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Montessori Update

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In This Issue:



2007 Fall AMS Conference Highlights and
Free Handouts Information
Montessori Resource Attendees
New Montessori Discussion List
New Montessori Blog
Free Montessori Hands-On Activities You Can Use Right Now!



The opening day of the 2007 Fall AMS Convention in Irvine, California proved to be a iconoclastic experience. Many Montessorians in attendance were excited to be at a 2007 Montessori event which coincided with the year long series of Montessori Centenary festivities, The streamlined registration and well marked workshop locations helped participants quickly acclimate to the Hyatt facility which hosted the event.

Being a past attendee of both NCME and AMS conventions, I was somewhat curious to see how two well known Montessori organizations would bridge any differences and present a unified Montessori conference. Much to my amazement, there were few, if any glitches.

AMS presents itself as a truly professional, caring organization that is truly looking *forward*. NCME's presence has definitely added to the completeness and richness of the of workshops available to attendees. The two creative powers have jointly added new elements, such as **Maria Montessori: THE MUSICAL**, in which upper elementary students from the Maria Montessori Elementary School of San Diego presented this special premiere featuring the life of Maria Montessori.

The regional Montessori Groups Networking Session was also something I had never recalled seeing. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend this event because of time restraints. However, the opportunity to become part of an AMS group in your own locale sounds inviting, and I am sure that it drew many participants. This is just another indication to me, of how AMS is attempting to reach out and create a feeling of cohesiveness on every level - from local to national. My favorite workshop was presented by Michael Dorer. Unfortunately, because I wanted to attend different workshops, I was only able to attend Part I of Impressionistic Geography. However, if you ever are presented with an opportunity to hear this man speak, take it. He is one of the most gifted educators I have ever had the pleasure to see. He embodies every quality a Montessorian should possess. He is organized, disciplined, unassuming, insightful, perceptive, creative and caring. He really mesmerizes the listener with his understanding of how Montessori materials were meant to be presented. Just listening to him speak, reminded me of why I decided to take Montessori training.

Follow along with me right now, as I describe the highlights by downloading and reading the handout which accompanies this workshop presentation. Just visit <http://www.amshq.org> and click on the 2007 Fall Conference hyperlink. You should see another web page appear. Glance to your left on this newly opened page, where you will find the HANDOUTS hyperlink. Click on this link as well. Again, another page will appear entitled AMS 2007 Annual Conference - Irvine: Handouts. Click on the **Impressionistic Geography** hyperlink.

Dorer reminded the workshop participants that Maria Montessori had some definite ideas about how geography should be presented to the child. For example, Montessori believed that every child should be introduced to the entire curriculum, and that introducing two chapters per year is appropriate. By presenting the chapters at this rate, the child can then go back and thoroughly absorb what is presented when ready. Maria Montessori felt that the latter was important so as not to set up a 'defeatist attitude' in the child.

Dorer reminded the audience that the curriculum serves to meet the needs of both upper and lower elementary students. For example, The First Great Lesson initially serves as history charts for lower elementary. The charts are then later reintroduced as geography charts for upper elementary students.

You will notice by reading the handout that Dorer mentions several of the elements that I am about to present here in this newsletter. For example, he feels that it's important to understand the Dynamic and Static levels.

Static (Lower Elementary) refers to things that are *fixed* like flags, puzzle maps, political geography, land forms, classified nomenclature. etc.

Dynamic (Upper Elementary 9 -12) refers to geochemical elements that cause change.

Obviously, Dorer reminds us that there is some crossover.

Next, we need to realize that all lessons are of two types.

Technical - This is classified as elementary in which specific techniques are learned.

and

Psychological - No specific techniques are involved.

The latter strikes the imagination of the child.

Dorer elaborated by pointing out that the *technical* refers to the *meat and potatoes* of the lessons, while the *psychological* refers to the *spices and herbs* that help set off the imagination.

As you will notice by as you review the The Organization of the Charts handout, there are 60 charts which represent six groups or chapters. Remember, these charts are referred to as history charts for lower elementary.

Dorer advises that the charts should not be too small. For a standard classroom, charts should be no smaller than 8 1/2" x 11". However, at this AMS 2007 Convention workshop demonstration, Dorer used larger charts because he was presenting before a large audience.

Dorer also advises the following protocol:

When to Present Charts

Charts 1 and 2 should be presented in the fourth year.

Charts 3 and 4 should be presented in the fifth year.

Charts 5 and 6 should be presented in the sixth year.

How to Present Charts

First, present the chart.

Tell about it, but don't be didactic.

Engage the child.

Moral of the lesson - The world doesn't circle around me.

Dorer acknowledged that there will be variables as far as the charts look.

Fundamentally, though, as stated earlier, there should be 60 chart for six chapters.

Dorer described imaginative scientific experiments which are designed to help the child conceptualize the principles being presented.

To learn more about the presentations and experiments used read the Impressionistic Geography Handout in its entirety.

Contact for Michael Dorer is as follows:

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Real Life as Practical Life

I was also fortunate to attend a workshop where practical schools are used in various settings.

Sandi Meschoulam and Kristin Edwards did a nice job of presenting extensions of practical life exercises in the *real world*. The team explained in detail the Let's Go... Community-Based Learning Guides that are offered through the San Diego County Office of Education. Sandi and Kristin demonstrated all of the practical life exercises the child sees and or experiences at a restaurant from making lemonade and pizza to learning about social courtesies and clean up. These real life experiences correlate with the every day activities the child does in an actual Montessori environment.

