

# Montessori Pathways'

## News

**December 2014**

*"The child, in fact, once he feels sure of himself, will no longer seek the approval of authority after every step."*

*Maria Montessori*



### Notes from Ms. Alena

**"Christmas Tree"**  
**(Kindergarten Art Project)**

The children were only in school for three weeks in December. But they were extremely busy in this short amount of time. Aside from working with materials, their main task was preparing for the **Winter Celebration**. There was not a lot of time in which to prepare after the Thanksgiving Celebration. The children had to prepare songs, dances, poems, masks, family presents. The children continually sang songs throughout the day, living in the spirit of the celebration.

I was very pleasantly surprised when I entered the class and saw the children singing along while preparing presents. It looked just like Santa's shop! I couldn't resist and took a video to share with you (this is a private video, which can only be accessed by our parents, who have the link):

<http://youtu.be/hj5EpBZXquU>

The kids carried this same holiday spirit to our winter celebration! We hope you enjoyed it as much as we did. Thank you to everybody who shared this wonderful evening with us!



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We hope everybody had a wonderful holiday season and we wish you the best of luck in the coming New Year!

### Coming School Events

- **January 15 – January 30 – Returning Families Re-Enrollment Period**

January is an important time for parents in making the decision regarding their child's Kindergarten and Elementary attendance. Prior to making this decision, it is important to consider all of the possible options.

*"One test of the correctness of educational procedure is  
the happiness of the child."*

*Maria Montessori*

- We invite you to attend our **Parent Evening "Thinking about the future – The importance of the Montessori Kindergarten year and Elementary education"** on **Thursday, January 22, at 6:00 p.m.**

We really encourage you to attend this meeting and prepare any questions that you may have.

- **Friday, January 30 - Elementary Parent / Teacher Conference by appt.**
  - **Early Dismissal (11:45 am) for School Day Elementary students**
  - **Regular Schedule for All Day Elementary Students**
- **February 2 – New Families Enrollment begins**

As always, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns, feel free to contact us via e-mail  
[montpathways@hotmail.com](mailto:montpathways@hotmail.com)

Warmly,  
Ms. Alena

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## Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)

Mr. Matt

Season's greetings! Hope everybody is having a wonderful time during our 2 week hiatus.

In December we continued our study of the parts of speech. The children learned about the *conjunction*. The conjunction's function is to join together multiple phrases, verbs or nouns. Conjunction comes from the Latin "conjugare" which means join together.

The first graders focused on the three conjunctions that are most prevalent in the English language: *and*, *or*, *but*. Some of the third graders worked with more rare conjunctions such as *neither*, *nor*, *for*, etc. The third graders also were introduced to *prefixes*.



In biology, we continued our study of vertebrates, invertebrates and plants. We learned about our third vertebrate, *the reptile*. This was our first vertebrate that lives primarily on land for and breathes with lungs. The invertebrate we learned about was *the phylum of porifera*, more commonly known as sea sponges. Poriferians are the simplest members of the animal kingdom. They are also one of the most enduring. Sea sponges date as far back as 530 million years ago. They have survived multiple mass extinctions. We also continued our *study of plants, focusing on roots*.



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In math, the first graders continued their work with *multiplication*. The first graders also had the *subtraction* key experience, in which they learn what subtraction is when I take away a portion of a quantity they have built (maniacal laugh included), this illustrates that in subtraction you start with a quantity, then a part of it is taken away and thus the difference is going to be smaller than the initial number (minuend).

The second and third graders reviewed subtraction and continued to work on their multiplication skills. Toward the end of the month they continued their *fraction work* and were introduced to *addition and subtraction of fractions with unlike denominators*. This required finding common denominators which required their previous knowledge of common multiples and multiplication.



In geography we began our *study of Europe*. Thanks to everyone who sent in pieces from European countries, the children were excited to learn about each other's culture as well as to teach others. Europe was our first continent which has the polar region biome. The harsh conditions of this biome required different adaptations for survival than the other biomes we're used to.



