

Montessori Pathways' News

February, 2012

Notes from Ms. Alena



“Groundhog Day” Afternoon Project

February began with yet more additions to our Montessori Pathways family. We would like to welcome our new friends *Sophie P. and Arianna F.*

The month started off with our **Kindergarten & Elementary Parent Meeting**, where parents of prospective Kindergarten and Elementary students discovered the importance of completing the three-year cycle of the primary classroom via the Kindergarten year, as well as the logical progression to the Montessori Elementary thereafter.

At our meeting, we shared a video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcgN0IEh5IA>) by Trevor Eissler, the author of Montessori Madness! Both were created due to his passion for the Montessori schools his children attended.

After this meeting and Kindergarten conferences, many of the parents who are considering our Elementary program asked about a potential curriculum for the beginning of the school year. We are currently working on writing out this curriculum and will be sending it out shortly.

I would like to point out that the September curriculum will contain reinforcement of material covered in the Primary Classroom. However, the Elementary curriculum, in its entirety, is based on the fact that students of the Primary Class already have a deep understanding of all of the Montessori areas, and thus does not return back to the basics, which allows our children to continue their development at a pace they're used to.



Both classrooms saw **new sewing activities** this month: *Sewing the Button, Sewing a Buttoned Cuff, and Sewing on a Plastic Heart Canvas.* Through these activities, children not only enhance their fine motor skills, but also concentration, as they learn how to work the needle and thread, make a knot, and secure stitches.

The children were extremely excited to see and try these new additions.

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Kids are naturally drawn to real-life activities due to their love for imitation of the adult world, and having a chance to sew like an adult with real needles and thread is fascinating for them.

The Buttoned Cuff activity, for example, not only inspired some kids to decorate the entire cuff with even more buttons, but also to create a paper cuff as a token of appreciation for the activity.



Though the sewing activities were intended for the older children, whose motor skills are better developed, our younger students are finding this activity not only interesting, but doable as well.

Parent Corner

I would like to announce that, starting with this newsletter, we will be adding a “**Parent Corner**” section, where you can find information regarding the growth and development of our children that we or other parents discovered. If you have any questions or areas you would like to address, or have something interesting to share, please feel free to send it to us via our e-mail.

This month, I would like to direct your attention to two Huffington Post articles, written by a teacher who switched from public to Montessori, which one of our parents found (thank you!).

The first article addresses the development of concentration in Montessori schools in light of the recent rise of ADHD debates. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-flores-shaw/after-ritalin-whats-next_b_1271750.html

The second article presents Montessori as a possible alternative to the current educational system in the current educational reform debates. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/laura-flores-shaw/montessori-education_debate_b_1237451.html

Coming School Events

We are excited to announce that we will be holding the “*Montessori Unique Math*” meeting on *Tuesday, March 6th at 7:00pm.*

We would like to remind you that *registration for the coming School Year and Summer Camp has begun.* To ensure a space for your child, we ask that you please turn in the registration form and re-enrollment fee by *March 15th.*

By bringing the 10% tuition deposit by *May 15th,* you will lock-in this year’s prices and receive a refund for the registration fee.

On *Saturday, March 17th* we will be holding our first *Open House* from *11a.m.-2p.m.* where you will have a chance to stop by and ask questions, register for Summer Camp or the coming School Year.

Warmly,
Ms. Alena

Working with Montessori materials:

The Addition Strip Board

The addition Strip Board: a board with numbers 1 – 18 across the top and a grid on the board on which to place the strips. There are is one red set of strips and one blue set of strips. Each set represents the numbers 1 – 9. The addition strip board is used on a daily basis.

This board is kind of “magical” in that when strips are placed on the board, the right answers show up above the end of the strip. Hence, it is a shortcut: no counting needed. We simply “read” the board: $3 + 4 = 7$. The board is to help children memorize the addition facts of the addition table. It is used AFTER children have had much experience with adding concrete objects and have had “real life” experience in adding. We want them to understand the PROCESS of addition as well as memorize the facts of addition.

There are many forms of papers that the children can use to maintain their interest in strip board work: circle problem paper, chart problem paper, various kinds of addition books to complete. With the change in the look of the answer paper, it helps the child stay interested in this activity.

Points of interest for the child:

We can use the board in a variety of ways. In addition to changing the format of the papers, we can alter the kinds of problems. For example, let's see how many ways we can make 9. Or let's see what the answers are for the doubles of numbers.



