



Montessori Pathways' News

October, 5th 2010

Notes from Miss Alena

School Events

This year's school events calendar opened with our annual "Hardy Mums Sale". We would like to thank all of the parents who participated in this event, as well as the Countryside Garden Center, which provided us with such beautiful flowers. Proceeds from this event will go to additional equipment for our new gym class.

Coming School Events

Picture Day: Monday, October 18th

We will be having our fall Picture Day on Monday, October 18th. Just a reminder: Siblings and other family members are always welcome to be included in the photo sessions. No money is due on Picture Day and there is no obligation to buy. Please return the background request form to the office before the Picture Day.

Montessori Evening for the Parents: Wednesday, October 20th

We would like to invite you to our Parent Evening on Wednesday, October 20th at 7:00 PM. Ms. Christine and Ms. Ambreen will explain why Practical Life activities are crucial in the child's development and will present some of these activities. Detailed information and RSVP form will be sent later.

School Field Trip: Friday, October 29th at 9:30 AM.

On Friday, October 29th, we will have a Montessori Pathways School Field Trip to see "Honk" –a musical adaption of Hans Christian Anderson's "The Ugly Ducking". The performance will be held at the Huntley High School Performing Arts Center. Please check your child's blue bags for detailed information and RSVP form.

Halloween Celebration at Farm: Saturday, October 30th.

Detailed information and RSVP form is coming soon.

Spanish Class

We are excited to announce that we have begun a new Spanish Class in our school. Our new teacher, Ms. Linda Sloan, holds the class every Thursday morning. Ms. Linda is a State Certified teacher and has focused on teaching Spanish at various child day care centers/schools for many years. During Spanish class, the students will begin learning the basic skills of the Spanish language through music, books and visualization. There will be games and art projects to reinforce what has been taught in the lesson.

Music Development Class

The kids are thrilled to see Ms. Nina (our Music teacher) again after the summer break. They really love Music class because they use a lot of their imagination, fantasy, and creativity while they learn new songs and rhythmic movements, play kids' instruments, and express their feelings as they listen to the music. The class is held every Wednesday morning.



Ms. Alena

Notes from the classroom: Miss Jocelyn and Miss Christine

We can't believe that September is already over! All month long, the children have been busy choosing new works in all areas of our classroom and developing their sense of independence, concentration, coordination and sense of order that will build the foundation for all of their future academic learning. In addition to daily classroom work, as a class we celebrated the United Nation's International Day of Peace and had our first small group healthy food tasting activities of the year. In every monthly newsletter, we'd like to share a few descriptions of activities from the month, but please remember that not every child chooses to do every work in the classroom and that the beauty of a Montessori three-year cycle enables every child the opportunity to participate as he or she is ready.

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Healthy Food Tasting Activities

On average, a child needs to be offered a new food 8-10 times before he or she will accept it as a regular part of their diet. As a Montessori environment, we feel it is important to offer activities that aid each child's total development: social, emotional, academic and physical. Healthy food tasting activities create a strong foundation for every child and address each area of development. Tasting activities are structured as a small group activity that a child may choose to participate and we are happy to report that nearly every child was excited to try the healthy fruits and vegetables this month! Rather than simply tasting the foods, we first explore each food (both before and after we slice it open) through all five senses. By calling attention to the aroma, the texture and color or the sound it may or may not make, a child becomes more aware and interested in eventually tasting each food. This September, our three food tasting activities focused on comparing foods that may look similar, but taste different: peaches and nectarines, Gala, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith and Honey crisp apples and cucumbers and raw zucchini.

Letter Sounds with the Sandpaper letters



In Montessori, we have a unique Language material called the Sandpaper letters. We use this material with each child to practice verbally saying the sound each individual letter makes, and also to practice tracing the proper formation for each letter. Many children know the names of the letters; however the Sandpaper letter material focuses on the sound each letter makes, which is the first step before a child can begin building words and eventually read. A lot of children have been practicing their letter sounds and building words at school this month!

If you are interested in practicing letter sounds with your child at home, but are unsure how to say each individual sound, we'd be happy to send home a copy of a letter sound sheet.

First and Last Names

Every child needs to be able to say, recognize and write his or her first AND last name as a natural aid in developing a sense of independence and self-care. At school, in addition to being able to orally recite his or her name, every child is encouraged to independently write their own name on their work to the best of their ability. To facilitate name recognition, we have a basket in the classroom that contains a full name card for each child. They may use these cards when they have a large work in progress that they would like to save to work on the next day or when they are ready to begin practicing writing their full names accurately. Children who stay for lunch are also learning to read each other's names on our table place settings. Before lunch you can hear children quietly sounding out the letters in each name card to discover who they will be sitting by. In October, we will be introducing a work that will allow each child to practice their home address and phone number.



