

Montessori Pathways' News

December 2015



“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.”

~ Maria Montessori ~

Notes from Ms. Alena

(Head of School)

We began December with the **Montessori Educational Nights for parents** and **Fun Nights for kids**. A lot of parents came to understand how carrot peeling could be educational for their kids. Some of them experienced how their kids work with Carrot Peeling and Tying Frame activities.



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After this workshop, one of our moms commented– “It seems that we need to be more patient and quiet with our kids, less talking, but more showing to them”. What a great observation, Mom!

But an adult, if he is to provide proper guidance, must always be calm and act slowly so that the child who is watching him can clearly see his actions in all their particulars.”

~Maria Montessori~

While their parents were learning, the kids gathered together for a lot of fun.



In continuation of the parents’ education, we would like to invite the parents whose children will be going to Kindergarten or Elementary class for the next school year, to our annual **parent workshop “Good Enough VS Becoming Accomplished”** that will be held by Ms. Karen and Ms. Amber on Thursday, December 7 at 6:00pm. Your kids are welcome to enjoy a **Pajamas Night** on the same evening.

The new year arrives with new problems and questions for us. In the beginning of every year, the parents of 5-6 year old kids have to make a very important decision – what is the next step for my child? Where should he/she continue his/her education?

There are two common things we hear every year from the parents. The first one is a question “Will my child be prepared for public kindergarten?”

It is very important to understand that if we would prepare our students for traditional kindergarten, then we would not be Montessori, but the same conventional school where kids of the same age (but still developmentally very different) learn the same material at the same time based on the teacher’s plan.

Our school prepares our students not for public kindergarten, but for real life, which more and more requires great thinking skills, independence, initiative, creativity, and so on. We provide a child centered, multiage environment, where kids are learning at their own pace through a hands-on experience, exploring, discovering, and making connections.

And the kindergarten year is the final and very crucial year in the primary 3 year cycle of the Montessori environment.

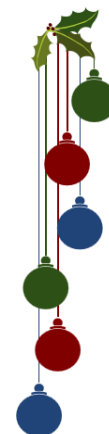
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The second thing that we hear every year from many parents is that *“being in a Montessori environment during one or two years was enough for our child’s development. It is time for him/her to move to a public school like most of his/her friends. He /She will be fine there.”*

There is no “enough” in education and no bounds in a child’s development. And being “just fine”- is this what we are looking for for our kids?

So, if you are still open to exploring all of the options and possibilities for your child’s education, you are more than welcome to attend the *Parent Night on January 7.*

Hopefully everyone enjoyed **“Icicles Follies”** presented by the Montessori Pathways’ students. Thank you for coming and sharing the holiday evening with us.



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I hope that everyone enjoyed the set of your child's daily activities pictures. If you still did not see them, please check your emails for the set of pictures, discuss, and enjoy them together with your kids.

Coming School Events

- **January 4 (M) – Classes Resume**
- **January 7 (Th) – Montessori Fun / Educational Night:**
 - **“Good Enough VS Becoming Accomplished”** (Montessori Kindergarten and Elementary Education) – workshop for parents whose kids are becoming Kindergarten or Elementary students next year ;
 - **Story Reading / Pizza Night** - for Pre-K and K Kids

Please RSVP by Tuesday, January 5th.
- **January 15 – January 29 – Returning Families Re-Enrollment Period**
- **January 18 (M) - No Class (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)**
- **January 22 (F) - Elementary Parent / Student / Teacher Conference Day (North Room)**
 - *No School for School Day Elementary students*
 - *Child Care is provided for 4:15 / All Day Students*
- **January 29 (F) - Free Concert at the First Congregational Church presented by the students of the Music Academy**
- **February 1 – 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

Have a healthy and happy New Year 2016,

Ms. Alena

Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)

Ms. Amber

Joyful and inspiration are two nouns we can use to describe the atmosphere in the elementary classroom this month. Many children were inspired to work harder and faster, as they tackled larger work activities. Some children were an inspiration to others through encouraging words and actions.

All of the children were filled with joy with their preparations for the *Icicle Follies*. Their presentation was exceptionally joyful! It truly is fascinating to step back and watch the children work. A spark is lit with this one, or the light bulb goes on for that one. Learning is inspirational and joyful for each child as they welcome new knowledge with fresh or renewed excitement.



