

Montessori Pathways'

News

November, 2012

Notes from Ms. Alena



November is one of the busiest months in the school year. During Halloween, we had talked with the kids about *Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF* and how a lot of people in this world need our help. Many of our families participated in this event. After the Kindergarteners had counted the money, the Kindergarteners and Elementary students had a wonderful opportunity to go to the bank and exchange the coins there. Each child had a chance to drop some coins into the coin counter! In total, ***we collected and donated \$250.*** We hope that this money will provide first aid, a chance to study in school, or even a pump for clean water to somebody.

Thank you to everyone who contributed! It is a great chance for our children to feel that they are a part of this world and that they have the ability to change it.

We are always happy to see parents in our school, participating in the events at hand, as the children are happy to share their experience and knowledge with you. Thank you to everyone who came to the ***parent-child evening "This is My Classroom."*** The children's pride in showing the parents around was visible from the very start, when they greeted the parents and showed them how their day begins and progresses.



Our next event was the ***Thanksgiving celebration.*** Thank you to everyone who attended. The children worked very hard in preparing their performances to show their appreciation for the parents.

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Our final event of November was a school-wide field trip to see the *Cinderella play*. The play concluded with a question-and-answer with the performers of the play, who described their preparation and how much work it took them. This was a wonderful parallel for our Kindergarteners and Elementary students, who are also currently preparing a play for the Winter Celebration in a very short time span.

Coming School Events

On **Tuesday, December 4th from 4:00pm to 7:30pm** we will be holding **Family Portrait Night**. Bring as many people as you would like to get your Holiday Family Portrait. Please schedule your appointment while at school.

We invite all Montessori Pathways families and friends to our **Winter Celebration** on **Wednesday, December 12th 2012 at 5:00pm**. Please RSVP by Friday, December 7th.

Winter Break is **December 24th 2012– January 4th 2013**.

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 14th 2012.

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

Warmly,

Ms. Alena

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Working with Montessori Materials

Math Facts in the Montessori Elementary Classroom.

Many parents often wonder how the Montessori math materials in the elementary classroom will lead to the memorization of math facts in the areas of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The answer is that the materials lead to both an in depth understanding of the mathematical processes along with memorization of facts.

Let's use the addition materials as an example, as the process is similar in all of the operations. Students coming from the preschool and Kindergarten program already have a firm understanding of base ten, number building, basic addition and adding four digit numbers using the golden bead materials. When they come into elementary we begin right where we left off. Students begin with adding four digit numbers together and practice the process of exchanging. Once it is mastered with the golden bead material (which represents the absolute value), they move on to the Stamp Game material. In this game, the pieces no longer represent the absolute value, they instead represent the value.



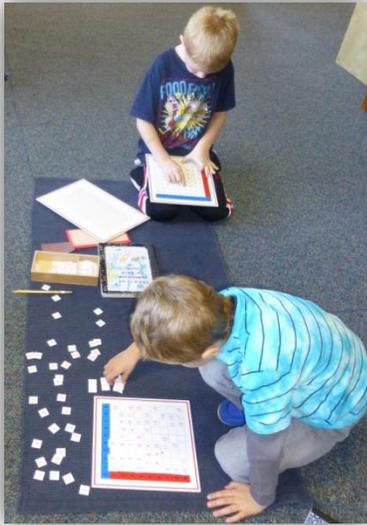
While working on the concepts of place value, addition and exchanging, the students also begin using the addition charts. After using the Golden Bead materials, students naturally begin to see that they are slowed down by the need to count quantity and realize the importance of addition facts.

The sequence of the addition charts begins with the addition strip board and then on to the finger charts. All of these materials require the students to manipulate materials. Students are also taught to see the equation, say the equation and write the equation. There is also great opportunity for partner work, which is essential at this period in development.



For example, students work together to fill in all of the sums on the blank addition finger chart. One student takes a few turns solving equations and placing the sums, while the other uses the addition control chart to check answers. While using any of the addition materials students are told if they can solve it without the material, go ahead and solve it.

