

Montessori Pathways School News

October 2026

We are Building the Scaffolding

Before a child can read and write, they must first develop a strong foundation in oral language, phonemic awareness, fine motor control, and spatial orientation. While many parents focus on the final products—reading a book or writing letters—the brain requires a rich sequence of indirect preparation to successfully master these abstract skills.

In a developmental approach like Montessori, these foundational stepping stones are prioritized for 3- and 4-year-olds to make the transition to literacy natural and frustration-free.

1. Oral Language & Phonemic Awareness (Hearing the Sounds)
Reading is a code for spoken language. If a child cannot hear and manipulate sounds in spoken words, they cannot connect them to printed letters later.

- **A Rich Spoken Vocabulary:** Children need a vast library of spoken words. This is built through precise nomenclature (naming exact objects, plants, and animals), storytelling, and detailed conversations.
- **Phonemic Awareness:** The ability to isolate individual sounds in words. Games like **"I Spy"** targeting the starting sound of objects (e.g., *"I spy something on the table that starts with the sound /m/"*) train the ear to hear *sounds* rather than letter names.
- **Rhyming and Alliteration:** Recognizing patterns in language through poems, fingerplays, and songs.

2. Fine Motor Skills & Hand Strength (The Physical Grip)
Writing requires incredible hand-eye coordination, finger strength, and muscle memory. Before holding a pencil, a child must build their **pincer grasp** (using the thumb, index, and middle fingers).

- **Hand and Finger Strength:** Developed through everyday functional tasks like squeezing sponges, using tongs or tweezers, buttoning, snapping, and molding clay or playdough.
- **Pincer Grasp Preparation:** Activities like picking up tiny objects (sunflower seeds, beads), threading, or using specialized classroom tools like the knobbed cylinders in the Sensorial area directly train the exact three fingers needed to hold a pencil.
- **Wrist Control and Light Touch:** Learning to control the pressure of their hand by using lightweight objects, dusting, and wiping tables.

3. Visual Discrimination (Seeing the Differences)
Before distinguishing between similar letters like **b, d, p, and q**, a child's eyes must be trained to notice minute differences in shapes, sizes, dimensions, and patterns.

- **Sorting and Categorizing:** Sorting items by color, shape, size, or texture.

- **Visual Sequencing:** Laying out objects or geometric shapes from biggest to smallest, thinnest to thickest, or darkest to lightest.
- **Shape Recognition:** Tracing geometric boundaries with their fingers to build muscular memory of shapes before encountering letter shapes.

4. Tracking and Spatial Orientation (Directionality)

In Western languages, we read and write strictly from left to right and top to bottom. A young child does not naturally have this spatial orientation.

- **Left-to-Right Workflow:** Every activity a child engages in should be modeled and organized from left to right. For example, when transferring water or beads from one bowl to another, the full bowl sits on the left, and the empty bowl sits on the right.
- **Visual Tracking:** Looking at pages in a book from left to right or following a moving object across their field of vision, which trains the eye muscles for reading tracks.

A child who has spent months strengthening their fingers, training their ears to hear sounds, and learning to track from left to right will often suddenly "burst" into reading and writing with immense joy and minimal struggle.

Community Corner: Sharing Parents Feedback

Thank you for such a beautiful curriculum night! Your passion for your work and the children shines through in everything you do. We especially saw that last night. We are so proud to have our child at a school that values hands-on learning, inquiry, and a genuine love of learning. Thank you for creating such a special place for young children to learn!

We also recognize the sacrifice of giving your time to the families, especially when it means missing precious time with your own. Please know that we see it, appreciate it, and are so grateful for the love and dedication you pour into the Pathways community. ♡

With gratitude,
The Sevillas

Thank you so much to all the families who joined us for our Primary and Elementary Curriculum Nights! It was wonderful to connect, share, and look closely at the incredible journey your children are on this year.

A Glimpse Inside the Primary Classrooms

In our first classroom, we loved showing off the final, blossoming year of the 3-year Primary cycle. Parents have got a first-hand look at the complex research projects, advanced math, and deep language works our Kindergartners are diving into right now. It is amazing to see how much they can do!

Then, everyone stepped into a second primary room to see the beautifully connected "bridge" of the whole cycle. We explored how the foundational work done during those first two years directly prepares children to absolutely thrive in their final Kindergarten year, setting up a lifelong foundation for learning.



Deep Roots in the Elementary Classroom

Over in the Elementary room, Ms. Bridget shared a beautiful look at how our older students learn and grow. She explained how a stable, loving, and deeply caring environment allows children to truly spread their wings.

Parents have got to see how our hands-on materials bring abstract concepts to life, making big ideas real, touchable, and easy to understand. This concrete foundation doesn't just teach academics; it builds deep confidence, a genuine love for learning, and helps our students grow into independent, self-motivated learners.

