

# March 2013

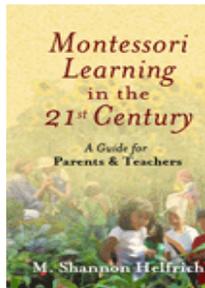
# INSIDE THE WOODS

## Book Club Debut is a Success

Stimulating conversation around a great book, delicious snacks and visit time with friends; our first ever Book Club had it all.

In case you missed out on the fun, here is a brief synopsis of the evening.

Our group started the evening with social time and meeting new friends while we discussed our earliest childhood memories.



Then two discussion groups formed, Early Childhood parents and parents of older students. Each group discussed their key learning from the book, how understanding the planes of development help them support and understand their child, and the components of the fully developed adult.

At the end of the evening, all agreed that we should do this again! More information coming soon on our next Book Club event.

*Lots of fun things coming up this spring;  
check the calendar*

*Spring Break! - March 11-15*

*6<sup>th</sup> Grade Trip to Williamsburg, April 23*

*Middle School Adventure Trip to Sea Camp, May 20*

## It's here . . .

We told you all about it last month, and sure enough, here it is in our front yard.



You might not appreciate the attractiveness of this geologic specimen, but remember, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And, lots of us think it's just the cat's pajamas.

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

## Three Essays by Maren Schmidt, M.Ed.

### Leaders Have Spirit

One definition of spirit is "a particular mood or emotional state characterized by vigor and animation." As leaders we need to have enthusiasm for the work we are doing, the people we are working with, and the place where we work and play. As parent leaders we model to our children what it means to be a healthy adult in body, heart, mind and spirit.

There are times when we will have to act more animated than we perhaps feel. Especially after being up all night with a sick child or not feeling at the top of our game ourselves. But enthusiasm is infectious, and a little bit can go a long way.

One of my twelve-year-old students took a manners and ballroom dancing class and memorized a set of guidelines for being a convivial guest. One of the rules that stuck in my mind was, "Enter into the spirit of the event." If the event is a dance, get out there and boot and scoot. If it's a costume party, dress up and act the part. If it's an opera, study up a bit and become familiar with the storyline and libretto.

And if it's your life, what better advice could you have than: "Enter into the spirit of the event?"

No event to really bring out your enthusiasm? Dale Carnegie suggested that we practice acting enthusiastic by taking a week and exaggerating exuberance. Perhaps 100 times more than we actually feel. Carnegie recommended that we put 100 times for energy into

our movements, our tone of voice, and our smiles on every topic for seven days. At the end of the week, what we should see is life and leadership appearing rosier and more rewarding, along with a habit of enthusiasm.

Things aren't going well? Well, go fishing. You may have heard of the fish market where they throw fish? At Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle a spirit of enthusiasm is key to the way this business is run. Stephen Lunlin wrote the book, *Fish!*, in order to explain *Fish!* philosophy

**Be There. Play. Make Their Day. Choose Your Attitude.** Four interconnected practices for leadership.

**Be There** is about being totally present for the people around you. Being there sends a powerful message of respect on which communication and relationships are built.

**Play** gives us permission to have fun, be creative, make mistakes and show our enthusiasm. Using the practice of play lets us play with ideas versus working on them, and helps us find creative solutions.

**Make Their Day** is a practice that focuses on finding simple ways to delight people in meaningful and memorable ways.

**Choose Your Attitude** helps us practice the idea of choosing how we will respond to whatever life throws at us. Our attitude affects not only ourselves, but everyone around us. Knowing we can choose our attitude helps us build the relationships we want.

Leaders have spirit and enthusiasm is contagious. Catch it!

### Leaders Have Imagination

Being an effective leader requires immense imagination. As leaders we must envision the person who is not yet there; the situation that has not arrived; the community that is to be formed.