We also created some coasters for you, the parents. The children and I also worked on our wrapping skills, wrapping the coasters and paintings from art class. Curling ribbon took some getting used to, it was one of those things that had to be described again and again and people only really get once they've done it.

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*Happy Holidays,*

*Mr. Matt*

## **Notes from the Art Class (*Kindergarten and Elementary*)**

*Ms. Susan*

In December, the art class explored painting on canvas. They followed along with instructor examples to create winter tree scenes, and then added their own creative details. During this activity they learned about mixing paint, painting in layers, and storytelling in composition.

In another activity, students made holiday ornaments. They first explored making paper ornaments by cutting with scissors and using glue. Then, they tried making paper ornaments using origami folding techniques to make a holiday tree out of a single piece of paper with no cutting. They learned how to fold a square paper to make a triangle, then a diamond, and then folded the tip of the diamond to make a square base - ending up with a holiday tree they could decorate with markers and give as a gift.



*Sincerely,*  
*Ms. Susan*

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## Kindergarten Extended Day News

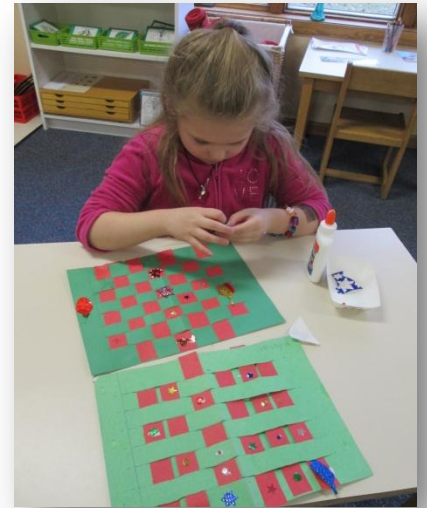
*Ms. Karen, Ms. Christine*



In keeping with previous months this year, December also went by in a flash! In addition to the Montessori curriculum, our short month included holiday preparations. The children so enjoyed making their holiday gifts, cards, ornaments and decorations. It was an opportunity to use some skills that were developed with practice over time.

The projects included geometry: transforming the 2 dimensional paper into a 3 dimensional wreath. Weaving was included in both the placemats and the holiday wall hanging. Also included is the idea of patterning: many of the children recognized patterns and commented on this, especially while weaving the holiday placemat. Maintaining the pattern required focus and concentration. All projects required following multi-step directions and organization.

They loved the cutting, gluing, weaving, tying of the ribbons, etc. Who would have thought ---- children love the "simple" acts of cutting, gluing and decorating? What looks like a simple, no-brainer activity to us is actually a challenging skill that the Kindergarten children have developed over time. What are some of the complexities that they have mastered?



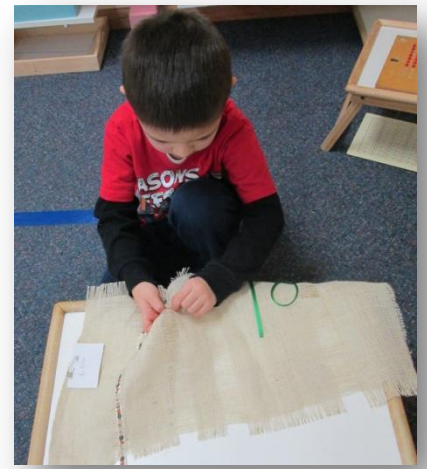
The first thing to notice is that, unlike many other activities, cutting with a scissors requires use of both hands. Not only that, but each hand is doing a totally different activity. The right hand (for the right hander) is opening and closing, while the left hand is simply holding the paper straight in front of them. The left hand is also required to be steady and exert pressure to keep the paper in place, even turning the paper in rhythm to the cutting task, in order to stay on the line with precision.

Also included in the skills needed, of course, is gluing ---- can be messy, right? For the children, initially, it is magical. Wow! I apply this white stuff and it holds. I can turn the paper upside down and it doesn't fall off!!! The children have been provided many open-ended art activities over time, to help the child master the use of glue.

