

Montessori Pathways' News

November 2015



“It is not true that I invented what is called the Montessori Method. I have studied the child, I have taken what the child has given me and expressed it, and that is what is called the Montessori Method.”

~ Maria Montessori, “What You Should Know About Your Child”~

Notes from Ms. Alena (Head of School)

We began November with a field trip to the **Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake** where our Kindergarten and Elementary students had an exciting experience to meet CHICAGOBOYZ ACROBATIC TEAM and see their spectacular performance. One of our students was invited to volunteer on stage – how exciting it was for the rest of our kids!!!



The next day we had a great school wide field trip to the **Marriott Theatre in Lincolnshire**, where many of our students and parents enjoyed watching “*Seussical the Musical*”.

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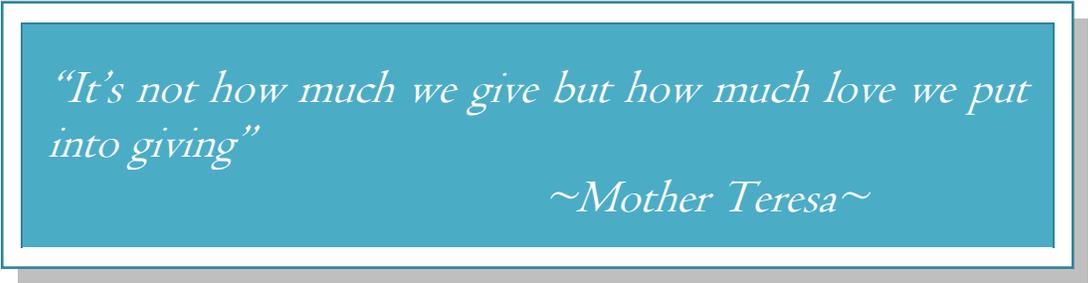
This month many of our families continued offering their help. After the weekend when many of you were helping us clean the school post flooding repairs and assemble the first pile of new furniture, five more dads of our students were so kind to spend another Saturday helping us assemble the second pile of the furniture that arrived later. Thirty seven families helped us one way or another after the flooding. Of course it was a HUGE AND VERY APPRECIATED HELP from all of you!

We would like to extend our gratitude to those of you who have taken part in our **Equal Exchange** fundraiser. Forty two families of our students and teachers participated. *Together, we have raised \$1,850.00!* We did not reach our goal this time, but this amount was enough to replace the carpet in the South room. Now we have new carpeting in every classroom, hallway, and down stairs!!!

If your family participated in the fundraiser, please make sure that your children knows you've helped their beloved school as well as small-scale family farmers and artisans around the world!

We concluded November with a **Giving with Gratitude Week**, when kids and their families were able to donate food and other items to the **25th Annual Community Harvest**, which will benefit clients of the **Crystal Lake Food Pantry**.

Together we collected and donated **633 pounds** of food and other items. It was a great chance to teach our students not only the importance of giving thanks for what they get, but also the importance of giving. Thank you everybody who participated in both events and gave our kids a chance to feel the Thanksgiving spirit.



Coming School Events

- **December 1st (for South room) and December 3rd (for East room) – Montessori Fun / Educational Night:**
 - **“How is Carrot Peeling Educational?”** – hands-on evening for parents;
 - **Story Reading / Pizza Night** - for kids

Do not miss it! It will be a lot of fun to learn!

- **December 16 (W) – 5:00pm – “Icicles Follies” - Winter Celebration at the First Congregational Church in Crystal Lake.**

Please RSVP by **Monday, December 7th**.

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- **December 21, 2015– January 1st, 2016 - Winter Break**

- Montessori Pathways offers **Winter Wonder Camp** for your children during winter break.

If you would like to sign up your child(ren) for **Winter Camp**, please return the registration forms, along with the payment, no later than **Friday, December 11th**

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

Warmly,
Ms. Alena

Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)

Ms. Amber

Memorable moments of the month:

- Theater visits - One student was invited on stage to volunteer during the Raue's *Chicago Acrobatic Boys* show. What a thrill! Plus, questions were answered from two Montessori Pathways students after the "*Seussical the Musical*" show!
- First snow - Excitement added to our recess time, plus the big adjustment of all the extra clothing; donning snow pants, boots, gloves, etc., and the later removal and putting away of gear. Students are practicing patience and taking turns. 
- Giving thanks - Students enjoyed writing a letter home offering gratitude and thanks. They watched the mail carrier collect the letters from our mailbox, and later reported when the letter was received at home.

