

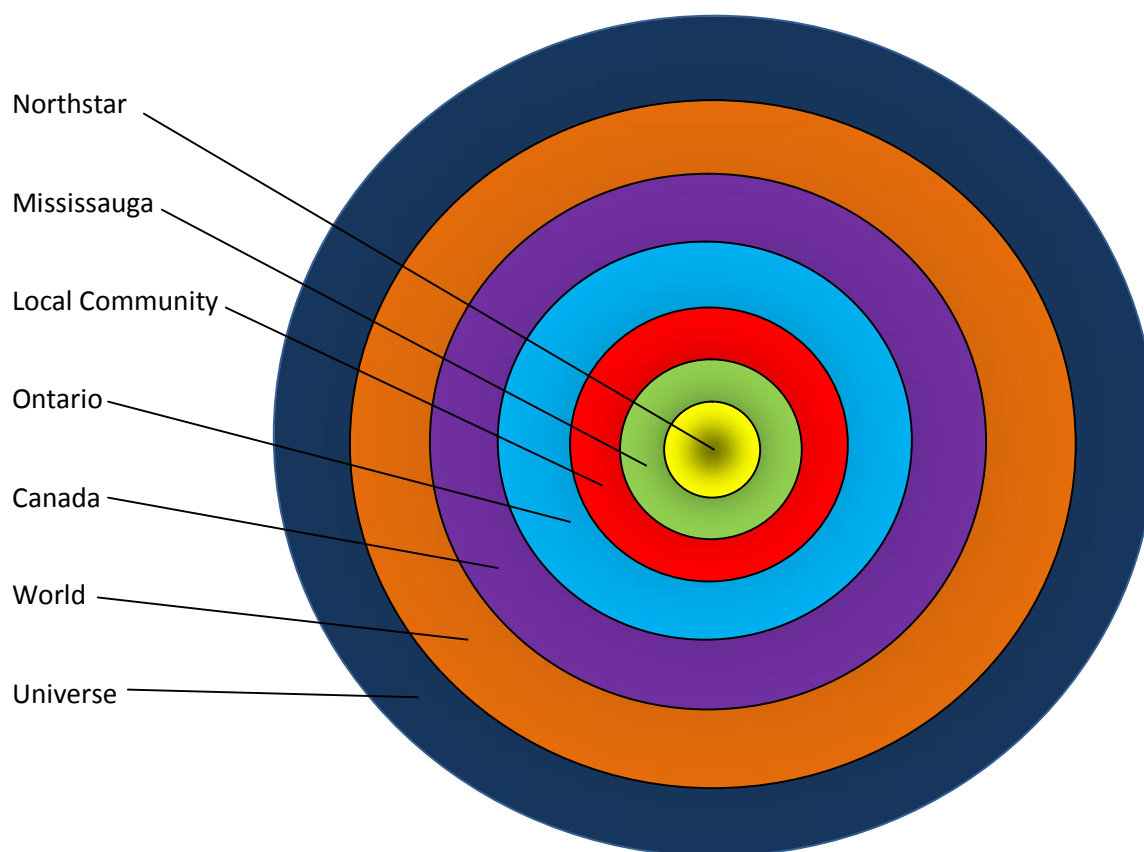
Kristina Wright

Michael Waski

NAMTA Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies

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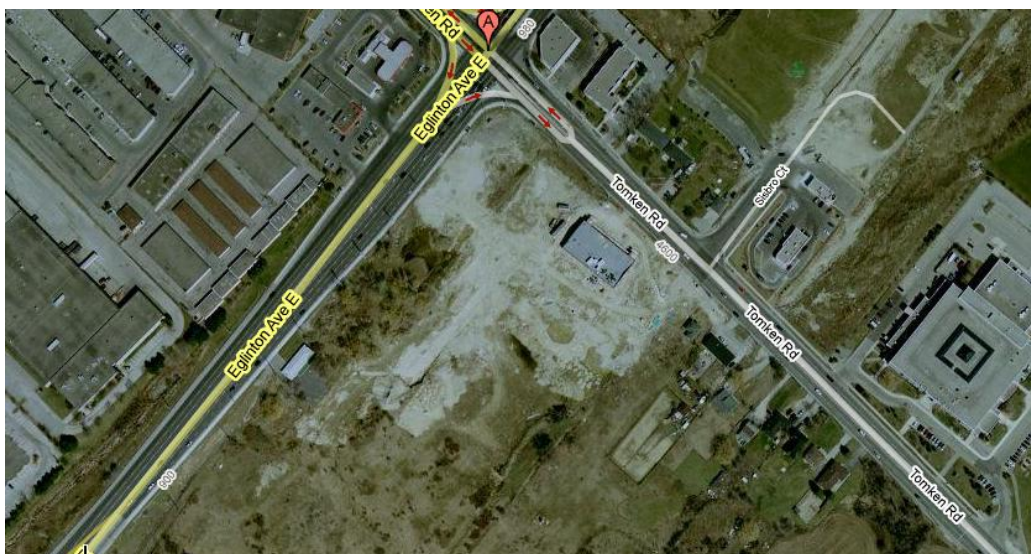
Studying a Place Using the Montessori Educational Syllabus