Although we are lacking snow, we began a study of life-size polar animals, those who adapt to and live in harsh, snowy climates. We will finish up the polar study in January, before moving south (or north) into our South America studies.



Maria Montessori felt the culture studies of History, Geography, Botany and Zoology should be the driving force to all other learning. However, these work activities can be big and long, requiring both patience and concentration. To avoid the “I already did that last year” complaint, the expectation is to build on previous knowledge by learning something new each year. For example, when completing a map study of North America, a first year student can master the name and location of five North American countries and two oceans; a second year student can learn five more countries and two seas; and the third year student can manage an additional five countries (or all of North America), at least three capital cities, and the major mountain ranges.

The Upper Elementary student conducts a more detailed study and research, which may take up to eight weeks to complete, using a step-by-step process and lots of patience. For all, capitalization and spelling of the names of countries or oceans should be correct the first time, since the student is **copying** the information. This is an instance where precision (and concentration) is very important.



For elementary children, especially those in lower elementary, practicing to perfection is the key. They should *want* to practice it, they should *want* to do it right, and they should *want* it to be perfect. Good work habits extend into later school years. Rushing through the work does not lend itself to perfection or correctness. This mental organization carries into Math, Geometry and Language studies as the child strives to do purposeful work, and do it correctly.



January is typically a hard-working month. With the holidays over, a renewed effort of inspiration takes shape as each child strives to do more work, and to do their best work all the time. This is a prime opportunity for the elementary students to set a goal for themselves, which **the student** will discuss at parent-student-teacher conferences on January 22nd.

Independence is another key area where children can make progress both at school and at home. As adults, we can help children learn and establish independence by providing limited choices, structure, and support. This can be applied in many ways. For example, Ms. Amber prepares the Blue Folder, but the student's responsibilities include: putting the Blue Folder into the school bag; carrying the bag to and from school; and returning the folder to the classroom. The student is also responsible for getting any homework completed, and back into the folder and bag. Parents can encourage the child's independence and responsibilities by providing a set location to place the bag and Blue Folder, a quiet place to do homework, and if needed, editing the homework. We can have high expectations and a child will work hard to meet those expectations. Provide the guidance and support, and encourage your child to do it him/herself. There are so many opportunities where a child can learn responsibility and independence, if we let them. Being independent and responsible are lifelong skills to practice at this age.

Before school begins again, help your child be prepared by reintroducing a regular bedtime and meal time routine, and limiting screen time. She/he will feel refreshed and ready to begin working with renewed enthusiasm.



Happy New Year 2016!

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Kindergarten Extended Day News

Ms. Karen

We began our month reviewing the classification base of our science curriculum. So we had “guests” for one of our extended day classes. I brought in worms that we could actually observe them. We each had a night crawler and a red worm. By doing so, we could observe that not all worms are alike. Did you know that worms can crawl vertically! Many of the children felt them, allowed them to crawl on their hands, and observed them moving across the carpet. This was after the initial oohhs and a few squeals. Most interesting: several children spontaneously wrote about and/or drew the worms. We will pick up on the invertebrate theme after the holidays.



We also had all the children involved in the bank game this month. Using concrete materials, it allows the children to accurately add 4 place value numbers such as $4,561 + 3,677$. You will notice that such addition involved what we used to call “carrying” in various place values. But using the Montessori math materials, we can actually show and the children can actually experience the need to “exchange”. For example, we add the 6 tens and the 7 tens, but followed the rule that whenever we have ten of something in a place value, we exchange. Thus the children “go to the bank” with 10 of their 17 tens and exchange them for a 100 square which is placed in the hundreds place value. That leaves us with 7 tens as the answer in the tens place. But the point is they actually do the exchanging. It is not something we just “explain” to them. By having multiple concrete EXPERIENCES, the children come to understand math in increasingly complex ways. The understandings build upon themselves.