Botany studies have "taken root" with parts of the plant and of the leaf. Upper Elementary students will take these studies further with a study of plant needs. Our North America tour will end in the next month. Watching several "*Children of...*" videos allowed us to learn about a typical day in the lives of other North American children. Those children also get up, brush their teeth, go to school, and have similar hobbies or chores.



Most students now have a weekly spelling list to practice and study. The list of words will go home for practice. Students continue the creative writing process of rough draft (or sloppy copy), editing, and final copy rewrite.

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At this age, children need daily writing practice to make progress in their writing skills and technique. Students always need more practice with neatness and legible handwriting. Improvement is being demonstrated by most of the students.



Students took a Math “test” to identify in what areas they demonstrate mastery, and in what areas they need more practice, representation, or an initial presentation. Practicing Math skills every day is vital to achieving and maintaining mastery.



Good manners matter is the theme of our weekly manners discussion. This includes questions and answers about what each of us needs to do to be a global citizen. We will continue our conversations on gratitude and gratefulness and what we can do for others, not what we want or get. At this time of year, it seems all the children want to talk about is the elf on the shelf and what gifts they are getting. When talking about gifts, perhaps Maria Montessori said it best:

"This is the treasure we need today - helping the child become independent of us and make his way by himself, receiving in return his gifts of hope and light."



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It gets increasingly difficult to maintain a calm atmosphere in the classroom as the holidays approach. Please try to keep your child's schedule, sleep and nutrition, as routine as normal.

Have a beautiful, peaceful, and safe holiday season!

Kindergarten Extended Day News

Ms. Karen

Time still has not slowed down ---- a short month. I am happy to be back from Slovenia. It was a remarkable experience on many levels. I was fortunate to be present at the national convention, giving me access to some excellent speakers. The Montessori "movement" is very strong in Slovenia. The group I taught comprised 40 women working for Montessori certification for the 3-6 age group.

November went by in a flash! Thinking back however, there are many highlights. We did appreciate the time spent together at conferences held earlier this month. It is always helpful to us in understanding your child.



To begin at the end, the children thoroughly enjoyed their Thanksgiving "project" ---- learning the family song, creating a frame for it add addressing the envelope. They each spend 1 ½ - 2 hours on the gift, not including the time learning the song. They each used a template (new vocabulary) to mark where the holes went, then punched all the holes themselves, then sewed around the edges, choosing colors and how they would finish the decorating. They were happy to address and decorate the envelopes. The sewing was a new skill ---- the pattern of coming up from underneath EACH time or the alternating pattern of under/over. The children have asked to do it again, so look for a Christmas song as one of their gifts to you!

In geometry, we talked about and demonstrated the concept of open and closed spaces. We then applied that idea to art: creating open and closed space and then creating multiple unique patterns to fill in each closed space. Hope to get a "gallery" of the class creations up in the hallway. We are still working on this very popular project. Each child who has done it has spent an entire afternoon thinking and creating.

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In math, an activity that is being used individually by the children is the “bead chain cabinet” which does consist of a series of chains. Chains are composed of single bars of beads. The single bars are color coded and range from 1 - 10 (ex. 1 is red, 2 is green, 3 is pink, etc.) The color gives visual clues as to the amount.

These individual bars are linked together to create short chains (2 twos, 3 threes, 4 fours, etc.) These “short chains” comprise the chains of the squares of numbers. Then there is also a set of “long chains” (3 chains lengths of the square chain ---3 x 3 x 3, etc.) which comprise the cube chains.

There is an unending variety of math concepts encoded in this work: squaring numbers, cubing numbers, changing the shapes of the chains (ex. folding the short chains into square patterns), demonstrating that changing the shape, the appearance does not change the value. Of course skip counting is embedded in the material and that lays a foundation for multiplication. It is a brilliant, creative and concrete material. It requires focus, interest, fine motor skills, concentration and absorption in the work to be successful.



Our highlighted musician this month was Mozart. We gave background: country, date of birth, death, why we are able to still play his music (how he wrote it down), told the stories of playing at the court of the kings and queens, how life was different ---horse and carriage. Of course, the highlight was listening to his music. And each child began to spontaneously dance to the music --- gracefully and in time! Beautiful to watch. Some children chose to make a book about him and bring it home to you.