I will attempt to explain pedagogy of place, in respect to my school, using the concentric circles approach which I have illustrated above. I will begin with the immediate school community. My school is called Northstar Montessori Private School and is located in Mississauga, Ontario, just outside of Toronto. We have approximately 230 to 240 students, ranging in age from sixteen months to grade six,

currently. We will be starting up our adolescent program in September of 2009, with three grade six students and three grade seven students. The families in our school are mostly middle to upper class, with a large ethnic diversity, predominantly East Indian, Chinese and Filipino. I am hoping to use the families within the school community as a resource for Ethnic Studies and specialties (depending on parent's occupations), etc. Also, with the school, the adolescent students will be able to assist in other classrooms as reading buddies, supervision, developing a compost program, and other areas as interests arise.

We have a small classroom on the upper floor of our school which will be used for the adolescent program. There is a kitchen which is located off of our gymnasium, and we will use it for cooking lunches and any cooking and baking which is incorporated into our occupations and micro-economy. We have a plot of land in the back of our building which is used for a playground and soccer field. Beyond our playground is cleared, undeveloped land which has currently not been purchased for development. We do have some land outside of the fenced playground that is available for gardening and hopefully to construct a small greenhouse as part of an occupations project, and later to incorporate into our micro-economy. Just beyond the undeveloped land, we have a small stretch of forested area that we will explore to see the potentials for study.



I have included above a picture of our site before our school was built on the property. This area is quite developed now with restaurants and shops on the undeveloped land that is seen in the picture. Our school was built two years ago, as we outgrew our previous building. Below is a recent front view of our building.



Within the City of Mississauga we have some resources which we will be able to use to enhance our academic curriculum. Some of these include local libraries, Habitat's for Humanity, nursing homes, local government buildings, Historical Houses (Benares House and Bradley House), the Women's Shelter, the Credit Valley River, cemeteries, local parks, gardens and farms. We currently have a relationship with a nursing home located a few minutes walk from our school, as the upper elementary students did some volunteer work there in the past few years.

Since we are located just outside of Toronto, there are a multitude of opportunities for exploration just outside of our city. Toronto is approximately a twenty-five minute train ride away, and contains a number of resources that we will be able to take advantage of. Some of those include the Art Gallery of Ontario (A.G.O), Royal Ontario Museum (R.O.M.) which is a natural history museum, Provincial

Government buildings, the C.N. Tower, the Science Centre, Black Creek Pioneer Village, Provincial Parks, several colleges and universities, Lake Ontario, the Air Canada Centre (for hockey and lacrosse games), numerous theatres for live performances, and countless others that will be discovered through experience and exploration.

Within the province of Ontario, we have several other options for further areas of study. We will be visiting the city of Ottawa for the first week of school for our Odyssey Trip. There we will visit the Parliament Buildings and take a historic tour of the city on an Amphibus, which drives through the city and then into the Rideau Canal, where it turns into a boat. I would like to take the students to St. Catherine's to begin a study on the St. Lawrence Seaway. Located in St. Catherine's is the Welland Canal and Museum, where they will be able to learn about how the locks work to move the ships through the St. Lawrence and visit the 'Follow the North Star Exhibit', which illustrates St. Catherine's role in the Underground Railroad. Our school is located less than an hour from Six Nations Indian Reserve and has many rivers, lakes and Provincial and National Parks which we could visit. We are also located near Stratford Festival Theatres, which is a world renowned theatre, well known for their Shakespeare productions.

