

# Montessori Pathways' News

*October, 2011*

## Notes from Ms. Alena

This month was very busy, as usual, for our school and passed even faster than previous months.



We started with the **Jungle Book field trip**, which a lot of parents attended, thereby allowing us to feel that we are a big friendly family. Two fantastic **kindergarten field trips** to the **Crystal Lake Fire station** and the **Crystal Lake library** followed. When we were thinking of how to get there, Ms. Jocelyn said: “*Our kids need to walk.*” And do you know what some of the kids answered to the question “*What is your favorite part of these field trips?*” – “*Walking.*”

I think this is the answer for another question, which came up during the **October Parent evening** with the topic “*Nutrition and life style - how they affect our kids*” and during the **parent /teacher conferences-** “*How we can help our kids develop at home?*” The kids have answered us: “*Walking*”.

We need to “unplug” our kids from the TV, play stations, computers and go for a walk with them.

Do you know the many different opportunities available to us have outside for our children’s development?

Walking is only the beginning. Observing the seasonal changes, listening to the rustle of the leaves, watching the birds migrate South and discussing this process, collecting and drying the bright autumn leaves to use for an art project—just a few ways to enhance your child’s *observational, creative and listening skills*.

Naming objects that we see outside, identifying the first letter of different things (and finding something that starts with the same letter), looking for rhyming objects, reading signs—all *language development activities* that can be done outside.

Reading house numbers, counting the cars that go by, estimating the number of steps to the next tree—invaluable *math skills* to be incorporated into a simple walk.

And perhaps most important: *spending precious time together*.

*Maria Montessori said that children develop through observation, exploration, and discovery, which is available to them with nature. In returning back to the world around us, we allow the children to naturally develop and understand the space they inhabit. Something that a TV or computer simply cannot compete with.*

While some schools pride themselves in owning the latest technology, Montessori schools offer children the natural environment that they crave. This month, our kids were busy raking leaves, collecting and planting sunflower seeds (which many of you have received!), cooking and baking, learning about different types of squash and using some to make zucchini bread. There must be a lot of music ringing throughout your homes as our students have been learning songs for Halloween and Thanksgiving!

In preparing for Halloween, the kids created a lot of beautiful art projects to decorate the school and discussed **Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF**, the children helping children program. Many of the children awaited the day not so much for the collection of candy as for the chance to help other children in the world. The kids made sure to double check that they had the orange box to take home.

We wrapped up the month with an exciting **celebration of Halloween!**

### Coming School Events

Our next **Montessori Parent Evening** will be on *Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m.* on the topic of *“Discipline – want vs. should.”*

We would like to invite you to our **Thanksgiving celebration** on *Friday, November 18<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 am in the North room* (Ms. Christine, Ms. Jocelyn) and *at 10:00 am in the South room* (Ms. Karen, Ms. Ambreen)

Our **Picture Day** will be on *Tuesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> at 9:00 am.*

Warmly,

Ms. Alena

## **Working with Montessori materials:**

### Color Boxes #1,#2,# 3

Our Montessori classrooms have many materials that allow each child to explore through her senses. **In the Sensorial area**, we have three different Color Boxes for your child to discover.

**Color Box #1** is the simplest work that allows your child to learn how *to handle, sort and match red, blue and yellow color tablets.*

**Color Box #2** builds upon the skills learned in Color Box 1 and *adds more color tablets (orange, green, purple, white, black, brown and gray).*



**Color Box #3** is the largest box with 63 color tablets in seven graded shades of red, blue, yellow, green, purple, orange, brown, pink and gray. In Color Box #1 and #2, your child will match same color tablets together. In Color Box #3, your child will now choose one shade of color at a time and then arrange them from darkest to lightest. **This work allows your child to focus on slight variations and become aware of gradation of color.** Grading shades of colors develops a child's ability to concentration, problem solve and creates and awareness to focus on details.