As leaders we must imagine the human potential, and this is no small or easy task. We have to have vision and curiosity. We have to empower others to use their imaginations and find their way in the world to a life that only they can imagine. We have to imagine and believe that what we do is making a difference.

A recent story in The Oregonian about the founders of Sseko Designs highlights the imagination of leadership. About four years ago Liz Forkin Bohannon, not long out of college, decided to do a four-month trip to Uganda, to see what she could see. What she found through some volunteer work were college-bound girls unable to go to college due to not having the \$5,000 a year to pay for tuition, and not having a way to earn the money. The opportunities were not there. Unimagined human potential being wasted.

Bohannon, not married at the time, thought that starting a charity might help. But a Ugandan friend suggested that finding the students work--helping them to help themselves--would be the way to go.

An idea of making a flip-flop type of sandal appeared along with three students who were struggling

to raise college tuition. Bohannon made a commitment to the students that if they worked on this sandal-making project, she would guarantee the nearly \$15,000 they needed for college.

The three students and Bohannon, now married with her husband on board with the challenge, made and sold enough sandals for the three to go off to college in 2009.

In 2011, Sseko Designs sold over 10,000 pair of Ugandan-made shoes, with 10 students working their way to college. One of the original three students is scheduled to graduate in a few months with a computer engineering degree.

Liz and Ben Bohannon, with their imagination of leadership, envisioned college graduates who could work their way to college and enrich their lives and communities with their experiences.

Leaders need imagination as they innovate, grow, listen, and respond with enthusiasm to the needs of the people around them.

Our challenge as parents, teachers and other adults is to see in a child an adult who is not yet there, to see an opportunity waiting to be discovered, and to envision a world we all will be making together.

## Leaders Take Risks

Our initial responsibility as leaders, no matter what field we are in, is to first do no harm. If we are going to be problem solvers and remove obstacles to a child's development, we have to take risks. Change always involves the danger that what we do may not work, but change also creates the opportunity that our modifications may work better than we imagined.

Our risk taking is calculated so that we give up something good to get something better.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes of a leader become critical as we endeavor to make changes. Have we listened carefully to those around us to truly understand needs and requests? Do we have the ability to respond to those needs? Can we take the responsibility? Can we bring enthusiasm and passion to our tasks? Do we have a clear vision in order to empower others to see their worth and potential?

We have three basic ways to affect change: We can change our attitude about a situation. We can change the rules that govern the situation. We can change the environment.

Change our attitude. Martin and Lela were frustrated that their four-year-old, Olivia, would not settle down for a 7:30 bedtime. Until after 9:30 every evening Olivia was up for a drink of water, jumping on the bed, surfing down the stairs on her stomach, and various other non-sleeping activities. Using a leadership idea of "ask more, talk less," Martin and Lela decided to ask Olivia why she couldn't get to sleep and how they might help her. Much to their surprise, Olivia suggested that they take a walk after dinner every night so Olivia could exercise. A thirty-minute walk around the neighborhood with flashlights in the cold seemed to be the antidote for their sleeping pill. Martin and Lela changed their attitude about what bedtime should look like. Risking what might happen if they let Olivia set the routine, created a situation that was a win/win. Olivia got tired enough to go to sleep. Lela and Martin got some exercise and energy for rest of their evening.

Change the rules. Pam and Pat, dealing with much the same situation with their four-year-old, Logan, took another tactic. After getting input from Logan, they decided to change his bedtime routine. Logan could turn off his new bedside lamp with the clap of his hands, empowering him to have more control over when he went to sleep. After a nighttime routine of brushing teeth, pajamas, story and prayers, Logan agreed to not get up from bed, but would read and listen to music until he was ready to sleep. Working with Logan to find a solution to bedtime problems, created new expectations. A clap of the hands changed bedtime for the better.

