

Montessori Pathways' News



parent Night In October

In October, Primary parents met with Ms. Masha to learn about what is the difference between preparing a child for school and preparing child for life, what skills need to be developed before moving a child to strong academic work, what the Montessori environment offers to develop a child's independence, self-confidence, organization, problem solving, and leadership skills, and how these skills will help your child to be successful at school and in their future life. Ms. Masha also shared some ideas on how parents can implement Montessori at home and help their children in their education and development.



"Tonight's presentation was extremely engaging, helpful, and informative. I wish we had these sorts of amazing informative sessions when our kids were born! So helpful! Thanks for helping the WHOLE child and educating the parents too!" ~ Lyndra B, South Room parent

"We wanted to share that we both found your presentation very informative and helpful last night. The information gave us a lot to think about and talk through. I especially liked the introduction that articulated the goal of a Montessori education, what it is and what it is not. We both agreed we have some areas we would like to refocus on at home. Thanks for being such great leaders and partners both for our children but also to us as parents." ~Riya and Chris E., South and East rooms parents

"I learned quite a bit about how to better integrate Montessori at home. You and Ms Masha gave me some good ideas and I just wanted to let you both know how informative it was to parents who are always trying to learn more about how to support our kids in the classroom at home. We have been adding more Montessori-like areas in our house based off the presentation and the kids love it! Thank you again." ~ Kait N., East and South room parent

Halloween at Montessori Pathways

We appreciate everyone's effort in preparing the **Halloween celebration** at our school. Some parents decorated their children's classrooms, many of you contributed a lot of items for the Halloween party, prepared the Halloween crafts and games, and hosted the activity stations. It was such a busy, exciting, and, at the same time, peaceful morning at school.



Our elementary friends planned and organized their party independently and enjoyed it in the afternoon. They started with a Halloween Feast and then played Halloween games. They also visited a Haunted House that they created in downstairs room. Thank you, Elementary Parents, for helping our students in preparation of the Halloween Fun Day!





Parents' Corner



'Help Me to Do it Myself!'

([click here to see Montessori Pathways Students' Practical Life Activities](#))

How do Montessori programs foster independence in children? From a very young age, children are supported in learning to do things for themselves, rather than having things done for them. Montessori teachers give kids "just enough help." In this way, the environment helps them develop confidence by actually learning *how* to do things for themselves.

Being independent lays the foundation for a strong sense of self and for having healthy relationships later in life. Montessori students learn to take off and put on their coat and their shoes. They learn how to wash their hands and how to use the toilet. Children learn how to pour a drink into a cup, how to carry a tray, how to safely carry a chair. They also learn how to clean up a spill, because spills can happen. In this way, children are free to move around the environment: to get a drink of water whenever they are thirsty; to move the chair if they want to sit in another spot; to safely carry their activities from the shelf to the table or floor. They feel a sense of connection to the larger community because they contribute to the whole: by setting up lunch, watering the plants, putting their work away when they have completed it if they are able, and giving assistance to a friend.

Coordination, choice, and the real world

The students move about freely in their Montessori environment in order to develop physical coordination and support freedom of choice. They may lift heavy objects like a table, bin with water, or tray with thousand cubes and carry them from one place to another. They are free to exercise their muscles as needed, not only at a specific time for "gym" or "movement", because within the classroom there are places to jump, spin, and experiment with balance. In this way, children are able to strengthen their core muscles, practice balance, and develop muscle coordination.

The Montessori classroom is dedicated to discovery of the real world rather than opportunities for pretend play. The Montessori toddler learns to safely use the tools of the hand, for instance – a fork, spoon, scissors, writing utensils, screwdriver, hammer, needle with thread, and paintbrush. Rather than play in a make-believe kitchen, the students cut their banana for snack or peel and slice an egg for tasting activity. Instead of playing in the dress up corner, the children are engaged in learning how to dress themselves, by practicing with a button or zipper, and by putting on and taking off clothing.

Giving the gift of time

Traditionally, adults often show their love by doing things *for* the child, such as picking them up and carrying them from one place to another, putting on their coat, wiping their nose. Adults are efficient and want to get things done as quickly as possible. For little children the goal is not to get it done quickly, but rather to learn how to do it by themselves. It is the greatest gift we can give a child, to slow down and patiently give them the time they need. Whether that means

walking slowly, waiting without speaking to allow a child time to let the words come, or dealing with a little bit of mess because the child poured their own milk, Montessori teachers show their care for the child by helping the child to gain independence: modeling and showing how to do things, patiently breaking tasks down into smaller steps, and giving child-size tools to enable the child to succeed, to help the child to do it themselves.

