



Montessori Pathways' News

May, 2011

Notes from Ms. Alena

*You helped me laugh, you dried my tears.
Because of you, I have no fears.
Together we live, together we grow,
Teaching each other what we must know.
You came into my life and I was blessed.
I love you my little friends- you are the best.
Release my hand and say good-bye.
Please, my friends, don't you cry.
I promise you this-it's not the end
'cause, like I said, you are my friends.*

Throughout many, many years I have had the same feelings at the end of the school year. On one hand, I am so glad and happy to see how all of the children have changed – they became stronger, smarter, more mature, independent, curious...But on the other hand, it is so sad to say good bye to some of our little friends, who are ready to move onto the next big step in their lives. I really appreciate that I have the chance to meet so many wonderful and beautiful eyes and smiles in my life.



These three weeks of May were so busy for all of us. Even as the school year was drawing to a close, a new friend, Christopher, joined us.
Welcome to our family, Christopher!

We finished making our school beautiful after winter time. One Saturday we had **planting day**, when we invited parents and kids. Unfortunately, this day was rainy. We were so surprised when a lot of families came with various gorgeous plants and flowers despite the rain.

Thank you everyone who participated in this event

one way or another. Now our school looks very beautiful. And the kids are really proud of themselves, because **THEY** did it!

We had a wonderful time **celebrating Mother's Day**, but this event required a lot of preparation from students and teachers alike. This was a large celebration and I would like to thank everyone who helped make it happen—the teachers, the children and their families.



Our kindergarteners participated in **a lot of field trips** this month, and I would like to thank Ms. Karen for organizing the different trips (more information can be found in Ms. Karen's news below). A big thank you to the parents who helped drive the children during these educational and interesting trips: Scott Cain, Tammy Knowles, Jennifer Sigler, Lillian Wendt, as well as Ms. Jocelyn.



We wrapped up the year with **the kindergarten graduation**. One had to see how excited the kindergarteners were as they awaited this event, how proud they were of their achievements. Some even drew themselves wearing the cap and gown long before the graduation!

Even though this celebration was dedicated to the kindergarteners, we prepared for it as a team, along with the preschoolers. **Good luck to our kindergarteners!** We hope they visit our Montessori Pathways family many, many times!



I would like to thank all of our teachers—**Ms. Karen, Ms. Ambreen, Ms. Jocelyn, Ms. Christine, Ms. Terri, Ms. Donna** (gym teacher), **Ms. Nina** (music teacher), **Ms. Brittany** (dance teacher), **Ms. Linda** (Spanish teacher), and **Mr. Aaron**—for their tireless work and effort to make the school year productive, interesting and beneficial for the kids.



I would also like to thank all of the parents for becoming a part of our warm and friendly family and participating, one way or another, in the life of our school.

A special thank you to Karl Jahnke and Meelis Saareoks for painting our classrooms. Thanks to them and our teachers, who prepared the school for summer camp the last week of May, our school looks beautiful!

I hope everyone enjoys their summer and spends plenty of time resting in the sunshine.

Warmly,
Ms. Alena

Notes from the classroom:

Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine



What a wonderful school year it has been! Many, many months of new friends, new activities and new challenges culminated in a May filled with of meaningful exploration across all areas of the indoor and outdoor environments.

Children who have just finished their third year as a Kindergartener were busy this month **practicing book making** and **complex sentence building** using inventive *spelling in Language* and the *multiplication and division boards in Math*.

*In Montessori, the progression of learning **math facts** follows the order of addition, multiplication, division and finally subtraction.* When a child has mastered the activities of manipulating hands-on materials to solve addition equations, he or she will then be introduced to the concept of multiplication. **The multiplication board** uses a grid that allows a child to place beads in a simple pattern to solve a multiplication equation. For example: We present the equation of $3 \times 2 =$ as “3 taken 2 times” and the child will fill in a row of 3 beads two times and then count the total number of beads to solve the equation. As a child continues to work with this material over several days and weeks he or she will begin *to notice the natural pattern in numbers and develop an understanding of the answers rather than rote memorization.*



In Science, all of our children had the opportunity **to grow their own radish and green bean sprouts**. It was with great excitement that the children checked the window sill each morning to make sure their seed had sunshine and remained moist. I hope everyone had an opportunity to replant their child’s sprout that was sent home in order to take care of and watch grow all summer long.

What a busy time of year the last few weeks of school are! The excitement and energy level is almost too much to contain indoors, so whenever possible, we headed outside for nature activities. In the very back of our outdoor environment, we **observed wildflowers** such as Lily of the Valley and **made "crowns" of Dandelions** by tying their long stems together to form a chain. The children looked adorable!