Change the environment. Jeff and Julie were getting more ragged every day as their sleep was disrupted by their daughter Morgan's 2 am visits. Tucking Morgan into her own bed didn't help her get back to sleep. Nobody got any sleep if Morgan got into bed with Jeff and Julie. In a parenting magazine, Julie came across the idea of putting a sleeping bag at the foot of their bed for Morgan. Morgan agreed to the idea of using the sleeping bag if she got up in the middle of the night. After a few more days of investigations, Jeff discovered that the air conditioner came on around 2 am each morning and blew cold air on a coverless Morgan. Moving Morgan's bed and changing the thermostat to come on at a later time fixed Morgan nocturnal roaming.

Leadership requires that we take risks by changing our attitude, changing our rules, and changing our environment to help make life better for those around us--ourselves included.

# Montessori Movement in the US- Be an Advocate

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

Today's educational reformers have good intentions, but too often the "fixes" they apply have little to do with the children and their needs. We are encouraged to rate schools by the results of test scores, "But, and here is the heartbreaker, raising test scores does little to help, develop, or even measure, our students' independence, competence, motivation, or concentration" (Eissler, p. 20). And to take it further, according to John Taylor Gatto, neither do test scores tell us about a student's "insight, wisdom, justice, resourcefulness, courage, [or] originality," the very "hallmarks of human excellence." We do not measure human excellence because human excellence can't be measured, it can "only [be] witnessed" (Eissler, p. 20).

In his book, advocating and explicating Montessori, Trevor Eissler argues that the entire system of schooling, as it is usually practiced, is the big problem. The original accounting system on which it is based is flawed. In his own education, even as a straight A student, he feels he was taught "cruelty, fear, tearing others down, lack of responsibility, lack of self-confidence" (Eissler, p. 2). These are things many people typically take for granted as being part of childhood experience. He urges parents to rate schools not by test scores, but in the same way that Maria Montessori developed her method, by observing children.

Eissler's observations of his own children taught him what he lists as the three themes of child development: (1) the importance of environment, (2) that "children are absolutely desperate to learn...to know everything and experience everything...to be as competent as the adults around them...to be independent and learn how to do things by themselves," and (3) that his own knowledge of his children as their parent is significant. These observations "led me to look with a more critical eye and a sense of responsibility at the way our kids would be educated" (Eissler, p. 13).

Because the child is treated as a whole person in Montessori schools, the observations you make of your child's learning, level of happiness, independence, curiosity, concentration, and sociability would be a better test for school success than a computer-graded answer sheet. "A fundamental truth permeates

Montessori's work: children are desperate to learn. This is the beating heart of Montessori schools. But this fundamental truth is not universally recognized. In fact, our traditional schools are built upon just the opposite assumption: children avoid learning" (Eissler, p. 51). Eissler reminds us of the dopamine effect of learning: when we are engaged in pleasurable activities, such as completing a goal or making a new discovery, dopamine is released in the brain. The resulting positive emotions connect to the learning process and create children who not only remember what they have learned, but also enjoy school.

"The roots of Montessori's method are in the natural way children learn...It is the fundamental nature of the [traditional] classroom that needs to be changed. Luckily, we have hundreds of examples of successful and effective Montessori schools around the country. These schools are...bringing this revolutionary method to more and more children" (Eissler, p.55).

The Montessori method is named for the Italian educator and doctor, Maria Montessori (1870-1952). In her work she talked continuously about self-motivation and self-education. Her prepared environments for children grew from a single preschool to a worldwide movement. The first Montessori teachers were trained by Maria Montessori as her method spread within a few years to five continents. Montessori was first introduced to the United States with the support of prominent figures such as Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell in 1911. More than 100 schools were set up within the first five years in 22 states.

In 1929, the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) was established to oversee the many national organizations and their schools and to supervise the education of Montessori teachers worldwide. However, by this time, the movement in the United States had declined due to a combination of a shallow understanding of her principals by the educational establishment and other historical events.

