

Montessori Pathways'

News

September, 2012



Notes from Ms. Alena

The first month of the school year has come to an end and we've been able to enjoy some wonderful weather! Thanks to the weather, the children were able to spend quite a bit of time outside, the Kindergarteners and Elementary students had several walking field trips. The whole school visited the **Crystal Lake Public Library** for the "Police Keeps Us Safe" Program, but it seems like even here the favorite part of the trip was the walk through nature.



I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to our **Fall Mums Sale Fundraiser**. We were able to collect \$250, which will be used to purchase books for the classroom libraries. A special thank you to our Elementary students, who helped unload the mums from the truck!

The kids were so excited, helpful, and fast, that the giant truck with 90 mums was unloaded in a mere 10 minutes!



The participation of all of the students in the event is very important. The children were really excited about choosing mums' colors and taking them home. Some even forced their parents to change their mind and buy one after all! The kids are very eager to be a part of school events. Therefore, we encourage participation in school events not so much for the event itself, but for the

important feeling of community that they bring to the kids.

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Two weeks into the school year, we began our **enrichment classes**. Children have enjoyed weekly gym classes with Ms. Donna, music classes with Ms. Nina, Spanish classes with Ms. Marissa, dance class with Ms. Brittany, as well as monthly art class for Kindergarteners and weekly art classes for Elementary students with Ms. Terri.

Coming School Events

I would like to remind you that we will be having *Picture Day* on **Tuesday, October 2nd**. Please dress your child(ren) appropriately.

On **Thursday, October 11, at 6:30 p.m.**, we will be holding our first hands-on parent evening ***“Developing Problem Solvers through Critical Thinking Activities.”*** We really hope to see you there!

On **November 29**, we will have a very exciting field trip to see the *Cinderella play* in the **Marriott Theater in Lincolnshire**. As the theater’s ticket deadline is October 29 and we have pre-ordered some tickets, please make sure that you place your order by October 26. More detailed information will be coming home this weekend.

Halloween celebration

We will be celebrating Halloween at school on **Wednesday, October 31**. The children are invited to come to school dressed in a Halloween costume. Each morning classroom will have a simple celebration which will allow time for each child to show off their costume and tell a little bit about who or what their costume represents. Afterward, each class will “parade” into the other class and sing a special fall song for their friends and then return to their own classroom for a regular morning.

Our children need consistency and routine even more so on exciting celebration days, so we will strive to make it special while maintaining a level of regularity for the children.

The School Day and All Day children will be changing out of their costume prior to lunch, so **please send a comfortable change of clothing and a labeled bag to place your child’s costume into.**

Children who leave at 11:45 will wear their costume home.

Costume Guidelines:

We highly encourage you to choose an age-appropriate costume with your child. As a Montessori school, we aim to operate within our philosophy of providing the children with real experiences that are beautiful and natural and encourage you to choose a costume that is based upon a person, thing or animal.

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Some costume ideas include animals, community helpers, athletes and storybook characters. The most important feature of your child's costume should be comfort, please make sure they can still independently use the bathroom and can sit and move with ease.

Please note the following guidelines for costumes:

- No scary costumes
- No masks or headwear that covers the face
- No weapons or "fighting" props (swords, light sabers etc.)
- Please do not send any costume accessories that may be lost or damaged.

This year, we will be continuing the *Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF* tradition that successfully began two years ago. We will be explaining the importance of this fundraiser to the children in the classroom (how they can be helping kids across the world) and we ask that you give your children a chance to do so—our students absolutely loved knowing that they were helping out last year! We will be sending out more information regarding this wonderful opportunity shortly.

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

Warmly,

Ms. Alena

Working with Montessori Materials

Taking Care of Environment.



In a Montessori classroom, students are given the responsibility of caring for their environment. This begins at the age of three and continues on through their successive years in Montessori school. At three the main focus is on the care of self and instilling a sense of personal responsibility. This continues as the child gets older, but around age four we turn the focus to helping take care of the classroom environment as well.

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For example, at Montessori Pathways the four and five year old children who do not take a nap are responsible for helping both Ms. Christine and Ms. Ambreen after lunchtime. Their many jobs include carrying the dishes to the kitchen, taking the laundry to the laundry room, sweeping the floor, washing the tables and some of the children help to set up the cots for the nappers. It is truly a remarkable thing to watch how hard the children work and the pride they have in accomplishing these tasks, which seem so “adult.”



During the Kindergarten year at Montessori Pathways, the children begin having afternoon jobs. These include straightening the shelves, sweeping the floor, washing the tables, checking supplies in the supply cabinet, rolling the rugs and emptying the garbage cans. The Kindergarten children are very excited about this new responsibility. They also take great pride in their work, which in turn helps foster a sense of independence and responsibility.



