# Partnering with Adults: The Fifth Plane

Presented by Julia Volkman American Montessori Society Conference (March, 2012)

## The Planes of Development

#### Plane 1: Infancy (Ages 0-6)

- What is this world?
- Unconscious to conscious sensorial explorer: The mind is made by the work of the hands
- Adaptation to the cultural/family environment driven by sensitive periods
- Physiology is rapidly changing: the Absorbent Mind
- Neural development is dramatic; excessive neural pathway formation; neural pruning begins

## Plan 2: Childhood (Ages 6-12)

- Why? How does this world work?
- Joyful scholars: exploration of reason
- Adaptation to the social/peer group
- Physiology is stable
- Neural development refines neural pathways (pruning)
- Concerned with justice, reason, and morality

### Plane 3: Adolescence (Ages 12-18)

- Who am I? What do I believe?
- Concerned with self definition, social justice, moral conscience, responsibility, moral dignity, social interests; exploration of society
- Adaptation to the larger community, role models/heros
- Physiology is rapidly changing
- Neural development includes an ongoing reduction in grey matter; frontal lobes developing

#### Plane 4: Maturity (Ages 18-24)

- What is my life's path? How will I contribute to humanity?
- Concerned with life's work: exploration of self as part of humanity
- Adaptation to <u>independent living/self-realization</u>: romantic relationships, financial independence, career/studies
- Physiology is stable
- Neural development includes an ongoing reduction in grey matter; frontal lobes complete developing

## Plane 5: Adulthood (Ages 24-99)

- What is the meaning of this life? How do I balance obligation and freedom? What brings joy? What new skills/knowledge do I need?
- Concerned with career and economics: daily relevance, immediate practice
- Adaptation to evolving domestic/work situations
- Neural development is plastic
- Physiology is stable (with intermittent failures)

## **Neuroscientific Principles**

Dynamic Skill Theory

- Skills develop with predictable advances and regressions on the road to mastery
- Skill development requires varying levels of support over time
- Application of developing skills is *context* dependent

#### Stress

- Includes emotional events, fatigue, medical interventions, illness, social events (e.g., being observed, put on the spot), etc.
- Prevents the higher brain areas from engaging
- Intellectual concepts cannot be grasped/applied while under stress
- Cortisol is released 15-20 minutes *after* the stressor is experienced

## **Montessori Pedagogy**

Adult Prepared Environment: A place for everything—belongings, privacy, social engagement

## Finding the Adults' Work

- <u>Teachers</u>: designing/maintaining the classroom environment, designing/following the daily routine, planning/offering lessons, inspiring/guiding the children to their work, responding to the needs of the moment, sharing joy
- Assistant Teachers: maintaining the classroom environment, following the daily routine, providing feedback on the environment/routine, assisting the children with self-care, inspiring/guiding the children to their work, responding to the needs of the moment, sharing joy
- <u>Administration</u>: designing/maintaining the school environment, designing/following the daily routine, planning/offering lessons on pedagogy/school philosophy, , inspiring/guiding staff/families to their work, responding to the needs of the moment, sharing joy
- <u>Parents</u>: designing/maintaining the home environment, designing/following the daily routine, planning/offering life lessons, responding to the needs of the moment, sharing joy, inspiring us with their children's successes

### Possibilities for Adult Engagement

- Mentoring: Family to family, staff to staff, staff to family, family to staff
- Observations: By parents, by staff
- Discovery nights: For parents, for staff
- Work Shares: Inviting parents into the classroom to be taught by their children (outside of the regular work cycle time)
- Going out: Field trips, Family excursions, Professional development
- Holidays: Sharing traditions, food, beliefs