



MENTAL GYMNASTICS

This past spring I had the pleasure of traveling to Ireland for the first time by invitation of the St. Nicholas Montessori Society. In contrast to the wonderful scenery, the delicious food, the interesting history, and of course the delightful people, there was one irksome detail in this otherwise idyllic adventure: left-side driving.

The mental gymnastics required to not get run over by a car was quite difficult. No matter how much I told myself, "Cars, left. Cars, left," it still took me by surprise when I crossed the street and a car zoomed past seemingly out of nowhere. There is an acute difference between knowing the correct answer (cars on left side) and intuitively anticipating where the cars will be coming from. It is the difference between rote memory and experience.

This distinction is yet another of the many reasons why I am a Montessori advocate. Montessori students get the opportunity to spend a lot of their time experiencing, feeling, touching, and contemplating—not memorizing and reciting. I remember this difference highlighted by my five year old son one day (a Montessori student). He was counting his money on the floor and talking out loud to himself. At one point he said, "Twenty-five plus twenty-five." Then he paused for a second and continued, "Twenty and twenty is forty, then you add another five to make forty-five, and add another five to make fifty." I thought to myself, That's it. That's the difference between Montessori education and the entrenched education system. Those of us who grew up in the latter system know that my son's method of addition was not at all how we learned addition. If we had been given the problem 25+25, we would have lined up the two numbers on a piece of paper just as we had been taught. We would have added the two fives together to get ten, writing a zero at the bottom of the unit's column

(because that's what the teacher said to do) and carrying a one to the top of the ten's column (because she said to do that, too). The teacher didn't care if we understood why we were doing that. It produced the right answer. That's all that mattered.

My son's method of addition at age five was totally different. He saw numbers as visual quantities, objects, entities to be moved around and manipulated at will. He was mentally breaking the numbers apart in his head and rearranging them to make sense of them. He was coming up with mental strategies for figuring out why, and how, and what makes sense, and what does it look like. These are strategies that take mental fitness and flexibility and creativity. These are strategies and skills that my son will need throughout his lifetime. The materials of the Montessori classroom allow children to practice taking numbers and mentally flip them, twist them, turn them, and set them down again.

The stronger one's mental gymnastic skills, the more adaptable one is when facing new challenges or being thrust into new environments. For me? I'll keep to the sidewalk.

Trevor Eissler

QUALITY CIRCLE TIME

Quality Circle Time is now well established as a model of excellence which can support early learning communities wishing to share a commitment to enhancing self-esteem and promoting emotional resilience and thinking skills for young children.

The UK Dept of Education's report 'Intervening Early' highlighted this approach as "one that can help young children get the best from school". The approach for early years settings is intensely practical and interweaves a range of creative activities, puppets, games and drama to help build the learning confidence and emotional strength of very young children.

The emphasis is first placed on the need for adults working with young children to first take action to value themselves so they can experience the motivation to boost others. Jenny Mosley's model advocates that all early years practitioners, parents, carers and children need to work together to create a vision of a happy, respectful learning community.

Sarah Bentley will speak at the St. Nicholas Conference on Saturday 9th April 2011

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS



March 2011

2nd Tuesday	Science - Montessori County Network Meeting - Cork
5th Saturday	Curriculum Plan/Record Keeping - Workshop - Sligo
7th Monday	History - Montessori County Network Meeting - Galway

April 2011

6th Wednesday	Speech and Language - Montessori County Network Meeting - Kildare
9th Saturday	Conference & AGM - Dublin - Guest Speaker Dr. Tony Humphreys
14th Thursday	Mathematics - Montessori County Network Meeting - Mayo

May 2011

3rd Tuesday	Communicating with Parents - SNMTA Members Meeting - St Nicholas House, Dublin
11th Wednesday	History - Montessori County Network Meeting - Cork
16th Monday	Science - Montessori County Network Meeting - Galway
23rd Monday	Observations - Montessori County Network Meeting - Limerick

June 2011

8th Wednesday	Sensorial Education - Montessori County Network Meeting - Kildare
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PRACTICAL SCIENCE MAKE A WORMERY

A wormery is a temporary home for earthworms that facilitates study.