The Elementary years bring about even more opportunity for classroom care. After the Kindergarten year, the children have become expert rug rollers and sweepers. Classroom Care in the elementary classroom becomes the main focus of the practical life education. The children receive more complicated tasks and also are working towards jobs that require maturity and accountability. In the elementary classroom the students receive two jobs a day. Some jobs need to be done in the morning, midday and the afternoon.

Morning jobs include putting dishes away, folding laundry and checking if any of the classrooms in the school need more milk for lunchtime from downstairs. The midday jobs include watering plants, checking the supplies in the bathrooms, washing the glass window on the side door of the classroom, and straightening the books in the library. The afternoon jobs include rolling the rugs, sweeping the floor, taking the garbage and recycling outside, taking the laundry to the laundry room and the most coveted job: job manager.

The job manager has the responsibility of making sure all jobs were completed and to check whether the classroom is in overall good order. As the children become more responsible, they know that their freedom and choices will increase. Part of that includes the classroom jobs of taking care of our animals, sweeping and cleaning the outside area and vacuuming. As the year goes on, the children will be given the opportunity to add jobs they feel need to be done.

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Overall, the Montessori classroom serves as a safe place for children to gain their independence through challenging, meaningful work. Care of the classroom is a wonderful way to provide this opportunity to children of any age and any level.

Ms. Katy

Water Transferring.



Observation is a powerful method of learning in our Montessori classroom. We have observed that many of the children love water transferring activities offered in the Practical Life area. Water transferring offers an opportunity of fine motor control, concentration, coordination, a sense of order and independence.

Currently, we have presented this activity using a small dropper to transfer water from one small, glass bowl to another. The child chooses this work carefully as to not spill the water or drop the tray that holds the glass bowls - so far, no casualties! Should spills occur, a sponge is already on the tray for any drips. The child then carefully cleans the tray and has to recall where on the shelf it needs to be returned.

It sounds so basic but making the choice, slowing movement to bring it to a table without spilling/breaking, clean up and return safely to its place on the shelf is a feat in fostering independence within the classroom.

Use of a funnel to transfer water from a small pitcher into narrow necked bottles is also another favorite in this area as well. A good at home extension of this activity is to let your child pour their own drink from a small pitcher that they can manipulate easily on their own.



Ms. Christine

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Polishing activity.

The Polishing Activity allows children to concentrate on cleaning one of three various materials. The three different polishing activities in the practical life area of our classroom are Wood Polishing (maps and animal puzzles), Silver Polishing (spoons, pitchers), and Metal Polishing (utensils, other metal objects). This activity calls for concentration, focus, and self-control, which are then rewarded by seeing the beautiful (and often shiny) object become cleaner and cleaner. The child's fine motor skills also become more refined as the activity utilizes Q-tips or cotton swabs. The child cleans in small, circular motions, refining the same muscles that will be later used in writing. Lastly, the child practices grace and courtesy by not only preparing the activity for the next child (replacing the cotton ball, etc), but also by learning to take care of the environment by making it as beautiful as possible.



Ms.Ambreen

Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)

Ms. Katy

Perhaps it is a cliché, but this first month of school has gone so fast! The children seem to be having fun and working hard. They are making excellent progress both academically and socially. In this first month's newsletter, I thought I would give a brief overview of a typical day followed by some highlights from September.

Our day begins with the children coming in between 8:15 and 8:45. During this time they are expected to set up their morning work and complete any morning practice sheets.



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Around 8:45 we meet for our morning meeting. During morning meeting we look over the days schedule as it is written on the board, say our Morning Peach Pledge, choose who will be the Classroom Job Manager for the day and one student is chosen to set our goal for the day. Friday's goal was to use our classroom voices. This was a wonderful one to work on as we have been working very hard at using the appropriate volume at the appropriate times.



After morning meeting we usually go outside for twenty minutes for our Physical Education time. We do a warm up and work on other physical skills such as balancing and cardiovascular exercises. The children love being out in the fresh air in the morning. The children having had the opportunity to exercise their bodies are now ready to exercise their minds.

We begin our morning work cycle. During this time the students are choosing work off of their work plan to complete and receiving group and individual presentations of new works.

After our work cycle is completed, we clean up our work, complete midday jobs and set the tables for lunch. When all have washed their hands, gotten their food and are seated with napkins in their laps we sing our Community Song. During lunch it is always interesting to listen to the conversations the children are having.



