



CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

We have had a busy and exciting year to date the highlight being our Annual Conference in April 2011, which was a great success. I look forward to meeting many of you at the events planned for the coming months.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Executive Committee and the NCIP Team for their tremendous support, encouragement and assistance. I would also like to wish June Hosford every happiness in her retirement as Director of St. Nicholas Montessori College and my good wishes go to Aileen O'Brien as she takes over this role.

Kate Gray, Chairperson St Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland



TIPS TO EASE YOUR CHILD INTO SCHOOL

- 1 Be positive about your child's experiences in school. If you are happy to leave your child, your child will know this and will be happy too.
- 2 Talk and listen to your child about school in an easy and relaxed manner. Discuss other children they will meet, activities they will do. Be realistic about the excitement of school or your child may be disappointed.
- 3 Let your child know school is part of their new daily routine or they may perceive it to be like an outing. Your child may announce after a few days that he/she has had enough; this phase will pass when the routine is established.
- 4 Tell your child about the things you do during the morning. Try to ensure it's something you usually do without them so they don't feel they are missing out on an activity you usually share.
- 5 Encourage your child to be at ease using the toilet by him/herself. Help your child to choose comfortable clothes that they can manage easily themselves - preferably elasticised waist rather than dungarees. Your child will feel confident and secure when able to do for him/herself.
- 6 Avoid discussion with the teacher when you are leaving your child to school as this may pass your anxiety to your child. If you have any concerns talk to the teacher after school has finished if possible or telephone later.
- 7 Encourage your child to walk into school. If you have your child in your arms, it makes it more difficult for your child to separate from you or they may perceive they are being taken away from you.
- 8 While you may be experiencing a mixture of emotions try not to pass any anxieties on to your child. If you feel anxious talk to the teacher about it but not in your child's company. The child will sense your anxiety and worry about you.
- 9 Hugs and kisses before you say goodbye makes the separation easier for your child and for you. Be assured if your child does not relax and settle the teacher will phone you.
- 10 Make sure you are on time to pick up your child because five minutes seems a long time to a small child. Saying "I'll be back in a minute" may not be reassuring, young children know this is a very short span of time and will feel let down by you when you don't return in a minute.

Mina Walsh, B.A. in Montessori Education, M.Ed.

Programme of Events 2011

September 2011

- Wed, 14th *Settling In to Montessori Preschool*
Montessori County Network Meeting, Kildare
- Sat, 24th *Music Workshop*
St Nicholas Hous, Dublin
- Thu, 29th *Montessori County Network Meeting – Mayo*

October 2011

- Sat, 8th *Science Workshop*
Cork City
- Mon, 10th *Christmas Theme*
Montessori County Network Meeting – Galway
- Tue, 18th *Irish Language*
SNMTA Members Meeting
Dublin
- Wed, 26th *Irish Language*
SNMTA Members Meeting
Dublin

November 2011

- Mon, 7th *Christmas Theme*
Montessori County Network Meeting - Limerick
- Wed, 9th *Christmas Theme*
Montessori County Network Meeting - Cork
- Sat, 19th *Language Workshop*
New Ross, Wexford

December 2011

- Fri, 2nd *St Nicholas Night*
St Nicholas House, Dublin

JOHN TAYLOR GATTO – A MONTESSORI OF OUR TIME?

By Sean Griffin – Academic Head SNMCI

Not many people have heard of John Taylor Gatto. I hadn't either until a friend sent me an article from the New York Times. Gatto (b.1935) has made a name for himself in America by his strong criticism of the standards of public funded schooling.

An experienced teacher of over 26 years in the New York public school system, Gatto is now a celebrated public speaker and author. He left his job twenty years ago declaring that he was 'no longer willing to hurt children' by his having to conform to the low standards demanded by so-called state education. What is particularly interesting is the link that John Taylor Gatto has made with the ideas of Maria Montessori in this regard. Do you think that you, as a Montessori teacher, would agree with him? Is Gatto, as some people think, Montessori of our time?

