

Montessori Pathways' News



Notes from Ms. Alena
(Head of School)

Normalization in the Montessori Classroom

Children are inherently curious. Encouraging a child to engage deeply in something that interests them strengthens their desire to ask questions and learn new things. Along with the uncertainty of the new school year should come a reminder that, when given the opportunity, each individual child can lead the way through their learning and become normalized through work.

Normalization is the term Maria Montessori used for the process of internalizing multiple skills through coordination and organization. It is something that spontaneously happens when children have meaningful work to do. Given freedom, a child may choose to do things that adults may not initially choose for them. If we can step back and observe, many times we will see the purpose and merit in their actions.

The "Normal" in Normalization

The word "normalization" obviously has the word "normal" at its core. Before going on, **it is essential that it is understood that "normal" has a large range in child development.** Simply because one child can accomplish a task at any particular age does not mean that all children should be able to accomplish that task at the same age. Each child is unique with many different sets of circumstances determining the way and time at which that particular child will accomplish tasks. The variation between the upper and lower limits of the scales is often great, all within the range of what is still considered "normal."

The combination of the child's desire to do something, their understanding of how to do it, and their action of actually doing it, is the beginning of normalization. Normalization is this establishment of the point of contact with the environment. Through this contact with real objects allowing the child to perform real-life actions, the child begins to concentrate.



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Elementary Parent Curriculum Night

In October, the Elementary and Kindergarten parents were invited to our first post-Covid in-person curriculum night.

Ms. Bridget displayed some of the materials in different areas to show our parents how the Montessori multiage and hands-on environment helps our students be successful in and enjoy their learning process.

Thank you Ms. Bridget for such an informative evening and thank you, parents, for finding the time to participate in it!



Halloween at Montessori Pathways

We appreciate everyone's effort in preparation for the Halloween celebration at our school. The students decorated their classrooms and were so ready for a fun morning. We made a last minute decision to invite the elementary students to host the activity stations that were amazingly prepared by our teachers and parents. It was such a busy, exciting, and, at the same time, peaceful morning at school. Our elementary friends were absolutely great leaders, helpers, and friends for the little ones.





Parents' Corner



Practical Life: The Soul of the Montessori Classroom

"Any child who is self-sufficient, who can tie his shoes, dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity, which is derived from a sense of independence."

~ Maria Montessori, The Child in

Children are naturally curious and want to participate in the activities of daily life they see all around them. Maria Montessori developed the Practical Life exercises to give children the opportunity to practice those skills, gain independence, and become fully functional members of their community.

Some parents, new to Montessori, keep asking us why their kids are doing all of this sweeping, mopping, dusting, polishing, scrubbing, washing, cooking, etc. while parents are expecting their kids are working on math and language.

It's important to educate parents about the crucial role that Practical Life exercises play in their child's social, emotional, and academic development, providing a foundation for confidence and success.

These activities help children develop their motor skills, refining both large and small muscle coordination. A child may repeat a particular exercise over and over, perfecting her movements and developing concentration. Pediatric neuropsychologist Steven Hughes found that children's strongest link to their brains are their hands, noting that repeated motor movements develop the pathways in the brain that help children learn.

The child is learning to follow a complex motor sequence, independently, in order to fulfill his or her own desires and needs. These skills, when taught early in life, allow children to believe in themselves as well as develop the self-discipline needed for success throughout their lives.

Math, reading, and language all require one to have the ability to focus, to be able to follow logical and sequential steps, to make intelligent choices, to see a task through from start to finish, to persist when one makes a mistake, and to correct one's mistakes—and all of these are present in the process of learning and practicing the practical life activities.

The Exercises

In the preliminary exercises, children learn basic life skills such as pouring, cutting, folding, and spooning. In the applied exercises, children learn how to care for themselves (hand washing, dressing and undressing,), as well as the environment (polishing furniture and washing their own snack/lunch dishes, for example).

The other two areas of the Practical Life curriculum are Grace and Courtesy, (which include asking for or offering help, letting someone pass, covering a sneeze or yawn; using "Thank you", "Please", "Excuse me", etc.), and Control of Movement, (carrying scissors, walking around a rug, the Silence Game, etc.).

