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Ingrid Weland

Editor

Subscription information or to submit an article contact Editor at:

pentopaper@cox.net

(402) 502-9118

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Cycles of Activity

Montessori describes cycles of activity as an indirect preparation for future life. A child sets out to do a certain task, one that may not have an obvious outcome to the adult, and the child feels compelled to carry out the activity to its conclusion.

[Education For A New World](#) (p 44)

Think about your time with your child. Is your child allowed to select an activity and work through to its completion? As long as the task does not involve harming the child, someone else, or something in the environment, one must leave the child alone to complete the chosen task. At a young age a child may seem to choose a task arbitrarily. The child has a reason to complete the task even if the reason isn't obvious to the adult. It is the adult's role to leave the child alone to repeat the task. If your child picks up the broom and starts sweeping the floor, allow them to sweep.

In the Montessori environment the Directress encourages the child to repeat work as much as they want by not interrupting the child. The child may use the old fashioned hand-washing station three, four or even five times to wash their hands. The child is not interested in getting their hands THAT clean; the child is interested in the cycle of activity – getting the water from the sink, pouring the soap into the bowl, getting their hands wet, working the soap into a lather, rinsing their hands off, drying their hands, pouring the waste water in to a bucket. Through the cycles of activity the child learns so much about how their environment and how the world works.

By not interrupting the child you are showing respect for their choices.

At any age cycles of activity occur, including adulthood. For a very young child, the child may choose to repeat an action (building blocks, inserting shaped blocks in to a shape sorter...). As the child gets older she will also exhibit cycles of activity with chores around the house, homework, hobbies, and tasks.

If possible, avoid interrupting your child's activity. When you need to interrupt, let them know why you are interrupting (I need you to finish because we need to go to the doctor) and give them a warning (We need to leave in five minutes for our appointment).

Noticing that your child flits from activity to activity? Watch to see how much you are interrupting what could otherwise be a cycle of activity for her.

Important aspects to remember about cycles of activity:

- Show your child the steps to complete a task (making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, vacuuming the floor...)
- Let your child make choices
- Let your child repeat an activity as long as they would like



Inviting Creativity

By: Sarah Valeri

Creativity can be defined as unique problem solving, seeing life “outside the box”, or being driven to express individual creations. It is alive in many forms in many vocations and people depend on it for resourcefulness, relationships, enjoyment, and learning. Creativity isn’t something that can be taught, it requires personal initiative, but you can create an environment that will allow your child to be creative as they are ready. Following are suggestions for inviting creativity in your child:

- Keep a real life sketchbook.
 - Artists keep drawings and photos and journals of these they see to mull over and make art out of later. Children may benefit in the same way from keeping actual collections of objects in small space that they can touch, discuss, and compare. Collect leaves, collect different colors of sand in tiny bottles (if your child is older make a map of where you found the samples), collect nests, collect fabric, pictures of family making funny faces, pictures of their friends in funny costumes. Whatever they seem to be drawn to can serve as a beginning point. Provide materials for your child to draw the objects, or clay, or string to try weaving. When they lose interest help them decide how to dispose of the materials and begin a new collection.
- Create an art space.
 - Artists make messes, especially the very happy or the very angry ones. Find a place inside or out to set up a table with containers for materials and paper, with a ground tarp if it’s necessary. Help your child decide how to decorate it. Ribbons hanging from the ceiling? Mobiles? Pictures of loved ones, animals? Easels are helpful for drawing because the child can look at the paper upright, but table sized easels are cheaper and can be removed if the child wants to use clay or collage work. They may need to be weighed down so they don’t slide. Make sure your child knows ahead of time where to put paints, which sink to use to drain dirty water, where to keep scraps, etc. Discuss the fact that artists need their materials to be in good condition to work. Creativity can be messy, but mayhem is not necessarily creative.
- Use art to support academics.
 - Young children get a strong understanding of academic concepts through art. They really have to define their understanding to represent these odd, abstract concepts. Allow and encourage your child to use art to express their understanding of a given topic.

Continued on next page.



Inviting Creativity Continued...