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All of the mathematical operation charts assist the children in learning both the concept behind math facts and lead to the natural memorization of math facts. While we do rely primarily on these materials, as an aid students are exposed to math fact worksheets, flashcards and other mathematical games.

The goal in the Montessori classroom is to allow the children to naturally arrive at a point of memorization by using a variety of activities that all have the same goal in mind.

Ms. Katy

The Geometric Cabinet.

The Montessori geometric cabinet is a solid wooden cabinet with various drawers containing geometric shapes in trays. This cabinet is used to provide preschool and early elementary children with the foundational information necessary for them to later easily move into understanding and working with geometry. The geometry cabinet can be used in a wide variety of lessons.

The cabinet consists of 6 drawers, each with 4-6 cut-out knobbed wooden shapes. The drawers are organized by shapes, each containing 4-6 variations of the shape. Specifically, the drawers include circles, rectangles, triangles, polygons, curvilinear figures, and rectilinear figures.

The lessons begin with familiarization of the 2D shapes by tracing them and locating the matching frame. The child then learns the names of the shapes, matching the shapes with the cards, which are at a distance. This is first done with the filled-in shapes, then just a thick outline of the shape, and lastly just a thin outline.

This material develops the visual and muscular discrimination of 2D shapes, in addition to visual training and preparation for learning the geometrical figures. Tracing the figures also serves as preparation for writing.



Ms. Ellen

The Red and Blue Rods.

The Red and Blue Rods, also sometimes called the Number Rods, are a set of 10 wooden rectangular rods each a different length, representing a number quantity. The shortest rod is red. The next rod is twice the size of the first; one half is painted red and the other half is blue. The third rod is three times the size of the first and is divided into three sections; the first painted red, the second blue, and the third red.

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All the other rods are divided in similar fashion, alternating red and blue. The number of sections represents the numerical quantity of the rod.

The foundational math skills associated with the Red and Blue Rods are three-fold. A child will learn to experience the visual and tactile size associated with a numerical quantity and the vocabulary of number names. Secondly, the Rods show a child that each individual number is represented by its' own unique quantity. Lastly, a child can manipulate and practice the sequence of numbers from 1-10.

There are many different hands-on activities a child may explore with the Red and Blue Rods. A child will first learn *to count* the red and blue sections. Next he or she may use a set of cards *to match the numeral to the correct quantity on the rods*. Once a child masters this skill, they will then be ready to move on to *random identification*. For example, the teacher may hold up the 6 red and blue rod and ask the child to identify it out of sequence. This type of exercise shows real understanding of the mathematical pattern and concept as opposed to rote or memorized oral counting.

As a child advances, the red and blue rods are also used for *addition fact practice*. In the classroom, there is a set of "table-top sized" red and blue rods. A child can easily manipulate this set of red and blue rods to work out equations such as $6 + 9$ by simply identifying the proper rods and counting up the total number of sections.

There is also a similar material in the Montessori classroom called the Red Rods. The Red Rods are a sensorial work that are the same size and length as the Red and Blue Rods but without the blue sections. Our three year olds often begin working first with the Red Rods to learn how to carry, organize and manipulate this material prior to moving on to work with its' mathematical counterpart. The Red Rods allow a child to explore the concrete concept of length prior to associating it to a numerical value.



Ms. Jocelyn

Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)



Ms. Katy

November was a busy month! First of all, the children loved having family members come to the classroom for our *parent/child evening* at the beginning of the month. It was interesting to see which works each child chose to show their family.

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They also had a good time performing the classroom peace pledge. At the end of this month, we began memorizing a new song *to learn the states and capitals*. The students have expressed interest in performing this as well later in the year.

The class also had fun *talking about elections* and I could not believe how excited they were about the presidential election. We have very politically opinionated six and seven year olds.



Our other big event was the *Thanksgiving program*. The Elementary Class was responsible for slicing the apples, making pumpkin dip and greeting during the beginning of the celebration. They were so excited about this responsibility. I overheard one student showing parents to their seats and asking how many people they had with them so he could make sure to seat them all together. He said it was like working in a restaurant.