Inside, many children enjoyed using their *gross motor skills to scrub the shelves and tables*; the more bubbles the soap made, the better! Even the chairs got a good cleaning. We also *put of culinary skills to work* by **coring apples, peeling clementines, making muffins (cracking the eggs is the task of choice for this activity), and measuring cups of snacks** to share with our friends.

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It is so rewarding to see our class take such pride in taking care of our classroom! Lunch is a snap due to the fact that the children can **set tables and clean up** without any direction from an adult. **Laundry is folded, tableware sorted, plants watered, floors swept** and it is done beautifully and by their own motivation to help. Encourage their help at home this summer because they are so capable and it gives your child a sense of helping the "community" as well as self confidence and leadership.



May was a big month for performances for both **Mother's Day and Graduation**. All of the children worked very hard every day learning the songs and script (for Kindergarteners) and that practice shown through in the wonderful results at both programs. It is so meaningful for the children to have the experience to perform in front of a group as it builds confidence, self-esteem and oral language skills. We are so proud of all of the children!

It was with great pleasure that we added another new friend to our class in this final month of our school year. **Welcome, Christopher!** The children all loved having a new friend in these last few weeks and the kindness and gentleness they showed to helping Christopher adjust just as the year was winding down was really lovely to see. Christine and I are so proud of each and every child this year- it has been an amazing year of growth socially, emotionally and academically for all the children in our class.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the families who sent in lovely cards and gifts. The end of the year is often bittersweet, but the generous spirit of community of our families is always inspiring. We wish all our families a relaxing and safe summer and look forward to seeing everyone around town, at summer camp or in the fall for a brand new school year!



Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine

Notes from the classroom:

Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen

End of the Year

If you are like our staff, you must wonder at how fast the year has gone. It happens to us every year, of course, but somehow we never seem to get used to it.

The Gifts of Montessori

Dr. Montessori believed that education begins at birth. Educating the human potential is a challenge that must be faced early if it is to be successful.



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In the Montessori environment, the child has been allowed to proceed at his own pace based on understanding of the lessons. And, critically, the child is encouraged to go back and repeat work with materials, to practice until his interest is exhausted because the concepts and skills have been mastered. Mastery of skills creates energy, a love of learning, which provides a strong foundation for a lifetime of learning.

Words from Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen



It is hard to believe that the school year is over now. Throughout the year, we teachers enjoyed working with our little friends. It has been an eventful year – a year in which we could see so much growth and development in each and every child. That is the reward of working with the young child. Looking back, we shared so many good times together and were able to welcome so many new families to Montessori Pathways.

Together we shared our experiences, happiness and joys as a family. We developed and shared a special bond. The seeds of flowers that we began to sow in the beginning of the year now started to bloom. Toward the end of the school year, our kindergartners were blossoming with their experiences and maturity, helping our little ones to follow their paths. We are very happy to witness them grow each day with their beautiful smiles and amazing exploration. Now, with the end of the school year, with lots of hugs and kisses, we wish everyone a happy, fun-filled and safe summer.

Words from Miss Donna

As Miss Donna looked back with fondness, she remembered the beginning of the year. The young children could only be given a very short direction and it had to be simple and to the point! (Hold the ball.) Then after they could do that, she could give the next simple direction. By the end of the year, what satisfaction to notice the difference: they were able to understand several directions at one. Their processing skills went from one direction to multiple directions. They could process the information and act on it. What fun to see the change?

From the Music Front

What a treat! Graduation night was such a highlight. The music and movement was terrific and the children had a good time. You could see it in their faces. And that celebration had been preceded just two weeks before by our wonderful Mother's Day celebration. We are fortunate to be able to store such memories.



Music is the only thing that engages the left and right sides of the brain simultaneously. There is intellect and emotion and emotion drives the intellect.

“Music is a beautiful model for society. Everyone together listening to each other with one goal. This is the best way I can think of to build a better world.”

Gustavo Dudamel, director of the LA Philharmonic

Thank you

Thank you to the many families who contributed food for special snack preparation and for special projects. Preparing (and eating) the foods were favorite works of the children.



Thank you to *Christine Martinez*, our sewing mom, for fixing all our aprons and for making new napkins for lunch. The napkins are also used in our ironing activity.

Thank you to all the families who recently attended the Spruce It Up Day and Planting Day. The plant donations were so welcome. The outdoors looks beautiful and ready for camp. It will be a joy for the children to care for the plants and watch them grow.

To our Graduates

Remember: our door is always open to you. We welcome graduates back for visits and even for camp. We want to remain your home away from home.

Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen

Kindergarten Extended Day News

Wrap up

Why do Art?

From a skill point of view, art teaches order and sequence. It helps us learn to think in terms of images and to communicate ideas and feelings. Art develops large and fine motor skills and is a sensory experience. Even if we stop there, art has so much value.

