

September 2004

News Letter



Nature's Classroom Montessori

Dear Parents,

We are so excited to welcome you back to school! Our new Sycamores Building had a wonderful opening celebration on the 3rd of this month. Thank you to everyone for joining us in our first joyful steps!

We hope everyone has had a chance to take a look at our new Elementary classroom. Mrs. Meghan and Mr. David have many exciting ideas for this year and are eager to share them. Each issue, Mr. David will write an article to keep you informed of just what your Elementary children are doing and what new programs are being offered.

Miss Stacey, Miss Erin, and Miss Anne will be providing news and up-dates for the Children's House programs as well, including more about Montessori philosophy and methods. Miss Stacey plans on having her P.E.A.R. Center list ready soon. This list of resource materials will be kept at the office. For more about the P.E.A.R. Center, please look for the article by the same name in this newsletter.



Elementary News

The school year has begun with a bang for the 6 - 9 year classroom. It's hard to believe all the activities we've done in the first six days. We have explored the waters of Rice Lake in search of our amphibious friends, helped each other swing across the Peanut Butter Pit, helped our "Enchanted Forest" by pulling unwanted weeds, took a boat ride on Lake Beulah to perform water quality tests, had an outing to the library for resources, and accomplished countless works in the classroom. There's the rest of the year yet to come, so don't miss out on the excitement!

We invite all the parents to partake in our activities or lend a helping hand. Mrs. Meghan and Mr. David are open to any suggestions as to how you can get involved and share in the excitement. We will be cooking on Thursdays, climbing on Fridays, exploring during Ecolab on Mondays and Wednesdays, and mixing it up on Tuesdays with art and music. If those aren't to your flavor, come read a book to the class any day of the week. As of this Friday, September 17th, we will be starting the 6 - 9 fledgling business of "Coffee 'n Scram." The desserts we make on Thursday will be for your "enjoyment" on Friday morning. The proceeds will benefit the school. If you are not a coffee fan, grab a tea or offer words of encouragement. We'll see you there!

Mr. David

Dates to Remember

Friday, September 17th
"Coffee 'n Scram" Begins

Tuesday, September 21st
Parent Education Evening for Elementary
Montessori Overview 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Thursday, September 23rd
Parent Education Evening for Primary
Montessori Overview 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Week of September 27th
Scholastic Book Fair

Coffee ‘n Scram: Our Fledgling Business for 6 - 9

Our Elementary students will be running their own business beginning on September 17th. They will be the operators of “Coffee ‘n Scram,” an on-the-go coffee stand that will be located each Friday in our school entrance area. The students will be offering coffee and tea for \$1.00 and baked goods (produced by the students during their Thursday cooking sessions) for \$.75.

The “Coffee ‘n Scram” program is designed to teach students responsibility and give them practical, “real-world” mathematical problems to solve. The students will be responsible for the book-keeping, including records of their supplies, purchasing costs, and school-wide advertising expenditures. The teachers are eventually hoping to open a bank account specifically for the Elementary classroom and allow the students to fill out the deposit slips and balance the class bank book.

If you have any questions about the business, don’t hesitate to ask Mrs. Meghan or Mr. David!

**The
Sycamores
Building
Entrance Area
and
Offices**



NCM Climbing Program Begins for 2004 - 2005

The climbing program will be beginning the week of September 13th for the 6- 9 students and the week of September 20th for the kindergarteners. This is a wonderful opportunity for the children to build confidence, self-esteem, physical coordination, and to expand their comfort zone. The children will be climbing the indoor wall, fully equipped with all safety gear, under the instruction of experienced climbers. The climbing program fits well into the Montessori philosophy in that it allows an opportunity for every child, regardless of ability, to foster multiple skills. If they are more experienced, there’s always room to grow, and if they have never climbed, it’s an amazing experience to grow on.

Give the Gift of Reading!

We will be holding a Scholastic Book Fair on the week of September 27th in the school entrance area. A sample book sheet provided by Scholastic has already gone home to the students. (Please check your student file if you have not received one or simply pick one up at the office!) This sheet is meant simply to provide some popular examples, demonstrate the wide-range of subject material available, and give you an idea of the marked-down prices that the Book Fair will offer.

Scholastic will drop off the display cases, tables, and books on Monday, the 27th of September. If the materials arrive promptly, we will have the fair ready by our morning pick-up time. The Book Fair will end Friday morning, when Scholastic will be picking everything back up. Unfortunately, we will not have a complete book list until the materials are dropped off, but Scholastic has assured us that they will be providing a wide selection of age-appropriate reading books (preschool - Elementary) in addition to those shown in the sample book sheet.

The Book Fair is a great way to build our own school library, as NCM receives vouchers from Scholastic for every book sold. These vouchers can be redeemed for library books, language materials, and even book cases.

We hope that you will enjoy browsing through the books with your child. The love of reading is a gift that your child will treasure forever.



**The
Elementary
6 - 9 Year
Classroom**

The P.E.A.R. Center: Resources for Parents

Miss Stacey will soon be posting a list of resource materials that can be checked out from school by any interested parents. To check-out a resource from the P.E.A.R. Center, simply make your request during the morning drop-off. We will collect the items and have them ready for you when you return to pick-up your child. We can also send the items home with your child if you are car-pooling. We will be using a simple, no-fuss sign-out system to check-out the materials.