So far this school year, I have been impressed that when given opportunities to help at school the children always step up and do their best.

Avnish's mom, Asha, came by one afternoon to talk with us about the *Indian celebration of Diwali*. She brought in pictures, traditional dress and we went outside and lit sparklers to celebrate the festival of lights. *A big thank you to Asha* for coming in to teach us about this special time! The children seemed to really enjoy themselves. If anyone else would like to come in and volunteer some time, you are always welcome!

In our classroom we have also been *talking a lot about kindness, friendship and manners*. It is natural at this age for children to become a little less focused on the grace and courtesy they learned in the 3-6 year old program. However, we still emphasize the importance of being kind and respectful of each other and the environment. Over the next few weeks and throughout the year we will be reading books that call attention to the qualities we want our class and children to represent along with different activities to underline peace in the classroom.



Below are a few of the highlights of what we have been working on in the different academic areas this month:

Math: Addition Bingo Game, Subtraction Strip Board, Golden Bead Subtraction, Making different combinations of numbers, and patterns

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Language: Spelling work using the pink, blue and green series, reading as a group and individually, book reports, adjectives, capitalization and handwriting



Geometry: Line Concepts

Botany: Parts of a flower (flower dissection); an experiment to examine roots; and an experiment to demonstrate transpiration



Thank you,

Ms. Katy

Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Jocelyn, Ms. Ambreen



November is usually a time of transition in a Montessori classroom. For children who are new to the program they have adjusted to the daily routine, have found some “old favorites” to work with and are now ready to try different works they have seen their peers working on. For children who are in their second or even third year, in November they begin to actively seek out challenging work that really speaks to their interests and engages their mind.

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As with every month, we change a few of the works in the classroom to reflect the changes in our outside world (holidays, seasons etc.) in November we also add and emphasize works that are challenging for every level of child.

In Math, most of our new works focused on the topic of *money skills*. As all of the children were busy learning about and participating in Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF, in the classroom the opportunity to choose several hands-on works that incorporated coin names, values and “ways to make \$1” using the hundred board.

As a **Sensorial activity** the children also participated in helping sort the collected coins by using visual cues of color, size and thickness in preparation for the Kindergartners tallying the totals.

During our “This is My Classroom” evening many of the children choose to show these works, which is a wonderful home-school connection you can make with your child as you use money for everyday purchases. Also, in Math this month many of our 3 and 4 year olds discovered a new love of the red and blue rods. This foundational math activity is described in detail earlier in this newsletter.

In Language, the children are all coming along with learning their *letter sounds, sight words and reading*. Every child is different: different learning style, different learning pace, different interest level, but every child is right where they are supposed to be and surrounded by wonderful reading and letter sound role models with their friends every day.



Also new this month in Language was *syllable clapping, November Words (read, write and categorize), dog breed 3-part cards and phonetic flip books*.

The phonetic flip books were a gift from the Elementary children who created these books for their younger friends as an extension to their own Language works.



Our cultural area of the classroom includes **geography, sciences and history**. For November, we shared many books about *Presidents, elections, Native Americans, Pilgrims and Thanksgiving*. The children also had several turkey related works to try including parts of the turkey, turkey matching cards and turkey cutting and gluing art projects.

As a special treat, Logan’s Mom, Rochelle, planned a very fun special turkey art project one day. Using their foot each child traced cut and glued the paper to represent a turkey body. Then they cut and glued colorful paper feathers to their turkey.

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Finally on their turkeys they wrote who and what they are thankful for this Thanksgiving. *Thank you Rochelle* for volunteering your time and talents with the children, they loved it!

As winter approaches, in the classroom we will be sharing information with the children about the many different holidays that people all around the world celebrate at this time of year. Prior to our American holiday of Thanksgiving, people worldwide celebrated *Diwali*. In order to help us learn more about this holiday Meghana and Akshay's parents, Linda and Prakash very generously took time from their work schedules to come in to explain about their culture, share a special story and offer a delicious homemade treat. *Thank you Linda and Prakash.*



Thank you also to Jake and his Mom, Nicole for getting a great stack of library books for our authors of the month. This month we read books by *Simms Taback and Peter Reynolds*. If you have never shared these authors with your child, be sure to look them up on your next trip to the library, they are exceptional!