International Day of Peace



September 21st marked the United Nations International Day of Peace. To prepare for our classroom celebration as a group we read several books about peace, learned the song "Sing Peace Around the World", created an oversized colorful heart to represent love and made one large peace sign for the classroom using a paint handprint from each child, as well as individual peace hand puppets of each child's hand. At exactly 11 am, we displayed our props, lit a candle and recited our song along with over 80,000 other Montessori children around the world. The children really enjoyed our Day of Peace

celebration and have been talking about having another peace celebration soon.

Continent Study

Even before we began talking about our Day of Peace celebration, many children were already working on learning about the continents and even creating their own world maps. The different ways to create a map in a Montessori classroom is endless: pin poking, gluing, cutting, crayon rubbing, painting... however the way we talk about the continents is fairly simple and straight forward. We offer the child one or two interesting facts about each continent as a way to make learning the name meaningful. For example, we may say "we live in North America" or "Antarctica is very cold, only a few scientists live there". At our Day of Peace celebration, several children asked if Montessori children in Africa and South America were also having a celebration. Yes, they were! It is always wonderful to see the connections that the children make all on their own.



Sharing Basket

Thank you to all of our friends who brought in wonderful fresh foods, baking supplies and flowers to share with the classroom community this month. We truly appreciate every contribution and are so thankful of your willingness to bring it items throughout the year as we request on the Sharing Basket notes that come home. It is meaningful to the children, as a member of the class to help shop and then bring in items to share with others.

Miss Jocelyn and Miss Christine

Notes from the classroom: Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen

A special welcome to Isabella Galperin, newest member of our class, and to her family. The children gave her a warm and nurturing reception and delighted in showing her location of supplies and simple activities. They cared for her, led her to the playground, saw that she was included, etc. The older children play such an important role in the community of the classroom.

This year our class has a special international flavor! The countries of Pakistan, Chile, China, Russia, and Belarus are represented by parents who are directly from those countries. (Miss Ambreen represents Pakistan). What a rich classroom culture. We would love to have the families share traditions or foods from their country with us.



Conferences

As you know, October is conference month. We will be contacting you personally to set an appointment that works with both our time schedule and your availability.

Class “Directory”

We would like to put together a simple “class directory” for the children to use. Please send a simple photograph of your child (approx. 4 x 6). We will put the picture into a photo album with each child’s name on the page. The children can then use this as a reference when needing to identify or spell a friend’s name. And they enjoy just going through the album (of course looking for their own photo). We will assemble the album as the photos come in.

Thank You

Thank you to the many parents who brought in various items for snack. We have enjoyed fresh fruit and even vegetables from home gardens: fresh pineapple, melons, strawberries, grapes, bananas, apples and cucumbers. Together we cut open the melons and pineapples for a group tasting experience. But the children then continued preparing them for snack. Leftovers were served at lunch. And thank you for the fresh flowers for our tables and the cheese varieties for snack.



Also a big thank you to Tim Knowles for making the frames for new school drums. The Kindergarten children sanded all the wooden drum frames Thursday. Friday, they decorated the outside of the drums. The last step is to tape the clear “skin” of the drums using packing tape. Then they will be ready to play. We’re looking forward to it.

Thank you to Christine Martinez for repairing and adjusting all the aprons in our classroom. They are in constant use in our Practical Life area.

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Classroom Activities



There is a busy hum of activity each day in the classroom. Practical Life is an ever-popular area with assorted activities: baking, fruit and vegetable preparation, snack preparation, dish washing, clothes washing, table scrubbing, polishing, and plant care.

Children are busy continuing their math, language, and science development daily. An extremely popular work at the moment is presentation lessons on the phonetic sounds of the alphabet. Almost every day, several children request to “do sounds”. Usually, there are several children observing the lesson of a particular child who is being presented a new sound. In this way, small learning groups based on interest form and extend the scope of the lesson to several children.



An Everyday Work from the Shelf



In connection with learning sounds, the children trace sandpaper letters. This is the physical material connected with the actual lesson. The adult will trace the formation of the letter while pronouncing the “sound” it makes. Thus we are laying a base for phonetic analysis in reading. Using actual tactile tracing of the letter imprints the letter-sound association in several ways: tactile, visual, and auditory, thus creating a strong connection and memory of the association of a particular letter with a particular sound.

It is then only a short step to blending a few of these sounds together and actually reading a word! We use a simple consonant – short vowel --consonant pattern when we blend (ex. cat, pan, hit, tub, red). This pattern eventually expands to using multiple phonetic consonants (trip, stem, flat), phonograms (sh, ch, ing, etc.) and then to inclusion of long vowels. Wow.