We are also still collecting suggestions for books and educational media that can be added to our collection of resources. Simply drop your suggestions off at the office. For more information about the P.E.A.R. Center, please speak with Miss Stacey.



**Children's
House
for
Preschool
and
Kindergarten**



Excerpts from Basic Montessori: Learning Activities for Under-Fives by David Gettman

The following information may be of interest to parents of our Children's House, or to anyone interested in learning more about the Montessori philosophy.

This excerpt is from the first page of Chapter 2: Practical Activities. Basic Montessori: Learning Activities for Under-Fives was published by St. Martin's Press, Inc. in 1987.

Montessori believed that the young child 'at play', whether on the playground, at home, or in pre-school, has most of the same feelings and needs as an adult 'at work'. An adult wants interesting and important work that personally appeals, rather than just busywork or menial chores; an adult wishes to have adequate training, proper tools, and a workplace conducive to concentration; and an adult seeks respect and recognition for work well done. Montessori observed that a child at play similarly desires meaningful activities that may be personally selected; a child wants to be shown clearly how things are done and to be provided with proper materials and space; and a child hopes that concentrated efforts will be fully respected while in progress and admired when finished. An adult's work and a child's play are parallel in product as well as process. Just as the primary goal of adult work is to create from Nature a self-sufficient and tolerant society, so the primary goal of child's play is to create from a baby an independent and compassionate adult. Recognizing these parallels, Montessori preferred to call child's 'play,' the child's own special 'work.'

Some adults are wary of the Montessori method's apparent 'work' ethic, which they fear may cause their children to miss out on the delights of being young and without responsibilities - delights such as pretending, playing games, acting silly, running around outdoors, scheming with friends, or just doing nothing if they like. These parents suffer from their own adult pressures and anxieties, and decide that the responsibilities of education and work will come soon enough in their young children's lives. They firmly believe that early childhood should be fun and carefree.

Montessori also believed that childhood should be fun and carefree. But from her many years of sensitively observing young children, she developed a different understanding of what a child naturally thinks is fun, and how best to help children

be carefree. Montessori observed that running around, acting silly, and playing games only kept children entertained for short periods of time, and that afterwards they were still restless and unsatisfied. She found that when she did not try to impose adult conceptions of relaxation on them, the children had the most fun when their play developed early life skills and they were given the freedom to care for themselves. In other words, children seemed most satisfied by their 'play' when it enabled them to progress in their specially appointed 'work' - the work of building a helpless baby into an independent adult. (When children have been satiated with this work, then like adults who have been hard at work, they want to relax, mess about, play games, or just rest. The Montessori environment provides plenty of opportunity for relaxation too.)

In light of these discoveries, Montessori designed special 'play' activities that provide real-life experience - rather than just fantasy experience - to help the child in the 'work' of creating a well-adjusted adult. In the Montessori environment, the child does not just pretend to be a pioneer or an adventurer, but really explores the world, including its geography, cultures, and natural history. The child does not just arrange magnetic numbers on the refrigerator or look at cartoon picture books, but really experiences the satisfaction of calculating, reading and writing. And the Montessori child does not just play with dolls or play at House or at tea parties, but actually cares for his or her person, cleans and maintains the work environment, and learns how to behave in a graceful and considerate manner. These last activities - care of the person, care of the environment, and social graces - Montessori called the "Practical Life Activities."

The Practical Activities are the first activities the child is introduced to in the Montessori environment. This is because they can immediately begin to satisfy the young child's inner and hitherto frustrated desire for skills and self-sufficiency.

The Practical Activities allow the child to try doing what adults all around may be seen doing each and every day - for example, dressing oneself, cleaning the home, and greeting people. In addition to giving the child an opportunity for self-development, these activities provide an orientation to the customs of the child's particular society.



Excerpts from Together With Montessori by Cam Gordon

The following excerpts are from Chapter 3: The Learner, page 19. Together With Montessori was published in 1993 by Jola Publications.

I. Early Childhood, 0-6 years of age

This is a period of dramatic growth and transformation. Emphasis is on physical growth and independence, the concrete world and the construction of the self as the center of things in a sensory-motor, factual, protected environment. The young child is capable of taking in great amounts of knowledge through the senses. Learning is predominantly unconscious. The 0 - 3 year-old tends to be more exploratory and the 3 - 6 year-old more ordered. The central question is “What is it?” The overriding desire is to “Let me do it myself!”

II. Childhood, 6 - 12 years of age

This is a period of relative stability, health and growth. Emphasis is on intellectual growth and independence, reasoning, moving from concrete understanding to abstract thinking, imagination, culture, research, understanding right from wrong, good from evil, and on seeing the self in relation to peers. Children seek to acquire information and find out about everything. The 6 - 9 year-old is in a more exploratory and expanding period and the 9 - 12 year-old is more stable and secure. The central question is “Why is it?” and the overriding desire is “To know!”



**Elementary
Classroom**

**The
Sycamores Building**