Hallmarks of Montessori

One of the hallmarks of the Montessori program is a schedule that preserves a long, uninterrupted "work" time to support the development of concentration and to allow spontaneous activity. The child is not guided or directed, following a predetermined schedule or required activities. Another hallmark is that the program takes a child-centered view of children: giving them freedom to explore space and select their own activities of individual interest. An array of hands-on materials is available to attract and engage the child. This fosters concentration, develops problem-solving skills, and encourages intrinsic motivation.

The activities are designed to enable children to recognize when the task has been completed successfully, rather than be dependent on the adult for validation or correction. The materials and activities are beautiful, many made of natural materials, such as wood, and with as little plastic as possible. Activities and interactions enhance a spirit of generosity, awe, and wonder, with opportunities to provide meaningful help to others. The child has experiences designed to cultivate a love for nature, such as planting seeds, collecting pine cones, and sorting sea shells.

Language and environment

From the moment of their birth, babies are absorbing language and developing their receptive language skills. During the first three years of a child's life, they literally transform from an infant who cries to a child who speaks more than 200 words. A Montessori environment is rich with words and language, with many opportunities to name objects, parts of the body, animals, foods, plants, colors, instruments, and tools. Surrounding children with a fertile language environment, without it being loud or overwhelming, and also providing times of silence and quiet, encourages their natural tendency to develop receptive and expressive language abilities.

We know that little children are easily over-stimulated by sensory input, but the soothing, calming atmosphere of the Montessori classroom provides a safe haven. It is the quality of calm in the classroom, combined with enabling the child to do as much as possible for themselves, that makes Montessori children so content. The environment is a peaceful, caring, joyful place for learning, connection, and the development of independence. It seems far removed from the tantrums and struggles of a time known as the "terrible" twos. In fact, Montessori teachers love this time of life and are dedicated to making it a truly remarkable time for the children in their care.

By K.T. Korngold, CEO of the Center for Montessori Education in NY



COMING SCHOOL'S EVENTS

In November



- ◆ **November 5 (Th) - General Election Day** (Do not miss your opportunity to vote)
The school is open on Election Day.
- ◆ **November 8 (F) - No School – Teacher Institute Day** (staff in-service)
- ◆ **November 11 - November 15 – Giving with Gratitude Week** (Crystal Lake Community Harvest Food Drive)

As Thanksgiving approaches, we would like to teach our students not only the importance of giving thanks, but also the importance of giving. Therefore, every year, we participate in the **Annual Community Harvest**, which will benefit clients of the Crystal Lake Food Pantry.

We are asking that each family provide their child with a chance to select with their parents and purchase 5-10 items to bring as a donation to school any day from Monday, November 11 through Thursday, November 14.

The donated items will be picked up by Crystal Lake Food Pantry from the school on Friday, November 15 in the morning.



- ◆ **November 7 (Tu) at 1:30—2:30pm - Kindergarten and Elementary Class Trip to Crystal Lake Food Pantry for a tour.**
- ◆ **November 28 - 29 (Th- F) – No School (Thanksgiving break)**

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NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS

Ms. Bridget, Ms. Carole



October is always an exciting month. Spooky stories are read, decorations begin to appear and we begin to build our Ofrenda to honor those people and animals who we have loved and have lost. It is a month of decisions of costumes as well as our celebration at the end of the month.



Students are now comfortable with the environment and have made new connections with friends. Older students offer help to younger classmates and younger ones easily ask the older students now in the class for help.

It is around this time of year that the Montessori student is more confident and empowered to make decisions about their day. I am able to observe work habits, behaviors and abilities of all students much better.



The sciences and cultural subjects are always the first work to be accomplished. Immediately, students want to begin their research. Some do it alone, most in groups. They love to report fun facts, share their written research and present topics for discussion.



Many are asking for more math and grammar lessons and the reading groups are improving their understanding and the fluency of reading.



We explored Goebbert's Pumpkin Farm, enjoyed the new Nature Center at Veterans Acres, were engaged with Officer Swagger's presentation of being a police officer and prepared our favorite works for our parents to see at Curriculum Night.



Our arts classes are a joy. Ms. Lilly has taught movement, rhythm and singing in our music class on Tuesdays and Ms Suzy returned for art to add a creative plus to our Thursday afternoons. We still visit the library and Veterans Acres for more enrichment.

