

Montessori Pathways School

December 12, 2009
Teachers' mini-news

Notes from the Classroom: from Ms. Christine and Ms. Cindy

As December arrives, so does the snow and bitter cold - yeah! It's a busy and exciting time of year.

The children have been practicing the very challenging task of hanging and zipping up coats, putting on snow pants and boots - hopefully, remembering to use the bathroom before they're dressed to go out! They have enjoyed the snow so far (on the days it's been warm enough!). Shoveling has been a fun task as is pulling friends around in the sleds. Winter fun has begun.....

In the classroom, we're trying to maintain a sense of order and routine - this is not easy at this time of year! However, we have seen lots of thoughtful projects and deep concentration in their work. Some of the children have working on phonograms (blending two sounds together such as "th", "sh", or "ch") in Language, while others continue with individual sounds. We have observed tremendous progress with many of your readers and readers-to-be.

We have maps of Asia, North America and the Map of the Continents to coming home with a few of our "geography experts" in the near future.

Also, "on campus", many projects are underway; we are all excited and enjoying practicing our music and songs for the upcoming Winter Celebration.

Everyone is looking forward to making and sharing holiday gifts for their family. We are anticipating a fun celebration with all of our school families on the 18th at 5:30 - we hope to see you there!

Stay warm!

Notes from the Classroom: from Ms. Laurie

For the Kindergarten group, December started out with a field trip to the Crystal Ice House for the winter activity of ice skating. The children were surprisingly persevering the hour and half that we spent in skates on the ice. It was amazing to me to

see how much the children improved as skaters. Thank you to all the parents who went on this field trip. Your help with the transportation and assistance with the children was very much appreciated. I really enjoyed this time with everyone.

We have been spending time in our usual activities of penmanship and decoding with special emphasis on the “sh”, “th” and “ch” sounds. Along with our decoding skills we have been practicing our “higher order thinking skills” by reading stories and discussing their meaning.

December is a time of stories and traditions from around the world. In keeping with our ongoing themes of seasons and biomes, we have enjoyed the stories of Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates, The Tree in the Wood and Little House on the Prairie. Developmentally, this age group is curious and interested in hearing stories outside his/her own life experiences. This group seems to be very adept at following the logic in a story and drawing conclusions.

December has also brought us to the end of a year and along with our academic work we have been spending time in preparation for the Winter Celebration on December 18.

See you on Friday.

Notes from the Classroom: from Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen

Behind the Scenes

Yes we are preparing for the Winter Celebration: practicing our songs, how we stand, coming in together, etc. This is currently part of the daily activity of the classroom. And during the celebration, some children will sing that have not done so before and some children who sang every day in the classroom will not sing. But, we are all working together to create the gift of a presentation for the families.

What we as teachers there everyday get to see and you do not is the excitement of the children and the tone that our preparation frequently lends to the classroom itself. It was so special to just quietly watch one girl cutting carrots while singing Santa Clause is Coming to Town the entire time. Or to hear another child singing Rudolph while washing and drying the placemats. We get to see some “magic moments”!

We want to thank you in advance for coming. We enjoy the family get-togethers too. It’s a way for all of us to get to know each other better, building a stronger community. But your children really LOVE your participation. So, thanks for taking time out of a busy season to join us this Friday.

Building Attention

What kind of attention? Attention to detail. Acuity of attention. An ability to focus enables the child to overcome obstacles and allows him to develop strong habits of concentration. Mental habits, like physical muscles, are something that develop over time with practice. By learning to concentrate, to focus attention, “a person acquires control over energy, the basic fuel upon which all thinking depends.” (Csikszentmihaly Finding Flow) Talents cannot develop unless a person learns to control attention. Thus, to see a child fully absorbed in a chosen activity is to recognize a meaningful achievement. This very insight about importance of developing attention is a profound understanding at the heart of the Montessori classroom and home. We recognize the beauty of that moment for the child, and work to sustain it by not interrupting his/her focus and concentration.

How a Simple Planning Time with Children contained “hidden lessons”

One morning as several of the older children were organizing their morning, we sat down together as a small group to record their plan for the morning. I had a small sheet of paper for each of them and headed up each paper with their name. I pointed out that one child had a short name with only one syllable and another had a long name with three syllables. That led to a discussion analyzing syllables in each name, comparing names that were longer or shorter or the same as another child’s name. Which led to who in the room had the longest name. So we were comparing (math), matching (mathematical thinking), talking about the idea that words have parts called syllables (language and vocabulary) and generally enjoying our conversation together with everyone contributing (community building). Lessons in the Montessori class are intentionally rich, containing both direct and indirect aims, even when the lessons arise spontaneously.

Author of the Month

We had a great time with Leo Lionni (and will continue through this week). “I love those stories” said one of our six year old boys. His storytelling is so engaging his illustrations simply beautiful and we all had our favorite book.

In January we will read Ezra Jack Keats (1916 – 1983) who has authored more than 85 children’s books. Peter, a black boy, became the hero of his books and appears in more than seven books, beginning with a Snowy Day ---that seems a good book to begin with in January. He has received awards for outstanding contribution to children’s literature.

Play with EAT what you

Okay, looking for something easy, special and fun to do this winter vacation? Of course, who isn’t?

So we looked up 2 (untried by us. Let us know how it worked) recipes for “Peanut Butter Playdough that are easy to measure and mix and would provide lots of fun and end with a special snack.

Recipe # 1

½ cup peanut butter
1 cup powdered milk
½ cup honey

Recipe # 2

Equal amounts of corn starch and peanut butter

With either recipe, simply measure, stir, play and eat. Enjoy.