



Editor's letter

The initial inspiration for this issue's theme of diversity came from the Gorton Mount project (see article in MSA section) and the focus of the recent 25th International Montessori Congress, held in Sydney, the theme of which was "champion the cause of all children". A review of the conference appears on page 18 in this issue.

In addition to these articles there are also features on diversity in language (bilingualism), global diversity, and diversity in religion and culture with hints on how to introduce children to these elements in the classroom. Of course, diversity can also encompass opinions so we'd love to hear from anyone who may wish to contribute another point of view.

This issue was also inspired by the very qualities of the Montessori approach which allow her philosophy to be successfully translated into so many diverse settings all over the world.

In a Montessori context, diversity means that no two Montessori schools will appear exactly the same or operate in the same manner. Each will be responding to the needs of individual children and to the differences and diversity in the society and culture of which they are a part. Teachers too will also bring in their own special skills and interests.

One aspect of the Montessori approach which appears throughout this issue is the sense of belonging which is instilled in each child and consequently the values and respect which are fostered amongst the children. It is this community spirit which allows diversity to be celebrated on a day-to-day basis with our children and families.

Martin Pearce, Editor

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[news]

Montessori dot com successes

Interviewed recently on US television by Barbara Walters, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, the co-founders of Google™ attributed their remarkable success neither to Stanford nor the fact that they are both the sons of college professors. Instead they gave credit to their Montessori schools.

According to Brin, the Montessori approach instilled in them self-direction and self-motivation as well as an inclination to challenge the status quo and to do things differently. Montessori fosters creativity, self-confidence and an entrepreneurial spirit.

Another internet entrepreneur, Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com, also attended a Montessori school. A recent issue of *Business Week* said "As a preschooler, Jeffrey Bezos displayed an unmatched single-mindedness.

By his mother's account, the young Bezos got so engrossed in the details of activities at his Montessori school that teachers had to pick him up in his chair to move him to new tasks."

Abridged from an article by John Long, Headmaster of the Post Oak Montessori School in Bellaire, Texas which appeared in *Tomorrow's Child*, Spring 2005.

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Letter to the Editor of *Montessori International*

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As educators, parents and carers we will probably have overheard discussions between children about the recent terrorist attacks in England, Israel, Egypt and elsewhere. Even the youngest of our charges may take part in discussions and play experiences about bombing attacks, disruption to daily living and potential changes to holiday or travel plans.

Discussing feelings and playing them out is a perfectly natural process, and an important one in all children's development; our role is to make sure that our response is measured and that we uphold the values that underpin Montessori philosophy, ensuring that all children regardless of colour, race, religion or ability can work and play side-by-side and in harmony. We need to make sure we challenge any potentially divisive activity such as racial hatred, or imitation war games, and provide healthy role models for children's personal, social and emotional development.

In the UK, childcare and play work are growing sectors that are made up of very diverse people; adults and children, each with a range of skills, unique qualities and differing cultures that are representative of the population as a whole. Those involved in before-and-after school clubs and extended day care activities are usually experienced in helping children deal with questions and emotions that may not surface during the busy school day.

It is worthwhile spending some time considering our approach to helping children to come to terms with these recent, terrible incidents, and to re-think our strategies for helping children to come to terms with personal loss. The new academic year is an appropriate time to focus on our sense of community and global identity and to translate these into sustainable, personal development programmes relevant to the changing needs of modern Montessori children worldwide.

Wendy Fidler

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