Education for Peace: Curriculum or Outcome?

Anna P. Perry

Maria Montessori

“An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live.”

Education and Peace

What do we mean by:

Peace

Education for Peace is

“This is education, understood as a help to life; an education from birth, which feeds a peaceful revolution and unites all in a common aim, attracting them as to a single centre. Mothers, fathers, politicians: all must combine in their respect and help for this delicate work of formation, which the little child carries on in the depth of a profound psychological mystery, under the tutelage of an inner guide. This is the bright new hope for mankind.”

Maria Montessori

The Absorbent Mind

The importance of our choice of words

- Peace Education
- Peace Curriculum
- Teaching Peace
- Education for Peace

Techniques Don’t Work Without Depth of Understanding

- Peace Rose
- Peace Stone
- Peace Timer
- Peace Corner
- Peace Table
- Peace Book
- Peace Rug
- Peace Stick
History of Montessori in the U.S.
- Early 1900’s, Maria visits, lots of support
- Quiet, slow growth over the next 40+ years
- 1958 the Whitby School begins
- 1960 American Montessori Society founded by Nancy McCormick Rambusch

The American Montessori Revival: Early 1960’s
- Montessori caught on quickly in the US
- Lots of publicity, lots of interest!
- Nancy McCormick Rambusch began teacher preparation
- A smattering of schools open across the country
- Strong, capable women lead the way

Peace, Love and Happiness: Montessori in the late 60’s and 70’s
- Peace as a reaction to war becomes a focus for society
- Montessori gains momentum → Focus on nurturing independence and respect were emphasized
- Teaching Peace and Peace Curriculum become mainstream concepts, and many adopted the language into Montessori’s construct

Second Generation of American Montessori Leadership
- Teaching Peace and Peace Curriculum something you do to and for children
- Techniques become confused with meaningful change – if I’m “teaching peace” why aren’t they more peaceful, quiet, kind, etc.?
- Adaptations lead to Montessori-ish practices
- What is our objective? What is the point of Montessori??

Confusion ensues...
- “How can we speak of Democracy or Freedom when from the very beginning of life we mould the child to undergo tyranny, to obey a dictator? How can we expect democracy when we have reared slaves? Real freedom begins at the beginning of life, not at the adult stage. These people who have been diminished in their powers, made short sighted, devitalized by mental fatigue, whose bodies have become distorted, whose wills have been broken by elders who say: ‘your will must disappear and mine prevail’” – how can we expect them, when school-life is finished, to accept and use the rights of freedom?”

Maria Montessori
Education for a New World
So what did Maria Montessori Mean by Education for Peace?
“The child who has felt a strong love for his surroundings and for all living creatures, who has discovered joy and enthusiasm in work, gives us reason to hope that humanity can develop in a new direction.”

How To? By Fully Implementing Montessori
- Awareness leads to Responsibility
- Culture of Respect
- Nurture Independence
- Freedom and Discipline
- Purposeful Work → Practical Life

How to Change the World:
“We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself; this is the art of those who aspire to serve the spirit.”

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Areas of Growth
- Montessori for Social Justice
  - Anti-Bias, Anti-Racism work should be integrated into all levels of Montessori practice
  - Ground this work within Montessori Philosophy
- Examination of Cultural Appropriation
  - Multicultural approach must be steeped in awareness and respect

“Peace is what every human being is craving for, and it can be brought about by humanity through the child.”

What’s Next
- Study of the terminology, philosophy and practice on all levels, macro → micro
- Reexamination of the depth of this approach
- Research to answer questions
- Examination and addressing of our own areas of failure and need within Montessori
What will Montessori look like in the future?

Exciting new projects to follow:
- Montessori in the Public Sector
- MPPI and the Essential Elements
- Pathway of Continuous Improvement
- Wildflower Montessori

“Education today, in this particular social period, is assuming truly unlimited importance. And the increased emphasis on its practical value can be summed up in one sentence: education is the best weapon for peace.”

Education and Peace

Thank You!

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