Why are Montessori Color Boxes different? **Montessori materials are unique because of the details.**

The Montessori color tablets focus on one skill at a time, by making all of the tablets the same size, shape and style the only variation is the color. This allows the child to focus only on the attribute of color and be successful independently.

*Ms. Jocelyn*

### *The Trinomial Cube*

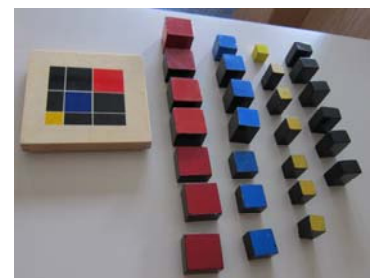
So what is the Trinomial Cube and why is it one of the most interesting pieces of material in the classroom? It is in almost continual use on a daily basis.

Well, to look at it from **an adult mathematical perspective**, it is a concrete and accurate representation of all of the parts of the equation comprising the answer to **(a + b + c) cubed**: that is  $(a + b + c)(a + b + c)(a + b + c)$ . There are 27 factors in the answer. Remember that from high school algebra?



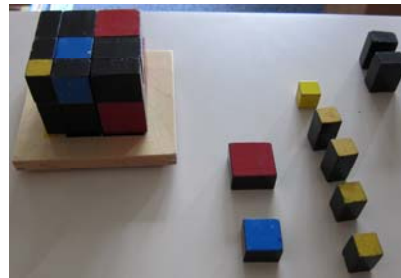
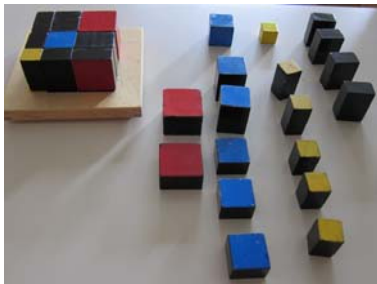
However, what does your child see? A fascinating three-dimensional puzzle. It is a cube which can be constructed and deconstructed over and over again. Yes, the 27 pieces are assembled to construct the cube.

1. All the pieces are first removed from the box.
2. Then the 3 cubes are found amid the 27 total pieces. These cubes are colored (red which represents the "a" dimension, blue which represents the "b" dimension and yellow which represents the "c" dimension of the formula). Thus the red cube is "a" cubed, blue is "b" cubed and yellow is "c" cubed. These cubes head up the columns the children subsequently arrange by color.



3. The remaining 24 pieces (rectangular prisms) are sorted by color into sets (1 each of the above colors plus a column for the black prisms which represents "abc").

4. Then they are sorted again into subsets using both size and color.
5. Once organized, the children reassemble the cube by matching color and size and also by recognizing patterns.



Eventually, every child wants to “master the cube” which means to construct it without looking at the box or the box lid for a color pattern or a size pattern. “I can figure it out all by myself!”

The mathematical skills which are being internalized include: *making sets (by both color and size), making subsets, recognizing patterns, distinguishing the cube from other rectangular prisms, and mathematical vocabulary.*

***“Mathematical ideas such as cardinal numbers, patterns, classification, size, shape, location and direction have a critical place in the early childhood classroom.”***

*Erikson Institute of Chicago*

*Ms. Karen*

## **Notes from the North Classroom:**

***Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine***



Fall is finally here outside and inside the classroom we are exploring fun new activities that focus on the season and Halloween in October. New seasonal works in every area of the classroom have drawn the children to develop new skills.

***In Science***, new works introduced the children to the **life cycle of the pumpkin and parts of bats, spiders and pumpkins.**

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*In History*, the children had the opportunity to set up their own **October calendar**, discovering the number of days and when each holiday falls.

