



## Montessori Matters

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The *absorbent mind* [of the child] is indeed a marvelous gift to humanity! By merely 'living', and without a conscious effort, the individual absorbs from the environment even a complex cultural achievement like language. If this essential mental form existed in the adult, how much easier would our studies be!

- Dr. Maria Montessori

## There's an App for That!

### Notes from Nikki

How many times have we heard this slogan? As the word “app” becomes part of our lexicon, more and more of us rely on our iPhone, iPads, and other “smart” technology to stay connected for work and leisure. Increasingly, it’s not just the adults in the family that are jumping on board the app bandwagon. Recently, a colleague told me about a new Montessori application for iPhones. With both mathematics and language editions, children can practice their writing with the Movable Alphabet, learn their sounds with the Sandpaper Letters, or brush up their math skills with the Number Rods, all on a handheld screen. Perhaps a little naïve, I was surprised to learn about this advent – Montessori is all about “hands-on learning”, right? How did this come to be?

With a little research (online, of course), I came across a recent *New York Times* article that went so far as to identify the iPhone as “toddlers’ new favorite toy”. Certainly this has not passed by those marketing apps as more and more are aimed directly at children under 6 years old (iGo Potty anyone?), including the iMontessori apps I had just learned about. The parents interviewed for the *Times* article described the iPhone as a convenient form of entertainment for their children that “goes anywhere”. Most were simultaneously amused and annoyed by their children’s rapt interest in the handheld interactive tool and didn’t know if (or how) to limit it in their lives. Part educational tool? Part passive entertainment? It’s not always clear.

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The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) is having a hard time keeping up. The AAP has long held that children under the age of 2 years should have no exposure to television with very clear time limits after that age. In recent years the inclusive term of “screen time” is continuously being redefined to not only include television (TV programming as well as movies and at-home DVDs), but also computers, computerized games and electronic toys. With the advent of new technology, the AAP is wondering if specific guidelines for cell phones are in order.

To further complicate matters, a new study published in *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* found that every hour of screen exposure (in this case, TV) toddlers experienced, there was a future decrease in classroom engagement, success in mathematics and more sedentary lifestyle.

So what are parents to do? As Montessori educators, we have long been asked the question of what technology is appropriate for children. We know that children, particularly children in the first 6 years of life, learn by whole body movement not feasible with the sedentary activities associated with a screen. By taking in information through their senses (particularly that of touch and three-dimensional sight) children are able to process and synthesize information while creating muscle memory that is not possible on a screen. Technology begins making more of an appearance in the Elementary years as the walls of the classroom extend to include the larger community, but never as a substitute for the real experiences afforded by working with the Montessori materials, books and other people.

Until we know more about how smart phone usage might be classified otherwise, we'll continue to offer the same advice: limits on computers, smart phones, television, video and gaming devices for children over the age of 3 years with a healthy diet of hands-on.

## **MONTESSORI IN TOWN WELCOMES INTERNATIONAL PARENT EDUCATOR**

Please join us on Thursday, February 24 as Montessori In Town hosts Lilian Bryan, esteemed international Montessori educator of teachers and parents. Ms. Bryan will speak at MIT's Glen Castle campus, 750 Glenwood Avenue, at 6:30 p.m.

The evening's topic, *Language at the Center of Human Development*, lends itself to a look at how Language is central to all learning experiences throughout Montessori education. Language is the primary tool for learning, as speaking, writing, and reading allow a child to explore the vast regions of human knowledge. Giving children the right start in the early years of childhood will lead them to a lifetime of facility, pleasure and confidence in their own literacy. Lilian will describe the exciting

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Language experiences your child encounters in a Montessori classroom and share how parents can expand their child's language capacities at home. She will focus on the continuum of the Language program into the Elementary years, particularly timely as MIT embarks on the start of our Elementary program in fall 2011.

MIT is especially honored to have Lilian Bryan speak to our parents; she brings with her nearly 50 years of Montessori experience working with children and adults. Lilian's Montessori expertise covers two age groups: Birth to 3 years and 3 to 6 years. Lilian is Trainer Emeritus of the Montessori Institute of Atlanta where she trained over 800 Montessori teachers from all continents. Since her retirement from being a full-time Director of Training, Lilian continues to be invited by training centers and schools all over the world to offer seminars, workshops, school consultations and parent education.

Individuals from outside the MIT school community are invited to attend, as Lilian's talks are universally supportive to all parents. Space is limited, so please RSVP in advance in order to reserve a space for this very special evening. Please contact Nikki Torres, Educational Director, at [nikki@montessoriantown.com](mailto:nikki@montessoriantown.com) or call 404.784.1038.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS WINTER/EARLY SPRING 2011**

**FEB 17: OPEN HOUSE FOR  
PROSPECTIVE PARENTS AT  
GLEN CASTLE 6:30-8:00 PM**

**FEB 18: TEACHER WORK DAY  
NO SCHOOL**

**FEB 21: PRESIDENTS' DAY  
NO SCHOOL**

**FEB 24: PARENT EVENING WITH  
GUEST SPEAKER LILIAN  
BRYAN AT GLEN CASTLE  
6:30-8:00 PM**

**MARCH 1: OBSERVATIONS BEGIN**

**MARCH 10, 17 & 24: ACTIVE  
PARENTING CLASSES AT  
PONCEY HIGHLAND  
6:00-8:00 PM**

**MARCH 14: TEACHER WORKDAY  
NO SCHOOL**

**MARCH 20: OPEN HOUSE FOR  
PROSPECTIVE PARENTS AT  
PONCEY HIGHLAND  
2:00-4:00 PM**

**MARCH 30: EARLY DISMISSAL  
CONFERENCES BEGIN  
12:00 NOON DISMISSAL**

**MARCH 31-APRIL 1: PARENT-  
TEACHER CONFERENCES  
NO SCHOOL**

**APRIL 4-8: SPRING BREAK  
NO SCHOOL**

## ACTIVE PARENTING WORKSHOP FOR PARENTS

In March Montessori In Town's Educational Director, Nikki Torres, will offer the *Active Parenting Now!* workshop for parents. The three-part series will be held on Thursday evenings, March 10, 17 and 24, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the Poncey Highland campus.

The *Active Parenting* program is designed to support parents in gaining cooperation, improving communication and increasing independence with their children. The *Active Parenting* approach is a great complement to the Montessori method, but the workshop is open and applicable to all families.

The registration deadline is March 1 and forms may be found on the website or by contacting Nikki: [nikki@montessoriintown.com](mailto:nikki@montessoriintown.com) or 404-784-1038.

## MIT AUCTION UNDERWAY!

Montessori In Town is excited to announce plans for its **First Annual Auction** to be held **Friday, May 13, 2011 from 7pm – 10pm** at the Wrecking Bar, located at 292 Moreland Avenue, NE, Atlanta.

The Planning Committee asks all MIT parents to think about the types of services or new donation items that they can contribute to the event – the more creative, the better! For more information contact Elizabeth Sears at 404-350-9420.

### **Suggestions include:**

- Gift Certificates
- Weekend Excursions (House Rentals, Cruises, Airline Tickets, etc.)
- Entertainment (Cooking Classes, Wine Tastings, Music, Boating, etc.)
- Fitness (Memberships, Personal Training, etc.)
- Packages (Spas, Salons, Dinner/Movie/Childcare, etc.)
- Professional Services (Landscaping, Carpentry, Creative, Photography, Tech Support, etc.)
- Childcare (Babysitting, Field Trips, Pizza Parties, Picnics, Park/Indoor Play, etc.)

Thanks for your continued support of Montessori In Town!