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Science: air pressure. How we can submerge an object without touching the object.

A highlight for the children was the first snow ---light, fluffy, on a warm, sunny day. Delightful! The children were outdoors frolicking like puppies!



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

Ms. Susan

In November, the elementary class learned about perspective. They practiced curving perspective lines by drawing a turtle and its curving shell. After that, they drew images or words inside the shell sections showing important things in their lives. This activity was inspired by the World Turtle of Native American mythology. Then, the class continued learning about perspective by tracing their own hands on paper, then drawing a smaller person connected to the large hands. This made it appear as if the person was stretching hands towards the viewer in perspective. So the class learned that in drawing, making things larger can make them appear closer, and making things smaller, can make them look further away. They used pencil, crayon, colored pencil and marker for these activities. In their art journals, they designed their own original dinosaurs.



Kindergarten class painted images of autumn birch trees with acrylics. They cut out strips of paper to use as masks, then painted dots and dashes around them to make colorful autumn leaves. Then they removed the masks, and outlined the tree trunks with black. The result showed off the contrast of white tree trunks against a colorful, leafy background. They also explored perspective drawing, using oil pastels to create swimming mermaids. They drew the mermaids by following step-by-step demonstration, and then tried using two varieties of similar colors for each part of the mermaid - hair, body and tail. For example, using orange and red for the hair, and blue and green for the tail. They practiced both laying the colors side by side, and layering the colors on top of each other, for different effects. They also drew Andy Warhol inspired art in their art journals.

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Both classes enjoyed a special Dia de Los Muertos art activity inspired by the November Mexican holiday, and drew skulls decorated with hearts, flowers, and suns. After drawing and decorating the skull, they cut out and glued it to colored paper. They also learned about the holiday and how it is celebrated every year with candy skulls, skeleton cookies, and parades.

Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Andrea, Ms. Eva

November is a time of giving thanks, and we would like to begin this newsletter by thanking all the parents who were able to help with the Halloween party. It was a great success and we couldn't have pulled it off without all of your contributions and time. We would also like to thank you for your continued contributions for the sharing basket, we are so grateful for your generosity. We hope you all received your child's handmade turkey craft and cornucopia treat, both as a sign of gratitude for your food pantry donations.



Just a friendly reminder, the snow has fallen and we would appreciate if your child has the weather-appropriate clothing needed to have fun out in the snow. They need a warm coat, snow pants, water-resistant gloves or mittens, hat, and water-resistant boots. Thanks!

Please remember that you are invited to schedule a time to visit the classroom and share a family tradition anytime in December. So far we have had two families visit and share something special to their family. Donovan's mom came to visit and read *Twas the Night Before Christmas* to the South Room children. This is Donovan's favorite Christmas book, and the children were very excited to have his mom read it. After the story was read, they were able to share their favorite part of the story.

We also had the pleasure of meeting Vihaan's grandmother and grandfather who are visiting from Houston. Along with Vihaan's mom, they taught us about Diwali, the Hindu Festival of Lights. Each child got a copy of a *diya* (a type of oil lamp) to color at home. During Diwali, thousands of these diyas are lit around the house in celebration. Special sweets are also eaten, and Vihaan shared a sweet treat with all of his classmates. The children are really enjoying these visits and we look forward to more during December.

We appreciate your help practicing your child's sounds in their sound books and we will be sending them home on Fridays. Please return them on Mondays after practicing over the weekends.



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We have been working on more extended works and encouraging the children to choose “challenging work.” This is a very subjective term, challenging for a 5 year old will be very different than challenging for a 3 year old. We also have incorporated a “work in progress” basket for those longer activities that can’t always be completed during one work cycle and need to be carried over to the next day. The children are learning to go back and finish what they began working on the day before. Not all of the Montessori works have a paperwork extension, and we do not push that on any of the children.

However, if it is something that the child is ready for, will be successful at, and asks for, we may find a way to incorporate some form of recording of the work using paper and pencil.



There has been a lot of math happening this month. In particular, children have been working on: cards and counters, odd and even, teen boards, ten boards, 100 board, addition facts, and the bead cabinet.