*In Math*, cards and counters offered the children the chance to **order the pumpkin numeral cards before counting out the appropriate number of beads.**

*In Language*, the children used their observational skills to look for details **to match up 20 different Jack-O-Lantern pumpkin faces**, while older children **read and organized “October words”** such as *Christopher Columbus, costumes, trick-or-treating and pumpkins.*

In *Creative work and Practical Life*, the children had many new works as well. Two of the projects worked on this month came home on Halloween: **Eight-legged Spiders and Tissue Paper Pumpkins.** The skills associated with each of these projects included *fine motor control, cutting, gluing, brushing, smoothing and most importantly making choices to make their own original piece of art.*



*Please be sure to display these projects at home, they worked hard and are proud of them!*

Fall is a fun and busy time in our classroom. The children are **noticing the changes both indoors and outdoors.** Outside, *the leaves have changed and the wind has blown them off the trees, there are pumpkins and scarecrows, apple tasting/comparison and pumpkin activities.*

Additionally, we're now faced with the challenge of **hanging up coats** when we come inside. This would be a good time to check the zipper on your child's coat for ease of self dressing. Most children are very proud of the fact that they can dress themselves and in turn, offer help to others.

*Since we do try to get some fresh air outside each day, please make sure you send mittens and a hat as well as a warm coat.*

Our classroom received some new plants recently and this was a good opportunity to present **leaf polishing** as a new activity. *This teaches the child to care for the classroom environment and help in keeping it clean and beautiful.* We noticed that one plant had lots of new leaf growth as well as dust on some of the older leaves.



We made a tray containing a small dish of water, a cotton ball, and a towel for spills. We dipped the cotton in the water, carefully supported each leaf with our hand underneath, and gently wiped the dust, being mindful not to break the leaf off of the plant.

Some of the children stayed with this activity for a long period of time, which helps in *learning concentration, coordination and care of the environment*. Some wanted to dust all the leaves on the plant and some were content with polishing just one. As we close our windows and turn on the furnace at home, ***take a look at your houseplants and maybe this is an activity that your child would enjoy at home.***

Of course the highlight of October is Halloween! The anticipation has been building for weeks and the classroom is filled with conversations of trick or treating, costumes and favorite candy. It also sounds like several of our parents are planning to dress up for the fun too—one dad is going as a corn dog, another mom and dad are going to be Mickey and Minnie Mouse, another mom is going to be Belle - out of their mouths and into this newsletter, haha!



We have been **practicing some Halloween songs** like "The Acorn Song", "Five Little Jack o Lanterns", and "Jack o Lantern Burning Bright". If you haven't heard your child singing them, ask them to. They regaled our music teacher, Ms. Nina and gym teacher, Ms. Donna with beautiful renditions. We will share them with Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen's class on Halloween!

We have also been busy adding to our Halloween decor by **push pin art** of *Jack o Lanterns, ghosts and bats*, which we then enhanced with very cool glow in the dark paint. This was especially fun to see when we turned off the lights and saw the paint glow! Some children made cute (oops, I mean scary) *spiders from egg cartons*. They painted the body black, chose 8 pipe cleaner legs (all spiders have eight legs but if they lose one, they can grow it back), two eyes, although most spiders have eight eyes, and a glow in the dark mouth. We definitely enjoyed **reading up on our spider facts** with this activity. Fascinating yet disturbing!



A great big thank you to *Zavier's mom, Nicole* for joining us on Halloween. Nicole donated all of the materials for the very cute cheese, pretzel and raisin spiders that your child made and brought home. She and Xavier also choose some fun Halloween books from their home library to read to our group! Thank you, Nicole!

As our school year is now in full swing, *many of our younger friends are now beginning to observe the older children read and practice sounds and are becoming interested in trying too.*

We are also seeing *a lot of children modeling the Kindergarteners who are practicing name writing, map making and working on math skills and are inspired to do the same.* This is truly the beauty of a Montessori classroom!



It was wonderful to meet with you for our fall conferences. Please remember we are available all year long for questions or concerns and we again extend an invitation for you to call Alena to arrange a time for you to come and observe your child at work in the classroom.