Outside of Ontario, we have countless opportunities for exploration, if our budget allows. To the east we have historic Quebec City and Montreal, deep sea fishing in Newfoundland, Halifax to learn the history of the Bluenose and see Bluenose II, the replica, Peggy's Cove, the Anne of Green Gables House in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, etc. To the west we have prairie and agricultural studies, Calgary Stampede, Lake Louise, the Athabasca Glacier, the Rocky Mountains, whale watching, etc.

Beyond Canada the possibilities are endless. Studies could include human migration, Ancient Civilizations, Global Warming and environmental responsibilities, astronomy and the solar system, the laws of the Universe, endangered species, etc.

Each of the resources mentioned could be used as a first period lesson, with possibilities for individual exploration, in any direction that the imagination takes the students. I will focus on one area of study which will be possible next year, and will write about how the three period lesson will be presented and the specific avenues of research that the student could take from there.

Through research, I have discovered that the Royal Ontario Museum, in Toronto, will be hosting the largest King Tut exhibit ever displayed, beginning November 21st, 2009. I have decided to use this exhibit as my entry point into a study of Ancient Civilizations. The first period lesson could include an introduction to Ancient Egypt, through stories, documentaries, role playing, etc. We will follow this with a visit to R.O.M. to see the exhibit.

From here, the students will select areas of interest to investigate as the second period. Some of these could include a study of King Tut himself, a study of the Ancient Egyptian civilization based around the Fundamental Needs of Humankind, exploration of other Ancient Civilizations, study of preservation and mummification, excavation, study of the Rosetta Stone and the history of writing, study of the Great Pyramids, study of Ancient Egyptian Mathematics, religious structures of Ancient Egypt, Ancient Egyptian ship building, time line of the Egyptian Pharaohs, study of Egyptian and Greek commerce, etc.

The third period of the lesson would involve the presentation of the information that was acquired during their second period of study. The students would use their research to create a concrete presentation in the form of timelines, charts, illustrations, graphs, role playing, narratives, etc. and would use that to present to their peers. In this way, their peers would be able to learn something of the others student's research and area of study. As well, the students presenting would solidify their knowledge through presentation and gain experience with public speaking and performing arts.

Below I have included a chart to illustrate a variety of activities which could be included into the educational syllabus for a four week period on study of King Tut and the Ancient Egyptian Civilization.

This shows the interconnectedness of the disciplines and allows the students to be working in a variety of curriculum areas.

	Week One	Week Two	Week Three	Week Four
Self-Expression Music Language Art	Burial treasures and gems	Narrative writing as King Tut	Mask making	Study of Ancient Egyptian Art
Psychic Development Moral Development Mathematics Language	Plotting the burial site of King Tut	Read and discuss history of King Tut	Hieroglyphics	Study of Ancient Egyptian math system
Prep. Of Adult Study of Earth Human Progress History of Mankind	Create a mummy of a fish and bury it	Mapping of Egypt	Timeline of Egyptian Pharaohs	Excavation

Next, I will describe some of the ideas that I have for our micro-economy and occupations projects. Because I will have only six students, we will have to limit this to a few occupations, hopefully that we can incorporate into the micro-economy. The first occupation that I would like to do is to build a green house on our property. Due to our limited growing season, we will be unable to plant in the green house until spring, but at that time hopefully we can incorporate it into our micro-economy, with the sale of organic produce and herbs. As an occupation the students will learn about the benefits of organic farming and agriculture. They can do soil testing, composting, germination, etc. The beginning of the school year would also be a good time to start the occupation of food preservation, while fresh, local produce is still available. The students could make jam, pickled beets, asparagus, etc. They could also do baking. The products that they make could be sold to the families and teachers within the school. Through the winter I would like to introduce the students to jewellery making, which could be made to sell to the families within the school. I would like to begin a tradition of donating some of our products to a local charity of the children's choice, who would benefit from the products that are developed. An example of this would be the Women's Shelter or Food Bank. Beyond this, the students could explore other avenues as they became interested.

On top of this, it is important to involve the adolescents in some sort of community service. Some ideas which I have considered are working on a build with Habitat's for Humanity, volunteering at a food bank or community kitchen, visiting retirement homes, Make a Wish Foundation, etc. I believe that it is essential to expose children and adolescents to opportunities to give back to their community in order to create a habit of generosity.

We must say at once that the aim should be to widen education instead of restricting it. Our reform is one of the distribution of culture and methods of teaching. The plan aims above all at "valorization of the personality" in the present social conditions. (Montessori, Maria. From Childhood to Adolescence. p.71)