Materials:

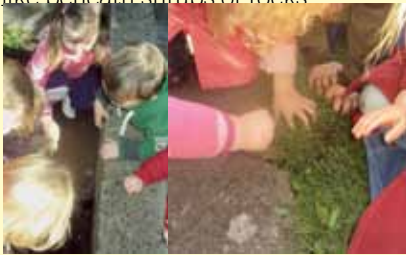
- Large container with clear sides is best as it allows children to view easily the worms at work. Include small stones for drainage and air holes at top for ventilation.
- Sand
- Leaf litter and compost.
- Soil
- Strips Of Moistened Newspaper
- Fruit And Vegetable Peelings
- Eggshells
- Earthworms



Making a Wormery

Children gather the materials needed from the environment where possible.

Children collect earthworms. (The best place to find worms is near the soil surface following rain OR alternatively wet the soil using the garden hose and wait thirty minutes to an hour. The earthworms will come to the surface. Children can also dig for worms in shady, moist areas of the garden like beneath shrubs or rocks)



Searching for Worms



Got one!

Layer the container as follows

- Begin with a layer of Small stones at bottom for drainage
- A layer of sand
- A layer of leaf litter or compost and add some soil and strips of moistened newspaper.
- Put in some earthworms
- Put in food supply to include anything organic from fruit and vegetable peelings to eggshells and tea bags. (Avoid feeding worms anything with fat, meat, or fish.)

Worms are not very fond of orange or lemon peels and do not like onions either. Don't overfeed the worms! Earthworms will continue to eat whatever is in the wormery so make sure to wait until the previous food supply has been eaten before adding any more.

Cover the wormery with dark cloth place in cool location for a couple of weeks. Make sure that the wormery remains covered and moist, but not wet. Use a mister to add a tiny amount of water now and then. The wormery may smell if it is too wet. Children can monitor their worms' activity for a week or two before releasing the worms back into the garden.

Children can make a mini wormery using a cut-off bottle. Simply cut off the top of the bottle and poke some holes along its bottom.

Mina Walsh, Drumcondra Montessori School

St. Nicholas Montessori School

Our Christmas Plays were held on Thursday 9th December 2010. Ms. Dempsey's class performed Scarecrow's Christmas, Ms Farrelly's class performed Busy, Busy Bethlehem, Ms Gray's class performed Tinsel and Tea Towels and Mrs Tierney's class performed Stable Manners.



A raffle and collection was held in aid of the Laura Lynn Foundation, a total of €1250.00 was raised.

An open evening was held by the Parent's Association on Thursday 3rd February 2011, when parents had the opportunity to work with a variety of Montessori materials. This evening was enjoyed by all.

Confirmation was held in St. Michael's Church on Friday 11th February 2011. Six children from the 9-12 class received their Confirmation.



The 6-9 class held project presentations for the parents on 16th February 2011. The children chose to research the following topics, Bears, Solar System, Violent Earth and Egypt. A very informative presentation was received with enthusiasm.

The 6-9 and 9-12 classes are looking forward to a trip to the RDS to see Tutankhamun-His Tomb and His Treasures on the 4th April 2011.

Noreen Tierney

Principal

Celebrating 25 Years at St. Nicholas Montessori School

This March Noreen Tierney celebrates 25 years teaching at St. Nicholas Montessori School. On behalf of all the parents and staff I would like to congratulate her on such an achievement and thank her for her constant help, support and advice. A surprise celebration was held in the school hall on the 17th February 2011 to mark this occasion. The following two poems are written by two pupils to show their gratitude and appreciation to Mrs Tierney.

Kate Gray

Chairperson St. Nicholas Montessori Society

Well Done Mrs. Tierney

Well done Mrs. Tierney
For passing first grade.
Well done Mrs. Tierney
For giving help and aid.
Well done Mrs. Tierney
For things that you made.
Well done Mrs. Tierney

We're so glad you've always stayed!