It wasn't until the 1950s that Montessori was reestablished in the United States. A young teacher named Nancy McCormick Rambusch, who believed in the need for significant changes in our culture if America was to realize the potential of its future, searched for alternatives to traditional American schools. She

attended the International Montessori Congress in 1953 and then took the Montessori Course given by the Maria Montessori Training Organization. Intent on bringing about change, she then established a laboratory school in New York City and wrote about her experiences.

In the years between 1959 to 1963, this new Montessori movement that was particularly American saw a rapid resurgence. It embodied a deep commitment to Montessori ideals as an enduring alternative to traditional schools. In 1960 the American Montessori Society was formed as a nonprofit organization headquartered in Greenwich, CT.

As head of the AMS, Dr. Rambusch was a charismatic, well educated, and persuasive leader and advocate for Montessori. She is credited with insisting that all teacher educators have a college degree so that the coursework could, potentially, be recognized by state education departments. AMS also broadened the curriculum for teachers and sought to forge inroads into mainstream education by offering Montessori coursework in traditional teacher preparation programs. The goals of AMS were the same as those of AMI: to support efforts to create schools, develop teacher education programs, and publicize the value of Montessori education.

In 1961, when *Time* magazine featured Dr. Rambusch, the American public took notice and parents turned to AMS in large numbers for advice on starting schools and study groups. Other media, such as *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*, also further publicized the effort. In 1962, Dr. Rambusch published a book titled *Learning How to Learn*.

Many more excellent sources for learning about Montessori have been published in the United States since then. Today, AMS is the largest Montessori organization in the world. In recent years, both AMS and AMI have made it a priority to extend Montessori education to greater numbers of children in the public sector.

"It is Montessori's principles which have withstood the test of time: the importance of the absorbent mind, the sensitive periods, concentration, observation, community, and the prepared environment" (Eissler, p. 230). Eissler points out that in his profession, when a problem is encountered, it is necessary to identify it, come up with a solution, and implement the solution. He believes Montessori schools have the best potential as a solution to the factory model that persists in most of our schools. He backs up his conviction by writing and

lecturing as well as supporting his children in Montessori.

In his final analysis of Montessori, Eissler urges parents to learn about Montessori and to observe a school to "see that Montessori education is concrete yet profound. See that it's fun. See that it's perfectly natural and revolutionary all rolled into one lovely package...I drop off my kids at school in the mornings and breathe a sigh of relief--not only because the decibel level in the car just dropped significantly, but because I know that although they are not at home, they are in the next-best place" (Eissler, p. 236).

#### Sources for this article:

*Montessori Madness: A Parent to Parent Argument for Montessori Education* by Trevor Eissler **Check out YouTube: Trevor Eissler "Montessori Madness!" -321 FastDraw**

The American Montessori Society web site:  
<http://www.amshq.org/Montessori%20Education/History%20of%20Montessori%20Education.aspx>

*The American Montessori Society, Inc.* by Gilbert E. Donahue, Chairman of the Board, AMS, 1966, reprinted in the spring 2010 issue of *Montessori Life*

John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down*, pp xi-xii.

#### Good quote:

Today Montessori schools have influenced many people, among them is Daniel Pink, author of *Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us*:  
"Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and richer lives. Maria Montessori figured this out a long time ago."

"I am not a Montessori scholar at all, but I know that at the heart of it is self-direction and letting kids follow their own curiosity, not dictating things, not bribing them or threatening them, but allowing self-direction as the pathway to understanding and excellence"

#### Recommended reading for parents by Maria Montessori:

*The Absorbent Mind*  
*The Child in the Family*



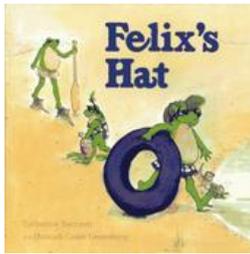
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14 – VALENTINE'S DAY



Everybody loves everybody on  
Valentine's Day  
and all those  
wonderful snacks, too.

