

Dear CMS Parents,

We are excited to begin a new series of newsletters aimed at deepening your understanding of the Montessori philosophy, which guides our work here at Central Montessori School. In this first edition, we focus on the foundational beliefs of Dr. Maria Montessori, the visionary behind our educational approach, and her profound insight into the potential of children to bring about world peace.

Montessori Education: A Path to World Peace Through the Child

Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator, discovered that children possess incredible inner energies—gifts from God—that, if nurtured properly, can lead to the transformation of society. She believed that our world, in need of reconstruction, could be rebuilt through two essential efforts: a return to religious values and an intensified focus on education. This belief aligns with the Montessori philosophy that education is not merely about imparting knowledge but about unlocking the human potential within each child. (The Child in the Church, p.100)

The Hidden Energies of Peace and War

Two tremendous forces, both unimaginable to be contained within something so small, were discovered in the same era. One was the energy hidden within the tiny **atom**, and the other was the immense power hidden within the small **child**. The atom's vast energy was tragically harnessed for the **Armaments of War**, causing destruction and death. In contrast, Dr. Maria Montessori believed that when the spiritual energy within the child is liberated, it has the potential to create the **Armaments of Peace**, fostering harmony and order. She saw this as Divine Providence, where war and peace intersect as one era ends and another begins. To transform our world from conflict to one of love and restoration, we must focus on unlocking the immense potential within every child. (Maria Montessori Her Life and Work, p. 82-82) As Dr. Montessori noted in a lecture on *The Child and civilization*, "*Whereas the Old Testament begins with an adult (Adam), the New Testament begins with a child (Jesus Christ).*"

The Absorbent Mind and Sensitive Periods

From birth to age six, children undergo significant mental and physical growth. Dr. Montessori identified this period as one where children possess an "Absorbent Mind," allowing them to effortlessly absorb knowledge from their surroundings. This time is also characterized by

"Sensitive Periods," during which children are particularly receptive to learning specific skills or knowledge.

Dr. Montessori compared these Sensitive Periods to the burning bush in Exodus: "*The flame that burns brightly but does not consume - the flame that Moses beheld in the burning bush in the Arabian desert.*" (Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, p.120).

Recognizing and understanding these Sensitive Periods is crucial for effectively guiding children in their development. As children follow their biological timetables, constructing themselves and growing into adults, the adult's role should be neutral and passive, assisting the child as needed. In her book, *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work*, Dr. Montessori echoed John the Baptist's words about Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease," as a guiding principle for educators, stating, "Students must increase, but the teacher must decrease."

Deviation vs. Normalization

According to Dr. Montessori, a child's mental growth is driven by the constructive energies given by God from birth to age six. These energies include **physical energy** for movement and **mental energy** for intelligence and will, both of which are interconnected. When the desires and needs from their Sensitive Periods are not met, or when these energies are misaligned, deviations in development can occur, leading to abnormal behaviors. A common cause of this misalignment is the lack of opportunities for children to harmonize their physical and mental energies through meaningful activities. For example, when a child's desire to dress themselves is hindered by a lack of motor skills, this internal conflict can often manifest as tantrums. (Maria Montessori Her Life and Work, p. 170)

Normalization: The Key to Transformation

In the Montessori Prepared Environment, children are given the freedom to choose activities that resonate with their inner needs. This freedom, combined with focused concentration on their chosen tasks, leads to what Dr. Montessori termed "Normalization (Transformation)." Through this process, the child's true nature is revealed, bringing forth qualities such as love of order, profound spontaneous concentration, obedience, independence, initiative, spontaneous self-discipline, joy, harmony with surroundings, and more.

"As modern physical science has taught us how to liberate physical energies hitherto unsuspected in the atom, Montessori has shown us how to liberate psychic energies in the child, allowing us to construct and build a better and more harmonious type of humanity with the **Armament of Peace.**" Dr. Montessori asserted that normalized children inspire not only

hope but also a promise for the future.” Montessori Education seeks to promote peace by helping the God-given natural characteristics of childhood to emerge and by nurturing future leaders who will promote peace worldwide in God’s way. Thus, it can be considered one of the most **Biblically** aligned teaching methods.

As we journey together in this educational approach, we invite you to reflect on these ideas and consider how they might resonate with your own experiences as parents. We look forward to sharing more insights in the coming months.

Serving with Joy in Christ,

Lois Sung Kim

Director, Central Montessori School



*“You can count the seeds in an apple, but you can’t count the apples in a seed. When you teach, you never know how many lives you will influence...you are teaching for eternity”
— Karen Jensen*