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And organization: what do I need to do the activity, how do I organize my materials, what kind of decorations do I want? And planning: one child said "I could see in my head exactly how I wanted it to turn out."

So now that the kindergarten child has some proficiency with the processes, he can fully enjoy the activity ----using his skills in a variety of ways on a variety of textures. Hours were spent in just such activities. "Creativity is inventing, experimenting, growing ....and having fun." (Mary Lou Cook) It was a happy time of contentment.



Looking for an after the holiday absorbing activity?? Your child would love a box of mixed paper (foil, embossed ----actually much of the holiday wrap), shiny things (sequins, etc), ribbon, yarn, glue, tape, crayons, colored pencils, and a scissors that works well (Fiskars). They will be happily absorbed in so many creative projects! A little of each of the above in little containers within the box is a perfect relaxing gift. A little music in the background and a cup of hot chocolate.

And, in the midst of the holiday feeling, we took a *special field trip to the City of Crystal Lake* (it was a very brisk walk!) We learned about so many things: how the police help us, what a jail cell looks like, what happens when a water main breaks (we SAW that one!), what the HUGE trucks for snow plowing look like and so much more. It culminated in the children having the opportunity to sit in the chairs of the city representatives where the decisions are actually made. All in all, a wonderful look into the complex functioning of a small town.



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And, of course, the children put so much time, effort, and LOVE into their preparation for the Christmas evening with the parents (often heard singing their songs while working on other projects in the classroom). Now that they had some experience (just a month ago) they undertake the celebration event with focus and intention. They were eager to share their effort with you, and that was apparent in the wonderful Wednesday evening shared with family, a culmination of their desire to share with others. We were so happy to have so many family members share the program with us. (There is no performance without an audience). For me personally, it was the official opening of the holiday season.



*Warm wishes to you all,  
Ms. Karen, Ms. Christine*

### Notes from the East Classroom:

*Ms. Christine, Ms. Laxmi*

We hope our families are enjoying the Winter Break and sincerely thank you for your positive feedback from the Winter Celebration as well as very generous gifts! Your children are the greatest gifts of all and thank you for supporting our school family :)

Our classroom has grown in their accomplishments and achievements this year!

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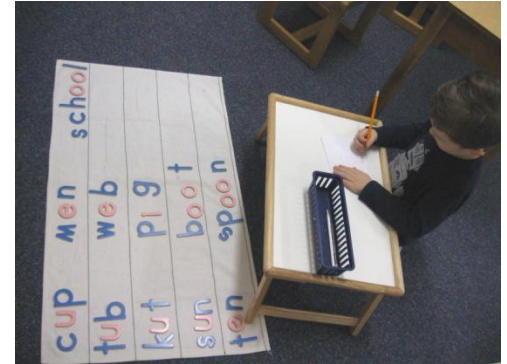




Handwriting skills have probably been one of the biggest subjects of success; all the fine motor skills learned and honed in Practical Life have attributed to this milestone for many.

We have many students interested and focused on math; addition/subtraction/multiplication and division equations - by the way.....their "choice work"!

Many students are on the brink of reading - we continue our daily work with phonetic letter sounds and reading materials as well as word building skills.



As we have many young students this year, the routine of organizing themselves and their work space is in progress and it has been very rewarding to see their success with establishing their independent achievements.



We have enjoyed making fun, warm and delicious snacks as well as fun seasonal art projects. Thank you so much for Sharing Basket contributions.

Wishing you and your families all the best this Holiday Season and look forward to the best in 2015!

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Warmly,  
Ms. Christine, Ms. Laxmi

## Notes from the South Classroom

*Ms. Ambreen*

December started in full swing of holiday season. Although we only had three weeks of school, these were the busiest and most interesting weeks of the year.

During the first two weeks, along with our routine Montessori activities, we did many beautiful holiday projects like parts of the Christmas tree and the beautiful holiday star.

The kindergarteners did a lot of word building related to the holidays we celebrate in December. We also practiced everyday for our holiday celebration, which was



held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December. I extend my appreciation to all the families and friends who attended this event and participated in the sharing basket.



