

WHAT BROUGHT ME TO „MONTESSORI“

I was fortunate to find Montessori through the children themselves - fortunate because I think my intellectual prejudices would have prevented me from opening my mind to anything other than a living experience.

I had majored in education at Smith College - no mention of Montessori there! - and had become a second grade teacher in the public school system. Nothing in my background had prepared me to receive my first introduction to Montessori (through a reading of Standing's biography) in a favourable light. In the same year, however, (1962) I was asked to be an assistant in a Montessori class to be started in the private day-school attended by my two older children. Because I respected the headmaster of the school and because my own three-year-old daughter was eligible for the class, I decided it might be an interesting experience for us both. And indeed it was!

What seemed so amazing to me that fall, was the teacher's constant reaching out to the children, and the responses she aroused in them. She persistently called them away from aimless, destructive, sometimes chaotic behaviour, and to-

ward something in themselves that seemed to pull them together, to bring them into focus, and to free them for a constructive response to their world. Because of the personal integration they achieved, the atmosphere in the classroom was spontaneous, joyful, and purposeful. There was a peace and freedom from tension there that seemed to release the children to live their lives to the fullest.

By spring of the first year the children were happy and working hard. I knew then that this was an educational approach superior to any I had seen before, and that I wanted to support it.

Since those early beginnings, I have found each year has taken me a few steps deeper into Montessori. Just in Cincinnati and now in my new home of Chicago, I have become ever more involved in public relations, study and writing - and, of course, best of all with the children themselves - and what a growing, stimulating adventure it has been!

For those who will let it, Montessori is truly as open ended as the child himself.

Paula Lillard

ANNOUNCEMENT



Plans are being made to hold two Montessori Congresses in 1974, one in Brazil, the other in Venezuela.

For information: Mrs. Talita de Almeida

Avenida Nossa Senhora de Copacabana, 435
salas 1201 à 1206 Copacabana

RIO DE JANEIRO - Guanabara - Brazil