Enjoy a safe and fun Halloween,

*Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine*

## **Notes from the South Classroom**

*Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen*

### **Thank you:**

- To *Colleen Nieckula* and to *Deanna Hendrey*, our garden parents, for working with the children planting and caring for the flowers. In the winter we hope to turn them into “snow parents”. Deanna donated some purple cone flowers and some bulbs that we will look forward to seeing in the spring.
- To the *family of Audrey Kanellopoulos* for giving the classroom a “surprise gift” on the occasion of Audrey’s birthday. (It is coming in the mail!)
- To *Kasia Hardcastle* for lending a hand with the Halloween morning, everything from helping to serve the children to helping to change children out of their costumes.
- To *Sally Junaid* for volunteering to be the room’s library mom this year.
- To *Miss Ambreen* for baking delicious pumpkin muffins for our Halloween party.
- **To all the parents:** We had a wonderful Halloween morning. The costumes were terrific, everything from storybook characters, community helpers, “the good guy” superheroes, princesses, black cats, and even an elegant flower. Thank you so much. A good time was had by all!

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## Gifts of the Montessori Classroom:

Offering tasks that are a correct balance between challenge and skill. For optimal learning, whether for child or adult, the task must be hard enough to be interesting, to engage us (otherwise it is boring). However, it cannot be too hard. It must be within our reach. Otherwise, we will perceive it to be impossible, we become frustrating and we quit. We have a wide range of activities and materials. But additionally, all materials offer a less challenging level and a more challenging level which eventually leads to mastery.



Adequate levels of skill to meet challenges. Montessori activities isolate individual skills and allow the child to practice those skills. Activities then combine these learned skills so the child can progress into increasingly complex work, but based on a secure foundation of skill and knowledge.

It allows children the **time** needed to thoughtfully complete activities draw conclusions and arrive at a point of satisfaction.

## How did carrots get to be a math material?

One of our younger children was happily engaged in peeling several carrots. These then needed to be grated so they could be used as ingredients for making carrot cake.

She began grating the long carrot, stopped, looked carefully at the carrot and said, “*Oh, it’s getting shorter*”.

Would it work again? Yes! She repeated the grating process, looked carefully at the carrot and remarked: “*it’s getting shorter*”. Did it get shorter every time she grated the carrot? This process of grating, observing and drawing conclusions went on for one half of the morning.

What a wonderful way for children to learn: through their own experiences and actions in the environment, they come to make observations, observe patterns and draw conclusions ---- a base for mathematical thinking.





**Conferences:** We have almost finished the fall conferences. If you have not yet met with us, we will be contacting you to set up a personal appointment time that works for you. It has been a pleasure meeting with you and, as always, these conversations allow us to understand you and your family more in depth.

**Our speech pattern this month is:**

*If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.*

**Words from Maria Montessori:**

*The best instruction is that which uses the least amount of words sufficient for the task.*

*Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen*



## Kindergarten Extended Day News



October is **Fire Safety month** and the Kindergarteners learned a lot about safety this month. We began our month with a **walking field trip to the Crystal Lake Fire Department**. The children enjoyed a tour of the building (including the fire fighters kitchen and sleeping quarters!), received an up-close look at all of the vehicles: fire engines, ambulances, water tender, and rescue boat. Finally, the children met with a fire fighter who showed them all

of his gear and talked about fire safety. This field trip was the launching pad for our classroom works and discussions about calling 911.

*As we continue to work on each child knowing their full name, address and phone number, they are beginning to understand the importance of these skills.*

*Did you know that the bottom of your pumpkin is called the "blossom end"?*



The Kindergarteners do! The children **learned the scientific names for each of the parts of the pumpkin** (*stem, skin, ribs, blossom end, pulp and fibrous strands*) and then took that knowledge and applied it to **other types of squash**. The children then accompanied their parents to the store to choose one squash to bring in to create their very own **funny face squash**. The children are all now aware of and *can identify acorn, butternut, carnival and gourd squash*.