Most are usually about what they will play outside. One day, they decided to play I-Spy at lunch without any prompting. It was wonderful to see them taking turns with each other and figuring out different strategies for guessing. When the children are finished, they clear their places, rinse their dishes and meet on the carpet to be dismissed to recess. This is usually when we take a moment to do "silence." We are working on lengthening

the time that the children are able to sit and listen to the silence and calm both their minds and bodies. The children go out for recess following this nice peaceful time.

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After recess we come in and alternate between the children having a silent reading time or listening to a read-a-loud. I have been reading the book Babe to the class this month. Both before and after, the children are asked questions such as what happened last time we read and what they think might happen next.

After this time I meet with the children for their guided reading groups. We are able to work on skills like comprehension and fluency. We also work on handwriting as a large group in the afternoon. When we have finished this, on a typical day, we have time for working on work plans and more presentations. At the end of the day the children complete their afternoon jobs and prepare for dismissal. If you ever feel like coming in and observing please feel free!

Below are some highlights of different activities we completed this month:

- Signing of the Classroom Constitution
- Making limeade
- Studying Warm and Cool Colors
- Creating a color wheel that includes primary and secondary colors with Ms. Terri



- Graphing the Ages of Family Members
- Acting out the functions and parts of an atom
- Studying the external parts of a real fish (the children were very interested in the internal parts of the fish, but we ran out of time this week . . .)
- Began our study of the Fundamental Concepts of Geometry

- Static and Dynamic Four Digit Addition – *Ask your child what happens when we reach ten*
- Practice with our Addition Math Facts
- Studying the parts of a plant and root using real plants
- Working with Nouns
- *Field Trip* to Veterans Acres to observe nature and look at the first signs of fall
- *Field Trip* to Crystal Lake Public Library
- *Field Trip* to Downtown Crystal Lake to create a community map and work on grace and courtesy when out and about



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Also this month the children began their weekly Spanish class with Ms. Marissa, Gym once a week with Ms. Donna and the Kindergarten class, Music with Ms. Nina and Art on Friday's with Ms. Terri.

One of our classroom mottos is *the more responsible you are, the more choices you will have*. As the children have been becoming more responsible in the classroom, one of their new choices will be to help write the monthly

newsletter next month. Be sure to check it out! Here is to a wonderful October!



Ms. Katy

Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Jocelyn, Ms. Ambreen

Our first five weeks of our new school year sure has gone by fast! September is always a fun month filled with new friends, new works and new experiences. The beauty of a multi-age Montessori environment allows us to change and modify our classroom activities change to accommodate each child's interest and developmental level all throughout the year.

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This month in the *Science area*, a variety of new works focused on *leaves and apples*. These common everyday objects are familiar to the children but allow them to explore and discover through observational and hands-on activities. The children had the opportunity to explore leaves with the works of *parts of the leaf vocabulary, leaf tracing and leaf rubbings*. For apple exploration the children participated in a small group *apple tasting activity*. We used our senses to explore Gala, Red Delicious, Golden Delicious and Granny Smith apples. After smelling, feeling, looking and finally tasting each apple variety we saved *the seeds to plant* them in a special pot to take care of and hopefully a sprout will emerge. Additionally, individual works about *the apple life cycle, apple classification and apple picture matching* extended our group *stories and songs about Johnny Appleseed*.



Every child in the South Room now has their own “*sound book*”. This spiral book allows us to track their progress learning their letter sounds, the precursor to learning how to read. As you child *practices the letter sounds* at school using the Sandpaper Letters, we will record which sounds are mastered along with the new sounds which your child is practicing. When your child’s sound book is in his/her blue bag it is an indication that he/she should practice the sounds in the evening with you. The sound book should then be returned back to school. Once your child knows all of the 26 letter sounds, sight words will be added to the book and beginning readers will be sent home along with the sound book.

Please be sure to practice sounds, sight words and read with your child as often as possible as this is the age (3-6) at which children most easily learn their letter sounds and begin to read.

For the month of September, our focus in *art* was on *corn, the harvest crop of Illinois*. The children had a chance to participate in three projects. First, kids used tweezers to get the dry kernels out from the dry corn cob. Then, the dry corn cob was rubbed with paint and used on construction paper to make a gradient art. Lastly, children glued the dry corn kernels in various patterns to create a beautiful art project. Different shapes from our metal insets were used by the kids. They traced the shapes on construction paper, poked them out with pokers and glued them to create amazing art projects like the Sunflower field and number train that now hang in our classroom.

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Our *Author-of-the-Month* of September was *Leo Lionni*. Thank you to Owen and his Mom for going to the library to check out 10 books for us by the author Leo Lionni. The children loved listening to the many wonderful stories focused on kindness, empathy and inclusion. The children all very kindly referred to the basket as “Owen’s library books” and took excellent care of the books while they were in the classroom.

