

Montessori Pathways' News



Notes from Ms. Alena (Head of School)

~Learning to be Change Makers~

"For parents who invest in a Montessori education beyond the earliest years, you are gifted with a child who goes into the world able to reach their highest potential—not only academically and eventually in their careers, but as human beings who are going to give back and make it a better world." — Michelle Morrison, Head of School, Princeton Montessori School

If children near the end of their kindergarten year in Montessori, many parents struggle with the question whether or not to keep their children in Montessori for Elementary Program.

On the one hand the typical Montessori five-year-old's self-confidence and love of learning lead many families to ask: *Why tamper with something that is clearly working?*

Other parents feel that, since their kindergarten graduate will be moving on to another class one way or another, next year might be the logical time to make the transition from Montessori.

If you are facing this choice, we encourage you to take a good look at your school's elementary program. Although, you will, of course, want to gain an impression of the teacher, focus your attention on the students themselves. Elementary students are often the best spokespeople for the value of a Montessori education.

What makes Montessori special is its ability to nurture talent without needless competition and stress. In a nutshell, Montessori children never lose the joy of learning.

Why Continue in Montessori Elementary?

[\(click here to read an expert's opinion\)](#)



The Magic of Montessori Materials Family Night

*"What the hand does,
the mind remembers".*

~Maria Montessori

Thank you so much to all who came out to our "Montessori Materials" family night. It was a great turn out and the parents who attended were amazed by the progression of the curriculum from Primary through Upper Elementary, the materials and the way in which it is presented to the children, and how the children learn to internalize mathematical, language and other concepts.



The objective of Montessori is to develop the concept first. By using concrete materials during the early, sensitive years, the Montessori child can learn the basic concepts of mathematics and language. Montessori students use concrete hands-on learning materials that make abstract concepts more clear. Lessons and activities are introduced simply and concretely in the early years and are reintroduced several times during the following years at increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity.

All of the materials in the Montessori classroom have been specifically designed to attract the interest of the student, while at the same time teaching an important concept. The purpose of each material is to isolate a certain concept the child is bound to discover. Montessori believed that "what the hand does, the mind remembers". Concrete materials make concepts real, and therefore easily internalized. The student works abstractly (paper and pencil) when he or she has internalized the pattern and no longer needs the Montessori material.

The hands-on materials in the Montessori classroom not only provide self-confidence and independence, but helps with concentration and memory which leads to more abstract learning in math, reading, and all other academic areas.



Parents' Corner



Multi-Age Grouping: Observation + Imitation = Learning

Inside the Montessori community and beyond, multi-age classrooms are a hot topic for parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Angeline Stoll Lillard, in her authoritative research review "Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius", describes the Montessori multi-age setting this way: *"Montessori encourages learning from peers in part by using three-year age groupings. This ensures that as children move through the classroom they will be exposed to older and younger peers, facilitating both imitative learning and peer tutoring... Dr. Montessori was quite clear about the need for this mix of ages."*

How & why multi-age grouping benefits younger learners?

Simply put, children learn readily from other children. Not only are they eager to play "teacher," they are astonishingly attentive "pretend" students. What young child has not played "school" with a friend or sibling? Multi-age Montessori schools take advantage of this natural tendency toward spontaneous learning by letting them "play school" with structured classroom activities.

Along with direct lessons given by classmates, younger students in a multi-age setting also learn by observing the activities of older peers and even by "eavesdropping" on advanced lessons given by the teacher to another child. Montessori teachers are careful to present lessons to older children in a manner that allows interested younger children to watch, listen, and learn.



The benefits of multi-age grouping to older learners.

It's easy to see how access to advanced activities and lessons benefits younger children academically. What about older children? Any adult who has tried to teach something the least bit

complicated to someone else has enjoyed a taste of the older child's Montessori learning experience! There is no better way to reinforce one's own knowledge than by teaching someone else.