Spontaneous Contributions

At first the child acts solely for himself, washing a table for the sake of doing the activity. Later he will wash a table because it is dirty. Eventually, what were once exercises become spontaneous and natural expressions of community life. Unprompted, children will often help each other mop up a spill or sweep the dirt from an overturned potted plant.

As his world expands, each child comes to realize that he is an important part of the community, someone with something to give. Children feel trusted and respected when adults provide them with the opportunity to take part in the real work of their family and school. Perhaps this is one reason why Margot Waltuch, who trained with Maria Montessori, said that "Practical Life is the soul of the Montessori classroom."

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[Click here to learn more: "How Cleaning and Sweeping Prepare Children for Academic Success"](#)

[Click here to see our kids' Practical Life activities](#)





COMING SCHOOL'S EVENTS

In November



- ◆ **November 8 - November 12 – 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 8 through Thursday, November 11.

The donated items will be delivered to Crystal Lake Food Pantry (42 East St, Crystal Lake, IL 60014) **on Friday November 12 at 10:00am.**

~Please let us know if you could help with delivery.~



- ◆ **November 18 (Th) - Family Reading Night**

Helping your children to enjoy reading is one of the most important things you can do as a parent and well worth the investment of your time and energy.

Kids will learn reading skills in school, but often they come to associate reading with work, not pleasure. As a result, they lose their desire to read. And it is that desire – the curiosity and interest – that is the cornerstone to using reading and related skills successfully.

It is a common question for parents, “How to instill a love for books in children?”. In our century of technology, we can find many great suggestions online. Check this article for some of them: [“Raise a Child Who Loves to Read”](#).

But please remember, nothing works better than your role modeling. Your child will love what you love, will do what you do, will avoid what you avoid.

If you would like your child to read, the recipe is very simple - sit and read together.

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White encourages families to read together to celebrate Illinois’ annual **Family Reading Night on Thursday, November 18.**

“This is a night when families are urged to turn off electronic devices and spend time reading together,” White said. “Reading together creates a positive learning environment and helps children develop language skills, comprehension and a love for reading that can last a lifetime.”

[Click here for the ideas: “The ABC’s of Reading”](#)

- ◆ **November 25- 26 (Th- F) – No School (Thanksgiving break)**

NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS



Ms. Bridget

If one asked what is on the Elementary student's mind in October, it would be Halloween. Not only do the students discuss their costumes, but they also start thinking of how to celebrate the day.

In our class, we divide into three groups to plan the party. The Upper Elementary students filled out an application for the committee that they wanted. Each could choose Decorations, Food or Games. Their responses were excellent so everyone was able to be on the committee that they wanted. Then Lower Elementary were able to pick which committee they wanted to be on. The teams then met to brainstorm all possible ideas before voting on what they would like for the party. It is a fun procedure that gets the kids working in teams, collaborating, and using creativity. Presentation is the final step.



Academically, students have been enjoying math lessons as they can work in teams to accomplish the work. The topics are various: multiplying fractions, long division, subtraction with borrowing and exploring addition. I have observed more and more students choosing math this month.



Language lessons are also various depending on the level. Diagramming helping verbs, conjugating verbs in the past tense, grammar studies or compound words, antonyms and synonyms.



The Upper Elementary has begun to explore water biomes in geography and Lower Elementary has discussed constellations, the sun and the Earth and moon.



In botany, we are delving into roots. Upper EI has been working on measurement in Geometry and Lower EI is completing introductions to all polygons up to decagons. In History, Upper EI is working on Ancient Egypt and Lower EI is learning to tell time or determining time passage. Reading groups are going well. Comprehension and prediction of text are the focus in Lower and Upper just finished their first book group book, *Save Me A Seat*, which explored what does it mean to be a friend.



