

Montessori Pathways' News

January 2016

“It is necessary for the teacher to guide the child without letting him feel her presence too much, so that she may always be ready to supply the desired help, but may never be the obstacle between the child and his experience.”

-Maria Montessori



Notes from Ms. Alena

(Head of School)

Since it's time for parents to make a very important decision about the future of their children, one of the events we had this month was our parent evening “**Good Enough VS Becoming Accomplished (Montessori Kindergarten and Elementary Year)**”, where Ms. Karen and Ms. Amber demonstrated the spiral nature of Montessori education, whereby the skills learned in the early years of the Montessori Primary class are studied at a deeper level in the Kindergarten and Elementary years.

They also explained why the Montessori Kindergarten year is not a beginning of Elementary education, but the final and crucial year of the 3-year cycle of the Primary Education.

Keeping this in mind is important in deciding where to continue your child's education.

In continuation of this parents' workshop, we decided to make the **Kindergarten and Elementary Demo Classes** for Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Elementary parents to help them understand how kids of Kindergarten and Elementary levels work during the work cycle.

We expect all Kindergarten and Elementary students to participate in this presentation on Tuesday, January 23 at 6:00pm. So, Kindergarten and Elementary parents please mark your calendar for this event and make sure that you will be able to bring your child for Demo Class that day.



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“The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from the birth to the age of six. For that is the time, when man’s intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed.”

~Maria Montessori~

We would like to thank *Encore Youth Choir* for inviting us to their concert at First Congregational Church. It was a lot of fun and great experience for everyone!



Coming School Events

Registration for the upcoming 2016-2017 School Year and Summer Camp 2015 has begun!

- **February 1 – New Families Enrollment begins**
- **February 4 (Th) – Vision / Hearing Screening for Preschool – Pre-K**
- **February 8 (M) – Chinese New Year Activities Day**
- **February 12 (F) – Valentine’s Day at Montessori Pathways**
- **February 16 – 26 – Kindergarten Extended Class Visit Days for Pre-K student**
- **February 16-26 – Elementary Class Visit Days for Kindergarten students**

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- **February 23 (Tu) at 6:00pm - Kindergarten Demo Class**

(During one hour the Kindergarten students will demonstrate a short version of the Kindergarten Extended Day Class for Pre-K parents)

- **February 23 (Tu) at 6:00pm – Elementary Demo Class**

(During one hour the Elementary students will demonstrate a short version of the Daily Work Cycle for current Elementary and Kindergarten parents)

As always, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns, feel free to contact us via e-mail montpathways@hotmail.com

Best regards,
Ms. Alena

Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)

Ms. Amber

The young workers have been busy as bees, completing the polar study before moving on studying South America. This continent can be more exciting, as the rainforest is a popular research topic in both Zoology and Botany.



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A field trip to Rockford's *Burpee Museum* will start a study of Native Americans.



The buzz of activity continues as many students share their confidence and competence in Math and Language by helping their peers with a work.



Our Valentine's Day celebration will occur on February 12th with the sharing of Valentine cards. Students will be studying the different types of poetry in February. This is a great opportunity to practice writing, rhyming, and using descriptive words. Our writing activities will expand in March to include a "Young Author" story, which will be completed by the end of the school year.

Science activities will also increase, especially in Botany as spring approaches.

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Some recent highlights in the elementary classroom include: spotting a tagged hawk (named Olaf by the students) and reporting our sighting to the USGS's Bird Banding Laboratory; completing Two Old Women, a folk tale of courage and survival set in northern Alaska (this also led to afterschool imaginative play of survival!); watching an inspirational DVD story of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (on his birthday); building a sled hill on our playground; and making dragon masks in Art class for the upcoming Chinese New Year.



A special “thank-you” goes out to parents for supporting student conferences. Choosing a conference goal was a new accomplishment, and most students had a clear idea of the goal they want to master. Now the student will work on plans to meet that goal. One goal many students are working on is leadership in the classroom.

This is often challenging for some students who continue to work hard at learning to be in control of their bodies and their brains. By setting a good example, being a positive role model, thinking before speaking, and moving or acting with purpose students learn how to navigate the classroom and life. These are lessons many will continue to work on for years to come, even into adulthood.

Discipline must come through liberty. We do not consider an individual disciplined only when he has been rendered as artificially silent as a mute and as immovable as a paralytic. He is an individual annihilated, not disciplined.

~ Maria Montessori

One wonderful component of a Montessori classroom is the ability to learn from peers, from older students, and to practice their skills until perfection is obtained.



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Maria Montessori said, "Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed." This is an ongoing discussion in the elementary classroom: when is it good to offer help to another vs. when is it good to step in and do it for him or her? Children want to help, but is the help welcomed? As parents and teachers, we also want to help, but when is it better to let the children figure it out or do it on their own? Doing things, learning things, and figuring out things on our own are all opportunities for learning and growth, and valuable experiences.



The idea that "failure is not an option" can mean there is no opportunity to learn from mistakes. Children need to learn from mistakes. It helps guide them to good choices, to the right way to do things or steps that work, and to answers. Is it easy? Not always. Does it make the child stronger, independent, confident, competent, and motivated to do more? Yes, definitely. Learning is not limited to the classroom. It happens at home and out in the world, every day of our lives.