Teaching a real lesson, as children do in Montessori classrooms, helps older children identify gaps in their own knowledge and often inspires them to achieve even greater mastery.



Leadership opportunities are extremely rare for children in a single-grade classroom; such roles are often assigned by the teacher. A Montessori multi-age classroom affords children daily opportunities to teach a skill or share information with others. Further, because every child is particularly good at something, this opportunity exists for every child, every day. This difference in how leadership roles develop in the classroom is a typical illustration of the difference between single-grade, teacher-centered, traditional schools and Montessori multi-age, child-centered classrooms.

When peer-to-peer learning is self-directed, when it happens because children are ready, willing, and able to participate, it bolsters the older child's self-confidence, opens doors for younger children, and sharpens the academic skills of both.

Maria Montessori observed that children are eager to learn, and she identified self-directed, observational learning as a central theme of childhood. Describing the phenomenon of observational learning in a multi-age group, Montessori wrote that the child *"...suddenly becomes aware of his companions, and is almost as deeply interested as we are in the progress of their work."*

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School Events in February

REGISTRATION FOR THE 2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR IS IN FULL SWING!

Thank you to all families who have already returned the re-enrollment applications to school. The registration process for Elementary program is complete since we have reached our maximum capacity for Elementary class.

Registration for new families for Primary Program is already open and spots are filling up much faster than expected at this time of the year. We are also doing a lot of tours for prospective families at our school now.

Therefore, if you are considering re-enrolling your child at Montessori Pathways for the next school year, we encourage you to not wait until the last minute.

To re-enroll your child:

1. Complete the Re-Enrollment Form for the 2026-2027 school year and return it back to us along with the \$50.00 re-enrolment fee at your earliest convenience,

Check to Montessori Pathways, Zelle to montpathways@hotmail.com, or cash are acceptable.

2. The 10% annual tuition security deposit is due no later than April 15th. This will ensure a place for your child at our school and allow your child to continue in the same class with the same teachers.

Contact Ms. Alena if you need a payment plan for deposit. The tuition contract will reflect a 10% discount for the second child's tuition and 15% for the third one's.

3. The Summer Camp registration begins March 1st. The application and \$30.00 early registration fee are due no later than April 15th. The spots for Summer Camp are also limited since it is time when our teachers need to take some time off. So, do not wait too long with your decision and registration.

Please note:

- a) If you consider a part-time schedule for your child, please **check with Ms. Alena what days of the week are available for part-time attendance** before filling up your application. The part-time spots are limited.
- b) If the registration forms will be returned after March 1st for the school year and after April 15 for the Summer Camp, a spot at our school and camp cannot be guaranteed and your child will be considered as a new student with a required \$100.00 registration fee for the next School Year and \$50.00 registration fee for Summer Camp if the spots are available.

~ It is important that we know who is enrolled in Summer Camp and the School Year as soon as possible so that we can make the appropriate plans for hiring staff. Students who are enrolled just prior to the start of Summer Camp or School Year cannot be guaranteed a spot in the same class or at school and Summer Camp at all. ~

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Ms. Alena. It is time to make your decision. Time flies and it can be too late. Do not miss your opportunity to provide an amazing education for your child(ren)!

We look forward to another great year with your family!

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IN FEBRUARY:

- ◆ **February 2 (M) – New Families Enrollment begins**
- ◆ **February 2 (M) at 5:00pm – “Soup and Story” Family Night for Elementary class**
- ◆ **February 12 (Th) – Love and Friendship Celebration (Valentine’s Day at Montessori Pathways)**
- ◆ **February 13 (F) – NO SCHOOL (Teachers’ Institute Day; staff in-service)**
- ◆ **February 16 (M) – NO SCHOOL (Presidents’ Day)**
- ◆ **February 17—March 6 – Moving On Weeks: Elementary Class Visit Days for Kindergarten Students by appt**

NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS



Ms. Bridget, Ms. Carole

One of the main reasons that I switched from being a traditional teacher to a Montessori educator was the concept of the triangle. Three sides, 3 angles and 3 parties involved with educating: the parent, the child, the teacher. Educating is most successful when all 3 are in harmony. Teaming is huge. One of us can be committed and the others not so much. Not much success is seen. Because we spend several years together, we are always working towards being a great team. This January, I met with all of my teammates, and we collaborated and shared strategies. The students were aware of this meeting and told me some of their own ideas. There are beautiful works and growth seen often but it is invigorating to see the growth from year to year. Together, we can see it. I am so glad to be a part of this team to educate some of the coolest humans I know.



Empathy is taught, observed, practiced. Two times this month, the students have witnessed great empathy. Maria saw that one of her friends accidentally broke a game piece and she immediately said, "My dad can fix it!" And he did! Thanks Mr. Eugene!

Daniel saw two of his classmates arguing over who forgot to clean their spoon after lunch. I asked the two, "How will we solve this?" Daniel said, "I can put it away."

Whether it is encounters like these, or Ava teaching SO many kids how to crochet, all of the students are learning how to make things right. How do we love like Martin Luther King spoke. "Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that." Maria Montessori's favorite verb to use was "To Love". We all learn through observing daily our classmates how to be light and love to all.



Reading: "Reading is an exercise in empathy; an exercise in walking in someone else's shoes for a while". - Malorie Blackman

Please continue to ensure that your child is reading at home. Trips to the library and bookstore are nice. Thanks to all who have been purchasing books from Scholastic. Having kids see you read also will make the difference. Our library visits have certainly helped. Also, congratulations for Drew, Bryce, Ava, Neel, Zuzana and Zosia who finished their Crystal Lake Library Winter reading to earn a prize!



Autonomy: Autonomy is when students can make their own choices without external direction. In elementary, this is an important skill that transfers to success later in life. Montessori students are known for being adaptable problem solvers when they enter the traditional education system after Montessori. The Montessori environment allows for choice making. Lessons inspire choices. Friend collaboration motivates choice making. Work plans are their guides but not the final say.



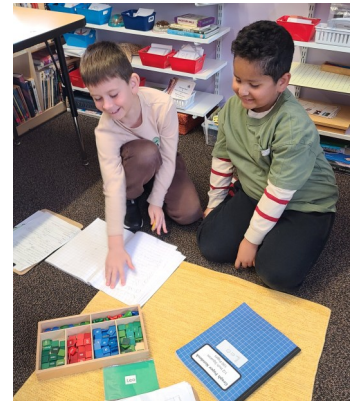
I enjoy motivating and guiding students to become independent learners. At this time of the year, the first grade students are noted to have gained an ease at making choices. The other students have been working on choices but now it is more time management. There are deadlines for some. I have some student/ teacher meetings and group/ teacher meetings. These help the students find direction for success without stress. It is encouraging to see so many improving in this area.



We are enjoying the cold snowy weather but are excited to enter the month of love, February.

JANUARY PHOTO GALLERY

Elementary Class



NEWS FROM THE PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN AFTERNOON GROUP

Ms. Masha, Ms. Kathy



Art lessons: This month's lesson combined negative space, shadows, and geometric shapes to create a wintry landscape. Pre-K and Kindergarten students created a snowman in winter forest. Students drew each element using common geometric shapes – circles, rectangles, and triangles, and cut them out. The remaining "outline" was glued on the bottom portion of the paper to create the effect of a shadow, which led to a very exciting discovery – none of the paper is wasted in this project! After arranging and gluing all of the elements down, children worked to add details with colored pencils to bring their projects to life!



Group Cooking: The incredibly chilly weather of January inspired us to get together to make a warm batch of vegetable soup. By now, the Pre-K and Kindergarten group is quite proficient at dividing and conquering the tasks needed to complete a large group cooking project like this. We peeled, washed, chopped, scooped, seasoned, mixed, and patiently waited for the delicious bowl of soup to be ready for tasting as temperatures dropped into negatives!