But looking beyond the “specific skills”, art has such a human value. Art is a process which nurtures the child’s spirit. It helps one discover the relationships between drawing, thinking and reality. It is a creative expression that comes from within the child.



Victor Lowenfeld, who has been a professor of Art education at Pennsylvania State University, published the single most influential publication in art education. He believed that **every** child is creative. He has called creativity an instinct we are born with and he relates it to the basic ability of all human beings to express and solve problems. ***Through art, one discovers one’s own worth and dignity.***

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A particular pleasure:

So a special thank you to *Miss Terri* who added much to the Kindergarten year with her passion for art and her wonderful ability to foster our children's creativity and talent. As a basis for her program, we studied the techniques of various artists: Monet, Jackson Pollock, Van Gogh, Georgia O'Keefe, and Marc Chagall. We used them for inspiration and then we created our own art work. *The wonderful discovery: we are all artists.*

The value of field trips:

Field trips have been a key component of our Kindergarten program since its inception. They are not merely an add-on. Some resources are simply not available in the classroom including hands-on experiences. We had the ability to use the wonderful McHenry County Conservation District resources including the outdoor teaching environments.



We also used their resources and other resources into the classroom so the children could see and handle animals that we could not provide: turtles, snakes, alpacas, a red-tailed hawk, worms, lizards, and more. They have also provided us with "kits" to continue an in-depth approach on various topics.



The staffs of both MCCD and Crystal Lake Park District specialize in creating highly effective, informal learning experiences. They have been a terrific resource

Report on latest field trips:

The alpaca farm: Awesome!

Overused frequently, but this is the word that comes to mind to describe our experience.

The alpacas were wonderful: gentle, curious about us and simply adorable. Their long "hairstyles" made them endearing. There were four baby alpacas that had been born. Miss Lauren held them so we could pet them. Several of the females are pregnant and due in a few days/weeks to come.



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We saw the alpaca wool before it was processed, then after it was washed and dyed, and then the final yarn. Miss Lauren loves her alpaca clothing: a coat, a poncho, a hat, a scarf, mittens, and slippers.

The children enjoyed petting the Great Pyrenees dogs and running after the flock of chickens which were actually up for a game of chase.



There are about 12 alpaca farms in the Woodstock vicinity. We visited Lauren Kinnare's Prairie Creek Alpacas. If you watch their website, (www.prairiecreekalpacas.com) you will see that they offer "open house" weekends from time to time. It would be well-worth a revisit. Lauren was a wonderful, welcoming hostess.

Veteran's

Acres: In conjunction with the Crystal Lake Park District, on our last day of school, we met at the Veteran's Acres Nature Center for information and *a series of demonstrations on the subject of weather*. It was a timely topic as part of the discussion revolved around tornados and the children were very aware that several areas of the United States had just experienced tornados. The hands on activities of making clouds (shaving cream: your children would love to play with that on a rainy indoor day!) and making snow were highlights.



We ended the afternoon with the children rolling down and running back up the wonderful grassy hillside (some made the up and down trip three times). That was a demonstration of pure youthful exuberance and joy. Nice ending to an event filled year.



Right now, at the Museum of Science and Industry, is a hand-on, interactive weather exhibit that even blew the weather man (Tom Skilling) away. All he could say was "wow I've never seen anything like this before". This would be an excellent follow-up to our trip to Veteran's Acres. The exhibit is 26,000 square feet, so in itself, it is an

entire trip. Included: a 40 foot tornado exhibit, a tsunami tank, an air currents display, prisms which can be split into giant rainbows, a 20 foot Tesla Coil of electrical energy that releases lightning twice an hour and much more.

Many Thanks:

Many thanks to the drivers for the field trips: Scott Cain who drove almost every trip, Alena Baradzina who drove every trip, Jocelyn Scott a regular, Tammy Knowles who was a frequent driver, Jennifer Altman and Lillian Went who also joined us. Without the drivers, the field trips would not have been possible.

Graduation:

What a beautiful evening. I would like to say “Thanks for the Memories”. Much time and planning went into the event. Miss Alena was the program creator and director and Miss Nina the music advisor, music teacher and accompanist. Miss Ambreen made significant contributions with song/dance selections and extra rehearsal time with the children. Wasn't it rewarding to see the pride in the eyes of your children and to be able to share their accomplishments in such a beautiful way?



Last thanks for the class of 2011

Thank you for the privilege of teaching this class. They are a remarkable, talented, strong, accomplished, and energetic group. This Kindergarten year was essential for the unfolding of their life-long learning skills to have a chance to emerge. They were the leaders of the class who showed love and compassion to the younger children. Each one of the Kindergartners has made such amazing and wonderful individual progress this year. We have appreciated your support and your trust in Montessori Pathways.

