

Children learn self-teaching in local Montessori program

by Kathy Robinette
Battalion Reporter
Most children learn how to read, write, add, subtract and multiply by the third grade.

However, at the Mary of the Oaks Montessori School, a child can learn all this and more by the age of 6, when most children are in first grade.

Mary of the Oaks is the only Montessori school in the local area, on River Road off Highway 60, and is based on the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori, founder of the Montessori System.

Montessori, who died in 1952, worked with handicapped

children in Rome and observed how quickly they used their senses. From these observations, she developed a system that encourages self-education by teaching young children to train their senses.

Director Veronika Motekaitis said she became interested in Montessori's work while she was a graduate student at Illinois Teacher's College. Motekaitis started a Montessori school 10 years ago with three pupils — one of whom was her daughter Milda — in an extra bedroom of her home.

In 1974, the Mary of the Oaks Montessori School opened with

12 students, and today, it has 15 pupils

"The Montessori system is a no-rush, no-bother system," Motekaitis said. The children, ranging in age from 2½ to 6, choose what they want to study on a particular day, she said.

The program helps the child develop his eye-hand coordination, Motekaitis said. The youngest children begin by studying practical life activities in which they learn how to coordinate their small muscles by washing hands, washing scraps of material, pouring liquids, scrubbing floors, sewing and polishing objects, she said.

By the age of 3 to 3½, they are well into practical life. Motekaitis said they begin sensory exercises by working with building blocks — learning to identify the largest from the smallest and tracing geometric shapes with their fingers. This practice will help them when they start to learn to write.

Usually by the age of 4 to 4½, the child will begin to learn reading, writing and math, Motekaitis said. The children also are taught science, geography, music, creative dramatics, art and dance.

In addition to these activities, children learn grace, poise and courtesy, Motekaitis said.