By Finn Calverley-8 years

Mrs Tierney

Mrs. Tierney is simply great
She's always early, never late.
She fills our everyday with joy,
And is kind and caring to each girl and boy.
She's always happy, full of fun
And wears her smile 'til the day is done.
An amazing teacher, that's why we say,
She's super special in every way.
Our Principal-loyal and true,
Mrs. Tierney - we think the world of you!!!

By Katie Killarney

THE MONKEY AND THE DOTS DRAMA MOVEMENT STORY

Movement Concept: Focus: Single Multiple Related Academic Subject Learning skills (Concentration)



Introduction

Let's do a story that uses the idea of Focus. Focus tells us how we use our eyes when we move. When we use single focus, we look at just one thing at a time. Let's try it:

Focus on the ceiling
Focus on the floor
Focus on your elbow
Focus on me!

Multi-focus is when we let our eyes wander all around. Let's try that for a moment, standing right where we are.

Have children begin standing in a scattered formation. This is the story of a monkey who lived in the jungle. The monkey loved swinging from tree to tree. Move through the room reaching hands overhead cross-laterally – crossing from one side of the body the other – as if grabbing onto tree branches.) One day, as the monkey was swinging along it looked down and saw something unusual on the floor of the jungle. So it jumped down to take a closer look. There, right in the middle of the jungle, was a big silver box with a lid on it. The monkey had never seen a box before, so it tiptoed carefully around the box, trying to figure out what it was. The monkey decided to open the box to see what was inside. The lid was very heavy, so the Monkey had to use all its muscles to get it open. Let's count to three, and then try to lift the lid. One, two, three, lift!

Children will usually all cluster around one imaginary box instead of finding their own. This is fine, since it allows them the group experience of trying to lift the lid together.)

The lid wouldn't open. So the monkey tried again. One, two, three lift! The lid still wouldn't open, so the monkey tried one more time. One, two, three LIFT!

This time the lid popped open and the monkey stared into the box. It was full of little dots! Dots! Blue dots! Green dots! Purple dots! The monkey reached into the box and put one into its hand. The monkey moved its hand around slowly, staring at the dot.

Then, suddenly, the dot jumped off the monkey's hand and landed on its foot. The monkey hopped along, staring at the dot on its foot.

The dot jumped off the monkey's foot and landed on its elbow. The monkey began to hop along sideways, looking right at the dot on its elbow. Next the crazy dot jumped right onto the monkey's back. The monkey twisted and turned to see the dot on its back.

Oh my goodness! The dot jumped off the monkey's back and began flying through the air, all around the jungle. The monkey chased it – over here! No, over here! No, over here! No, over here! Finally the monkey jumped into the air and grabbed the dot.

But when the monkey opened its hand, there were not one, but two dots inside! The monkey juggled the two dots, just like a circus juggler. (You may need to model juggling the dots.)

The monkey looked up to see that all the dots were jumping out of the box. There were hundreds of coloured dots flying through the air! The monkey began dancingspinning...leaping...jumping...and rolling as it tried to see all of the dots. The monkey heard a noise. "Oh dear, someone is coming. I'd better put all these dots back in the box." So the monkey carefully picked all the dots out of the air...off the trees... off the ground...and put them back in the box where they belonged. The monkey closed the lid with a BANG and went swinging away through the trees. Then the monkey curled up in a tree and fell fast asleep.

(Curl into ball on the floor. Music ends. End of story.)

Miriam Daly

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY



St. Nicholas Montessori
Society of Ireland

*Learning and the
Inner World of Children*



Saturday, 9th April 2011

Promoting Children's Knowledge of Different Cultures

The Continent Folders

Each Continent is represented by different colour on the Jigsaw Map of the World. The Continent Folders are prepared coloured coded to this map so for example the continent folder for Africa is emerald green.

Materials:

Folders coloured coded to the jigsaw map of the world.