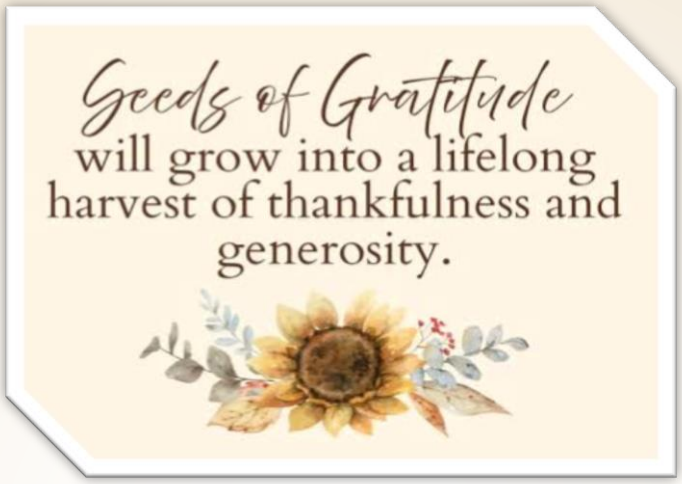


Coming School Events

- **November 6 (F) – NO SCHOOL – Teacher Institute Day (Staff in-service)**

- **November 9 – 13 – 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.



- **November 10 (Tu) at 10:00am – Elementary Class Trip to Crystal Lake Food Pantry**

  Elementary students will deliver some collected food items and walk through the pantry to see and learn how food is organized, sorted, and prepared for neighbors in need.

- **November 26 – 27 (Th – F) – NO SCHOOL – Thanksgiving Break**



News from the Elementary Class (North Room)

Ms. Bridget, Ms. Carole

Freedom within Limits is a Montessori concept where a student chooses work independently with respectful boundaries. It also promotes deeper growth in their desired choices. Many today call this "going down rabbit holes" when becoming interested in an idea.





Daily, Montessori children are presented an academic concept. They then can choose how they would like to demonstrate new knowledge gained from exploring the concept as deeply as they choose. Because they are in a multi-aged environment, many times younger students will want to do as the older kids do. Research is HUGE! Visuals can be added. Many then will ask to do their presentation to the whole class.





Motivation comes from a class humming with workers who are passionately exploring their interests. It is easy to spot someone looking for a new work. The student will be walking around the class, talking about other's work, watching lessons or looking at others working. Sometimes, they will join in another's work. If not, a teacher will guide the student to the work plan to discover a work that they may be interested in accomplishing now.





October began with spooky songs to be sung for our clean up time. Halloween decorations begin to appear around the class and we begin to build our Ofrenda to honor people and animals who we have loved and have lost.

Curriculum Night is a special time to connect with parents and to show them the many topics we cover in elementary Montessori. This year, parents dove into the math curriculum with me. Special thanks to Ms. Masha for being my student for the Checkerboard Multiplication.







A final exciting elementary concept is the planning of the Halloween party. The kids plan and prepare for the Halloween party by reflecting on last year and looking at library books that have ideas.





The older students are heading the committees- games/ crafts, 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 will discuss what we like about the party and what we will improve for the party next year.



News from the East Room

Ms. Masha, Ms. Laxmi

October is the month of settling into routines and expectations. The early morning children set up their classroom -- taking down chairs, placing flowers on tables, setting up water in bins for dishwashing and cloth washing, making snack, feeding Rainbow the fish, and ensuring the class is orderly and beautiful to start the day. By this time in the year, even the new children are familiar enough with the routines to begin moving through the day much more independently. They are remembering to exchange outdoor shoes for indoor shoes, grab a hanger for their sweater and/or jacket, and put away their blue bag all in one go before entering the class. Less and less help is needed from peers and adults to get dressed and hang everything up! And the most beautiful aspect of all – many have now had enough time and opportunity to be in the class to head straight to work and make their own choice of how they would like to start their day! We are steadily moving towards what Montessori calls "normalization"

As months and seasons more noticeably change, we have been having group lessons and discussion on the difference between night and day, and how Earth's rotation differs from its revolution. The children are always surprised to see how sun shining on North America leaves Asia and Australia in the night, for example. And most interestingly, how our seasons are opposite! Australia's winter is our summer!

We are also slowly working on the concepts of *Yesterday/Today/Tomorrow*, as well as different days of the week. **At home,** you can highlight a memorable event or class that happens on certain days of the week for them to better help your child understand the progression of the days of the week. For example, Mondays we have dance class, Wednesdays are swim class days, and Saturdays are library days. Mentioning the days by their name and the correlated activity allows the children to better grasp the concept of progression of time!

Amidst the exciting preparation for Halloween, children have been preparing decorations for the room, studying spiders, bats and skeletons, and of course, pumpkins!





They have been busily hammering and scrubbing pumpkins all month long as well.