We are laying the base for life-long learning and enjoyment!! It is a pleasure to be part of the process.



Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen

Kindergarten Extended Day



It is only the end of Week 5 and already so much has happened. Children are involved and engrossed in what they are doing --- state of immersion, of concentration, of contentment. And in their works, there is such a beautiful attention to detail.

In General

The children are becoming increasingly adept at setting the tables for lunch. Yes, often they do so with no help or guidance, and take pleasure in the complete competence and independence they know they have. It is a rather complex task: tablecloths are put out, place cards are sorted (we need to note if anyone is absent), placemats are placed at the table, chairs are moved from around the room to the lunch tables, knife, fork, and spoons are put out in correct placement, napkins are folded and placed at each setting, the food “buffet table” is set up, glasses are counted out, plates are counted out, flowers are placed on each table, and the milk and water are taken from the refrigerator and poured into pitchers. It all requires coordination and cooperation among the group. And also a certain order. For example, it becomes evident that the tablecloths must be put out first, before the placemats, the placemats before the silverware, etc.

At the end of the day, the room is restored to order by the children assuming individual responsibilities.

Our group “projects” have become increasingly complex and the children have become more adept already at organizing and thinking of the materials needed to complete the activity and the order in which the activity proceeds. Some of these projects have yet to come home; they have been displayed in the school hallway.

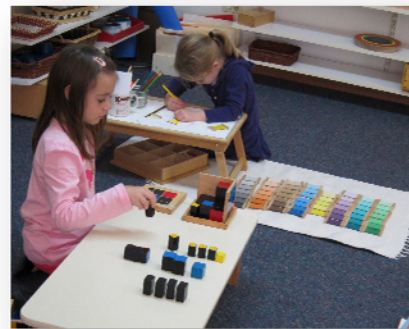


Mathematical Thinking



Mathematical thinking is almost always a part of our organizing and part of our problem solving (ex. 11 people and only 10 drums to sand). We always begin by noting who is absent, how many children are present, who is missing, amounts of supplies needed that are needed, etc. This practical incorporation of math into the curriculum makes it both interesting and meaningful. It

includes skills such as one to one correspondence (the fundamental rule of counting) to division and subtraction problems and so on. We incorporate logical thinking on a simple basis. For example, we give clues as to whose name has been drawn from the basket to feed the frogs. Who does that clue eliminates and who it includes?



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We have also incorporated estimating problems intentionally. The ability to estimate is different from the ability to count and to calculate. Scientists have demonstrated that it actually uses a different part of the brain. Our estimating problems lead to building a number line. We put the numbers the children guessed in a line from smallest to largest. The concepts of more than and less than (ex. is your estimate more than or less than Emma's), grouping by tens (as we count up the answer and physically put the objects into groups, etc) become a natural part of solving for an answer. Those skills and more are developed. The children love the suspense of who is the closest to the correct answer.



History/Geography Curriculum



The history curriculum is organized in a hierarchical system. We provide an overview, the global picture and then more and more specific aspects of the system. It is a holistic approach. Think of the nesting Russian Matryoshka dolls: You open the largest doll and another is contained inside and open that one and another is contained inside, etc. So we begin with the universe, then the “parts of the universe”, then galaxies, then the solar system, then the earth, then land and water and so on. Each new topic being included in the previous topic.

Land and water leads to continents and oceans.

Continents lead to study of countries, etc. This is also setting the base for a more meaningful understanding of the maps which the children love to make.

We pause in the curriculum “line” sometimes and do projects related to or representative of the idea presented. Hence, when talking about galaxies, we made representations of spiral and elliptical galaxies, when talking about the stars; we brought in Van Gogh’s *Starry Night* and were inspired to make our own *Starry Night* representations (both projects are on display in the hallway). We made books about the universe and the solar system.



We are looking forward to our trip to the Challenger Learning Center this Wednesday (see field trip section). It has a terrific mural of the solar system and a power point presentation of the photos from Hubble telescope. (I’m sure you will hear about it after we get back). Thank you to Scott Cain for driving.

We are also beginning our study of biology, again moving along a hierarchical line: living and non-living, then plants and animals, then studies of groups of plants and animals.

The Drums



This week Thursday, the children spent an hour sanding the drum frames made by Maggie's dad. We were outside enjoying the weather, but focused on accomplishing a task. As one person said: "Boy making a drum is a lot of work!!!!" But they loved the achievement of feeling the rough wood become smooth under their hand. Friday, we spent the period decorating the drums. Each child got to do whatever design or pattern they wished. It was a pleasure to see your children so "into" their art work. It was a pleasure for us all.