Lastly, thank you to all of our families who joined us on "This is My Classroom" and our "Thanksgiving Celebration" this month (especially those who came in to school early to help us get ready!) Your child really loves to share his/her school experiences with you and we love it when days and weeks later the children are still chatting among each other about the night they were all at school together or the morning when we all shared a Thanksgiving Feast!



Warmly,

Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Ambreen

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Kindergarten Extended Day News

Just as the preschoolers and pre-k children are getting serious about work in November, the Kindergartners are really getting down to business! Challenging works are the new normal and the children are ready and embrace it with excitement and focused interest. It is not uncommon for the Kindergartners to very excitedly say to me “Ms. Jocelyn, what are we going to learn today?”



This month some of the challenging works included: *The Banker's Game* (adding 4-digit numbers), *phonograms*(read and match multi-syllable words), *word building with blends and ending suffixes*, *reading for comprehension*, *50+ piece jigsaw puzzles*, *addition bingo*, *hundred board scramble and animal classification*.



One of the Kindergartners big projects this month was to *sort and count the UNICEF money* collected. Once the coins were all sorted, every child helped to accurately count the coins in order create over 100 cups of coins each worth \$1. With the help of our classroom hundred chart the children carefully placed 100 pennies, 20 nickels, 10 dimes or 4 quarters on the designated squares and then transferred the coins into cups. Once all the cups were filled, the children organized the cups into rows of 10 and then as a group we skip counted by 10 to determine how many cups we had. Next we sorted the paper currency and skip counted by 1's, 5's, 10's and 20's to calculate each of those totals.

Finally, we walked with the Elementary children to the Crystal Lake Bank in order to exchange the coins and confirm our total. Because the Kindergartners were very diligent in accurately counting the coins it is not surprising that the children's manual tally was only off by about 2%.



As an extension to the Kindergartners work with animal classification, we had a special afternoon visitor to our classroom, *Teeny the Turtle*. After learning about the parts of the turtle and a little bit about reptiles, Ms. Katy generously loaned us her turtle for an afternoon observation. The children were able to see exactly what the parts of a live turtle look like as well as watch how a turtle walks, stretches, crawls, opens his mouth and digs. Each Kindergartner completed his/her own

observation log by using both writing and drawing skills.

The Kindergartners are also *emerging as independent writers*. The many hours of practicing simple word building and reading now translates into fearless phonetic writing.

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Notes from the East classroom:

Ms. Christine, Ms. Ellen



We really enjoyed our classroom Thanksgiving celebration and hope you and your families enjoyed your long Thanksgiving weekend as well! Much dedication and love was put into making our "feast" and the children worked so hard at making it all come together for you; we are so proud of each contribution and so thankful to our parents who sent items in for the Sharing Basket to make it all happen. *Cutting up fruits and vegetables, turkey and cheese for the roll-ups, making pumpkin bread with homemade butter and*

arranging flowers for our tables was busy work that everyone pitched in to make this a special day for all!

Now that we are preparing for colder weather, we have been giving lots of attention to the details of *putting on coats, zipping and tying* and being mindful of the weather so we are prepared to go outside every day that is feasible. This means remembering gloves, hats, warm coats and practicing hanging them on hangers; it is so amazing to see some children that needed help with these tasks last year leading and helping some of our new friends - such a great example of the Montessori multi-age classroom at work! And so empowering for a four year old to mentor a three year old with this; practice at home because everyone wants to be a helper to another.

In Practical Life, baking and preparing snacks continue to be popular. We added cinnamon to our baking dough as well as had a lesson in filling a "cookie" with jelly; you use just a small spoonful and then have to crimp the edges of two cut outs together so the jelly doesn't leak out. Cutting or slicing fruit and veggies is also a great opportunity to share within our classroom community.