It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.

-- Frederick Douglass

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Kindergarten Extended Day News

Ms. Karen

What a wonderful, interesting winter! After several days of minus zero degrees wind-chill, we had a wonderful time outdoors. The children were actually frolicking in the snow. Lots of laughter as kids were pulling each other on sleds and sliding down our "hills". Our first day out felt like we had all been released. The sun was brilliant and fresh snow was on the ground. The children all helped to build our snow "hill", hauling shoveled snow on sleds. It took so little to bring out the joy: sunshine, snow, sleds and friends. Simple fun!



And then the snow became ice The entire playground coated in ice! From the children we heard: "this is the best ice", "I LOVE the ice," etc. Yesterday they were sliding down a small, ice-coated hill on their stomachs, playing polar bear. "You'll be the baby polar bear and I'll be the mommy polar bear, etc." No sleds, just bodies! Fun, cooperation, laughter and joy!

Winter science: The children found a large rectangular prism of ice. So we brought it into the classroom and measured it: $9\frac{1}{2} \times 3 \times 4$. We guessed how many cups of water there would be after the large brick of ice melted (which took 2 days). Guesses ranged from 6 cups to 13 cups. Actual measurement: $7\frac{1}{8}$ cups.



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Another highlight: the ash trees in the front of the school were dead and needed to be removed -- victims of the emerald ash borer. So we watched as the workers cut the trees down, ground the branches, and blew the particles into their trucks to haul away. It took just a few moments for each tree, maybe 2 or 3, and then the crew moved on to the next tree. And the children were there to see it from beginning to end. Also a lesson on how the community helps us.



A memorable science experiment: Have you ever added baking soda to some vinegar in a bottle and attached a balloon to the top of the bottle. We added a lot of baking soda!! That produced a surprising amount of energy! We were all impressed!

We will be continuing our study of invertebrates and vertebrates for the next weeks, categorizing various animals. Math, science and language all combined.



The most popular math work at the moment: "Roll Work". It is the child's experience of always adding "one more" to the quantity and then recording the amount they now have. Purpose: relating **the amount** of beads **to the specific numeral** that represents the quantity.

It is also a way to experience exchanging multiple times. "Every time we have 10 of something, we can exchange." So we exchange 10 ones for 1 ten, 10 tens for 1 hundred, etc. We can continue adding, creating the numeral to match the quantity, and record the answer. Then we roll the paper up so they can continue to work on the math project another day. Currently one child is up to 120.

They are fascinated by how long the roll of paper is when unrolled and laid out. When will they be done? "Never. You can always add one more". And so it will continue. Their goal: to reach 1,000.

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Notes from the Art Class (*Kindergarten and Elementary*)

Ms. Susan

In January, the elementary and kindergarten art classes learned about Chinese New Year. They discussed how the holiday was celebrated with fireworks, lion dancers, and special food.

The elementary class drew dragon faces and made them into masks for the celebration. They drew simple shapes to make eyes, fangs, and horns, then used patterns to draw scales and designs on the dragon faces. Then, they decided between warm and cool colors to make fire or ice dragons, and blended colors throughout the image. Finally, they cut the dragon faces out and attached sticks to make them into masks.



Kindergarten class created dragon art out of cutout shapes. They colored and cut out an image of a dragon head, then cut out squares or triangles for the body. They arranged and glued the head and shapes onto colored paper to make the body, and drew in legs and a tail. They also made cutout heart art for Valentine's Day.

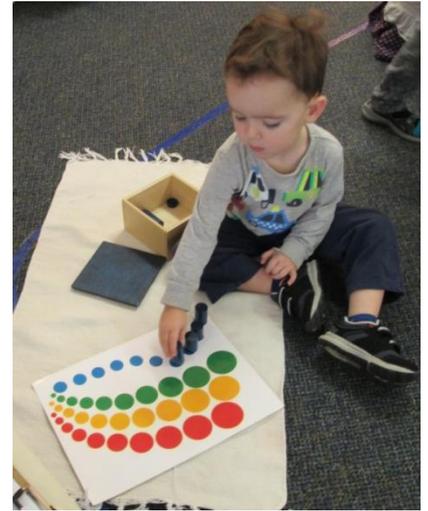
Both classes continued to draw in their art journals, exploring how to draw vehicles, animals, objects, and landscapes.



Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Andrea, Ms. Eva

Happy New Year to all of our south room families! We hope you had a wonderful holiday break. We would like to welcome four new children and their families to our classroom. Mason, Lucia, Monty and Gabriel have joined our classroom at the start of the new year and we are very excited to have them. The south room children were very excited at the opportunity to meet new friends and to show the newbies the ropes. It's amazing just how quickly children can adapt to new surroundings; it feels like they have always been a part of our classroom community.



Just a few reminders:

1) There is a new list of dates for the sharing basket. You should have received an email with these new dates. For the new families, this is a way for your family to contribute to some of the practical life and food preparation activities that are ongoing in the classroom. When it's your turn, we will send a shopping list home with your child, along with the basket itself, the Thursday or Friday before it's due back. We greatly appreciate your generosity.