Ms. Karen

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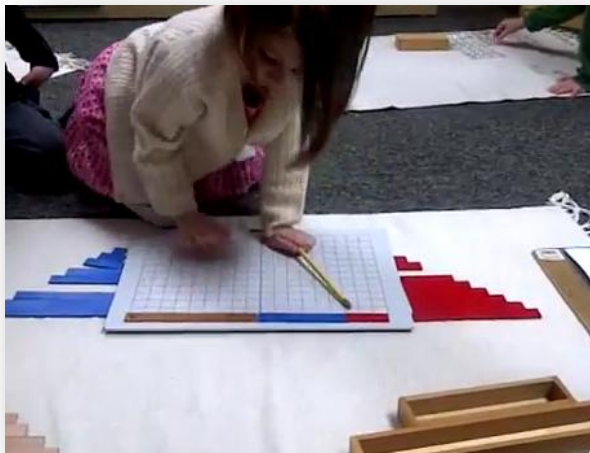
The Subtraction Strip Board

In Montessori we present the mathematical functions in the order of Addition, Multiplication, Division and lastly Subtraction. Children who are in their third year in a 3-6 environment will begin to explore The Subtraction Strip Board. The Subtraction Board is numbered across the top 1-18 and covered with a grid twelve deep comes with a set of numbered and divided red strips 1-9, blue numbered strips 1-9, and un-numbered tan strips lengths 1-18.

The children learn the proper organization and set up in order to successfully solve their subtraction equations by following the following presentation:

First we together read the equation aloud (12 minus 6 equals?) Next the child determines the "Minuend" (or the number to take away from) which in our example equation is "12" and removes the corresponding tan strip that will cover the numbers at the top of the board to cover from 18 to 13.

Next the child selects the blue strip "Subtrahend" or the take-away digit which in this equation is the "6" and places it directly next to the left of the tan strip. The difference of the two numbers is determined by the child by reading the next number showing on the board. The



child will then fill with the corresponding red divided strip to confirm the correct answer of 6. The child then records this answer and then replaces the strips back into position on the board to begin another equation.

The Subtraction Strip board is an incredible hands-on Montessori material that allows each child to visually manipulate and understand the abstract concept of subtraction.

Ms. Jocelyn

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Notes from the North Classroom:

Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine

We had many special days to celebrate in our environment this month! To close out the month of January, Ms. Ambreen invited all our morning friends over to share in a **fun Frosty the Snowman story and song and to enjoy a delicious snack** of cookies and hot chocolate! It was a special treat and a fun way for our whole school community to come together.



Groundhog Day was up next on February 2nd so we spent some of our morning group time *reading stories about the folklore behind the groundhog and his shadow*. Many of the children were curious about this holiday and naturally made the connection between our discussions about hibernating animals in January and the groundhog.

With **Valentine's Day** quickly approaching, the children began to prepare for our Valentine's Day celebration by *decorating their own collection bags*. Then on the day of our exchange, the children *practiced grace and courtesy* by taking turns walking around the circle to distribute their Valentines and thank each other as a Valentine was dropped in their bag. The children really enjoy giving special notes and cards to each other on this special day that focuses on love and friendship.



Finally, in observance of **President's Day** we added some meaningful activities to our shelves for the children to try; *penny polishing, penny counting and getting a close up look at a dollar bill using a magnifying glass*.

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At a young age, this types of activities create and awareness in a child to explore and discovery the relevance of everyday objects in their world (*Who is on the penny? Who is on the dollar bill? Why?*)

This month we added **many new works related to the solar system** on the shelves throughout our environment.

In Sensorial, the children were able to try a planets floor puzzle or a table top jigsaw puzzle that explored the layers of the Earth. These “big works” allowed younger children and older children to work cooperatively together.

In the Science area, new works related to the phases of the Moon and the Constellations were added to several very popular planets works.

The children also enjoyed trying out our *Gravity Basket*. This work asked the children to experiment with gravity by dropping different objects and then observe the results (*Which items fall quickly? Which items fall slowly? Why?*)



In February, our morning friends had the opportunity to join in our **tasting activity featuring mangoes**.

As a group, we had a **smelling and observation activity** to compare *three kinds of potatoes (red bliss, russet and sweet)*. We compared a peeled and unpeeled potato of each variety and the children were then asked to make their own observations as they related to smell, touch and sight.

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We have ended our month this week with a **celebration of all things Dr. Seuss**, in commemoration of his birthday on Friday, March 2. As a group we have read several Dr. Seuss favorites and the children have had the opportunity to create their own artistic version of *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*. Stop by the classroom to see their beautiful work adorning our walls for a while before they are sent home.