Gatto, in his 1991 essay *The Six-Lesson Schoolteacher* is uncompromising in saying that a state-paid teacher is required to support a system that

- Causes children to be dependent on teachers/experts rather than on themselves
- Praises total conformity and condemns individuality as a threat to the system
- Teaches that the timetable, not interesting work, is what has value
- Teaches that value is only possible under conditions of competition
- Leaves children with almost no private time
- Teaches children that their worth is determined by other people

Is it fair to argue that our Irish state-supported primary school system too is really in its practice aimed at producing dependant and passive human beings? One of Gatto's chief indictments of the public school system in America is that it forces children to believe they must wait for the instruction of the teacher in order for learning to take place. The assumption accepted unquestioningly by teachers, parents and pupils is: 'Good children do what the Teacher says; 'bold' children don't conform'. In a Montessori classroom the child learns to be a learner working independently at his or her own pace, and by the practice of teaching oneself. Maria Montessori advocated respect for the absorbent mind of the child within the prepared environment as the way to stimulate curiosity, inquisitiveness, and life-long learning.

It is interesting to see the remarkable similarity in these two quotations. John Taylor Gatto says in his book *The Underground History of American Education*:

"Wherever I go these days I hear of something called the crisis of discipline, how children are not motivated, how they resist learning. That is nonsense, of course. Children resist teaching, as they should, but nobody resists learning." This seems a radical, even provocative thing to say. But on the very same theme, Maria Montessori said in the *Absorbent Mind*: "And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being (Ch. 7)."

John Taylor Gatto seems to be reminding us that when parents choose Montessori schooling it is more than just an opportunity for children to embrace hands-on materials or mixed-age classrooms. It's a choice for the development of children as self-motivated, capable, critical human beings and not compliant robots who depend on teachers, textbooks, and rules to govern their decisions. I was interested to learn recently too that the new four-year Graduate Entry Medical School in the University of Limerick operates 'self-directed and problem-based learning methods' as the dominant mode of education in the programme. This is a most hopeful sign. I wonder if many of its students had a Montessori upbringing or who would have fellow-feeling with the thinking of John Taylor Gatto ?

Gatto, J.T. (1991) 'The Six-Lesson Schoolteacher' <http://www.cantrip.org/gatto.html?seenIEPage=1>

Gatto, J.T.(2000) *The Underground History of American Education* New York: The Odyssey Group <http://www.johntaylorgatto.com/chapters/index.htm>

Gatto J.T. The author speaking about the themes of his book *The Underground History of American Education* (video) <http://www.disinfo.com/2010/03/john-taylor-gatto-the-underground-history-of-american-education/>

University Of Limerick (2011) A student's perspective on the BM BS Graduate Medical Programme (video) <http://www.uloplayer.com/prospectus/Im101student.html>



Practical Life -Putting on Coat

Materials: Two coats - adult and child's coats

Presentation: the teacher places the coat on the floor in front of her with the collar/hood at her toes and the with arm holes showing. The teacher puts arms into each arm hole as far as she can. Holding the material she lifts the coat over her head and onto to her back. Push hands to end of the sleeves and move coat onto to shoulders.

Exercise: The child does the exercise as presented

Follow on Activities: Taking off coat, hanging up coat on hook, hanging up coat on clothes hanger, buttons zips, toggles and drawstrings.

Mina Walsh, B.A. in Montessori Education, M.Ed.

"Montessori today – a scientific approach to education"

14th to 16th October 2011 | The University of Economics | Bratislava/Slovakia

For more information log on to: www.montessori-europe.com

On the move

The Childcare Directorate is due to move in October 2011 to the new offices of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 43 Mespil Road, Dublin 4.

News from the Childcare Directorate

From 8 August 2011 Moira O' Mara leaves as Head of the Childcare Directorate and will be replaced by Ms. Mary McLoughlin.

St. Nicholas Montessori School



First Communion was held in St. Michael's Church on Saturday 14th May 2011. Five children from the 6-9 class received their First Holy Communion.