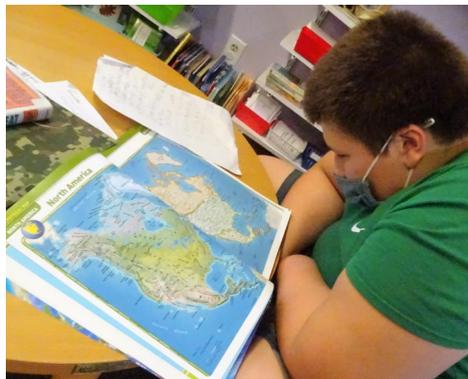
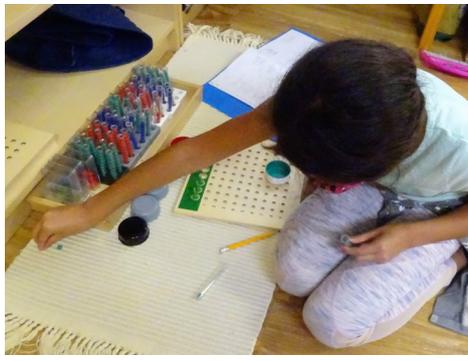
On Writing Wednesdays, I have been encouraging the students to find good topics in which to write as well as looking at diversifying the genres of writing. What makes a mystery story a mystery? Finally, in physical science, Upper EI has begun meteorology with looking at heat and the ways heat travels. Lower EI has been learning about matter and atoms.

The class is in a groove with more interactions happening. New students have figured out routines and where to find items in the class as well as where to get help when they need it. Veteran students have embraced their new roles of helpers to others and take the time to be of assistance. Now if I can just get them to remember their jobs in the class, we will be set!

For me, I have enjoyed watching work being accomplished, seeing excitement in learning, watching the ah-HA moments occur and seeing most of you for Curriculum Night.

OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

Elementary Class



OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

Pre-K and Kindergarten Extended Day Group



NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Urana



Our first month of school has come and gone. We can't believe it! October was a busy month for all. It brought us cooler weather, fall colors, the change of seasons and of course Halloween. Our party was a remarkable success and enjoyed by all. Thank you all for your donations and assistance to make our day extra special. Remember if you were not able to donate because the list was small and went quickly, your school supplies came in very handy for our crafts, everyone participated one way or another. The children had fun and should have a lot to talk about.



Thank you also for your attendance to our parent teacher conferences. Please remember the best way to communicate with teachers is an email. While we cannot always step out of the room to call, we will reply to emails by the end of the day.

The children are learning how to be a community. Socially they are working out all the skills they need to be a peaceful group. Maria Montessori believed the education of children could change the world.

"An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking; it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live." ~ Dr. Maria Montessori

For many of our new students this is the first exposure to working in a group or being with peers outside of the home. This has been a big change for some. The children are moving from the basic understanding of respecting their environment to respectful collaboration. They want to work together but must have the skills and information to do it.

We have spent a lot of time this month and last addressing these skills both independently and as a group. We role play and give language to help children resolve simple social conflicts. Children often have their own definition of peace and social justice and how that should be carried out. They know what feels uncomfortable when the ground rules are broken. They need to be empowered to make a change themselves. Running to a teacher to tell on a friend does not solve the problem. We are trying to teach simple conflict resolution with peers which will remain with them all their lives. How to solve this problem? Conflict is an opportunity for growth and potential personal leadership. As teachers, we direct the children to address what made them feel "bad" with the other child. What do they need to say? Not to just no, to express how the action

disturbed them. I do not like it when you? They are learning not all children want to play "their" game. No one will play with me is usually because one child is setting all the rules without the collaboration of the others playing, often changing the "rules" as they play. So how to get along? It is by listening to the viewpoint of another child or children, a child begins to build empathy for others. It is human nature to want to belong. How to respect differences of thought?

Collaboration is key, the children are encouraged to make the rules together. If the rules are clearly defined at the beginning of a game the game is then successful. Empower your child to be kind and caring, to think for themselves. Help them see what they could do to solve a conflict. Give them language and social cues to make a more peaceful world by educating children peacefully.