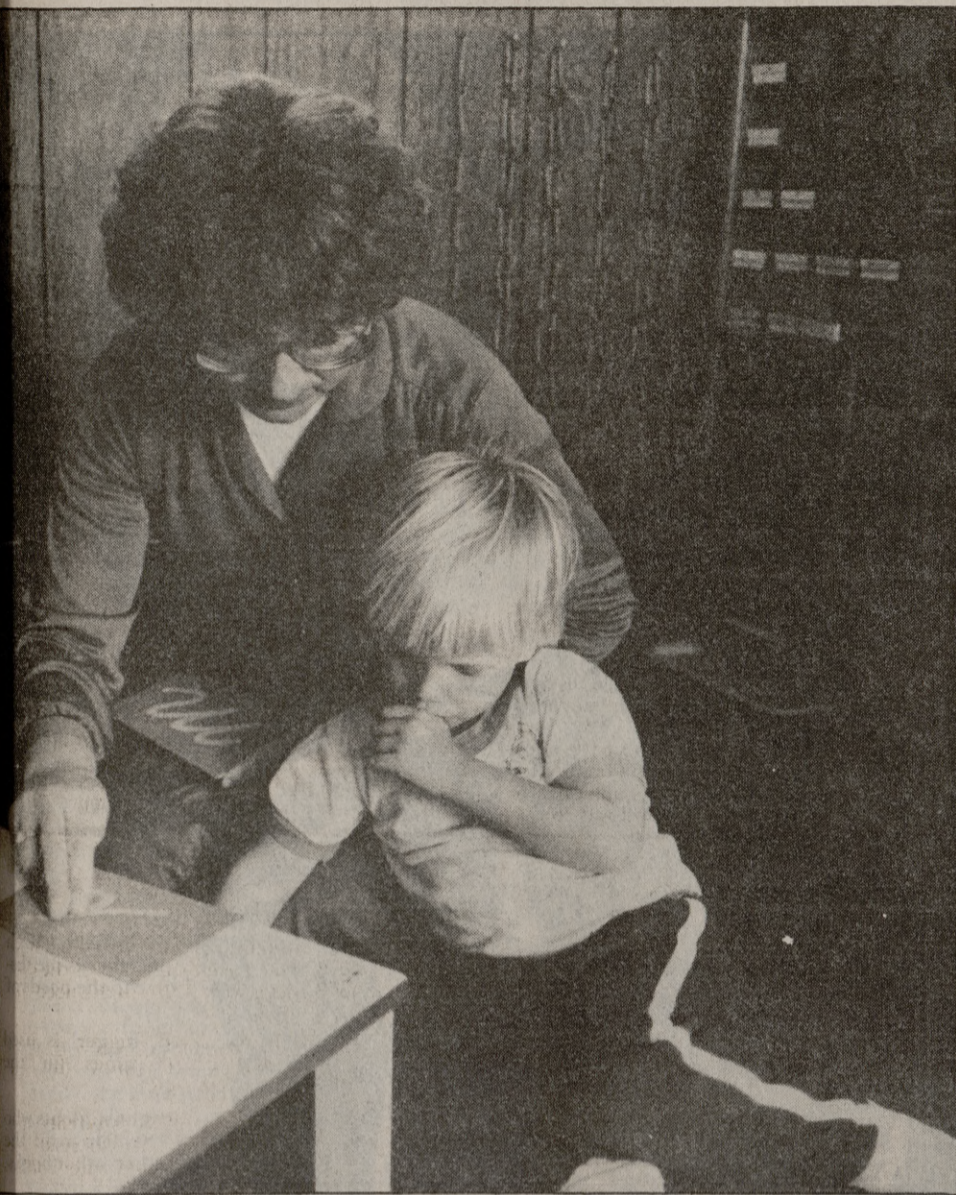


photo by Gabriel Elliott

Veronika Motekaitis, director of the Mary of the Oaks Montessori School, shows Trevor Carney, 3, of Bryan, how to identify the letters in the alphabet.

Latin leader blasts Clements' oil ties

United Press International
AUSTIN — The national president of the League of United Latin American Citizens on Thursday accused Gov. Bill Clements of making contacts with leaders of Mexico to "feather his own nest" and promote his oil well drilling business.

Tony Bonilla recalled that when Clements was campaigning for office he responded to questions about bilingual education by telling reporters he was not running for governor of Mexico.

"If he wasn't running for governor of Mexico, why is he spending so much time down there," Bonilla said.

"Our opinion is the governor is doing this to feather his own nest in anticipation of departing from office, and so he can become even wealthier in his drilling business."

"I challenge him to deny he's talked to anybody on these trips about his own business."

The Latin leader said Clements' contacts with outgoing Mexican President Jose Lopez Portillo and Portillo's apparent successor, Miguel de la Madrid, would be very important to the oil well drilling firm founded by Clements.

Bonilla also said LULAC opposes Republican proposals for a temporary guest worker program allowing Mexican citizens to work in the United States, claiming such programs in the past have amounted to institutionalized slavery.

"If the governor is so concerned about the people of this state, he should see that legislation is enacted in the next session, or call a special session, and see that farm workers are given their rights," Bonilla said. "Then we can sit down and talk about these other problems."

The LULAC president also criticized President Reagan's New Federalism, saying it would seriously curtail bilingual education programs, increase suffering among the poor and increase the financial burden on states that are already in a bind.

"It is LULAC's contention that the president should spend less time visiting with consultants at \$1,000-a-plate dinners and start visiting with the real mainstream of America, the middle income and the poor," Bonilla said. "The message he would be receiving is that we do not want free cheese donated to us; we want jobs."

Priests urge, aid workers to quit nuclear plant jobs

United Press International
AMARILLO — A group of priests has donated \$10,000 to Catholic Bishop L.T. Matthiesen to provide counseling, support and financial aid to Pantex nuclear plant workers who choose to seek work in peaceful occupations.

Matthiesen, bishop of the Amarillo Diocese, last summer urged employees to leave their jobs at Pantex, a Department of Energy facility that assembles nuclear weapons.

But in a statement released Wednesday by the West Texas Catholic, a weekly newspaper, Matthiesen said his statement on the immorality of nuclear arms production was weakened by an inability to economically assist workers who decided to seek employment elsewhere.

In an effort to aid such workers, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, an order of Catholic priests, presented Matthiesen with a check for \$10,000.

"The Solidarity Peace Fund will hopefully bear the fruit of peaceful conversion for Pantex workers," Matthiesen said.

Father Donald Bargaen, Oblate provincial for the order's central province, said the funds would be used to "provide counseling services and interim financial support for workers in nuclear arms manufacturing who choose to seek work in

peaceful occupations." Another member of the Oblates, Father Larry Rosebaugh, served a year in prison for his Feb. 10, 1981, attempt to scale a fence at the Pantex plant during a prayer pilgrimage with five other priests.

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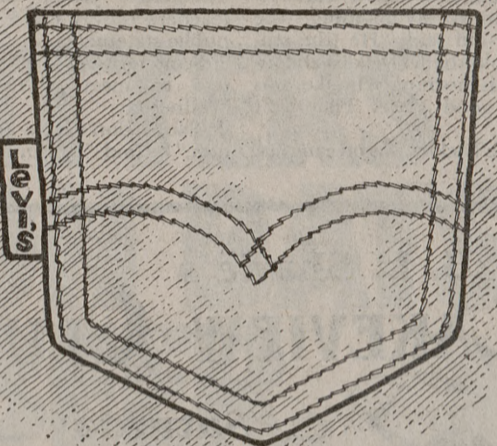
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