Our daily work cycle in the classroom is impressive; children are challenged and making good and appropriate work choices. At each individual's level, we are introducing new concepts and observing progress and enthusiasm for learning every day:



In Language, we were working on proper letter identification and correct formation for writing, writing first and last names, word building with objects, identifying the difference between vowels and consonants, and vocabulary development.

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In the Sensorimotor area, Geometric shapes (recreating them with clay - great hand strengthener!) and Metal Insets (pre-writing skill along with shape identification) were the most popular this month.

In Math, the hundred board, fractions and multiplication board were introduced to some of the kids, as well as the table of Pythagoras (sensorial material that represents the numbers 1 – 10 and their squares.)

In Science, we moved to the November calendar, parts of the Earth, parts of the flower, parts of a turkey, land forms, and animals and the continents they inhabit.



These are just a few of the ongoing activities that your children are choosing daily. We love to see these emergent learners explore their interests and make it a point to seek out any ways of enhancing this wonderful window of learning opportunity.



Please feel free to share any experiences from home that you think could be beneficial to the classroom. *Thank you Jackie, Christopher's mom*, for brining the sun catcher craft to the classroom. We really appreciate our parent volunteers and your children love to have you be part of their day.



Sincerely,

Ms. Christine and Ms. Ellen

Notes from the afternoon classroom:

Ms. Terri

Early November was so mild outside that the *kindergarten class* was able to return to our “*nature spot*” for art class.

We continued working on our *outdoor sketches*; looking at values, shapes, sizes and textures found in nature. The finished drawings were mounted on black paper and put on display in the hallway.

This month we also started a *Christmas project with terra cotta clay*. The children are practicing rolling coils and slabs for a “secret present”. You will get to see it in December. The kindergarteners are finding out it’s not as easy as it looks to roll a coil. Using both hands, fingers straight, moving hands up and down and out to the sides while applying even pressure – all at the same time is a challenge and takes practice. Clay is very forgiving however, and it’s easy to start over. Lots of small motor control is involved along the way.



The *Elementary class* was also able to do some *sketching outdoors*. We started with texture rubbings on paper using the side of our pencils. We tried to find as many different surfaces as possible, both from nature as well as man-made; bricks, asphalt, tree bark, leaves, table tops, the train, and railroad ties to name a few. Using their hands, the children were able to touch and feel the surfaces then rub a pencil over paper to capture the texture. We found the smooth surfaces were not as fun as the rough surfaces.

The next week we were outside again – more beautiful weather! After looking at all of the trees in and around the playground, we chose our favorite. We drew “*our tree*” looking at the height, shapes, texture, leaves, etc. Using the information we gathered the week before with rubbing, we shaded darker for the rough areas and lightly for the smoother parts.

The 1st graders are also working on a *secret Christmas project*. It includes patterns, Christmas colors, a ceramic tile and glazes. You will just have to wait till Christmas to see the completed project (gift)!



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Our *pre-kindergarten class* made one last fall project. We drew *a squirrel in a tree* where it lives. We practiced and drew the basic shapes for the squirrel - a circle and an oval and added a bushy tail. The children are amazed to see an actual animal appear as we go step by step. Triangles for ears, two curved lines for arms, zigzags for fingers – all done together, but each work is so unique. We colored the squirrels with crayons, painted the sky with water colors then glued on left over dried leaves around the tree to make the habitat for this squirrel.

Our current project with the pre-kindergarteners is based on the book Minas and the Fish. The book is about a little boy who wants to be big and know how to swim so he can go on the fishing boat with his dad and brothers. They catch a magic fish who grants his wish. Again, practicing shapes & looking at the parts of the fish (dorsal fin, gills, tail, scales, etc) as we drew. This is not only fun, but it also teaches the children through art as well as strengthening fine motor muscles.



A fun favorite project done later in the day involved turkeys, tracing, coloring, cutting and feather gluing. Our turkey pictures kept us busy and they looked great. Hopefully, they all made it home for Thanksgiving!

Best regards,

Ms. Terri