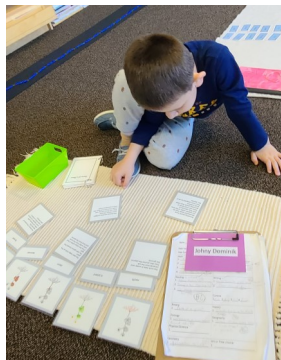
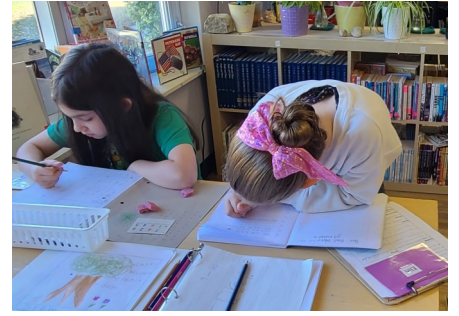


The kids have been planning and preparing for the Halloween party. The older students are heading the committees- games, food and decorations. Every child is on a committee to plan the party. It is always interesting to hear their ideas and to see the excitement on their faces when they work together as a committee to make decisions. On the day of the party, the committees of students will set up and clean up. After, as a class, we discuss what was liked about the party and what we will improve on for the next party.



OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

Elementary Class



NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Ellen



October brought a change of routine, beginning our school days inside, rather than on the playground. The children had to navigate, changing shoes, hanging jackets, hand washing and going right to work. It also meant an extra hour of work in the classroom. We witnessed a bit of fatigue after an hour and a half initially, now all are accustomed to the extended work time schedule. This extra inside time lead to more ongoing lessons in Grace and Courtesy. These lessons on social skills and physical control of movement help create a sense of community and support for one another. They teach the child how to navigate social situations in the classroom, on the playground and in the community. They help the child take ownership of their own actions and develop a sense of pride in accomplishments by working together. We teach these lessons by modeling and role playing. For example: 2 children arrive at a narrow path between rugs, someone tries to squeeze through. This is an opportunity to teach the appropriate behavior. The older children or a teacher role plays to stop and gestures saying, "after you".

A frequent lesson that arises as we begin each year is asking for something another has snatched away, "Please my I have that back?", rather than grabbing it back. Which leads to the lesson you must first ask for something before you touch it if it does not belong to you. The lessons in grace and courtesy come up frequently because children aren't born with these skills. They must be taught. There are many lessons, here are a few: greetings and goodbyes, thanking someone, using an inside voice, speaking respectfully, asking for a turn, accepting or refusing something, resolving conflicts politely, apologizing and accepting an apology, asking to watch, taking turns, walking around rugs, not touching someone's work, waiting without interrupting—the list is endless. We are role models for the social development of children and therefore must display positive behaviors.

As the seasons change and Halloween approaches, we have incorporated the study of pumpkins. The life cycle of a pumpkin from seed to fruit, the inside parts and outside parts of a pumpkin. We learned the nomenclature for the parts of the pumpkin, with the help of our 3-part cards works.

In Montessori works that are designed to introduce specific vocabulary we use 3-part cards, which are basically 3 sets of cards: 1) a card with both the picture and the word label, 2) a card of just the picture, 3) and a card with just the word label. These 3-part cards are found throughout the different areas of the classroom including: zoology, biology, language, geometric shapes and so on. Even for those who are not yet reading, this is a great pre-reading activity because they are able to see the letters, and use visual discrimination, to match the word labels based on the letters that they see. Montessori Three-Part Cards refer to card materials that children manipulate to internalize the information on the cards. So, for example, with parts of the pumpkin we will have cards with the skin, pulp, stem, leaf, etc. The younger children might just match the cards while having a real pumpkin to explore these new vocabulary words, while older children might want to make their own books essentially recreating the 3-part cards in a paper book form in

which they color and label each separate part. It was fun to introduce parts of a bat and spider while we were in the spirit!

The children had the opportunity to draw a face on a pumpkin with a marker and scrub it off. Scrubbing things is an important skill in the Montessori classroom. It's a multi-step activity that builds skills such as order, concentration, gross motor skills and attention span.



Another favorite thing is hammering golf tees into a squash, inevitably the squash breaks open and we can explore the actual concrete inside parts, the pulp, cavity, ribs, flesh and seeds. We notice how similar squash is to a pumpkin. A pumpkin is a type of squash, we had many types of squash butternut, spaghetti, acorn, Hubbard, carnival etc. Transforming our classroom pumpkin into a Jack-O-Lantern was also a wonderful exploration. How many seeds will be in our large pumpkin? How does it smell? Is it gooey and sticky? Is it cold or warm? Is the skin thick or thin? How much does it weigh? We had many questions answered in these fun lessons.