*Sincerely,
Miss Karen*

Notes from the afternoon classroom:

Ms. Terri and Ms. Donna

May was certainly a bizarre weather month. On our calendars we recorded temperatures ranging from the 40s to the 90s with everything from hail to tornados! The afternoon class was also a whirlwind of activities itself.

We started out the month **finishing up the scenery** and making the *Ugly duckling* character head dresses for the **Mother's Day play**.



We also **finished planting all our flower seeds** and we now have little 4-inch flowers. We plan to plant the daisies, marigolds and cosmos flowers outside during summer camp.

The children **made Mother's Day cards** that turned out to be beautiful keepsakes. This work involved *gluing, cutting and copying or tracing* the Mother's Day message, "My Love for you Grows and Grows," using yellow construction paper, green stems, tissue paper flowers and green leaves.

Next, we made **an artwork** from another of our favorite nursery rhymes, *I'm a Little Teapot*.



We started with the circle inset which we traced then added a handle, a lid, a spout and a teacup. To the teacup and teapot we drew feet and faces, then we decorated them with patterns of our choice using crayons or colored pencils. Many children made several versions of this activity as they thought of new patterns for their teapots. They turned out great!

We never got tired of **making play dough** in the afternoon. The children always know what color they want to do next or what color we haven't tried yet – everything from passion purple to sunset orange. Speaking of purple, we **made lilac pictures** using various shades of lavender paint which we dabbed on with Q-tips. First, we drew brown stems and colored green leaves before adding our clusters of lilac flowers.

Another fun work this month was with the insets. We made a **positive/negative work** using construction paper. First, we drew and then we poked out (using a poker) an inset shape of our choice (square, circle, quatrefoil, hexagon, etc.) then we glued the 5 ½ -inch shape and its frame to an 11-inch rectangular piece of paper to make a positive/negative picture. The children really liked this work and chose to do it several times using a variety of insets.

Afternoon **baking** was busy as usual as we are responsible for PM snacks for kindergarteners as well as nappers. We made our usual snacks of *banana bread, applesauce, assorted dried fruit, bananas and oranges*. We also made *oatmeal raisin bars* in a 13x9-inch pan. The kindergarteners helped with this snack and really enjoyed creaming the butter and sugar, beating in the eggs and stirring in the dry ingredients of oatmeal and raisins.



Rice Crispy Treats were a big hit too. Fun, easy and just 3 ingredients! Most of the children seemed to think that Rice Crispy Treats only come in a box with premade treats inside. **So parents, here is your assignment or homework for the summer** – buy a box of Rice Crispies, a bag of miniature marshmallows and 6 tablespoons of butter and have fun with your child.

It's a little sticky, but finger licking is good! One helpful hint that worked great was to butter the children's palms and fingers before they pressed the sticky Rice Crispies into the pan.

We had lots of fun baking this year and I'll bet one of the favorite parts of baking, if I asked all the children, would be licking the beaters (for my two helpers) and tasting the batter (by the rest of the class).

The children have really enjoyed story time each afternoon after our rest time. We finished our third *Little House on the Prairie* book, Farmer Boy. The children listened to Almanzo's story of life in our country's early pioneer days. Almanzo, a boy of nine, worked alongside grown men truly pulling his own weight as he plowed, planted, harvested, cut ice from the frozen lake for the summer, trained the oxen, helped feed and raise all the livestock and coveted the horses which he later is able to help train as a 10-year-old.

This series of books is full of character building stories, hard learned lessons with some heart breaking and humorous events as well. At the core of all Laura Ingalls' books is a strong and loving family core. We can all benefit from these stories and we are drawn into their daily lives. ***Your next homework assignment (this one isn't as sticky) is to read to your child each day. It doesn't matter if it's a chapter or only a few pages, it will be time well spent.***

Thanks for a great year and have a great summer!

Love, Ms. Terri

P.E. Notes from Ms. Donna

May found us outside for most of our P.E. classes. We used the *parachute for the exchange game*. Two names are called and the students move under the parachute into each other's spot.

We *kicked* a moving playground ball and *ran* the bases. The kicking team would take turns kicking the ball and running the bases. The fielding team would try to get the ball back to the pitcher. When the kicking team each had a turn they would then become the fielding team and the fielding team became the kicking team.

We worked on our ball skills: *bounce and catch, toss and catch, throw to a partner*.

We formed teams and took turns *catching magnetic fish* with a fishing pole. The fish were put into a bucket.

The kinders did all of the above plus trying to *catch a frog flying off* of their ball as they let go of the ball. When the ball touched the ground the frog would fly up into the air. Kinders also enjoyed playing the game of SPUD outside. Having more room made the game more fun.



Enjoy your summer!

Ms. Donna