The school year was brought to a close with a number of fun events. The 9-12 Class celebrated EU Day on Friday 6th May when parents had the opportunity to view the children's EU projects and sample the food from each country.

The 3-6 Classes visited Glenroe Farm on the 26th May while the 6-9 and 9-12 year old classes visited Castlecomer Discovery Park, Kilkenny on the 19th May.

Sports Day was held on Tuesday 7th June and on Wednesday 8th June the children welcomed all the parents to their end of year Music Concert.

Welcome back to all the children and staff, in particular new staff members Ms. Sarah Fitzpatrick and Ms. Niamh Irwin. We are looking forward to another exciting and fun-filled year.

Noreen Tierney Principal

MESSAGE FROM JUNE HOSFORD

It is with a sense of expectation and excitement that I enter into the next phase of my life "retirement" after 25 years in the College. I have had the privilege to work with many colleagues and students over the years. The quality of work and commitment of you all has ensured that the name St. Nicholas Montessori is synonymous with Montessori teachers of the highest quality. I thank you all for making my time at the College a most rewarding experience and I wish everyone well as they continue to promote Montessori Education for future generations.

The academic year 2010-2011 has been an eventful one for the College. In early October we submitted our Self Evaluation Report to HETAC as part of the Institutional Review process. The on-site panel spent 2 days here in Adelaide Street reviewing all our processes and procedures. The panel met representatives from all areas of the business starting with the Board. All outreach centres also sent representatives. The findings in the final report were challenging for all. With HETAC's support we are addressing the issues raised and have engaged a consultant to refresh corporate governance and have entered into a partnership with Griffith College who have offered support at the academic level. The quality of our graduates and the teaching/learning experiences of our students in meeting HETAC standards was not an issue. We were extremely pleased with this affirmation.

Aileen O'Brien has been appointed College Director commencing her duties on Tuesday 2nd August 2011. Aileen has a deep commitment to Montessori Education and to St. Nicholas in particular. She also had her own Montessori School for 15 years and was also Chairperson of the Teachers' Association before joining the College staff. She has been Assistant Director for the past 7 years during which time she achieved an MBA (Executive). She embraces change with vigour and belief. This has been of great benefit to me and to the College over the years. Her experience will serve her well as she leads her team in the challenges ahead. Aileen has proven by her work and through the interview process that she is highly qualified for her new position. I know that all staff, students and graduates join me in wishing her well in the future.

June

Register of Teachers

Are you looking for work as a Montessori teacher or are you wishing to employ a Montessori teacher. St Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland can help make the connection. Forward your details and we will put you in touch.

Would you like a network group in your county?

Montessori networking can provide a lifeline of support and ideas generation

- Networking is a key source of information and support as you can share ideas and discuss common issues.
- Networking can help to develop further skills and knowledge by providing you with an opportunity to identify areas where you can enhance your Montessori Preschool environment.
- You can access up to date information on what is happening locally and nationally in Montessori Education e.g. changes in legislation, training news.

St Nicholas Montessori Society will support the development of a Network Group in your county.

Let us know if you are interested. Contact: the Administrator, St Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland

Creative Drama and Play

Shared by Lisa Donaldson, Wee Play and Learn

Play is a powerful way for children to experience the world. Drama games link these two means of expression - drama and play. The interactive activities will help build strong bodies, expand the mind, and spark creativity. Play is a natural way for children to develop strong social skills and fine-tune their emotional intelligence. Play lays down neural patterns in the brain which are important foundations of future learning such as being flexible, imaginative thinker, and appreciating the feelings and lives of others.

When they play, children can:

- Rearrange their lives
- Rehearse the future
- Reflect on the past
- Be creative and imaginative
- Organise their learning for themselves
- Get their thoughts, feelings, relationships and physical bodies under their own control

Nursery Rhyme Charades

Start with a discussion on favourite nursery rhymes. Teachers act out one, children name the rhyme. Work through a few in this way. Then allow each child to act out their favourite one as a charade. Guide the guessing and be sure to use positive feedback such as 'that's an interesting way to act out Little Bo Peep'!