Halloween opens the door to the study of vertebrates and non-vertebrates. We studied skeletons of each class of animals as a simple study matching a skeleton to the body shape for a fish, bird, turtle, dog and frog and several made human skeletons. Everyone learned we all have a skeleton and the yearly rush to the mirror the see one's ribs was on!

Bats was another fun study! The children learned the parts of a bat and discovered bats are also vertebrates and the bones in their wings resemble the bones of a human hand. We read a book about bats to go along with the lesson. We also explored types of bats. The bumble bee (a very small bat) and the vampire bat were overall favorites!

No one can forget spiders! We explored the parts of a tarantula and created books with the 3-part cards.

We appreciate all of those who took the time to attend our parent meeting. I heard it was very informative and eye-opening for all. I wish I could have been there as well.

Thank you to all for attending the conferences, it was nice to see you and discuss your child's progress in this short period.

A final thanks to all who donated time or materials for our spooktacular Halloween party. It was a fun celebration thanks to all the effort and energy provided by our families.

OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

South Room



NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Masha, Ms. Laxmi



Welcome to the crisp season of colorful leaves, bats, and pumpkins! The East room has been immersed in the beauty that the middle of fall has to offer in all corners of the room. Thank you to the families who found and donated the special items that adorned our Practical Life shelves this month. The children have been passionately tweezing kernels off of flint corn in a beautiful refinement of their pencil grip – the kernels are then added to our transferring with a ladle material! The colorful gourds have provided a study of patterns and textures and are now being lovingly scrubbed and used to decorate the room. The sequencing, sense of order, and muscle refinement of scrubbing is seen again in our pumpkin scrubbing this month, with the added challenge of a large and heavy pumpkin to maneuver! A wonderful practice in gross motor and balance. And of course, we cannot forget the all around favorite – pumpkin hammering. The gentle “tap tap tap” of the mallet against golf tees in the pumpkin has been a gentle background rhythm in the room as children take turns strengthening their grip, wrists, and bilateral hand use.

We can't forget about the month long preparation for Halloween. This year, the children have been preparing decorations for the room in the art area! Pasta skeletons, egg carton spiders, glow in the dark bats, and precious ghosts adorn our class. The final preparation was scrubbing, cutting, cleaning, and carving out Jack-O-Lantern pumpkin! After a month-long study of the pumpkin lifecycle and parts of a pumpkin, the children enjoyed getting to see, touch, and remove the fibrous strands and seeds of the pumpkin. We even toasted the seeds as a special snack! We worked as a group to decide on the perfect Jack-O-Lantern face and carved it together, finalizing our decorations before the Halloween party. Thank you to all of our volunteers for your hard work in making our Halloween party so special for the East room friends!

In addition to the study of the pumpkin, children have been exploring parts of a spider, parts of a bat, and the human skeleton. The “Parts of a” books that children often choose to make and take home as part of their study are a small glimpse into the great work that came ahead. Children first work with Nomenclature Cards or 3-Part Cards, which consist of a control card (picture with label), a picture card, and a label card. Aside from the picture of the “whole”, each card highlights a part of the plant or animal and names it. The children lay out the control cards left to right first, reading or hearing the names of each part. Then they match the pictures, and finally the labels by either reading, looking for the beginning sound, or having the label read by a friend or adult.

If they choose to create a book, children lay out the black outline pages under each set of cards, working to isolate the section to be colored and then labeled. Aside from the direct study of botany and zoology that comes from this lesson, children are practicing sequencing (an important language and math skill), great attention to detail, visual discrimination, memory, vocabulary, and executive function in collecting all of the pieces needed to get through this work! This is a lengthy process and truly works the child's focus and concentration!

Development of focus and concentration in practical life was a big focus of our Parent Evening this month – thank you to so many of you who took the time to attend! When you see the apples, carrots, green beans, or cookies come home, know your child has focused for at least 20 (and more likely 60) minutes in setting up, prepping, and cleaning up after themselves!