This year we are *focusing on healthy eating habits and activities* for our classroom. In addition to our monthly tasting activities, for our morning snack we are only serving fresh fruits and/or veggies that the children have brought in, washed, prepared and served. It is a great opportunity for the children to try new healthy foods and to be exposed to a wide variety of juicy, crunchy, sweet and tart whole foods.



Thank you to all our families for participating in our “sharing basket” requests. Your children just beam with pride when they bring in their requested fruit or vegetables. Also, please feel free to send in any fruit or vegetables your child may be interested in when you are grocery shopping together- we’d love to try them out together!

Warmly,

Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Ambreen

Kindergarten Extended Day News

We have a great group of Kindergarteners this year! The beginning of the Kindergarten year is a very exciting time. There are new expectations, new responsibilities, new experiences and a lot of new work. As the Montessori philosophy allows for freedom of choice within a structured environment, the Kindergartners are learning how to navigate their individual work plans, act as role models, help others, try new things and explore the world around them. One of the great features of Kindergarten at Montessori Pathways is the commitment to real world experiences in the form of meaningful field trips that extend what is being learned in school. In September, the Kindergartners traveled to **the All Seasons Apple Orchard, the Prairie view Nature Center** (to learn about and hunt for native seeds) and went on a walking field trip with the Elementary children to **Veteran’s Acres** to look for “signs of fall”.

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After weeks of studying about the parts of the apple and the life cycle of the apple the children then went out as a group to visit a working apple orchard of over 4,000 trees and see and learn the importance of a working beehive to growing apples. Unfortunately, the poor spring and summer weather has been very hard on local orchards and their apple production, so this year we were unable to pick apples ourselves, but did bring some pre-picked apples back with us to school. We used these apples to conduct some apple-related **science experiments**: *Apple Oxidation: Which liquids cause apples to not turn brown?* and *Do Apples Sink or Float?*



In addition to the field trips, the Kindergartners have been working hard every day. *Advanced math works, learning sounds, sight words and reading, making maps, practicing proper letter and number formation, participating in science experiments, beginning journal writing and much, much more.*

Additionally, the Kindergartners have already had some experience working on **multi-day projects**. The idea is that work can and will take more than one day to complete is essential at this age as it requires organization, planning perseverance and concentration. In a society that often thrives on immediate gratification, a project approach gives a child the opportunity to explore and discover in a slow paced and meaningful way.



One of the multi-day projects the Kindergartners completed was *creating color wheels*. We spent a week exploring the subject of primary and secondary colors. As we were watching the leaves change colors outside every day, naturally we began to discuss colors in the classroom. The children were given the opportunity to work with several activities to explore color mixing and discovered which colors were primary and why, as well as which colors when mixed together create other colors (secondary colors).

Ms. Jocelyn

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Notes from the East classroom:

Ms. Christine, Ms. Ellen



We are off to a beautiful start of another school year! Our class roster is a great blend of returning/summer students and new friends as well. This allows for the most ideal Montessori multi-age environment in that our "alumni" are helpful in teaching the new children some of the daily classroom routines. The younger, new students love the interaction with their new friends and have caught on quickly to new presentations and work in the classroom. We have seen much enthusiasm and growth already with all of our children.

Basically, our day starts with the children choosing a work of their choice. We have been busy making presentations of how the work is done and then, in turn, put away. We either present new concepts individually, small groups or as a whole class as warranted. Some children want to try new work right away and some prefer to choose a familiar, favorite activity. Nonetheless, we encourage each child to visit all areas of the classroom in some capacity and at their own level.

We usually end our work period around 11:00 or so which is when we come together on the line for group time. The weather has been so beautiful lately, we have incorporated outside time as much as possible during this period; we then transition to either a.m. dismissal or lunch.



September brought us a nice opportunity to study the science of *Botany* or more specifically, APPLES! We were presented with a nice selection from several of our families which allowed us to explore *the parts of an apple, the life cycle of an apple, the many varieties of apples - tasting them was a favorite.* Most of our children liked juicy, sweet Red Delicious but many also chose Granny Smith as their favorite. We noted each apple's appearance: color, shape, taste and if you cut one horizontally, the seeds form a star pattern that we then made painted apple prints with.

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Never to miss an opportunity to extend activities to their full potential, we made and then devoured *homemade Apple Crisp* as a group activity - yum!

