

Montessori Pathways School

December 2, 2009
Teachers' mini-news

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

Fall has quickly passed by and as of last weekend we are seeing signs that winter is soon approaching. All the fall and Thanksgiving crafts and songs are put away again for another year.

These past weeks the children were busy learning about Native Americans and the Pilgrims. We learned how the Mayflower was small, crowded, and had limited space for food. The Pilgrims ate salt beets and hard biscuits, and stayed in the same clothes during their full sixty six days on the Mayflower. They survived their first year in the new land with the help of an Indian named Squanto.

The children also learned in math about exchange. When you have ten of something you can exchange it for something else. They are learning that the quantity of ten cubes is also the same as the ten beads.

You may have noticed your child is bringing home a "Secret Sound" book. These are the language letters your child is practicing. These can be practiced at home, but remember we teach the sound of the letters not the letter names.

In the science area, the children are learning about the seasons. We have talked that in the area in which we live, there are four seasons. Fall is when school starts, and the leaves fall off the trees. Winter is when it snows, and the weather is colder. Spring is when it rains a lot, and the leaves start growing on the trees. And summer is when it is warm outside, and you don't need to wear a coat. Some children are choosing to make a book about the seasons, while others have made a poster of the seasons made from pictures out of magazines.

We truly enjoyed the Thanksgiving Celebration and the special feast that was shared afterwards. Don't the children have such sweet voices?

Thank you to the children who brought special ingredients for the Thanksgiving Celebration. Those children who didn't bring ingredients in for Thanksgiving will get a chance to help at the Holiday Celebration.

We are quickly moving into the Christmas Season. Please try to keep your child's routine as consistent as possible, it will be helpful for you and your child to enjoy this busy time of year.

And last, if you would like any suggestions for holiday gifts for your child please let us know because we have a wonderful resource of many catalogs.

Notes from the Classroom: Ms. Laurie and Ms. Terri

In preparation for the Thanksgiving holiday, the kindergartners discussed the first Thanksgiving in North America. We chose to focus on the contributions of the Native Americans. In keeping with the flow of our curriculum we started studying biomes by looking at the grasslands biome of the prairie. We are also studying animals of North America. The Native Americans reliance on the buffalo made it the most popular animal of the week.

Much of our time was spent learning about the stories of Native Americans as we prepared for the Thanksgiving celebration by making dream catchers, the prairie scenery and prepared cranberry and applesauce.

In the language area, we practiced our words and printing by writing about what we are most thankful for. I was not surprised to learn that "family" came up number one.

In the afternoon we are learning about another North American biome, the woodlands or forests. In these environments we are finding that the animals and their habitat are interdependent. For example, the conifer or pine trees do not lose their leaves/needles in the winter time thus providing shelter for birds and other small animals.

We will be painting another winter biome scene of a winter forest in the afternoon. The children will add the animals, plants and trees native to the woodlands as they make them. Some of the new animals we will be studying are the beaver, the weasel, the mole, the bear and the worm.

Pinecone is a compound word with two final "e" syllables. We will be doing some pinecone crafts; one to hang on an outdoor tree and one to hang on an indoor tree. We are enjoying the last few days of the fall type weather. We hope you are too.

News notes from Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen

The Prairie Biome Mural

It is such a pleasure to see a group project take off and be continued by the individual children. The children were happily making their own prairie animal books, adding species to the group mural, developing their own projects, all while discussing the animals of the prairie. It was also interesting to note how small groups developed on their own and how those children worked together.

Preparation for the Celebration

It has been a busy past 2 weeks. Every day, the children were baking, making decorations, putting together the small flower arrangements in anticipation of your presence at the Thanksgiving program Monday. It was not just the program, but the actual preparation which so engaged them. A special thank-you to all who attended including the many grandparents and siblings (nice to see "several old" alumni present).

Building Time on Task

Just a note on the beauty of the past several weeks when we watch the children work. As parents or teachers, when we hear children complain that they are "bored" or "tired", we observe a very surface interest in the activity. A few strokes with the carrot peeler and "I'm done" and then they look for something else to briefly touch upon. That kind of interest level brings no satisfaction to the child who then wanders from work to work, but does not engage fully in any activity. However, when we can help the child focus on the detail, the precision, the challenge of the work, we find that they are completely absorbed for long periods of time, perfecting their movements and seeking mastery of the task. Then we see children happily absorbed in the same activity --- peeling carrots or dicing apples to use in applesauce for example --- for 20 minutes or a half hour or even the whole morning. It is precisely when a task demands precision and close attention that we find it interesting.

So it has been rewarding to see children spending longer periods of time on task, choosing more independently and therefore deriving satisfaction and competence from it. We see it peeling carrots, washing a table, finishing the 100 board, completing their map, building with the cylinders, etc.

Author of the Month

We will be choosing an author of the month and reading several books by that author. This month, we will begin with Leo Lionni. Perhaps some of you are familiar with his many books. He was born in Holland and studied in Italy (opportunity for a short geography lesson there) until he moved to the United States in 1939. The Chicago Tribune calls him the master of the simple fable. His illustrations are stunningly beautiful and simple.

His books have included four Caldecott Honor Books. With Terri's help, we will connect an art activity or two with his style of illustrating.

Thank You

Thanks to the following families for contribution ingredients for our food preparation:
Keaton Munter, Kayden Shatzer, Ben Toby, Tommy Jackson. A special thank you to Pam Suerth who came in for 2 full mornings to work on a special holiday project with the children. Thanks to a local orchard who were so please to hear that our children were making applesauce “from scratch” that they donated 30 pounds of apples!!!!