

Presentation by

Montessori Training Centre of British Columbia

(in affiliation with the Association Montessori Internationale)

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Montessori Education As An Aid to Life

(Reading List included)

This presentation discussed the first six years of life as a time of adaptation to ones world – the time, the culture and the place one is born. It is a period of self-construction of the foundation of ones personality, will and intellect.

The workshop focused on the importance of a specially prepared environment for each stage of development and on how implementation of the Montessori philosophy not only meets the needs of young children, but also prepares them for future learning.

After putting the workshop within a historic perspective, the presenters gave an overview of the bases upon which Montessori pre-schools are built. Careful observations of the children, responding to the ‘absorbent mind’ and to the ‘sensitive periods’ of language, movement, sensorial exploration and order are vital components. The group must be of mixed ages with children 3 to 6 years of age together. There must be a three-hour period of time when the children can freely choose their activities. The presenters stressed the importance of the preparation and upkeep of an attractive and stimulating environment that features purposeful activities for the children in the areas of practical life, sensorial exploration, language and its extensions and mathematics. There must be a full complement of Montessori materials to meet the needs and

interests of all the children. The unique role of the Montessori teacher as guide and observer was explained. The presentation showed how children, after being in the multi-aged classroom from the age of 3 until 6 years, could readily tackle the next step, i.e. the classroom for children 6 to 9 years of age, without interruption in the natural flow of learning from one stage to the next.

Special reference was made to the recently published book “MONTESSORI: The Science Behind the Genius” by Angeline Stoll Lillard. She received her doctorate in psychology from Stanford University in 1991. This publication shows in detail how Montessori theory and practice are supported by current cognitive developmental and educational research. (See reading list for details.)

HANDOUTS

MARIA MONTESSORI

Maria Montessori (1870 - 1952), the first woman doctor in Italy, became interested in education while working with mentally handicapped children in the course of her medical career. She discovered an unsuspected potential in these children after using didactic materials devised by two French doctors, Itard and Seguin. She elaborated these materials and developed new ones. The results she obtained with the handicapped children were so astonishing that she had them tested with typical children of the same age. Her children came out ahead and she realized that something was drastically wrong with the education of the typical child.

She gradually abandoned a successful medical practice and appointment as a Professor to the University of Rome and dedicated herself totally to the study of human development. The basis of her studies - as of most scientists - was observation. She was quoted as saying “I do not think, I observe”. She observed indeed, for half a century or more - in Europe, America and

Asia, children of all races, cultures and social environments. She found that children developed according to the same rules, manifesting the same needs and tendencies at the same time in their lives. From this extensive study of a complex educational philosophy and practice grew what has become known as the Montessori Method.

In 1907, Maria Montessori opened the first Casa dei Bambini in one of the poorest quarters of Rome with unprecedented results. In less than a year, fifty children from illiterate families between the ages of three and six, blossomed to become courteous, self-assured little people who were working independently, with cheerful self-discipline. They had also begun to read and write spontaneously which caught the public eye. These children became known throughout the world as Maria Montessori's "Miracle Children".

Since then, the Montessori philosophy of education has been advocated by Montessori societies in Europe, Asia, North and South America, Australasia and Africa. Montessori schools around the world have educated hundreds of thousands of children in the past ninety six years.

In 1929 Maria Montessori and her son Mario founded the Association Montessori Internationale. One of the main functions of the A.M.I. has been to perpetuate Montessori education following Maria Montessori's guidelines, maintaining her philosophy without violating its integrity. To this end, A.M.I. has the pedagogical guidance of Training Centres around the world.

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**WHAT IS A.M.I.?**

A.M.I. stands for the Association Montessori Internationale, founded in 1929 by Dr. Maria Montessori and her son, Mario M. Montessori. They were respectively President and General Director during their lifetime.

The A.M.I. is the oldest international Montessori organization in the world. In founding this, Dr. Maria Montessori's aims were two-fold: to safeguard her original contribution on behalf of the child against diluting influences, and to maintain the standards of training for those wishing to apply or to teach her methods.

A.M.I. has functioned without interruption since its foundation and is the most reliable authority on authentic Montessori theory and practice in existence.