We have incorporated some new "work" into the *Practical Life* area of the classroom this month. The children have enjoyed **polishing pennies** with lemon juice or vinegar and a pinch of salt. We start on the "head" side of a penny (which, of course is Abraham Lincoln, who's birthday we just celebrated) and add the pinch of salt followed by 5 or so drops of the juice/vinegar. Just watching the process for the copper to emerge is interesting to the children. Then, we use a q-tip to gently wipe away the grime and turn the penny over to the "tails" side. Repeating the process, and then immersing the coin into water to rinse and dry, the child is then able to take it home as a token of their work. Following is the routine of cleaning the tray so it's pristine for the next person; this is a popular activity that the class enjoys. You might ask your child about how to do this at home and be surprised by their level of concentration and satisfaction in this task.

With a small sponge of liquid wood soap, our wooden Montessori materials are shining as well. The well loved cylinders, pencil holders, chairs, tables, etc. are all gleaming with the attention to detail of erasing crayon/markings to make our classroom sparkle. This was an introduction to **wood polishing** and could also be incorporated as a benefit at home!

Some of our pre-K students have been asked to help after lunch with *wiping tables, sweeping the floor, rolling rugs and general tidying up to prepare our classroom for our kindergarten friends*. They have been enthusiastic and energetic about pitching in so that it looks beautiful for the afternoon class. They use their strong muscles to carry the laundry and dishes to their designated areas of the school and are the future role models for the younger children (who are eager to help, too!).



A huge thank you to all of our parents that sent in a requested Sharing Basket item. Your children love to bring and prepare the snacks that we make. The process of shopping for the item, bringing it to school, and helping to prepare or serve it to their friends is a wonderful opportunity to experience what community is really all about.

This month, we sampled some new ideas for snack which were *cucumber sandwiches and ham and dill pickle roll ups*. The children loved preparing them and most enjoyed eating them.

They say "Variety is the spice of life" and it's always interesting to see a child try something new and have a new favorite!

Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine

Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Karen, Ms. Ambreen, and Ms. Alena



Thank you:

To Shawn Junaid's mom for her continued help in bringing a monthly supply of library books for us to read to the children.

To Malcolm's dad who helped the children enjoy their valentine distribution process on Valentine's Day.

To the many parents who accompanied us on the bus to the Aladdin play. It was such a help and the children could enjoy the parents of their classmates. Thank you.

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Happy Birthday:

Yes. Happy Birthday to **Dr. Seuss**. Theodor Geisel's 46 books are favorites of every child. His publisher believed that children were bored by the "easy readers" and therefore challenged Geisel to write an entertaining book for early readers using only 400 vocabulary words. He came up with the book "A Cat in the Hat", familiar to and loved by all. Actually, Geisel used only 236 words in the book! Dr. Seuss's book, *The Lorax*, is opening soon at the theater.



The Smell of Home Cooking:

Frequently you can enjoy the smell of garlic bread being made. We have also made waffles this month and have made the "cookie baking activity" more complex for some of the children. They have the option of precisely measuring and leveling the cup of flour, then adding cinnamon and sifting the ingredients together. They have enjoyed "burying" a chocolate chip in each cookie and then experienced it melting while baking.

OVERHEARD IN THE CLASSROOM:

"Oh I can solve that problem!" --- expressed by a 4 year old child with such confidence and delight.

The classroom is set up as a learning laboratory in which simple problems that can be solved by children come up on a daily basis. We want to convey a message to children: you are capable and practical problem solvers.



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Gifts of the Montessori Classroom (continued from previous newsletter)



Montessori's recognition of the child's natural desire to learn is a valuable insight. The child does not need to be "motivated" or rewarded with stickers and gold stars. In fact, those can be a distraction from the learning process itself.

Instead, it is through absorption in their work that the child matures. We have all recognized the insatiable curiosity which drives the activity of the children exploring their environment. They are unstoppable. They emerge satisfied after a long period of concentrated work.

Examples just this week in the classroom: a 5 year old totally engaged the entire morning in measuring and baking.



A three year old totally absorbed in "water play" for 45 minutes --- pouring water from container to container, watching the flow of water, changing the angle of pouring, observing the properties of water.

A 4 year old working with the brown stair for 45 minutes: building it in a variety of patterns, looking at the structure, taking it down, rebuilding in a different way, balancing the various stairs in patterns, cantilevering the brown stairs out over the base until the base would not support it any more.

6 year olds engaged in simple button sewing for half an hour and then happily wearing their creation.



A 4 year old engaged for an hour in cutting squares and then gluing those squares, creating her own creative pattern.

Two children working together all morning to cut bananas for our food dehydrator.

There are examples every day like the ones pointed out above. What a wonderful working environment our children enjoy.