The Math area of the classroom has been busy with *ladybug number cards and ladybug counters, circle addition equations, the addition strip board, and the ever challenging 100 board with its challenging extension/pattern cards where applicable.*

In Language, we have introduced *beginning sounds, short vowel sounds and word building as dictated by each individual's level.* You have also most likely seen your child's sound book come home with



phonetic letter sounds to practice with you. This is something we practice daily and the children take pride in learning so they are on their way to pre-reading.

Thank you all so much for your support of the Sharing Basket items; we have enjoyed preparing and sharing these with our classmates.

As the days become cooler and coats with buttons and zippers are part of our morning dressing routine, remember to check and see how easily your child would be able to manipulate them for ease in self care. We are also practicing these functions on the Montessori dressing frames at school.

Just a reminder that our *classroom conferences* are this *Thursday, October 4th* - we have sent reminders along with a few questions to discuss during this time. We are looking forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Ms. Christine and Ms. Ellen

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Notes from the afternoon classroom:

Ms. Terri

Greetings from Ms. Terri!

The afternoon hours are made up of several components; outdoor play, nap or rest time, snack time, story time, art project or art activity, baking, clean-up, line-time, and outdoor play.

The children have settled in nicely and are very familiar with who goes home at what time each day. Plus, they know who belongs to every coat and every pair of shoes! Amazing!

As a Montessori Art teacher I will be concentrating on the art side of the afternoon hours. It's been busy! The pre-kindergarteners have made several projects this month. After our initial **pattern work**, we made a **Sunflower**. We practiced the circle shape several times as well as the petal shapes of the flower. The petal is actually a curved line on one side and a reversed line for the other side. It is very challenging for young minds and hands. We also drew stems, leaves, clouds and sun which we outlined and colored with crayons.



For our next project, a **scarecrow**, the children practiced and drew several basic shapes including triangles, circles, squares and rectangles. We combined these shapes to make our scarecrows which again, we outlined then colored with crayons. We added a sunny day, crows and a pumpkin. Each work takes a lot of instruction or steps and several days to complete. Our scarecrows were beautiful. Lots of small motor muscles used and strengthened each day.

Our last art project was inspired by the book Panda Bea, Panda Bear What Do You See? We practiced tearing for this work using black and white construction paper **to make our Panda Bears**. It's not that easy. The fingers have to grip the paper firmly as the hands move in opposite directions to tear or rip the paper. Controlling the tear to make a desired shape, say an oval, was also a challenge. We decided to cut the paper we used for the bamboo trees in the background!

Each month I will be doing one *art project with the kindergartners*. This month we did a **body portrait**. I traced around each child as they laid on a child size piece of paper. The children then looked into individual mirrors to draw their faces. We also drew and colored the clothing they were wearing that day. Controlled coloring – one small area at a time – is still a work in progress. Children tend to want to color the whole large area all at once. The Kindergarteners will be finishing their body portraits as part of their work plan - even labeling the body parts!

I visit the *elementary classroom* and each Friday for their art lesson we have started out the school year by **painting a color wheel**. We are using 8” squares of poster board. First we traced a circle in the center and divided it into thirds - one third for each primary color - Red, Yellow, and Blue. We are now in the process of mixing in secondary colors of green, orange, and purple. There are a lot of steps involved and a lot to learn. Blue has a very strong pigment, for example, and it only takes a microscopic amount of blue added to yellow to make a chartreuse green or pale lime green. We plan to use all this information as well as the care and cleaning of brushes for future art projects.



We also started **baking** in the afternoon. Our first recipe was *zucchini bread*. All of the ingredients are laid out along with measuring cups and spoons. The “bakers” wash their hands and get to wear white aprons. Each child had a turn either shredding the zucchini, adding an ingredient or helping to hold the mixer. All of the children look forward to tasting the batter at the very end. (That is, after the batter has been poured into the baking pans.)

Here is our recipe – it was a big hit! We need to double the recipe next time.

Zucchini Loaf

1 Cup graded unpeeled zucchini	1 teas ground cinnamon
1 Cup sugar	½ teas salt
1 egg	½ teas baking soda
1-1/2 Cups cooking oil	½ teas ground nutmeg
1-1/2 Cup all purpose flour	¼ teas baking powder

In a mixing bowl beat zucchini, sugar and egg. Add oil, mix well. Stir together the flour, cinnamon, salt, baking soda, nutmeg, and baking powder. Stir into zucchini mixture. Pour into greased 8-1/2 x 4-1/2 x 2 ½ inch loaf pan. Bake at 325 degrees until done – 60-65 minutes. Cool 10 minutes remove from pan. Cool thoroughly. Warp and store overnight before slicing.

Best regards,

Ms. Terri