In the classroom, the entire Montessori classroom is booming! Seasonal favorites have been pumpkin counting from 1- 10 and acorn counting. We have been scrubbing pumpkins, poking our Jack o Lantern face, scooping the seeds and pulp out. Separating the two of them How many seeds will be in one pumpkin? We estimated and counted by 10's to find out the answer. What is your guess? The children poked bats, pumpkins, leaves and ghosts.

In science, we love our parts of a pumpkin, and we saw and smelled the parts up close. Our pumpkin had very thick skin over an inch and a half. Hum? The children learned about the life cycle of a pumpkin. It starts in the Earth and goes back to the earth. We enjoyed parts of a Tarantula and the bat. The bat is fascinating as it has fingers and thumbs just as we humans do. We are both mammals. We learned about Echo location and how bats can navigate the dark.

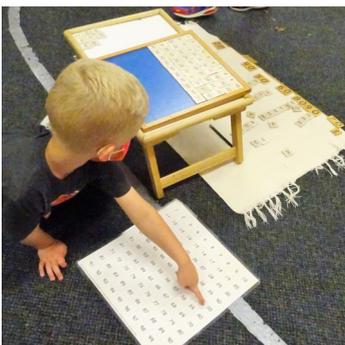
Everyone loved learning that we all have skeletons! Humans have 206 bones. We would be Jell-O blobs without them! We can see our clavicles, ribs, and scapula in the mirror. A few children can pop their scapula out to feel them by reaching up and backwards with their hands! We have many bones in our hands and toes not to mention our vertebrae, without which no one could bend over or do a summer sault. Our skeletons protect not just us but our important organs such as the lungs and heart. Skeletons are necessary, not scary.

Every day is an opportunity for learning and knowledge helps create a more peaceful world.



OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

South Room



NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Joey, Ms. Carole



We all enjoy the changing of the seasons, cool crisp days and the sights and sounds of fall, especially apple, and pumpkin picking time!

We began our month talking about the parts of the apple and life cycle of the apple. We also had the opportunity to taste a variety of apples. Our activity began with matching apples, labeling, and classifying sweet and tart, some were both. All kids had their favorites!



We then wrote and recorded our favorite apples, creating a graph. The children also peeled and cored apples for apple sauce. We first talked about what apple sauce from the store looks and tastes like...they all agreed ours did not look the same. We then tasted the apple sauce chunky, "it kind of tasted the same", then put it in a blender and yes, now it looked and tasted better than store bought! What a wonderful sensorial experience, through sight, touch, sound, taste and smell, the sensorial actives enable the child to clarify, classify, and comprehend their world.

We are now learning the parts and live cycle of the pumpkin, and in the month of November identifying different squash (tasting to follow)

In the science area we are also focusing on the leaf, the children have been learning how to identify characteristics and classify lobed, simple lobed and compound leaves. We also discovered the many types of nuts and seeds different plants produce and how they travel.



Other new works include parts of the spider and bat. We have been learning many facts through stories and non-fiction books about these flying mammals, like how it maneuvers using echolocation or its night song.

We have been studying parts of the skeleton, how it works, then finding and naming those bones on our own bodies. When the children have learned all the parts of the skeleton they have fun reconstructing a child size skeleton on their own. The results have been very interesting!



In the practical life area the children are having fun pumpkin scrubbing and picking kernels off corn, helping to develop gross and fine motor skills.



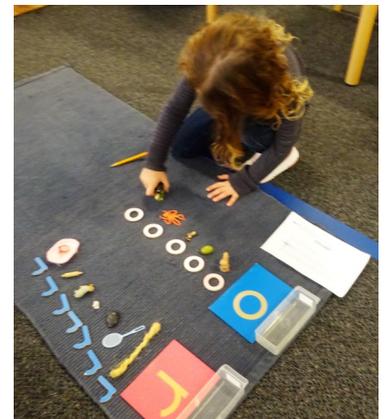
This month we celebrated 2 birthdays, Daniel turned 4, and Christian is now 6, a BIG Happy Birthday to you both!

Thank you to all of our families who volunteered their time and resources to help make our Halloween celebration so much fun!



OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

East Room



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