Words from Maria Montessori:

“...we discovered that education is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by just listening to words, but through experiences in which the child ACTS ON HIS ENVIRONMENT.”

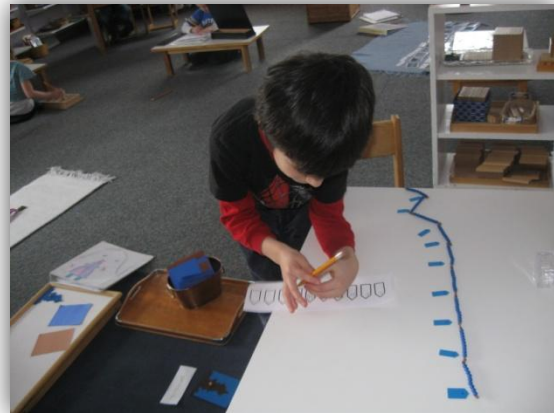


Ms. Karen, Ms. Ambreen, Ms. Alena

Kindergarten Extended Day News

By February, the Kindergarteners are deep into challenging works.

In Math, the children have been working on mastering their *place value skills* with ***The Banker's Game*** and ***The Stamp Game***, practicing using the ***Multiplication Board*** to solve equations and utilizing ***the Bead Cabinet*** to not only perfect their *skip counting skills* but to *discover some interesting mathematical facts*.



The Kindergartners have worked with both The Bead Cabinet short chains (*which represent the square of a number, like 5^2*) and The Bead Cabinet Long Chains (*which represents the cube of a number, like 4^3*).

The children are just beginning to discover these relationships by manipulating the materials to fold the short chains to create an actual square and learn the numbers associated with these squares- did you know that is why they call it squared?) This concrete material transforms a child's understanding of abstract mathematical ideas in to real understanding and comprehension.

In Language, in addition to *word building, reading and journal writing*, the Kindergartners have begun work on *nouns and verbs*. The children are sorting and categorizing different words in order to understand which words are nouns (a person, place or object) and which are verbs (an action word). Soon they will begin to explore *adjectives and adverbs*. This Kindergarten grammar works directly prepares the children for advanced language works they will have in Montessori Elementary.



In Montessori, **the sciences** are often referred to as “**cosmic education**”, simply because we expose the children to the large topic of the universe and then slowly narrow our focus to smaller and closer ideas. In January, we began our study of *the universe*, and then narrowed it to our *solar system*. In February, we narrowed our focus again to *our planet, Earth*, its’ *composition, our moon and our constellations*. As we enter spring our focus will again narrow to *the seven continents* and a simple exploration of each.



Some fun activities the Kindergartners worked on this month include three **sewing projects**: *button sewing, yarn hearts on canvas and sewing real heart pillows* with Zavier's Mom, Nicole. The children each brought in a gently used pillow case (or much loved baby blanket!). They then followed Ms. Nicole's directions to trace and cut out their heart, come and sew it with her on her sewing machine and then

use their left over material to stuff their pillow. *This project was a wonderful opportunity for the children to experience the idea of recycling and reusing something to create a brand new usable item.*

Our first **field trip** this month was to *Morkes Chocolates*. As a culmination of our reading of The Chocolate Touch, the children became chocolate chefs and created their own chocolate pizza, valentine suckers and chocolate covered pretzels on this field trip.



Our second field trip was a one hour high-energy workout at the *Trinity Academy of Gymnastics*. The kids were led by the Academy's Coach Jonathon in a variety of structured activities. The field trip began with proper stretching and important basics such as safe landing position. They then worked through the tumbling obstacle course, three different balance beam challenges, did bear walks and monkey swings on two varieties of bars, jumped on the trampoline and tumble track and finally got try out the foam pit. Gymnastics is a great sport for children to develop flexibility, coordination, balance and discipline. Most of the children had never done gymnastics before and are now talking about signing up to take classes!

Ms. Jocelyn, Ms. Katy

Notes from the afternoon classroom:

Ms. Terri

While the weather was mild this month, the occasional snow allowed the children to have “fun with purpose” in the afternoon. The snow-hill made a couple of more appearances, thanks to many hard working shovelers.

We celebrated Groundhog Day by making a picture of a winter day. We **drew and colored a ground hog** (first, we had to look up what a ground hog looks like) and then we glued him onto a popsicle stick. We drew a hill and cut a hole along the top of it so the ground hog could pop out and check out the weather in our pictures.



The children were also busy **adding more animals to the winter mural**. We now have deer, squirrels and more birds, which the children traces and either cut or poked out.