Our second October field trip was planned to build upon our *practicing of partner work*. Much work in Montessori involves independent work and Kindergarten is the perfect time to practice the skills associated with working with a friend. On a beautiful fall day, we walked to the **Crystal Lake Library** and enjoyed our very own story time followed by Lego building with a partner. Every time we set off on a walking field trip the children are partnered up and we also reinforce safe walking practices including holding hands, how to cross the street and staying aware of your surroundings.



We are a school community and the Kindergarten children are learning that we are also part of a larger community. As a member of the world community, there are people who do not have as much as we do and we can help them. In the week prior to Halloween, the Kindergarteners discussed collecting coins for **Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF** and *how our generosity can help children in other countries have food, medicine and clean drinking water*.

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Some of the children came up with an idea that they would also like to donate money from their own piggy banks! These early life lessons are sure to make an impact on each child who will continue to help others in need as they grow.

The Kindergarteners were all excited to learn that they would be responsible for counting all of the money collected for UNICEF. In preparation, the children are **learning the values of each coin and practicing their skip counting skills**. We will send out a special note with the total collected when they are finished.

*Ms. Jocelyn*

## Notes from the afternoon classroom:

*Ms. Terri*

The month of October started with **making a calendar**. Each day we record the date, temperature, and weather, along with assorted pictures. We have been busy **raking leaves, playing games** and just enjoying the daylight hours we still have left in the afternoons.

One day we found a **black and orange fuzzy caterpillar** which we kept in a jar for several days for observation. The children named him Fuzzy. Fuzzy had lots of sticks, leaves, grassland soil in his jar. *We watched Fuzzy, wrote a story about him, and then set*

*him free to go back to his family.*



We also painted a **Fall mural** that is on display in the hallway. We used tempera paint to paint blue sky, green grass, and brown trees. Lots of fun and a very big art project with lots of children ready and eager to help! Now the children are busy **poking out** leaves, owls, squirrels, pumpkins, bats, ducks and black cats to add to our Autumn scene. *Small hand muscles used for writing are getting stronger each time the children do this work.*

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**Building and constructing works** are often part of the afternoon work. Pyramids, castles, trains, farmyards, and dinosaur villages are constructed on a daily basis. I am continually amazed at the intricate patterns and layouts that the children come up with. Bridges and winding tracks with attention to detail can be seen in the finished product. *Team work, cooperation, problem solving,* are all part of these building works as draw bridges are constructed and towers are erected. I get to see the future artists, engineers, and architects at work!



As you know, **snack preparation** is one of our daily activities. This month the children got to prepare the **snack for the Parent Night**. We made *fruit kabobs and ants on a log*. The children were very excited to prepare snack for grownups.



**Zucchini bread and Apple Crisp** were two of our favorite baked snacks this month. We found grating zucchini is a lot easier than grating carrots which we made last month for Carrot cake.

For a later afternoon snack the children have been enjoying **dried apple and banana slices**. Since the weather has turned cooler, we have all been getting very hungry late in the day. Almost every day someone asks me if the dried fruit is ready yet. *The children slice the fruit to be dried and arrange it on trays to be put in the food dehydrator* which stays in our room. It's a great snack to take outside and share with all our friends.

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We also love popcorn (made in Ms. Terri's hot-air popper) and now we have roasted pumpkin seeds from the *pumpkins we washed and cut open*. Snacks are a very important part of the preschoolers' diet, as important as their main meals. Snacks like these are easy to have on hand or in the car for travel time. It might even help us stay away from the not so healthy snacks.



Here is the **Zucchini Bread** recipe the children made and enjoyed!

