

Elementary art teachers Lise Lawrence and Kathleen Packlick are sending out the news. Children in the art classes need all sorts of materials to work and create with.

Here are some suggestions, but you might think of others:

Assorted small cardboard containers, cereal boxes, washed yogurt cups and butter containers, egg cartons, cardboard tubes.



Fabric, lace, ribbon scraps, buttons, yarn, beads, sequins, feathers, extra spools of thread, or anything else of that kind.

Clean "lonely" socks (or outgrown pairs)

Magazines with LOTS of varied pictures (travel, art, general features)

Beautiful or unusual wrapping papers, gift ribbons, greeting cards, gift boxes

Tinsel, glitter, garlands, plastic flowers.

Calendars – new and old



Paper and plastic grocery bags.

Styrofoam meat trays – clean!

But, PLEASE, no glass,
Styrofoam packing pieces or
packing peanuts

Chili-heads, Unite!: Get Ready for the Big Contest

It's chili time again, October 24, for the Chili Cook-off and Halloween Festival. Chairman for this year's event is Margie Udden.

All the things we look forward to will be there – the Rock Wall, Mechanical Bull, Obstacle Course, Slide, Dino Play Land, Caterpillar Craze, face painting, tattoos, hairstyling, Fishing Pond, and crafts.

There will be all that wonderful food, too – James Coney Island hotdogs and baked potatoes, Goode Co. House Chili, and Kettle Korn by Jason Mann.

The Parents' Organization would be pleased to receive \$10 donations to underwrite raffle items for the event.

If you wish to help underwrite the Chili Cook-off, please send your check to the school office.

Chili Today, Hot Tamale

Incas, Mayans, and Nubians Roam the campus

It happened last semester on May 24-26th. School of the Woods Lower Elementary students transformed their classrooms into an Ancient Civilization Market Place. The classes chose three civilizations to research: Incas, Mayans and Nubians.



Through their research, they developed activities to teach their fellow students about how the people of each civilization lived, ate, communicated, dressed, played and worked



Activities included mask and headdress design, games to teach math and writing, corn grinding, dancing, eating, washing pots in the Nile and feeding a real goat. Students of the hosting class dress in the costume of the day and lead the activities for students from the visiting classrooms.