2) Regarding birthdays, if you would like your child to celebrate their birthday within the classroom you are more than welcome to do so. We will send home a "Celebration of Life" form that you can fill out. It gives a timeline of some of their life events and you can send that form back to school along with a photo for each year of their life. Then at line time we will have a celebration in which your child shares their photos and we read from their form. Parents are always welcome to join, and you are welcome to bring a treat for the children (23 children total, nut free, preferably on the healthier side, fresh fruits are always popular). Please just let us know ahead of time so we can plan the morning. Line time is usually at 11:00. If you cannot make it, but would like to send the celebration form, photos, and treats with your child, this can also be arranged. If you have any questions regarding birthday celebrations, please email the school.

3) Please send your child's sound books back to school with them every week, so we can continue to add new sounds during the school week.

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All of the children have been very busy this month. We have quite a few maps in progress: World Map, North America, South America and Australia have all been meticulously poked out.



We continue to add more activities to enrich our practical life area. We want the children to always have “real” experiences and this month we have begun baking “cookies.” The cookies are actually Bisquick mix and water, with an option of adding sprinkles or chocolate chips. As you can imagine, this has been a very popular activity and it makes the classroom smell wonderful. We are also going to be adding some sewing activities in the coming weeks.



The classroom community continues to grow and our older children have been giving more presentations of materials to new and younger classmates.



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After almost an entire week of not being able to go to the playground because of below freezing temperatures, it finally warmed up and the whole school worked together outside to create a sledding hill as well as several snowmen. It was a wonderful opportunity for all ages to work together to create something special that we could all use. Even the teachers took turns on the sledding hill.



It's incredible to think that it's almost February. We have had so many amazing experiences this year and we are looking forward to what the rest of this school year brings.



Pre-K Extended Day Class (Photo Gallery)

Ms. Andrea



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Notes from the East Classroom:

Ms. Christine, Ms. Carole

As we welcomed in the New Year, it was very rewarding to acknowledge how far your children have come along in the past months! Our youngest students have become proficient in self care - putting away boots and snow pants, hanging up coats with mittens and hats inserted into the sleeves, being able to manage shoes, breakfast, and cleaning up when a spill occurs and just, basically, navigate the everyday tasks and life of our little world. For the older students, offers of help, and the increased responsibility in choosing more challenging and time on task work has been at their own direction and is evident in their daily work choices.



Most of the Pre-K children are working with Language and Math materials. Proper letter formation / handwriting skills are a daily function - Kindergarten readiness is important at this time. Phonetic letter sounds and inviting these students to challenge themselves with success is a great lesson that instills self confidence as future, self assured students.



Moms and Dads....as a parent, I highly encourage you at this time to think what future plans you have for your child for their Kindergarten year – in Montessori environment it is truly an important learning window that builds on their skills / knowledge. More information will be forthcoming.



The basic areas we are focusing on at this time are Language / Writing / Phonetic sound knowledge, Math / Number recognition and equating a quantity of variables with the numeral, an awareness of global continents and culture, Animal habitats / traits in the winter months; we have identified Animal Tracks that we may actually see in the snow outside our own homes / school - we have rabbits and apparently raccoons on the playground here! No deer though, although they're highly desired!



We have explored Ocean Animals such as the Blue Whale, Sharks, Sting Rays and many other ocean creatures - the children seem to gravitate to this subject and we have added many books on this topic as well as art to supplement their interest in this topic. We added three part cards and matching objects to encourage their interest.



We have experienced various objects placed into water and then predicted which would "sink" or "float" and why.

Our classroom pet, an African Dwarf Frog who has been with us for about 5 years has a new habitat thanks to Isabella Vera's family - he/she is healthy and thriving in the new environment - THANK YOU!! Everyone is enjoying taking turns to feed and check on its daily well being.

We have enjoyed making snowmen / snowflakes (glitter is great!) and playing outside together with sleds and shovels this month. We wove yarn around mittens and read the story about all the animals that were able to squeeze into "The Mitten".



This last day of January, we get to celebrate Sidney's birthday and look forward to several more in February....

We are also looking forward to our Valentine's celebration on Friday, 2/12- if you are available and have some ideas for snacks or art projects to share with our class, please share with us - your children love to have you in our classroom to meet and share with their friends.

Our Famous Person this month was Martin Luther King, Jr. We learned that he had a dream. He believed that all people should be treated the same. We did a poster showing our hands over lapping each other and got to paint them using water colors.

Gym Activity: Using two paper plates as ice skates we skated to music.

New Works: Different magnet works, circus, farm, fairy tales, seasons, a variety of puzzles.



Stories: "Snowballs " by Lois Ehlert And the " Snowy Day"

Science: We tried two recipes for making snow. #1- baking soda and shaving cream. #2 - baking soda and conditioner. Number 2 worked better.



We also put milk into a bowl and added different colors of food coloring and then added dish soap. When we added the soap the colors started moving making more colors as they ran into each other. We then tried putting paper on top of the bowl and we made a marbled looking paper.

Have a Happy 2016!