Kindergarten Lessons: Lesson in using Silent "e" for reading and writing. After a review of vowels and consonants, as well as vowel names and sounds, we introduced the concept of a Silent "e" that changes the short vowel sound to a long one.

We practiced building and reading several words with each of the five vowels (*cap, mad, plan*) without the Silent "e" first, and then adding it to see how the pronunciation and meaning of the words changes (*cape, made, plane*). For some children, this was the first lesson in Silent "e" and will need repetition before they are able to use it proficiently in reading and writing.



Many children have encountered it in their word building and reading and are able to think critically on their own or with a bit of guidance now about how to compose and read trickier words with the Silent "e."



We also had an introductory lesson on the different coin names and their values. Children took note of unique characteristics of each coin that would help them remember which coin is which, and we practiced recalling the monetary value associated with each. We also discussed how many of each coin is needed to make another (ie five pennies for a nickel, two nickels for a dime, five nickels for a quarter, etc). After some individual practice with the names and values, they will be able to progress to finding equivalencies, comparing values, and even applying the four math operations to coin values.



JANUARY PHOTO GALLERY

Pre-K and Kindergarten—Afternoon Work Cycle



NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Ellen



It is hard to believe another year has come and gone! We are all ready to start a new beginning as the children return to school, enthusiastic, inspired to begin working and get back to their routines once again. After conversing with friends and sharing their varied holiday experiences of course. It was as if we had no time off. Everyone has settled into the groove and the comfortable familiarity of school. Most children remembered what they had been working on before the winter break and set off with no reminders. All were so excited to repeat favorite activities with a renewed purpose.

Why do the children repeat activities? Repetition of materials is necessary in each sensitive period of development, to guide the child to mastery of each area and specific materials. These sensitive periods of repetition bring focus to the child and develop neural connections based on experience, repetition, and practice to help them fully learn. Repetition comes in many forms, daily routine being one. For some children the schedule is the major focus or learning how to choose a work on their own and feeling confident and secure enough to thoroughly complete the entire cycle of an activity. This is the practice of the child developing self-discipline and concentration before actual mastery can be achieved. All have different needs for self-development and will acquire them at their own pace. It is exciting to see where the children's various interests lie.



January unleashed a flurry of word building. Everything from building simple CVC words, to matching phrases to pictures and re-writing the phrases, to full blown story writing, with the various alphabets. Remember, this is an important intermediate step of composition and an in between before just strictly recording on paper. Writing on paper is optional so some children just build words, read them and put them away. It is the process of building these words that inspires thought and letter recognition which will lead to reading and writing. It is also a great time to identify which words children are pronouncing incorrectly. If the child says the word "tree" as a "chree", they will gather the incorrect letters.



Math is another hot area this month. From simple numeral and quantity recognition to the division board! In preparation for our parent's evening, the children were focused on choosing a favorite work. They explored different operations and skills, hence, a lot more math activities were observed.



The beauty of a Montessori classroom is before you do any "Math" the children have already been exposed to math, like it or not! The Sensorial area of the classroom indirectly prepares the child for the "Math" area. Nearly every material in the sensorial area is in sets of 10 and graduated by size changing by centimeters of 1 cm to 10cm. Indirectly preparing the child to recognize the difference between one unit and ten units or one unit and 1000 cube. The physical difference between a one or unit bead and a 1000 cube is not only seen through dimension and size difference of the materials but also felt by the weight. A thousand is "big", 9000 is huge! This concrete experience with the materials will later lead to a better understanding when moving to abstract concepts. The math area is divided to give experience with many forms of numeration, the decimal system, operations, memorization and finally the move to abstraction.



Nearly everyone is very excited about the upcoming "Magic of Montessori Materials" evening to share with parents what they have been doing and what they love. Children love to share what they are capable of. Remember, observation leads to a sense of self confidence to try new things.