*1 cup grated unpeeled zucchini*

*1 cup sugar*

*1 egg*

*1/2 cup cooking oil*

*1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour*

*1 teaspoon ground cinnamon*

*1/2 teaspoon salt*

*1/2 teaspoon baking soda*

*1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg*

*1/4 teaspoon baking powder*

In mixing bowl beat zucchini, sugar, and egg together. Add oil; mix well. Stir together flour, cinnamon salt, soda, nutmeg, baking powder, and lemon peel. Stir into zucchini mixture. Pour into a greased 8'2x4'2x21/2- inch loaf pan. Bake at 325° till done, 60 to 65 minutes. Cool in pan for 10 minutes; remove from pan. Cool loaf thoroughly. Wrap and store loaf overnight before slicing.

### *Ms. Katy*

Another month has come and gone. The children continue to impress me with their **grace and courtesy** when passing out snack to their fellow nappers. They are quick to remind each other to say "*thank you*" and "*you're welcome*."

This month we continued **reading stories**. A favorite this month was *Pickles Please: A Dilly of a Book* by Andy Myer.

We also began playing an **I-Spy type game with beginning letter sounds**. This is played by placing common objects on a mat with distinctive first letter sounds. I then tell the nappers, "*I spy with my little eye something that begins with the sound \_\_\_*."

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We also use the same objects to play **an observation game** where the children shut their eyes and I remove one object. They have to guess what object is missing. It is amazing how observant they are.

We also continued our **arts and crafts** this month following both a **family and fall theme**.

*I would like to ask parents of the children who nap to send in a 4x6 inch family photo to use in a craft at the beginning of November. This month we will focus on family, community and what it means to be thankful.*



Thanks,

*Ms. Katy*

## Notes from Spanish class

*Ms. Rita*

Montessori Pathways has Spanish class weekly on Thursdays. The children are taught the weekly lessons in sequential order building on previous weeks' lessons.



We started with learning to say **ice cream** and the 3 most popular flavors: **chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry**. Then continued the following weeks with **learning colors**. Now we are learning **farm animals in Spanish class**.

Each lesson is started with a review on the previous lessons and our *Hola, Como Estas* song which translates to *Hello, How Are You?*

Each lesson has interactive matching work and songs that are relevant to the respective lesson being taught. The children are given the opportunity to participate at their comfort level.

It is a joy to see the children become more interested and truly enjoy their Spanish class. Their excitement and openness to learning a new language is wonderful as it will expand their mind to different cultures.

## Notes from Gym class

*Ms .Donna*

October found us using **footballs**. We tried to throw them as hard and far as we could. This activity took place outdoors. We learned to wait for the word retrieve before we went to get our ball.

We had different **activities with our scarves**. Toss and catch, toss with our right hand and catch with our left hand, toss the scarf spin and catch.

We played a **game call "Fire in the forest, Run, Run, Run"**. Trees had to stay put. Behind each tree was a fire fighter who would run clockwise when the Fire Marshal call out "Fire in the forest, run, run, run". After the firemen had run for a short time the Fire Marshal would step in front of a tree which was the signal for the fire fighters to step in front of a tree. The fire fighter without a tree became the new Fire Marshal and the trees became the fire fighters and the old fire fighters became the trees.

We **walked on balance beams** in different ways. We also used our legs to move on **a scooter**.

We played **Team Bottle Cap Pick Up**. Each team sent out a member to bring back a bottle cap, and then another member of the team would get a cap. When all of the caps were picked up, the children would count how many they had collected, how many had a pumpkin sticker and how many were blank.

The Kinders did the above but also tried passing the football to their partner. They also played a game called **Bamboozle Football**. The team with the small ball tries to get the ball to the goal line without being tagged. Everyone on the team pretends to have the ball, if the other team tags them and they do not have the ball the tagger is frozen and may not try to tag anyone else. **Haunted House - Trick or Treat** was also played. The ghost (a tagger) would try to prevent the trick- or- treaters from taking his candy (bean bags).If you were caught you could not collect anymore candy. When all of the candy was gone the teams would count how much they had collected. Then a new ghost was chosen and the game would begin again.

Sincerely,

*Ms.Donna*