A.M.I. is governed by a Board consisting of a Chairman and 21 members, of which two-thirds are pedagogues. From this Board an Executive Committee is elected and this Committee is assisted by an Advisory Committee, proposed by the Board, and elected at the Annual General Meeting. The pedagogical work of the A.M.I. is carried out by the Pedagogical Committee, the Material Committee, and the Sponsoring Committee. The Pedagogical Committee, assisted by the Material Committee, is responsible for pedagogical decisions; the Sponsoring Committee is in charge of Training of Trainers. Since 1974, the members of these committees worked closely with the General Director (Mario Montessori) and took over his duties after his death in 1982. Members are proposed by the Board and elected at the Annual General Meeting.

Much of A.M.I.'s international work is supported by affiliated Montessori Societies or Branch Offices in various countries.

Established all over the world are A.M.I. Training Centers for people to work with children from birth to 3, 3-6, 6-12, handicapped and emotionally disturbed children. For information on these centers, please contact the Head Office.

A.M.I. is a non-subsidized organization subsisting exclusively on membership fees, gifts, donations, a percentage of trainees' fees from each A.M.I. Training Centre and A.M.I. recognition fees from schools.

A.M.I. is a non-governmental organization collaborating with others with similar aims, and admitted to UNESCO.

## **WHAT IS THE MONTESSORI METHOD?**

Montessori is an empirical discipline aiming to study and to help the development of the human individual from birth to maturity within the context of his life-situation. It is an educational method insofar as education is an integrative part of the formative process.

Dr. Montessori discovered the essential role of the child in the formation of man and became the child's helper and advocate. Around this new vision of the child,

a movement has generated which offers a coordinating factor to those involved in human sciences and their application.

### **WHAT ARE A.M.I.'s AIMS?**

To propagate, maintain and further the Rights of the Child, more specifically by:

- propagating the Montessori method, spreading knowledge of the physical, intellectual, moral, social and mental development of the child, at home as well as at school and in society;
- demonstrating the importance of the child in and for the progress of civilization;
- safeguarding the real objectives of the educational method of Dr. Maria Montessori;
- promoting general recognition of the Rights of the Child and this irrespective of race, religion or political conviction;
- co-operating with other bodies and organizations that fight for Human Rights, for the development of the method of education and for the furtherance of peace.

### **A.M.I. ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:**

- Providing guidance for AMI training courses.
- Co-ordinating a Training of Trainers programme.
- Encouraging the creation of Montessori schools.
- Guiding the manufacturers recognized by AMI in the production of approved Montessori materials.
- Overseeing the publication of Dr. Montessori's books.
- Organizing congresses and study conferences.
- Affiliating Montessori Societies.
- Publishing the magazine 'Communications' and a website, and
- Organizing Educateurs sans Frontieres.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Why become a member of the A.M.I.?

A.M.I. membership does not buy tangible personal benefits. It provides, however, the opportunity to join the Montessori movement and to actively participate in and contribute towards its endeavors on behalf of the child.

Membership is open to everyone.

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.montessori-ami.org](http://www.montessori-ami.org)**

## Reading List

### BOOKS BY MARIA MONTESSORI:

Several local book stores or chains carry Montessori books and they are usually available in public libraries. The Montessori Training Centre of B.C. has the majority of the books listed for sale. Please phone 604-261-0864 to confirm availability.

The Absorbent Mind  
The Secret of Childhood  
The Discovery of the Child (Also published under the title "The Montessori Method")  
The Formation of Man (Also published under the title "Childhood Education")  
The Advanced Montessori Method, Vol I: "Spontaneous Activity in Education"  
Education and Peace  
The Child in the Family  
Education for a New World (3-6 age group)  
To Educate the Human Potential (6-12 age group)  
What You Should Know About Your Child  
From Childhood to Adolescence  
The Child, Society and the World (Unpublished works)  
Maria Montessori: Creative Development In the Child (Volumes 1 & 2)  
(Kalakshetra Press, India) \*

### OTHER AUTHORS ABOUT MONTESSORI EDUCATION

Angeline Stoll Lillard: "Montessori - "The Science Behind the Genius"  
Oxford University Press  
ISBN-13 978-0-19-516868-6  
ISBN 0-19-516868-2  
Mario M. Montessori, Jr: "Education for Human Development "  
Silvana Quattrocchi Montanaro, MD: Understanding the Human Being  
(The Importance of the First Three Years)  
Paula Polk-Lillard: "Montessori - A Modern Approach"  
"Montessori Today"  
E.M Standing: The Montessori Revolution in Education (may be out of print)

### BIOGRAPHIES

Standing, E.M.: "Maria Montessori - Her Life and Work"  
Kramer, Rita: "Maria Montessori - A Biography" (Putnam Books)

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