Thanks to all for joining us for an enlightening and educational opportunity. A unique chance for your child to share their own Montessori world with their favorite people, their parents. Fun and wonder were enjoyed by all. If you did not attend the evening, please plan on joining your child in the future to encourage, support and boost their confidence,

As for the rest of the room? It's a snowy and frozen polar region! We have snowflakes, polar bear weaving, snowy cityscapes and birds in the snow. Penguins for counters in math. We have penguins, snowmen and reindeer for our science and vocabulary development. All familiar activities to build confidence but with a new twist to keep interest and as always give the confidence of achievement toward the mastery of a skill! Repeat, repeat, repeat until the child moves on. They all will!

JANUARY PHOTO GALLERY

South Room



NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Masha, Ms. Laxmi



Happy New Year and welcome back, East Room! After the excitement of the holidays, children return to school calmer and more focused on their work. January is often the time for new, more challenging presentations and for the mastery of concepts we had been working on before break. The mid-year reset is incredibly important for them and a great reminder of the important role that rest and time off play in developing progress!

Young children love big, meaningful, and purposeful work. For the youngest member of our community, this may look like scrubbing the table, baking cookies, or navigating the room with the red rods longer than their wingspan to understand length. These activities develop grit, patience, concentration, memory, and sequencing – incredibly important skills for math and language.



As children get older, map making becomes a beloved way to combine their love for big work, big words, creativity, and the study of the world around them. Children return to map making throughout their time in the Montessori classroom. They progress from putting together the puzzle map of the world while learning continent names to detailed maps of continents and countries. They trace and color each continent, country, or state while saying their names, often noting unique characteristics that help them remember these places as they grow older. And they return to these maps yet again when they are older still to understand what these places really are – who are the people who live there, what land and water forms are there, what is the flora and fauna native to this place, and what type of famous places are there to explore? They begin their journey into research. Collecting information, deducing patterns, forming opinions, and recording their findings. This “simple” activity grows with the child as they develop their reading, writing, logic, spatial mapping, and organizational skills.



And so, many of our children returned from break and dove straight into large projects, including, of course, map making, as well as study and writing about the solar system, study and writing about animal adaptations in winter, studying and writing about animal classifications, studying and writing with complex spelling patterns...notice a pattern?

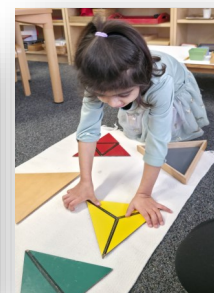
The same is happening on the mathematical end of things – they are measuring and writing down object names and length, checking lengths of the sides of shapes to confirm what differs a rectangle from a square or an isosceles triangle from a scalene, and applying their knowledge of the four operations to operations with fractions, coins, and word problems.



The beauty of the Montessori Kindergarten year is this blossoming of the integrated curriculum and how seamlessly children develop the skills of several curriculum areas at once. They are slowly but surely moving away from the didactic materials that once helped them very literally feel and understand the world with their hands, towards more symbolic and abstract but still tangible materials that bridge their knowledge from concrete to deeper conceptual understanding in the Elementary years.



Our younger students are laying the foundations for these incredible discoveries and connections to be made in their Kindergarten year right now. They are learning to put together various triangles to make other shapes, learning complex geometry vocabulary, practicing shortest to longest to then connect it to 1-10, finding that teen numbers are simply a 10 plus a unit, feeling the immense difference between a unit bead and a thousand cube, learning to match vocabulary cards to then match beginning and ending sounds, and putting simple words and phrases together to be ready to read them, just to name a few.



There is certainly a lot of pre-work to be done before everything is tied together beautifully in the Kindergarten year, thus the importance of the full three year cycle!

JANUARY PHOTO GALLERY

East Room





WE LOVE SUCH MOMENTS!!!



*"Children acquire knowledge
through experience in the
environment."*

~M. Montessori