Maps have also been very popular. We have started everyone on the same map, the World Map, so some of you may have seen one of these come home. Also, we always encourage repetition as a path to mastery, so you may see more than one version of the same map come home.



We are always working on community building. Specifically, we have been encouraging a new rule “ask three before you ask me” (“me” being the teachers). We are trying to remind the children to ask their classmates for help after they have tried themselves first. This has had quite a positive impact on their sense of community within their own classroom. It’s wonderful to see the children enthusiastically agree to help a friend in need. It also has proven helpful in building self-confidence in children that think they aren’t helpers or leaders. Of course, these helping encounters also provide perfect opportunities to practice “thank you,” “please,” “you’re welcome” etc.

Overall, November has been a peaceful month with lots of opportunities for growth, academically and socially.



Notes from Pre-K Extended Day Class *Ms. Andrea*

The afternoon Pre-K children continue to make strides in their abilities to navigate the second work cycle of the day. In particular, Ms. Karen and I have been focusing on self-control: choosing works and staying with that chosen work for the whole time needed to complete it, sitting by their work and holding up their hand until a teacher is able to attend to them, staying quiet and attentive for longer/more complicated presentations, waiting patiently for their turn with a teacher. They have been very successful in practicing these new skills which will undoubtedly help when they become kindergarteners.



Notes from the East Classroom:

Ms. Christine, Ms. Carole

November has been a busy month with lessons of sharing and giving thanks. Thank you families for your generosity with items for the Sharing Basket; your children take such pride in bringing in snacks and supplies which, in turn they help prepare and share with their classmates.

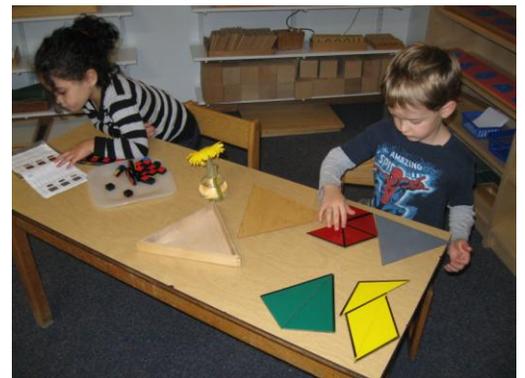
We have continued to work on independence with dressing; zippers, snow pants (!), mittens etc. The older children have been partnering with the younger students for success with this task - progress is being made though! Please keep practicing and encouraging this at home; they feel such a sense of accomplishment when they can do it by themselves.

With such a young class this year, Practical Life has been very popular; food preparation with baking, carrots and apples, stringing beads, scrubbing tables and chairs, sorting/spooning/tweezing various manipulative objects (preparation for pencil grip), and many other activities that encourage concentration, coordination and fine motor refinement.



Our class enjoyed making corn muffins with homemade butter, grapes and a Thanksgiving Blessing mix as some of our food preparation activities this month.

We introduced Parts of a Turkey, explored the geometric solids and metal insets. Many students have worked on maps. We discussed the Native American Indians and their life in America during the 1600's. They couldn't believe there were no Target stores then.....



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In math, we continue work of number solidification, odd/even, equations, predicting answers, one on one correspondence with a numeral. Everyone is working at their level and many individual and group lessons have been presented.



We also spend our time introducing, perfecting and refining our phonetic letter sounds. Your children love to spend one on one time learning these skills so thanks for continuing to practice with them at home! Many of the children are interested in our Spanish works as well as silent letters and compound words.



Art is a very popular region of the classroom - Indian corn tissue paper husks and handprint turkeys were fun and very creative projects this month.

Hope you all had a wonderful long Thanksgiving holiday and look forward to an exciting month ahead!!



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Notes from the Late Afternoon classroom:

Ms. Donna

Late afternoon news by Ms. Donna

We learned about the five branches of service that help protect us. They are the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines and the Navy.

ART: Remembrance poppies for Veterans Day, Pine cone turkey, Hand print Thanksgiving cards.



Song:

Gobble, gobble says the turkey.
Soon will be Thanksgiving Day.
Will you eat me?
How you treat me.
I'll quickly run away.



Science: More objects for Sink or Float, Will grapes and hot dogs float or sink?

New Works: Memory game and Scrabble Jr.

New Activity: Balance Beam

*Wishing everyone a very Happy Thanksgiving,
Ms. Donna*