That focus and ability to stay on task come into play as some of our students have built their first CVC words, working through each sound one by one, looking for the corresponding letters, and placing them in order. We enter the world of reading through writing! The same is true as we progress into longer words, those with consonant blends, or phonograms (*sh, ch, ee, oo...*) – the child practices hearing them in a word and building them with the moveable alphabet to gain the familiarity needed to read the more complex words! Other students have been taking their sound books home for the first time or opening up their journals to practice composition or getting started with their first Bob Books! On the other end of the room, we see students exploring the interconnections of the various dimensional materials in our Sensorimotor area, making the connection between a numeral and quantity with the counting rods and spindle boxes, all the way through 4-digit number building, addition, and work with the squared and cubed number chains.

We have also been welcoming our Elementary mentors every Tuesday during the morning working cycle! We are so fortunate to have the Elementary students right next door, so every Tuesday one of the Elementary students visits during the morning work cycle to work with the children. Our Primary students have been so excited to receive presentations from the 1st-6th graders, ask them for help with reading, writing, counting, or even holding a pencil.



The older students have always been role models for our young friends – we can see how drawn they are to the confidence and maturity the Elementary students exhibit. It is so exciting for them to learn from their friends next door, hearing their tips and tricks, and witnessing their own creative takes on materials. At the same time, we are seeing the Elementary students take great care to explain what is now a simple concept to them but is new for a younger student, patiently wait for the youngest child to set their work out just right, and ever so gently hold their hand to help them write. The Elementary students have been so surprised to remember that there was a time when they too couldn't read or write yet, and how much work goes into being on the teacher's side. It has been a phenomenal opportunity for both groups and we are so excited to continue this tradition.

OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

East Room



NEWS FROM THE PRE-K / KINDERGARTEN AFTERNOON GROUP

Ms. Masha, Ms. Kathy



The Pre-K and Kindergarten students were proud to work together to plant the school mums from the fundraiser earlier this month and have been careful to remember watering them each day at the end of recess!



We have been working on storytelling, prediction, and context clues in the afternoons by reading wordless picture books, where the story is told through illustration. The children take turns describing what they see on the page and working on putting those observations into cohesive and descriptive full sentences.



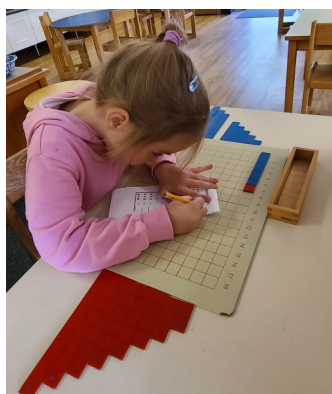
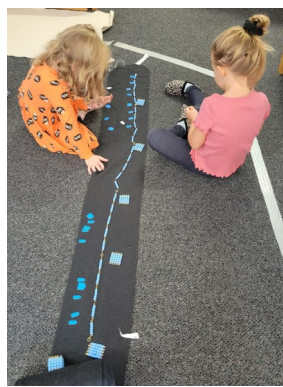
You have likely heard of the special afternoon work that has caught the attention of many – electrical circuits! Children have been working to figure out how electricity flows through simple (and some not so simple!) circuits with switches and resistors to turn on a light bulb, fan, music box, or combination of them! It is amazing to see how quickly our students are able to see the patterns and logic needed for this seemingly complex concept.



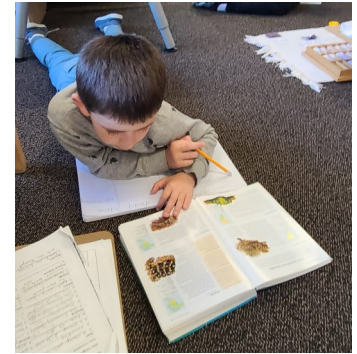
But perhaps the most memorable day of our afternoon group this month was the Field Trip to Goebbert's Farm. It's hard to narrow down what was the most exciting part for the children – seeing the giraffe's long black tongue, petting baby chicks, looking for piglets, riding in the Halloween train, waking the "Pumpkin Eating Dragon," or picking their own pumpkin from the vine. But it is quite easy to highlight our favorite moment as teachers – seeing (and hearing) the whole Pre-K, Kinder, and Elementary group spontaneously create and sing a pumpkin patch song in the wagon on their way back from picking their pumpkins, gently using their pumpkins as hand drums. Talk about being a community!

OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

Pre-K and Kindergarten Afternoon Group



MORE WONDERFUL MOMENTS AT MONTESSORI PATHWAYS



"Childhood is not a race to see how quickly a child can read, write and count. It is a small window of time to learn and develop at the pace that is right for each individual child. Earlier is not better."

-Magda Gerber