One more step: we need to tape the drums. We expect to do that next week.

Perceptual Motor Development

Each Friday, we complete Kindergarten Extended Day with a special gym class led by Miss Donna. We have been blessed with fine weather and, so far, have been able to have gym outdoors.

Miss Karen

Notes from the classroom: Miss Terri and Miss Donna



As the summer days started cooling down and the weather started turning fallish, it was a perfect time for the afternoon class to take a nature walk. But first we made our nature bags by decorating brown paper lunch bags with all kinds of things we see in nature: lady bugs, flowers, grass, leaves, stones, spiders, butterflies, etc. We also practiced walking with a partners and staying behind the person in front of us (a little challenging for some).

We walked a couple of blocks away to a "wooded" area where we proceeded to find things we could put in our nature bags. We also talked about the living and non-living things we found. Is bark from a tree living or non-living? It was a beautiful day and we plan to return to our secret spot in nature a couple of more times. We looked for grasshoppers in our walk but had no luck-so we looked a picture of grasshoppers and each made "Part of the grasshopper" booklet in the afternoon class.



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We also made grasshoppers out of clay and read a story about a fun-loving grasshopper and some very industrious ants. (Did you know the middle section of the insects body where the wings and 6 legs are attached called the thorax?)

We also took advantage of our beautiful blooming sunflowers. After the practiced making circles – with both starting and stopping motions to have control while drawing a circle- we painted a single sunflower with tempura paint on a poster board. We made secondary colors of orange and green by mixing the primary colors of yellow and red or yellow and blue together.

The kindergarten children (in the afternoon) are continuing their project. We looked at Van Gogh famous Sunflower picture. In it, he painted a vase, several flowers and a table, and background. We did the same.



Ms. Karen's Kindergarten class also had looked at and painted their own starry night pictures while studying galaxies. So our children are been exposed to famous artists for inspiration while painting their own master pieces. They are quite beautiful!!

Making play dough was also a big hit in the p.m. class. So far, we have made blue, yellow, red and green. It is to mix it: flour, salt, alum, food coloring, oil, and water. Then roll out the warm dough and knead it till it gets cool.



The children squeeze it, roll coils, and make animals, pound pizzas, etc., all the while strengthening those hand muscles for writing and fine motor skills. This work is now on a shelf and available every day for every child who wishes to take the play dough to a table and work with it.

The afternoon class also prepares the snacks for themselves, for nappers, and the kindergarteners. It is quite a process to count out the correct number of dishes, cut the apples or bananas, serve up the applesauce, snip the grapes, etc. We also count out a specific number of animal crackers or whatever else we are serving with the fruit. The children love this job and cannot wait their turn to make snacks.

We read each afternoon and the book the children love is called "One Tiny Turtle". It starts with a baby Loggerhead turtle (the size of o bottle cap) and takes us on a journey through the sea as it grows to be as big as a barrel. We like it so much that that we decided to make our own turtle picture and stones. The children drew their own Loggerhead turtle (using basic shapes which we practiced) and then colored them and dictated a story to be written on the story paper.

Thanks to all the parents who came to the Montessori Evening last week. It was great to see so many families represented! We really enjoyed the evening.

Miss Terri and Miss Donna

Gym Short Notes from the gym class: Miss Donna



All classes are working on locomotor movements (skipping, running, walking, jogging, galloping, jumping, hopping, leaping, marching and tip toeing). The children are also working on being able to carry their own space (which means not to get into someone's space or bump into someone). If your children have asked are we going counter clockwise or clockwise, that is great, for we are learning about those directions. They are learning to count off by 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, and 6's. This helps us to listen for when it is their turn to move.

GAMES we have learned are:

Rescue Race: we use a noodle to save others on a sinking ship.

Squirrels in Trees: squirrels may move but trees can't.

Mouse Trap: several children are mice and the rest are the mousetrap. The mice run in and out of the mousetrap and on the signal "Down" the mouse trap shuts if the mousetrap was lucky the caught mice join the trap if not the mice are free to keep going in and out of the trap.



Row, Row, Row Your Boat: a partner game where the children sit down looking at their partner and hold hands and touch their feet. They move back and forth, side to side etc.

The Kindergarteners have done the above as well as:

ELBOW TAG: two people are chasing each other, the rest of the class have hooked up by their elbows, if one of the chasers hooks up with someone's elbow the person in that group that is not attached to the new person is the one who must leave and try to get away from the person who is it.

HICKORY, DICKORY, DOCK: we are in a circle as we say the nursery rhyme they must listen for their number if it is called they try to catch the person in front of them before they get back to their original space.

Miss Donna