Firecracker Boom

On coloured index cards, draw pictures relating to a theme you are studying. Include 2/3 pictures of a fire cracker. Place in a box and pass around the circle. Ask the children to pick a card and act it out/describe the picture. If the child picks a firecracker they say Blast off and all children jump up, clap their hands and say Boom! When you say touchdown, everyone sits and the game resumes.

Clap around the circle

This simple activity is very useful for circle-time, suitable for all age-groups from very young children up to adults. It helps to bring focus to any group as an introductory activity or as a way of bringing everybody back together after pair-work or small group activity.

Sit or stand in a circle. Beginning with the leader, each person claps in turn. Try it a couple of times, asking the participants to make the sounds more regular, as though one person is clapping.

Once the group gets the hang of it, repeat the activity with everybody's eyes closed. When they have closed their eyes, pick someone to start by tapping them on the shoulder. Don't be surprised if you need to try this version a few times as it's much harder to know when it is your turn!

Grocery Bag Costumes

Props: Paper grocery bag, paint

What is pretend play without a costume. With a few careful snips, a large paper bag can be transformed into a jacket for a superhero, knight, jungle explorer or astronaut. Cut a V shape for the neck, holes for arms and let the little ones design their own costumes.

Giant Floor Drawing

Cover the entire floor with long strips of butcher paper (or even newspaper if white paper is hard to find). Secure onto floor with tape so that you have one giant sheet of drawing paper. Give the child/ren a pack of crayons or washable markers and allow him to create a master work. Some children may draw an entire town with roads which you can then inhabit with cardboard box houses and dolls for people. Or create your own play Airplane, Post Office, Bus, Circus, School or Library.

Starting School-Getting to know you!

The Name Game Materials: Ball

Presentation 1: Invite the children to be seated in a circle. Explain to the children that you are going to roll the ball to a child and when the ball is rolled to you, you say your name and roll the ball back to the teacher. The teacher continues to roll the ball to the children randomly around the circle.

Presentation 2: Explain to children that you will roll the ball to a child and the child says their name and then says the name of child of their choice and rolls it to the named child who will say his/her name and continue in this way.

Presentation 3: Explain to the children that you are going to roll the ball to a child and when the ball is rolled to you; you say your name and say something you like e.g. favourite colour etc.. The child name another child roll the ball and the child receiving the ball says his name and something he likes. The activity continues in this way.

Presentation 4: Repeat as for presentation 3. The children need to memorise each child's name and favourite thing. The teacher says a child's name and the child's favourite thing and rolls the ball. The child names another child and the named child's favourite thing and rolls the ball to them. The activity continues in this way. The presentations increase in difficulty and the pace you move though these presentations will depend on the age range of the children and their success at each level.

Extension

Sit the children in a circle. Have them start a pattern of clapping hands, patting knees, just going back and forth. Say the following poem to the beat of claps and pats:

*Nicholas (child's name) Nicholas (child's name) How do you do?
Who's that sitting next to you?*

Child says name of person sitting beside them. E.g. David
Chant new child's name:

David, David how do you do? Who's that sitting next to you?

David would name the person beside him.

Go around the circle until everyone has had a turn.

The Baker's Shop

'Who stole the bread from the Bakers Shop?'

Employ a suitable rhythm, clapping or snapping fingers.

Teacher: *Who stole the bread from the Baker's Shop?*

Edward (say child's name) stole the bread from the Baker's shop

Edward: *Who me?*

Teacher: *Yes you!*

Edward: *Couldn't be*

Teacher: *Then who stole the bread from the Baker's Shop?*

The rhythm continues with Edward taking control.

Edward: *Sally stole the bread from the Bakers Shop.*

Sally: *Who me?*

Edward: *Yes you!*

Sally: *Couldn't be*

Edward: *Then who stole the bread from the Bakers Shop?*

Sally: *Louise stole the bread from the Bakers' Shop.*

And onto the next child.....

This is a wonderful way to learn each other's names at the start of a new year.

Miriam Daly, Drama Teacher