- Be a good role model.
 - Make Mistakes. Can't draw a straight line? So? Everything you make with clay falls apart? So? Can your three year old draw a perfectly straight line? Normally people say practice makes perfect. In art you can add "exploration makes us pretty good", because if there was such a thing as perfect we would all be drawing the same thing, and then what would be the point? Paint big blobs with your child and see what comes out. Did you like the colors you made? Do they remind either of you of anything? You spent all day making a huge sand castle together and it fell down? Well, can it become a tunnel, or does it really need to be a huge sand castle? Time for some research or creative problem solving. Learn to enjoy the word "oops" and carry on. Finding a new way to complete the project has huge benefits for problem solving, confidence, and learning to finish what you have started.

Tips From Teachers: Summer Fun

As summer rolls in parents begin to think about what they are going to do for the summer. As you sign your child up or plan for different activities, keep in mind the following:

- Is the activity developmentally appropriate for your child?
 - Asking a four year old to sit through an hour long, non movement oriented class would be difficult. On the flip side, some activities are not challenging enough for a Montessori child.
- Is the activity/event something your child asked to do?
 - If it is a new experience, have you visited so your child has some idea of whether or not they will like the activity?
- Some experiences may be clear hits or clear misses. Decide ahead of time (based on the time and money commitment) which ones you will insist be followed through and which can go by the wayside.

The summer is a great time to expose your child to some activities that are hard to fit in during the school year. You may want to continue a favored activity, but introduce one new activity to expose your child to something new. Following are some ideas you may want to try this summer:

- Grow a garden.
- Tye dye a shirt, shoes, socks, cap...
- Explore a new location. Have you been meaning to visit a local historic place and just never seem to find the time? Plan a date with your child/family to go. Stuck for ideas? Check out the front pages of your phone book – most list local hot spots.
- Visit a geographical landform. Perhaps you have a bluff, a lake, or a river nearby that you could visit and explore.
- Read a book – by yourself or with a group. Think about having a summer reading club with some of the parents and children from your child's class.
- Learn a new sport. Perhaps you don't know how to play soccer or lawn tennis. You and your child can learn a new sport together. Listen to a new type of music. Discuss with your child afterwards whether it is something you would like to continue.
- Make a garden stone for your yard or deck.
- Visit a landfill or recycling center. Decide on one thing you will do this summer to help preserve the beauty of the earth.
- Have a summer lemonade stand. Invite your child to determine in advance where they would like to donate their profits (a local library? a homeless shelter?)
- Go through your toys/books and donate any un-needed items to a shelter.

Check out the last page for some additional ideas on fun things to try this summer.





Questions from Montessori Parents

Q: Eventually my child will have to leave the Montessori environment. How will she adjust socially and academically? How will she adjust to her peers and teachers that expect her to do the same thing everyone else is doing?

A: This seems to be one of the biggest concerns I hear from parents. If any of us had a way to look into the future to determine our child's ability to adjust or their readiness for something, life as a parent would be much simpler. Although we do not have a parental crystal ball, there is information available as to how a child will do after they leave a Montessori program.

Although I think Montessori is a wonderful match for many children and families, at some point your child will likely leave the Montessori environment for a traditional setting (maybe not until university!). Socially your child is your child. How they functioned and got along with their peers is not likely to change too dramatically right away. If after she's in her new environment her behavior changes, it is likely due to her new or different peer group.

Your child's academic success depends on how they learn. For example, a child that is very motivated and does not need a

lot of direction may be bored in a traditional environment because she is used to moving ahead at her own pace.

Adjusting to her peers and teachers depends more on your child's personality than her time in a Montessori environment. Some children, by their nature are more or less reserved than other children. This reserved nature, along with other personality traits have an impact on your child in new situations. Your child will likely leave a Montessori environment confident in their ability to ask for help when needed, ask for clarification on directions, and able to work towards solving their own problems.

Send newsletter questions to: pentopaper@cox.net and your question may appear in a future issue!

Summer Fun Ideas:

- Go on a picnic (even if its in your backyard)
- Go camping (in your living room is a good substitute if you can't visit a campsite)
- Find a parade in which to participate (be it a neighborhood Fourth of July or a city parade)
- Invent a new family game

Whatever activities you undertake with your child this summer, have fun!