As a grand finale, we prepared our carving pumpkin with plenty of teamwork. The first day was focused on scrubbing the pumpkin clean. Next, we opened it up and took a look at all of the parts we have been studying all month long – seeds, fibrous strands, stem, and more. They took turns scooping all of the fibrous strands and seeds (the seeds we toasted as a delicious snack for later!) so the pumpkin was ready to design and carve into our East Room Jack-O-Lantern!

Why is scrubbing such an important activity for children in Montessori? Whether they are first year or third year students, scrubbing serves as an important exercise physically, mentally, and often emotionally! Though the traditional presentation starts with scrubbing a table, we continue to apply this work to various aspects of our life. *Physically*, children are using their whole body to bend over, reach, and scrub their object of choice. Not only is this great physical development, but it also prepares their whole body for writing, which is much more than a fine motor skill! The motions we scrub in (loops), clear the bubbles using a sponge with (straight lines), and dry with (horizontal waves) all come together as strokes for letter and number formation!





Mentally, this activity works the child's concentration and ability to stay on task – incredibly important for writing longer sentences, reading more complex books, and solving equations. It is also an exercise in sequencing (what comes first, next, and last), executive function (what do I need to get now?), and problem solving (what do I do with this spill?), all of which directly translate to future academic tasks.

Emotionally, there is great satisfaction for a young child in seeing a large mess be cleared away by their hard work and proudly claim *"I did that myself!"* For the older children, this is often a great mental break from something that has been more complex for their mind and a wonderful physical break paired with a boost in morale before they return back to their more abstract thinking work. Even as the years progress, scrubbing is always an activity that is beneficial for any of the students in a Montessori environment!

News from the South Room

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Ellen

October brought autumn colors, apples, pumpkins, and Halloween celebrations to our classroom. The children explored these seasonal themes through activities across many areas of learning.

The children are settling into the classroom routines—a process known in Montessori education as "normalization." They are choosing materials independently and following the steps needed to complete each activity. They are showing concentration and focus while working harmoniously together.

Thank you for attending our fall conferences. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss your child's progress with you. We also extend our thanks to everyone who volunteered and helped make our Halloween party a memorable celebration.

We began the month by exploring **the parts of a pumpkin and its life cycle**. The children created their own representations of pumpkin parts on craft paper. In the math area, they counted apples and explored even and odd numbers. They discovered that even numbers can be grouped into pairs, while odd numbers leave one item without a partner.

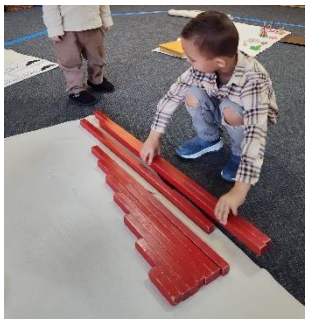




The changing weather prompted discussions about the **four seasons**. The children practiced placing the seasons in order and created books showing how trees look in each season. Songs about autumn leaves, squirrels, and nuts reinforced these themes, while Halloween favorites added to the seasonal celebrations.

Autumn offers many opportunities for **sensory exploration**. In the Sensorial area of the classroom, children learn to recognize and distinguish differences in sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound. Maria Montessori designed these materials to help children classify, clarify, and understand the world around them, drawing on her observation that children learn through their senses from birth by touching and manipulating their surroundings.

Each material isolates a particular quality. **The Pink Tower** explores size, from big to small; the **Brown Stair** explores thickness, from thick to thin; and the **Red Rods** explore length, from short to long. These explorations develop nerve connections, stimulate the senses, and strengthen memory.





Across the Sensorial area's subcategories, the materials provide a foundation for learning in math, language, geometry, and writing.

Although the Pink Tower may appear simple to an adult, younger children often find it challenging to distinguish the sizes of the middle cubes. They may place smaller cubes between larger ones, creating an uneven tower that topples. Through repeated attempts, sometimes with help from an older child, they gradually master the activity. The Pink Tower consists of ten cubes with side lengths ranging from 1 cm to 10 cm. Recently, a few of our kindergarten children recognized a connection between these cubes and the cubes of the numbers 1–10 they were exploring in math. This connection illustrates the cumulative nature of Montessori materials: the Sensorial work begun by a three-year-old provides a foundation for later discoveries about squares and cubes of numbers and more advanced mathematics.

Other Sensorial activities include *matching sound pitches and ordering sounds from loudest to softest, matching colors and the textures of touch tablets, and comparing the weights of wood using baric tablets.* Sensorial work is an engaging and developmentally necessary part of the Montessori classroom, with many opportunities for exploration. We invite families to learn more about this area and its role in children's learning.

October also brought **renewed interest in geography**. Many children make maps of the world and individual continents. The older children are researching their chosen continents and creating posters with one or two facts about each. A few children shared their research with the class.

The children are making progress with **Grace and Courtesy**, and continued practice at home will help reinforce these lessons. Please encourage your child to wait until you have finished speaking before taking a turn. Gentle reminders such as *"What do we do when someone is talking?" or "How do we wait?"* can support this practice. Thank you for reinforcing these lessons at home.