

February 2005 Newsletter



Nature's Classroom Montessori

The Sensitive Periods

(The following excerpt is from *Teaching Montessori in the Home* by Elizabeth G Hainstock. We thought it would be a helpful article for our parents and for anyone interested in the Montessori philosophy of teaching.)

Education need not be imposed on the child; given a learning environment he will be free to act and to develop himself along the lines of his own inner direction. Thus Montessori felt that there must be freedom within the prepared environment to develop his physical, mental and spiritual growth. The young child is very hand-minded, and the materials are geared to his need to learn through movement, because it is movement that starts the intellect moving.

Through normal and gradual learning processes, behavior patterns are established and the powers of the adult mind are gradually built up. Proper learning methods in the years from birth to six years will largely determine the kind of man or woman the child will become. Because mental development in these early years proceeds at a rapid rate, this is a period that must not be wasted.

Montessori felt that in these early years a child has what she referred to as "sensitive periods," during which time he is particularly receptive to certain stimuli. A particular sensitivity toward something lasts only until a necessary need is fulfilled. These periods are perhaps most easily seen in the stages of walking and talking. If parents are aware of these periods, much can be done to help the child at the right time. Observe the child and watch for each particular sensitive period. Then utilize these periods to help him understand and master his environment. All children develop at a different pace, but the following list will help you in knowing when to watch for particular phases of development.

The Sensitive Periods

0 - 3 years	The Absorbent Mind Period Sensory Experiences
1.5 - 3 years	Language Development
1.5 - 3 years	Coordination and Muscle Development Interest in Small Objects
2 - 4 years	Refinement of Movement Concern with Truth and Reality Aware of Order Sequence in Time and Space
2.5 - 6 years	Sensory Refinement
3 - 6 years	Susceptibility to Adult Influence
3.5 - 6 years	Writing
4 - 4.5 years	Tactile Sense
4.5 - 5.5 years	Reading

Schedule Changes

Please note that we have made several changes in our 2nd semester calendar. We have canceled our February 5th Open House and rescheduled it for March 2nd. We have also made several minor changes and a few corrections. We apologize for any confusion and ask you to please use this, our up-dated schedule, when taking note of school events.

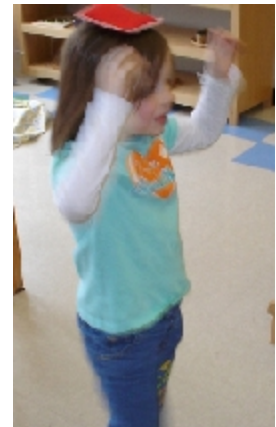
Tuesday, January 3 rd	Classes Resume (2 nd Semester)
Monday, January 17 th	Re-Enrollment Begins for Current Students
Thursday, January 20 th	Dessert & Demonstration Evening Presented by the Elementary Students (6:30 – 8:00 pm)
Saturday, February 12 th	Valentine's Ball Scholarship Fundraiser Featuring African Drumming, Music, Raffles, and a Silent Auction (6:00 pm – Midnight)
Wednesday, March 2 nd	Public Open House (6:00 – 8:00 pm)
Thursday, March 3 rd	1 st Day of 2 nd Semester Conferences (No School)
Friday, March 4 th	2 nd Day of 2 nd Semester Conferences (No School)
Saturday, March 5 th	Public Open House (9:30 – 11:30 am)
Monday, March 21 st	Elementary 5-Day Residential Experience at Nature's Classroom Institute Environmental Education Program
Friday, March 25 th	Spring Break Begins (Dismissal at 11:30 am)
Monday, April 4 th	Classes Resume
Monday, April 18 th	Spring Scholastic Book Fair
Friday, April 22 nd	Teacher In-Service Work Day (No Classes)
Friday, June 3 rd	Last Day of School End-of-Year Program & Potluck Lunch (9:30 – 11:30 am)

News from Ms. Erin's Room

Our eyes have been on the sky and into the universe of our solar system. The recent full moon was a wonderful opportunity to talk about the shape of the moon and why that shape seems to always be changing. This exploration has taken place along side the study of our solar system and the planets. The genuine interest and excitement the children find in thinking of a universe far above us is addictive. We try to imagine going to another planet and what that might be like.

Meanwhile, back here on planet Earth we have our snow-covered outside space. Just the other day we realized that sleds were not a necessity for sledding. The children simply used their stomachs and slid down the hill with no problem. This quickly solved the dilemma of attempting to share two sleds among sixteen children. You may also want to take a peek at the igloo constructed as a team by the 3 - 6 year-olds. It was quite a buisness of getting the materials needed for the construction and then working together to build its walls.

January has also brought with it two birthday celebrations -- a wonderful way for us to look at the relationship of the Earth and our Sun. This is just another way for the children to take ownership of their classroom. We have also added a white feather to the entrance of our space to assure visitors or guests that they will be treated with kindness and respect in our peaceful space. I want to thank all the parents who attended the parent education night. Your presence was greatly appreciated.



News from Ms. Stacey's Classroom

"It is upon peace that the very life of the nation depends, perhaps even the progress or decay of our entire Civilization." (Maria Montessori)

As the winter season treads on, so do the snow boots of the 18 scholars I am so very fortunate to work with. Without a doubt, this winter's snow has been a wonderful exploratory tool for the children here at NCM. Every day a new fortress is erected and an old glove is lost! I would like to thank all the parents for their diligence in sending all the appropriate winter items to school with your children so they can better explore our outdoor environment. I also want to remind you, as I have reminded myself, that we must practice our patience with our children in allowing them the opportunity to put away their things in the morning in order to prepare for class, as well as encouraging them to dress and undress themselves. I know that this may take some time and we just want to help them, but independence inspires confidence and confidence leads to courage! This is something that I know we are all striving for in the development and education of your child.