The holidays gave December a totally different feel. We focused on particular skills, but they were connected with a holiday themed product. So, all the children made fabric ornaments, holiday placemats and burlap wall hangings. Initially, they felt it was too challenging. But with patience and a little PRACTICE, they became adept at what they were doing, totally engaged and often spent an entire afternoon completing the activity independently. Each child made a holiday placemat. Interestingly, while every child required specific additional instruction the first time we did weaving, everyone was completely independent this time around --- and the weaving was designed to be more challenging.

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Finally, among the activities was one based on changing from 2 dimensional construction paper to creating a 3 dimensional wreath by folding. We talked about the difference between 2 and 3 dimensional.

These activities all required relatively advanced fine motor coordination because each hand was required to do something different in carrying out the project. But there was a feeling of holiday in the air: like little elves creating holiday gifts. There was also deep focus and concentration. *“Art is often the way for children to find their natural way to concentrate.” (Joni Perry)* Because the kindergarten child has some proficiency with the processes of cutting and gluing, she can fully enjoy the activities.



Are you 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, and scissors that work well (fiskars). With a little of each of the materials in small containers within the “art box”, you have a perfectly relaxing gift. Add a little music in the background and a cup of hot chocolate. They will be happily absorbed in creative projects for hours.



Warm wishes to you all!

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

Ms. Susan



In December, the elementary class drew, painted and sewed. They practiced cutting and lacing by making paper bird ornaments decorated with ribbon, then used yarn and fabric to sew holiday stocking ornaments.

They also illustrated a holiday scene and painted it with watercolors, choosing shapes and colors to fit their designs and tell their story.

Each student shared something with the class about how their families celebrated the holidays a little bit differently according to their traditions and culture. Volunteer students led different activities - those with good cutting ability led instruction on how to make snowflakes, and those with good lacing ability helped others sew during the stocking activity. We had so much fun, and learned how to work together and help each other.

Kindergarten class created Santa art by cutting out paper shapes and gluing them together. They started by tracing a red circle for the belly, then cut strips of white for the belt, and a red triangle for the hat. They learned how to use simple shapes and put them together, to make a recognizable image. In their journals, they created a mixed media piece showing a pair of birds in a tree, using origami paper, markers and more. They had fun looking back in their journals and seeing how far they had come from the beginning of art class to now. In the beginning, they had been tracing, and were now drawing on their own; scribbly coloring was now calmer; and cut edges were smoother. They were excited to bring home their holiday art as gifts for their families.



Thank you, and happy holidays!

Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Andrea, Ms. Eva

The last few weeks have just flown by. The South room has been very busy practicing for our Icicle Follies show and we were so impressed with the incredible turnout. Thank you for all the attendance and for all the generous donations. It really was a great night and the children did such a wonderful job.

Our family traditions continued with another two special guests. Jimmy's mom spent a morning in the classroom sharing a special tradition that they continue every year within their family, making gingerbread houses.

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She brought several small houses and one large one along with all the goodies used to decorate each. All of the children got a turn to add their own decorating creativity to the houses. It was very difficult for them to not eat it all. They had a lot of fun.



We also had Annabelle's mom visit. She brought a fun book called *Snowmen at Night* which is one of Annabelle's favorite and just happens to go along with our song *Snowmen on Parade* for Icicle Follies. Before she read the book, she shared a tradition that they began the Christmas that Annabelle was born and continue today. Each year Annabelle gets a new Christmas ornament that embodies something special about that year. The children were very excited to see these special ornaments and were able to share their favorites. It was a very neat peek into how Annabelle and her family share Christmas. Thank you to all those families who were able to share a tradition with the class; it was a very fun time.



We continued with our work throughout the classroom, and maps continued to be a very popular endeavor for many of the children. Food preparation also continued to be popular and we plan on adding some more complicated choices in the New Year. We also made a few holiday crafts. The snow globe in particular consisted of several steps that took quite a few days to complete. But we thought the end result was worth it.



During the two week break we always think it is a good idea to try to keep the children on a similar schedule, if at all possible. Continuing their sleep and wake times, keeping them on a similar diet, etc. can all help them to come back to school with the least interruptions.

We are always striving for more independence from each of the children in all areas of their school life. We would like to invite you to perhaps make a family new year's resolution to encourage more opportunities for independence at home as well. This way, home and school are connected in our expectations of the children.

