

***My Montessori Metamorphosis***  
***by MEPI Intern, Molly Baker***

As I began my first year as a Montessori guide, I was entranced by the magic of Montessori. I saw it in my own children who thrived in its non-competitive atmosphere. I was transfixed as I heard other Montessori educators tell marvelous tales from their own classrooms describing close-knit communities of little workers. I approached the much-revered materials with trepidation as I knew I must master them before I could share them, and I trembled at the mention of big words like *normalization* and *spontaneous concentration* wondering if I would ever be able to attach some sort of concrete meaning to them.

Next, I began to realize that Montessori is not just a method of educating, but a way of life. The principles I was learning began to shape the lens through which I looked at myself. As I taught little ones what it means to respect materials and put things away, I became keenly aware of my shortcomings in these areas. As I appreciated individual differences in my classroom, I noticed how often I expect my daughters to be alike. When I taught peace-making tactics and respect for others, I realized how fast I am to pass judgment or to become quickly resentful when misunderstood, and as I felt burdened to impart my great knowledge to a child, I was frequently humbled by how much he has to teach me. Ironically, as I have read about the utmost importance of nurturing the child's spirit, I am ashamed at how often I have been too hurried to feed my own.

I began to learn that no two Montessorians wear the Montessori mantle the same way and to expect myself to be just like someone else is too uncomfortable a cloak to wear. I have experienced the beauty of educators coming together as equal contributors to willingly share ideas, materials and time as opposed to competing for higher test scores.

I have come to value the importance of the practical life exercises, giving my own children more responsibility at home as I recognize I do too much for them. I have realized the settled feeling I get when performing daily tasks is not random but my spirit responding to the calm that completing everyday chores brings us. I have noticed how I ponder the more complicated parts of my life while performing these practical life routines and how students are doing the same in my classroom when they practice a pouring lesson after completing a challenging work.

And, lest someone fear I have not gleaned all the facts, I have internalized the essential components of observation, hands-on materials, developmentally appropriate lessons, line time, mixed-age groups and the "three-period lesson," just to name a few of the many ideas the Montessori course of study inundates the intern with. I think I am also finally able to define phrases like the "absorbent mind" and the "prepared environment," and I have practiced the bead cabinet lessons in my dreams, awaking to find myself trying to fold up like one of the chains.

So, I call this year my Montessori Metamorphosis...

I am definitely not a beautiful butterfly, but I like to think I am in the continual process of "becoming." This year I have feasted on knowledge like a "hungry caterpillar" and so am now ready to spin a "practical life cocoon" and nurture my spirit while my brain subconsciously considers all I have learned. As I "spin" and wait and eventually emerge, I anticipate the transformation to continue taking place. I know I will never be perfected. Still, I hope to always be "metamorphosizing" into someone more aware of the influence I have on children who shape the future—someone more intent on the intangible treasures of eternity.