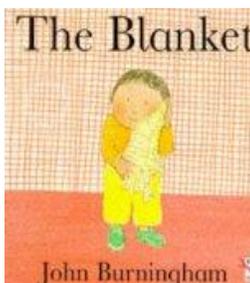


## Books about parting with security objects



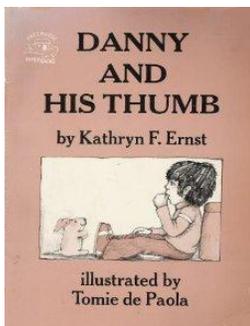
**Felix's Hat**, by Catherine Bancroft. Young Felix is one of a frog family who loses his favorite visor cap in the pond. Everyone is very sympathetic and helps him look for it. But at bedtime, Felix can't sleep.

Big brother Frank saves the day by giving Felix his own old red hat that he won at the County Fair. 1993. 32 pg.



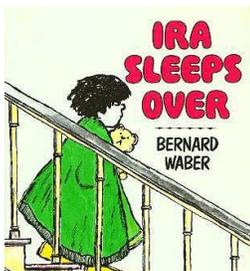
**The Blanket**, by John Burningham. Disaster strikes when a little boy needs to go to sleep and his favorite blanket can't be found. His parents look everywhere all over the house for the blanket and finally it is found

– under the pillow where it had been all along. 1976. 20 pgs.



**Danny and His Thumb**, by Kathryn Ernst. As he grows up and starts school, Danny finds he is too busy doing other things to suck his thumb. This book has also been included in recent lists of helpful resources for pediatric behavioral

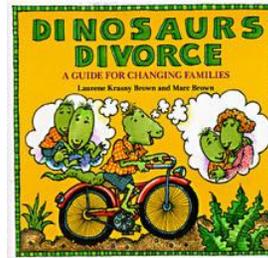
purposes, even though it was originally published in 1973. 32 pages.



**Ira Sleeps Over**, by Bernard Waber. Ira is excited to sleep over at his friend, Reggie's. But he's not sure if he should take his teddy bear. His sister makes fun of him, as a "baby" while his parents

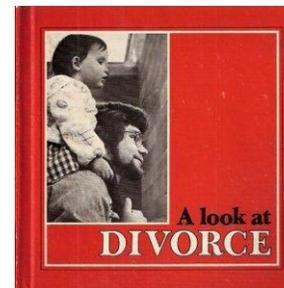
assure him it's OK. He goes to Reggie's without his bear but after they tell each other scary stories, Reggie gets out his own teddy. Seeing that, Ira goes home and gets his bear, then returns and falls asleep. 1972. 48 pages.

## Books pertaining to divorce and separation



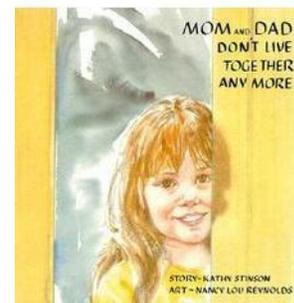
**Dinosaurs Divorce** by Laurene Krasny Brown. This award-winning book, written and illustrated in comic-book-style panels, A family dinosaurs provides the vehicle for helping children understand divorce, life with

a single parent, visitation, living in two homes, relating to friends, and parents' dating and remarriage. This book is unique in offering a section to help children identify their own feelings about divorce. It also emphasizes what children can do to help themselves. *Dinosaur's Divorce* is non-threatening and captivates children's attention. The illustrations are superb. 1986. 32 pgs.



**A Look at Divorce**, by Maria S. Pursell. This book emphasizes the enduring bond of parent-child relationships within the context of divorce. It explains that changes will be difficult and will require

special effort from all family members. The model it presents is one of continuing relationships with both parents. Photographs. 1977. 36 pages.



**Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Anymore**, by Kathy Stinson. A girl whose parents are separated explains that she lives in an apartment with her mother and visits her father on weekends.

The girl knows that although her parents do not make each other happy, they both still love her very much.