

February/March 2004

News Letter



Nature's Classroom Montessori

Dear Parents,

Parent/Teacher Conferences are coming soon, and we would like to explain a little more about our Montessori terminology and methods. We would like to work with you, our Montessori parents, as partners in guiding your children's progress.

In a Montessori class the teachers observe, take note and attempt to meet the needs of each individual child. In the calm, ordered space of a Montessori class, the children work on activities of their own choice at their own pace. They experience a blend of freedom and self-discipline, a place especially designed to meet their developmental needs.

Within Montessori philosophy, the word "normalization" has a special meaning. Maria Montessori used the terms "normal" and "normalization" to describe a unique process she observed in child development. Dr. Montessori observed that when children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration, working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and contented. She called this process "normalization" and cited it as the most important single result of her whole work.

Dr. Montessori believed that the characteristics of normalization (love of order, love of work, spontaneous concentration, attachment to reality, love of silence and of working alone, and the power to act from real choice, obedience, independence, and initiative, spontaneous self-discipline and joy) are the truly "normal" characteristics of childhood, which emerge when developmental needs are met.

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During our Parent/Teacher Conferences, we will discuss your child's progress in this process of normalization. We will also assess the degree to which Montessori principals are extended to your child's home environment. Together, by establishing a sense of congruency between home and school, we can work toward fulfilling your child's specific developmental needs.

Dates to Remember

Saturday, February 14 th	OPEN HOUSE FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS 9:00 am – Noon
Wednesday, February 25 th	PARENT/CHILD VISIT NIGHT 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm (No Siblings Please)
Thursday, February 26 th & Friday, February 27 th	PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES (No Classes in Session)
Friday, March 26 th	TEACHER WORKDAY (No Classes in Session)

Tango Exhibition

The children and teachers were so fortunate to have had the once in a lifetime opportunity to see Charlie's mom, Ms. Beth Norris-Kutchenreuter and her dance partner (who traveled over an hour to arrive) present the ethnic South American dance, The Tango. Mrs. Norris-Kutchenreuter has been taking tango lessons in Milwaukee for over a year. She even traveled to Argentina to dance.

Unlike ballroom dance, in the tango you "listen to your partner's heart" and move to its rhythm. The dancers must become attuned to another so that they can compliment each others movements. It was very beautiful and moving to watch. The children sat attentively, with great interest and curiosity. Discussing it afterwards, Charlie said, "It was cool, especially because they danced with their eyes closed." Christian said that it was awesome and that he liked the music. We would like to extend our most sincere gratitude. It was a wonderful, enriching experience and we greatly appreciate it.



Turtle Dissection

As part of our studies of the natural world, our students learn about the animal kingdom. We study each class of animals and learn about external anatomy and life cycles. On special occasions we are able to dissect biological specimens in order to study internal anatomy. This allows the students to discover the similarities and differences between human bodies and those of various wild creatures.

Miss Stacey from the office has a background in zoology. She was also a Nature's Classroom teacher for many years. As part of our study of reptiles and amphibians, Miss Stacey led our children in a turtle dissection. They began with an examination of its external anatomy. The students discussed how the claws, shell (plastron and carapace), and webbed back feet all served important functions. After this, the students were given the opportunity to remove specific organs with a dissection scissors.

The children were curious and quite confident. Every student who was interested in participating in the dissection was able to remove an organ or other body part. The students removed the heart, liver, lungs, intestines, stomach, and gall bladder. Ask your child which part they cut out!

Europe Day

On Friday, the children “traveled” to Romania with Mr. Rudy (our Kitchen Manager – originally from Romania), England, Italy, and Switzerland. In small groups, they were given a lesson on each of the countries with an activity representing them. For example, in Switzerland the children tasted the finest, richest chocolate, had a Swiss dish called fondue, and heard yodeling. Ask them what a hiker invented after a trip in the Alps!

Dessert/Demo Evening

Congratulations to Charlie and Christian! They articulately presented the three states of matter and other materials in the Lower Elementary Dessert Demonstration Evening program. To truly understand a concept, you must be able to teach it. They did a wonderful job with their clear presentations. If you were unable to attend, please stop by for a tour and visit.

The intended purpose of the evening was to give the children the opportunity to practice their public speaking and communication. The presentations allowed them to utilize poise and confidence while sharing some of the lessons in their Lower Elementary classroom with their parents and visitors.



A Note Concerning Clothing

Children should come to school in “work” clothes. Comfort, ease of handling, and good repair is all-important. A child should be unconscious of the clothing rather than distracted by a falling strap, a too tight waistband, missing buttons, or a stubborn zipper. Every child should come dressed in simple clothing for indoor and outdoor work and play. To encourage mastery and independence, children should wear clothing that they can manage themselves. If they cannot manage overalls, belts, suspenders, tights, or small buttons at home, they will have the same problems at school. Double knots discourage children from learning to tie and keep them dependent on a teacher or parent longer. Your preschooler has pride in his/her abilities and he/she is developing independence, order, and a sense of style. We don’t mind that outfits don’t always match.

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Toys, jewelry, and accessories (headbands, sunglasses, purses, etc.) are inappropriate as they cause a distraction in the classroom. Please leave those special items in the car or at home.

Safety is also a factor to consider when providing clothes for your child. Closed toe shoes are required. In cold weather we will continue to go outside, therefore, each child should have appropriate outer wear, including snowpants, warm waterproof mittens, scarves, hats and boots. We recommend warm, waterproof SHOE BOOTS (worn without shoes). Please attach mittens to the winter jacket with a piece of elastic through the sleeves.

Extra clothing: Please leave an entire set of clothes, including underwear and socks, in your child's box. A couple of small, reusable plastic bags to transport wet items home will also be helpful.

Names on everything: This ensures that your child will come home with his/her own clothes. We do have a lost and found box, which we suggest you check periodically.

Inside shoes: Each child will need a pair of inside shoes for classroom use. This encourages quiet movement, ensures that the child has something dry for his/her feet and helps to maintain a higher degree of cleanliness in the classroom. Rubber soled, non-slip shoes are required. Please label your child's inside shoes. It is also helpful if you mark or use colored tape on the inside edges to help your child match the shoes and place them on appropriate feet.

When your child comes home and changes clothes, please check the pockets for blocks or objects that may be part of our classroom materials. We are NEVER angry with a child for taking something home and ask that you also not get angry. We know the child loved the item as much as we all do – so please just return it.