

# Montessori Pathways School

**January 22, 2010**  
**Teachers' mini-news**

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

January is usually a busy month for the children. They come back from the break excited to see their friends and love reconnecting with each other. There were many stories about what they did during the winter break, so the first couple days were spent with many conversations about seeing Grandma, Grandpa and cousins, what Santa brought them, and playing in the snow. The children have now settled into the classroom routine.

All the snow has sparked interest in snowflakes. We learned that snowflakes are a group of frozen ice crystals. The crystals come in a variety of sizes and shapes. Individual snowflakes are one of a kind, not one snowflake is the same. The children have been cutting out and decorating many unique snowflakes. Our classroom is beginning to look like a winter wonderland.

After returning back to school, we talked about the new calendar year. We discussed why we celebrate on New Year's Eve, what New Years' day means, and what month and year it is now. Some of the children have been working on making their own calendar. A few of the older children, kindly helped the younger children complete their calendar.

You may have noticed your child is bringing home language booklets. Many children have been working on the three parts of cards and the picture cards representing a set of things, such as fruits, vegetables, rocks, shells, and farm animals. These booklets develop the child's vocabulary of common as well as uncommon objects. Handwriting is being practiced also when a child chooses to write the objects name in the booklet.

Our younger children have spent many days practicing counting with The Spindle boxes. The Spindle boxes reinforce the child's understanding of number names, numerals and quintiles. It also introduces zero. We tell the children that "Zero means you don't have any." Also some of our older children are learning the value of coins. They count out the coin values and record the total. It's amazing how these children can add up the totals in their heads, without using a paper to add the totals together. The children are really enjoying the new work.

Many of the children are work studying the letters "b", "d", and "p". We talked about when you're writing the letters, you can think of it as a house. Some letters are only written in the main part of the house. Letters such as a, m, c ... Some letters have parts that are in the upstairs of the house, too. Letters such as b, f, t. And then there are letters that have parts that are in the basement of the house. Letters such as g, y, p.

The past weeks, we have studied the author and illustrator Jan Brett. We talked about how she wrote the words and also drew the pictures. Our favorite book was *The Mitten*, but we also enjoyed *The Trouble with Trolls* and *Annie and the Wild Animals*.

When Jan was a little girl she spent many hours reading and drawing. She always knew she would write and illustrate books. Jan's ideas for her books come from childhood memories and places she visited all over the world.

We had such a special treat the other day. Ms Ambreen treated us to hot chocolate. The children prepared the hot chocolate in the morning and we drank it with our lunch. It was just what we needed on these pass winter days.

**“The first essential for the child’s development is concentration. The child who concentrates is immensely happy.”**  
*Maria Montessori*

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

The kindergarten group has been learning about the Polar Regions of the Arctic and Antarctica. The children have painted the biome to include its three large parts of rocks, ice and water. Relatively speaking, there are not many animals who can survive this harsh climate. Walruses, puffins, polar bears, the arctic foxes, arctic hares, seals, whales and of course penguins are all inhabitants of the coldest regions of earth. We are making clay penguins out of white clay that Ms. Terri will fire in her kiln, and then bring back to school to paint. They are really cool. This week we also are enjoying the "March of the Penguins" movie with popcorn.

Along with our studies of earth, living and non-living things, we are learning the scientific approach of classification. We are learning about the six major groups of animals and their characteristics: mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, birds and insects. Vocabulary and penmanship revolve around our cultural and geographical studies as you may have noticed from the work that is coming home.

In addition to handwriting, our phoneme work and vocabulary we have been delving into "teen work". When counting large numbers, we group the tens and add together to make a "teen." Then match the quantity to the symbol.

During the afternoon, we also have been making our yummy applesauce: it's a favorite. The children wash, core and cut up the apples. We then put them in the electric skillet and add water, sugar and cinnamon. We mash and serve. (Feel free to send tin apples. We make this weekly.)

Our latest cooking adventure involves carrots. We use several cups of shredded carrots (shredded by the children of course), as well as flour, sugar, eggs and vanilla, salt and soda to our new favorite...carrot cake!

Our wintertime studies have been really exciting and as well as stimulating to all the senses!

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

### **This Time of Year**

It feels so good to be back after the busyness of the holidays. During last two weeks, the classroom has a nice feel of independence and industriousness to it. Words we love to hear: “I built these numbers all by myself; I can zip my coat without any help; I know how to write the words all by myself; I know what I want to do”, etc.

Montessori has such a solid content curriculum: language, math, science, geography. But it also works toward building very strong competency base. With skills in place, with practice in problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, organization and time on task, it is a joy to see the children developing into such capable young people.

### **That Wonderful White Stuff**

**The kids love it.** A chance to play in the snow. We took full advantage of it on the warmer days. Thank you to several kids who brought in “snow block makers” and “snow ball makers”. Of course, “angels in the snow” is ever popular.

Please help us by making sure your child has school shoes that he/she leaves here. Also, they need to have snow pants, boots, etc. for outdoor play every day. Some families prefer to leave snow pants here. Otherwise, your child can simply carry them to school. They do not have to put them on in the morning and wear them. Also helpful: clearly labeling your child’s clothing. (All black snow pants look alike!)

We also took time to read “A Snowy Day” -----Ezra Jack Keats wonderful book. That was topped off with hot chocolate.

**“Reading can be a road to freedom or a key to a secret garden, which, if tended, will transform all of life.”**  
*Katherine Paterson*

### **Real Life Geography**

Both Ambreen and I took real pleasure in sharing our trips; she returned from Pakistan and I returned from Thailand. The world is becoming a much smaller place! We delighted in getting out the globe and sharing just a little highlight or two from “the other side of the world”.

### **Real Life History**

Martin Luther King Day always gives us a chance to tell a history story that many of us witnessed and lived through. The story emphasis is on commitment, on understanding that one person can make a change, on hearing that there are peaceful ways to solve a problem. And gratitude! We all have benefited from his legacy.