The third week, being the last week of the year 2014, was very special and dedicated to all the holidays. On Monday, we celebrated *Hanukkah* and learned all about this Jewish holiday. We made potato latkes in class and had them as a snack. We played a Montessori memory game with the Dreidel. The kids enjoyed dancing the Horah around a Menorah and received golden chocolate coins as treats to take home.

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On Tuesday we celebrated *Kwanzaa*, the African American holiday. We learned about the significance of the Kinara, which is a special candle holder with seven candles. The kids enjoyed singing a special Kwanzaa song. They had popcorn and fresh apples for snack.

On Wednesday, we celebrated *Christmas*. We trimmed our South Room Christmas Tree and caroled around it. The children made special gifts and frosted cookies to take home for their families. To end this special celebration, we all enjoyed having delicious pumpkin bread for snack.



On Thursday, the South Room was very excited to celebrate the end of the year 2014 and the advent of the *New Year*. The kids wrote their beautiful New Year resolution poems and made a pledge to use their hands to help their friends and dear ones in the coming year.

From December 20<sup>th</sup> to January 4<sup>th</sup> is our winter break. Have plenty of rest and loads of fun with your families. I wish you all a very happy Holiday Season and look forward to seeing you with your big smiles after break.



*Sincerely,*  
*Ms. Ambreen*

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## Notes from Pre-K Extended Day Class

*Ms. Ambreen*

December, the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the year, signifies the Holiday Season. It was a very busy month with many celebrations for us in the Pre-K class.

The trimming of the Christmas tree motivated us to learn about its parts. The triangular shape of the tree encouraged us to use our geometry cabinet and learn all about the different kinds of triangles and their names. Through the triangle box, the kids practiced forming triangles.



The lovely poinsettia flowers motivated them to learn about the parts of a flower. The celebration of Kwanzaa, the African American holiday, led the pre-k to study about the continent of Africa.

In math, we used our teen and ten boards to reinforce the formations of the teen numbers and the numbers beyond teen.

In language, our vowel of the month was "i", so we worked on the word families using this vowel.



In art, the students made beautiful holiday stars, poinsettia flowers, and lovely wreaths for their December folders.

Parents please review the December folder and all the work sent home with your child. Wish you all a very happy holiday season.



*In December I will be  
A bauble bangle Christmas tree  
With soup bowls draped all over me  
Merry once, Merry twice,  
Merry chicken soup with rice.*

*Sincerely,  
Ms. Ambreen*

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## Notes from the Late Afternoon classroom:

*Ms. Donna*

Games: *White Snow, White Snow what do you see?*

- The children stood up when their part of the story was called.

*I Spy Christmas.* - Each child was given an object to find. When the child found the picture another child would look for their object.

Since there hasn't been any luck with snow, we went to the lower level to have a snowball fight with rolled up socks. Almost as fun as the real thing, and definitely not as cold.

We also played a version of hot potato. When the music stopped the person holding the box was to unwrap a layer of paper. This continues until we got to the box and then each child could pick out a small toy that was in the box. A great time was had by all.



Art: To enjoy the holiday spirit, we made a *gingerbread doll*. Simply cut, paper punch, sew and stuff, and add a face for a fun new friend! We also made a black and white snowman picture since the month of December hasn't given us a chance to make a real snowman yet.

Acting out stories: The children would pick out a book, choose their parts, and then someone or Ms. Donna was the narrator. There would be a quick rehearsal. Then the kids would set up chairs for those who might want to see the show.

Books: "One Christmas Eve" by Margaret Wise Brown  
"Merry Christmas Curious George" by Cathy Hapka  
"A Snowy Day"  
"Christmas Lights" by Amy and Richard Hutchings  
"The Mouse before Christmas" by Michael Garland  
"The Snow storm" by Stephen Cartwright



Music: Danced and sang to a variety of Christmas songs.

New Work: Memory (cards are placed face down, then the children take turns turning over two of the cards to see if they could get a match).

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*

*Ms. Donna*