Our favorite artwork this month was related to one of our favorite books, The Dark at the Top of the Stairs. The story has to do with 3 young mice that live with their grandfather mouse in the cellar. They have an adventure going up the stairs to see the monster that lives there. We cut out a door, drew stairs, mice and assorted things found in the cellar. Oh, and also the monster behind the door – it says only one word, “Meow!”

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I was also able to work with the *Kindergarteners* on our vision of **Vincent Van Gogh's Starry Night**. The children mixed their colors on a palette using only primary colors (red, blue and yellow) to get our secondary colors (green, orange, purple and brown). We made "puddles" of the colors we observed in the painting. Then, we painted the sky first looking at all the swirls of color in the wind. The hills, trees and houses we added as we mixed more colors and worked our way down our painting. The children's artwork is on display in the hallway – take a look. They did a great job!



We added a few new items to our afternoon classroom this month. Several new pillows were added to our cozy corner. The children helped stuff the pillows with fiberfill (thank you Vanessa Baker!) which were then sewed shut. We loved trying them out at rest time! We also have a couple of new building works - HABA makes some beautiful wooden construction sets. We have really enjoyed working with the *Egyptian Pyramids* and now we have added the *Russian House* and the *Amsterdam Village*. The children sort the assorted wooden blocks before they build numerous levels to make the completed work. This work is out every day and has endless possibilities for imagination and creativity as the children visualize and then construct a village or town.



Several children were able to help **bake** this month. Our favorite recipe was the *Crunchy Breakfast Cake*. It is yet another recipe from the Magic Spoon cook book. While we were enjoying our delicious snack, a few of the children actually asked me to write down the recipe. So here it is upon the special request of the children.

Crunchy Breakfast Cake

Topping Ingredients:

3/4 c. brown sugar

2 T. flour

1 t. cinnamon

2 T. cold butter



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Cake Ingredient:

2 t. baking powder

¼ t. salt

1 c. sugar

1 ½ c. flour

½ t. baking soda

2 eggs

1 c. sour cream

1. Heat oven 350° - lightly butter sides/bottom of pan (8 or 9" square pan)
2. Mix topping ingredients in a small bowl. Chop the butter in little pieces and mash into the mixture with hands or a fork until crumbly.
3. Mix flour, baking powder, baking soda, sugar and salt together in a large bowl.
4. Beat sour cream and eggs in a medium bowl with a Magic Spoon (or any spoon will do).
5. Add this to the dry ingredients and beat with a spoon until spoon.
6. Use spatula to spread the cake batter in the pan, and then sprinkle in the topping.
7. Bake 35-40 minutes, until toothpick inserted into cake part comes out clean. Cool before cutting into squares. Enjoy!

Serves 6-9

Ms.Terri

Ms. Katy

First off, I would like to welcome our newest napper, Sophie Pan. She joined us this month and there have been wonderful opportunities for the older nappers to have extra responsibility in helping Sophie acclimate to her new routine.



This month we began by finishing our **Arctic Adventure**. Many of the nappers took home their *igloos*. These children worked very hard on lining up and placing the snow blocks (sugar cubes) on top of the row below. It was an exercise in both skill and patience.

The children loved creating **special gifts for their family members** as well this month. We began celebrating Valentine's Day by making *silly heart people*. The children were able to practice following directions in a logical order, especially when it came to folding the arms and legs. They were also very excited to take home their *popsicle picture frames* and *clay heart decorations*. I hope you will enjoy these gifts from your children for years to come!

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I would like to ask the parents of the nappers to think about sending in a book for story time. You and your child can select a book from home or the library to send in for our story after snack. I know that the children would love the opportunity to bring in something from home to share with their friends.

Thanks,

Ms.Katy

Gym Notes

Ms. Donna

We have been doing some beginning tumbling: log roll, egg roll, pencil roll, and partner roll. The children have also been jumping over mats, standing on mats and then jumping off, as well as riding the mats when we were pretending that they were horses. Motor skills are coming along: hopping on our right and left foot, jumping jacks, crab walking, skipping and galloping.

Sleeping Giant and *Mouse Trap*, which are two games enjoyed by the children were played again and again.

Run back to your place was a new circle game introduced. Children were given a color and when their color was called they had to run around and stop at their starting place.

"Kinders" have been tumbling as well and doing the wheel barrel, one partner using his/her arms walks across the floor with the help of the other partner holding his/her legs. We were lucky to be able to go outside one day and play a favorite game of *Elbow Tag*.

Rock, Paper, Scissors was our new game. Whoever won round 1 would move to round 2, winner of round 2 would move to round 3, and winner of round 3 would take a stick and go back to the beginning and start again. If you were not the winner you stayed where you were until another player came along to begin the process all over.

Ms. Donna