“After lunch everyone clears their place by carrying one dish at a time to the dirty dish bins. Carrying develops equilibrium and motor skills. Sorting dishes is classification of objects for cognitive development and pre-reading skills.”

An **After You Get Back** set of activities is used to reinforce concepts presented.

The following are available in both English and Spanish:

Let's Go to the Grocery Store

Let's Go on a Nature Walk

Let's Go to a Post Office

Let's Go to a Restaurant

Let's Go on a Vehicle Hunt

Contact childnest@aol.com or Sandy Silverman at (858)292-3620 for additional information.

Be sure to peruse through the wonderful free assortment of available AMS Handouts used at the conference available from the AMS website. Just visit <http://www.amshq.org> Click on 2007 Fall Conference. A new window will appear. Click on Handouts for the complete section of materials available.



The AMS vendor area is always an area of interest to me. Like most Montessorians, I rarely give up an opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with the exhibitors and enjoy seeing the new materials

available.

I really enjoyed speaking with Dave Roberts of Hello Woods. Dave is a generous, gifted Montessori teacher who has invented and developed some very unique Montessori products. I was very intrigued with all of the new materials that he demonstrated for me. Here is just a sampling of what he talked to me about.

Measurement Work

“Our measuring work is great for giving the students a standard set of precisely machined lengths to measure. You may increase the difficulty by removing or introducing the blocks relevant to your lessons. Place them face down and challenge the students to measure the length. After they have measured, they can check their work by turning it over.

M55 Fraction

The set includes 30 various sized wooden blocks designed to utilize each fractional ruler. They have the fraction and decimal equivalents engraved on one side.

M56 Metric

The set includes 20 various sized wooden blocks designed to utilize each metric ruler. They have the dm, cm, and mm equivalents engraved on one side.”

Lap Table

“This is the perfect solution for classrooms that have limited space. Made of quality Baltic Birch plywood, it only weighs around 8 lbs. and is easily assembled by young children. For storage, it folds flat to only 1" thick. By self-assembling this table children learn to follow sequential instructions and improve motor skills. They will also enjoy using the simple tools included for assembly (mallet and wedges). *Included* with each Lap Table is a one page pictorial only instructions on how to set up the table and, for elementary students, text only instructions. “ These represent just two of the many finely crafted materials I saw. I can’t stress enough just how well made these materials actually are. I invite you to visit <http://www.hellowood.com> to see the total line of materials available. I think after reading the descriptions of those in the product line, you, too, will be impressed with Dave’s ingenuity.”

I was also fortunate enough to finally meet Frida Azari of Montessori Greeting Cards <http://www.montessorigreetingcards.com>

Frida presented a photography workshop, but, again, because of time restraints I

was unable to attend. Frida's products are breathtakingly beautiful. Besides being a very talented Montessori teacher, Frida is a gifted photographer and her product line indeed captures the essence and beautiful simplicity of Montessori.

I also chatted with Dave Pryor of Priority Montessori Materials. The *Inner Earth Globe* and other universe and earth materials available from Priority Montessori Materials made me think back to Michael Dorer's workshop. I could readily see that these materials easily go hand in hand with the presentation I had just experienced. Other Montessori teachers eagerly gathered around the Priority Montessori Materials display and were very interested in the Priority Montessori Materials product line as well. You will want to visit <http://www.prioritymontessori.com> to see the entire catalog of materials available.

Dewey and Carol Parker of MECS were on hand as well. Unfortunately, I did not have an opportunity to speak with them, but I have reviewed many of their materials. The lessons designed by Montessori teacher Carol Parker are consistent with Maria Montessori's Three Period Lesson. The software programs use the Three Period Lesson to insure that the child *fully* understands the concept introduced. (I have mentioned the Three Period Lesson in many of my books. Therefore, I was so pleased to finally discover a software program which has successfully implemented this method of teaching into a computer software program for children.) Montessori teachers, in particular, will be pleased to have programs which supplement and reinforce concepts introduced by the presenter. Visit <http://www.mecssoftware.com> for details.



Free Montessori Hands-On Activities You Can Use Right Now!

Join the Montessori Resources List for the 21st Century Just send an e-mail to montessori_twenty_first_century-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Visit the new Montessori 21st Century Blog
<http://montessori21stcentury.wordpress.com>

Read the free AMC Fall 2007 Hands On Lesson Planning Newsletter and AMC Fall/Winter 2007 Hands On Lesson Planning Newsletter online by visiting
Visit http://www.amonco.org/montessori_library.html

Don't forget to visit http://www.amonco.org/1fall_winter2001.html and http://www.amonco.org/2fall_winter2001.html for some exciting Christmas Around the World lesson planning.

Find Thanksgiving, Kwanzaa and Hanukkah hands-on integrated lesson plans by visiting <http://home.earthlink.net/~amontessoric/fall99.html>
These newsletters have recently been revised and updated.

Plan to stop by <http://www.amonco.org/bookstore.html> For a limited time, you will receive a free Montessori Centenary Holiday Ornament with every Montessori CD that you order.

Finally, the AMC Resource Center <http://www.amonco.org/directory.html> is your one stop for year round educational lesson planning and fabulous, reasonable gifts!

HAPPY HOLIDAYS
FROM EVERYONE AT
AMERICAN MONTESSORI CONSULTING