In class, we are as busy as ever. I am so pleased to see how much the children's interests have blossomed since September. More conscious efforts are being taken at conflict resolution and the "Peace Panda" is getting more relaxation opportunities. Peaceful choices lead to peaceful results and we work daily as a class to recognize these efforts.

In regards to our classroom experiences, this past week we further explored the internal body organs of a frog with a dissection led by "the other" Ms. Stacey. We learned that frogs actually have teeth! Ask your child what they are used for or ask them about some of the important body parts and organs of the frog. This coming Thursday, February 3rd, we will be dissecting a turtle. For this dissection, the children will get an opportunity to do some of the cutting. If anyone is interested in participating with a dissection in the future, please let me know, as we love having parent helpers.

Each of our Kindergarten children had the opportunity to spend a day in the 6 - 9 class, and it proved to be a very thrilling experience for them. I still hear the phrase daily, "...well, when you are in 6 - 9..." It's nice to see them so self-motivated! They are becoming quite the role models for all of the young ones in the class, who, by the way, help in making sure all of the 4 year-olds are following the classroom ground rules.

February will be a quick month, and then March will be here before you know it. Believe it or not, conference sign-up will be approaching in 3 weeks! I hope you all have a lovely month and I look forward to seeing you at the Valentine's Ball.

-- Ms. Stacey

News from the Elementary Classroom

According to Merriam-Webster, community is a group of people with common interests living together. Now, the 6 - 9 classroom's definition of community is raising \$245 dollars in the month of January alone for the tsunami victims through Coffee n' Scram profits and \$1 chores around the house. Not only does our sense of community remain strong, but it has crossed international borders and taken on a global perspective. We are very proud of the effort and love the 6 - 9 students extended during this time of need. Thank you to all of the parents in our community for their generosity to make this contribution a reality.

According to Merriam-Webster, pride is a sense of pleasure that comes from some act or possession. This definition sums up well how the children felt after presenting their works to all of the parents during our Dessert & Demonstration Night. All of those eyes, all the preparation, even the jitters, didn't stop the children from shining like stars that were bursting with knowledge.

According to Merriam-Webster, exciting means to arouse great interest or enthusiasm. What could be more exciting than tracking animals in the snow, discovering creatures that didn't survive winter, dissecting rats and turtles, performing science experiments, sledding in our kettle at recess, or getting lost in our frozen marsh? Your guess is as good as mine. If you'd like to explore some of the thrill, you are always welcome. -- Mr. David & Ms. Meghan



Getting to Know Ms. Stacey

Well, it's January and I am up to the same thing as I was last January -- trying desperately to hang on to those good old New Year's resolutions. So these days I am finding myself partaking in Pilates, drinking lots of water, taking at least 3 baths a week, and eating more fruits and veggies. I also am trying to come to terms with the fact that I am 25, not 24, which for some reason seems to be miles away from each other. The 5 year-olds can explain this theory to those who do not understand.

Back when I was 17, I remember walking into this huge old car warehouse in downtown Milwaukee which also happened to be where I was going to be attending college -- the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design. I earned my BFA in communication design from this institution and to this day credit those 4 years as the best of my life so far. Towards the end of college and after graduation, I worked for an architecture firm as their graphic designer, but got the brilliant idea to quit and move to Chicago -- where no job was waiting for me! I am a romantic and, like then, I still believe that I can inspire people to change the world no matter the stakes at hand. I truly believe in the philosophy of Paulo Coelho's Alchemist, "When you want something with all your heart, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."

I wanted to work with children, so I took a part-time job as a computer teacher and I became a nanny. Through my nanny job I met a woman who started telling me about the Montessori philosophy. The following fall, I became an assistant at Chiaravalle Montessori school. I fell in love immediately -- I was so impressed with these children. How did they become so respectful at the age of 4? I decided to take my training that summer at Meca-Seton in Claredon Hills, which then brought me to the thriving metropolis of Mukwonago. I have been here since. I can't say enough about the people I get to work with day-to-day. They have truly become my second family. We compliment, help, share ideas, squabble, and giggle like brothers and sisters.

Back in Illinois, I have a very unique and large family. Both of my parents have remarried, thus giving me a grand total of 5 brothers, 1 brother-in-law, 2 sisters, 2 sisters-in-law, 2 nieces, 1 nephew, and 5 dogs! My mother works at a grain elevator and my step-father works at Caterpillar Tractor Company. He also is a farmer of field corn and soybeans, as well as a local volunteer EMT. My father owns his own construction and remodeling business and my stepmother owns her own real estate business. I have only one grandmother who will be 83 soon and she is my very best friend.

In my spare time, when I am not practicing my patience with Frank (my Boston Terrier), I try to enjoy the outdoors as much as possible. I love taking pictures and finding artsy things to get myself involved with. Traveling is one of my enjoyable activities. In college, I went to Italy and after I graduated I spent 10 days in Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan. Over this past holiday break I went to Los Angeles and during my spring break I will be in London. Hopefully next year I will make it to New York City and Australia!

Working at Nature's Classroom has made me so much more environmentally conscientious. I have learned so much and continue to do so as the children's curiosities spread. I am blessed that I have the opportunity to work with such wonderful children and their families.