Each folder containing pictures illustrate families and family life in each continent. Some information about the picture should be printed on the back for the child who is reading. (National Geographic, photographs, postcards magazines can be useful resources for pictures)

A map of the World with the continent coloured in the appropriate colour and the rest of the map is left blank.

Presentation: can be individual or small group. The discussion with child /children is begun by talking about what is in the picture.

Exercise: Children study the pictures and discuss them developing their interest in and understanding and tolerance of different cultures.

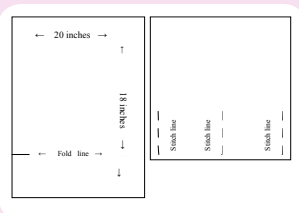
Age: 3years onwards

Extensions: Dolls in traditional costumes, artefacts/ objects, musical instruments, music, songs, story books, language, paintings, arts and crafts food, flora and fauna that represent and reflect the continent promoting the child's/children's knowledge of different cultures can be included at a later stage.

Mina Walsh

Instruction for making Continent Folders

1. Cut piece of appropriate coloured card 20 inches by 18 inches.
2. Fold on fold line, 5 inches from the bottom
3. Reopen and laminate
4. Refold
5. Hand stitch or use sewing machine (demin needle)
6. Colour in appropriate continent on A4 sized map and laminate
7. Mound A4 picture on appropriate colour A4 card
8. Write information on back ¼ inch writing and laminate



Africa Continent Folder

Continent Song

(Tune to "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands")

We've got ASIA and EUROPE in our hands,
We've got AFRICA and AUSTRALIA in our hands,
We've got NORTH and SOUTH AMERICA in our hands.
We've got the whole WORLD in our hands.

We've got six huge continents in our hands.
We've got six huge continents in our hands.
We've got six huge continents in our hands.
But where is number seven?

It's at the south point of the globe -- yes, it is.
It's at the south point of the globe -- yes, it is.
It's at the south point of the globe -- yes, it is.
And it's called ANTARCTICA.

Instruction for making your own stencils

Draw out a shape on a piece of card.

Go over it with PVA glue

Leave to dry overnight.

Repeat 3 times and the rubbing sheets are ready to use!

Lisa Donaldson

Rainbow Crayon Cookies

Required:

All your broken bits of crayons

Paper Bun Cases

Bun Tray

Turn the oven on to a medium heat. Place paper bun cases in the bun tray and place your broken crayons into them ensuring a good mix of colours. Place bun tray into oven and 'cook' for approximately 6-9 minutes. Remove from oven once the wax has melted and allow to harden. This should only take 10-15 minutes. Remove bun cases and crayon cookies are ready to be used

Late Sr. Redemptoris Cummins



Sr. Redemptoris Cummins of the Convent Military Road Waterford died peacefully on the 8th January 2011 after a long illness; she was the last surviving member of a family of nine children born to the late Captain Nicholas and Brigid Cummins of Ballybrick-en, Waterford

Winifred Cummins entered the Convent of Mercy in 1933 a Holy Year, celebrating our Holy Redeemer and received the religious name Sr. Redemptoris. She made her final profession in 1939. Sr. Redemptoris was a woman of deep spirituality, extraordinary ability and remarkable versatility. A graduate of University College Cork and Carysfort College of Education Dublin, she initiated the provision of second level education by the Mercy Sister in Waterford city she played a significant role in the development of our Lady of Mercy secondary School, teaching all levels and serving as principal and manager.

Sr. Redemptoris has been described by former students as 'one of the Mercy Sisters brightest stars'. During her own education with the Sisters of Mercy in Waterford she benefitted from an enlightened and visionary educational philosophy, which included a wide range of learning methods.

In 1926 she was among those who welcomed WB Yeats who wrote the poem Among School Children after his visit to the school. As a senior student she addressed Dr. Maria Montessori who visited the school in 1927. Having experienced a liberal education herself she continued to develop this tradition as a Sister of Mercy embracing and practicing a broad, holistic and rich vision throughout her life as an educator.

May She Rest In Peace

Transforming Ireland

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