We hope all of you have a most wonderful holiday and happy new year and look forward to seeing you in January.



Photo Gallery of Pre-K Extended Day Class

Ms. Andrea



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Notes from the East Classroom:

Ms. Christine, Ms. Carole

What a very busy and productive month it has been in our community! We have added several new works to Practical Life and Art as well as Language and Sensorial areas and the children have been very busy working with them all!

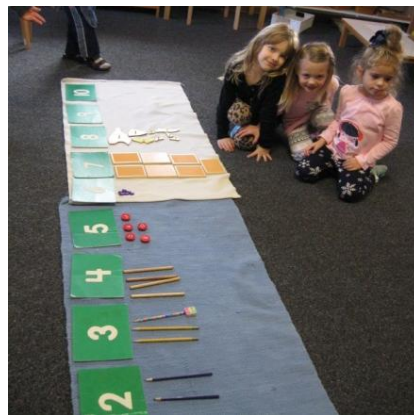
We made pine cone and candy cane ornaments, foil stars, tissue paper trees and many other seasonal projects in art. Practical Life has been, as always, popular especially with Christmas sprinkles and red and green M&Ms for the baking activities. The children love to choose their favorite activities and carrot peeling, apple slicing, water activities such as cleaning tables, chairs, windows, etc. allow them freedom of choice with the occasional reminder of following through with clean up.



Food preparation and snack preparation are a busy area this year and once again, thank you for your contributions to this very desired activity!

We are continuing to work on organizing our rug/table work, sequencing, matching and follow through with a project - staying focused and completion of our choices. The older children have been wonderful leaders to our new students who are showing great strides in their progress.

Daily, we observe and monitor each child's progress and look forward to encouraging their growth in all areas of the classroom. In Language and Math, we have seen our Kindergarten students assist younger students with more challenging materials - the younger children are very receptive and this is the beauty of the multi-age classroom!



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We've studied reindeer, their habitats, traits and made booklets with identifying characteristics. In addition, we discussed which animals hibernate, migrate or acclimate in winter.



The children were very excited to practice the songs in preparation for our Winter Program; in fact during lunch before the performance, they spontaneously started singing our songs in preparation - it was adorable!!!

We welcomed family volunteers - Mary (Marius' mom) and Daniel (Thomas' grandpa) to share some interesting information with us during line time. Mary, who is a college chemistry teacher, came to make snow and then show us how it melts; then the children made "snowflakes", which they loved!



Daniel brought two different varieties of chickens which he raises on his farm; we learned about their environment, characteristics and habits. His calm presence had a great effect on the chickens and the children (and their teachers) as we watched him take them out of their box with great, flapping wings! Beautiful and hopefully he'll come back in warm weather with the Vietnamese Potbelly Pigs (outside, of course!).

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Happy birthday to Jack - thank you for the beautiful "Jack" book and oatmeal cookies; and to Tyler, who we will celebrate with during the New Year.



We wish you and your families all the very best this holiday and in the New Year!

Notes from the Late Afternoon classroom:

Ms. Donna



We can't believe how fast the time has gone between Thanksgiving and our Winter Break. The children wanted snow to do several experiments that would use snow. We will do them when we have snow in 2016.

Art: Materials were put out to make wreaths, (paper plates, paint, tissue paper, glue, yarn and bows), cards (white paint to make a tree on brown paper and real bark for a tree trunk), gingerbread men (brown paper gingerbread men or women, red yarn to sew through the holes), coloring picture of a Russian stacking doll

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Music: holiday favorites, Jingle Bells, Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer

Stories: "The Animals Merry Christmas" stories by Kathryn Jackson and pictures by Richard Scarry

Works: Stacking soldiers and Santa

Gym activity: Balance Beam

Science: Making a guess at what was in the wrapped box. The kids used four of our five senses. They all touched the box, shook the box, and smelled the box before making a guess. Taste was not an option. The children thought for sure it was chocolate candy. I told them that it was not chocolate. They then thought it might be coins or plastic toys. We all had a chance to rip off the paper and open the box. We found sheets of stickers and holiday erasers.

Last month, for those of you who didn't try the hot-dog and grapes sink or float, the+ hot-dog and grapes sunk.



Enjoy lots of family time!

