

Current Events

Registration for Summer Camp and 2010-2011 School Year

Thank you to all the current parents who have recommended Montessori Pathways to their friends and neighbors. Families are the foundation of our school and referrals are our strongest publicity. At this moment, registration for Summer Camp and next school year are on-going.

We would like to invite you to our Open House, which will be held on May 1st from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Coming Events

Butterflies are coming : Thursday, April 22nd

As we witness new life unfolding, the children are filled with excitement and joy. Together we appreciate the beauty of nature and all living things. Every year, as part of our Spring Tradition and Earth Day, we order special painted lady caterpillars. We observe the whole cycle of development: caterpillar to chrysalis to the emerging butterfly. It is so special to watch the butterflies emerge. If we are really lucky, we even see them hanging to dry their wings.

In due time, we have a ceremony, releasing the butterflies and allowing them to fly free and do their special work in nature.

Playground Mulch Alert: Saturday, April 24th

Please join us to unload 6000 pounds of rubber playground mulch for our playground area.

Vision and Hearing screening: Wednesday, April 28th

Montessori Pathways School

April 19, 2010
Teachers' mini-news

Notes from the Classroom: from Ms. Christine and Ms. Cindy

Happy spring from Ms. Cindy and Ms. Christine!

It hardly seems possible that we're into the home stretch of another school year! Your children are enjoying the spring weather and more outdoor time with their friends. With the arrival of spring, take time for a walk with your child – it is an ideal opportunity to connect away from the TV and household chores. There are many interesting things to observe and talk about with each other; your child's sense of wonder may help you see your natural surroundings with a fresh eye. Can you hear any animal that you can't see? What is the smallest animal that you found? Look for plants that are growing. How many different shades of green did you see? Look for clouds in the sky. Are they moving? What shape are they? Do you see animals or other objects in the clouds? Talk about the weather. Can you feel the sun's warmth, is the wind blowing and how can you tell? As you talk to your child, introduce the concept of living and non-living things. Decide if things along your walk are living or nonliving; even 5 year olds often think the sun or moon are living!

Earth Day is this Thursday and we will be discussing the benefits of reducing, reusing and recycling. Whether at school or at home, we all can do more to nurture our environment and cut down on waste.

As we work together in the classroom, we are preparing special Mother's Day gifts and songs. We are learning that there are many different parts of a flower and our apple tree has been repotted to a bigger pot in the hopes that we can transplant it outdoors when ready. We have observed that our outdoor environment is transitioning from winter to spring. We've learned that rainbows actually are composed of seven colors; red, orange, yellow, green, blue and (new words!) indigo and violet.

In the math area, many of the Kindergarteners are working with the multiplication board as well as perfecting number recognition to 100 and beyond. Some of our younger students are making number books by associating a number with the correct quantity. This can be challenging because it is a process where they have to count slowly and deliberately to achieve the correct answer.

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In the language area, we have a fun, new card game called alphabet fish,. It is wonderful to watch the children help each other in making “matches” of the lower case and upper case letters. Even the youngest children can play because each letter card also has an animal picture – the capital letter card has the mom animal, and the lower case card has the baby animal. All sorts of vocabulary words are being used during this game. The children love it!

At this time, we have a fervent interest in maps of all kind; there are probably 6 or 7 different maps being made right now. The continent map (of course!), Australia, Mexico and Africa are popular along with the map of the regions of the United States. Many of you should expect one coming home soon!

In Practical Life, baking is as always a favorite activity along with peeling carrots and serving them with homemade Ranch dressing for snack or a side dish at lunch. We’ve also introduced “penny polishing” which is simply lemon juice with a pinch of salt to erode the build up on the copper. The children love watching and participating in this process because then they get to put the “shiny, clean” penny into the penny dish.

In the art area, we have been making homemade play dough which is softer and more pliable than the store bought kind. We’ve also been making mini flowering trees with real branches and colored tissue paper. They are quite lovely but do take some time to complete.

Basically the classroom is busy and functions beautifully. We hear your children using polite manners not to just their teachers, but with each other, too. They’re learning how to use their words to solve a problem and their confidence is greatly boosted by this ability. Help them do this at home too!

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Notes from the Classroom: from Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen

Conferences

Thank you so much for getting together with us at conference time. It gives us insight and a chance to connect with the family, and therefore a greater understanding of your child.

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Classroom activities

Well, spring is actually here. Time for us to begin planting seeds, getting early spring plants in the ground, and generally observing the changes all around us. Children enjoyed making paper chains using spring colors to add a little festive look to the class. A special thank you to the Christensen family for bringing in a flat of icicle pansies for planting.

In art, we have done a “tree budding in the springtime” activity. We will be introducing dandelion rubbings. These art activities also include attention to the parts of the plant and the function of those parts ---roots, veins, leaves, etc. Watercolor painting is still a very popular activity with almost every child.

Our new plants are thriving under the care of the children. We water them carefully every week, noting that the succulents need much less water than other plants the same size. It is fun to see the new growth.

Thank you for sending in fresh flowers, an activity that helps the children care for the environment. We change the water in the vases, trim the stems so they can obtain more water, and trim leaves so they are not actually in the water. Measuring is also involved as we hold each stem to the vase to determine appropriate size and learn to fill the vase just to the neck.

Children have been busy baking and also making egg salad. First we enjoyed coloring the eggs as a reminder of the part eggs play in the new life of spring. Thank you to the many families who supplied us with boiled eggs. The making of egg salad is quite a process: cracking the shell, peeling the shell, rinsing the egg, using the egg slicer, mashing the slices with a fork, adding the mayo, adding a dash of salt and pepper and mixing. It provides a thoughtful, sequential and useful activity in the classroom.

We also cracked open raw eggs and then hard boiled. What a difference adding heat can produce.

We had visitors too. What animal has no legs but still moves easily and no eyes but senses light (perhaps your child can tell you)? We brought in earthworms from the garden and simply enjoyed watching them. It's a great activity if you haven't done it recently. Children are so fascinated by everyday life.

An Everyday Work

Sometimes it is interesting just to look at an “everyday work” on the shelf which is always available to the children. A favorite is work with knobless cylinders. It provides thoughtful exploration daily for one or more children who choose it.

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The knobless cylinders are contained in 4 different boxes. Each box contains 10 cylinders and each set is painted a particular color (red, green, blue, yellow). The knobless cylinders are the final stage of the dimensional material. The child places the sets of colored cylinders in order based on his ability to discriminate visually. The cylinders also have interrelationships in size that are revealed to the child as he works with them. The variations of work that can be done with the sets of knobless cylinders are open-ended almost endless.

Because there are 10 in a set, the child has actual hands-on experience with working with “tenness”. Since we are in a base 10 number system, this is valuable for him before moving into the mathematical material. The sets all vary in particular ways. For example, in one set, the diameter is the same but the height changes. In another the height remains the same, and the diameter changes. They are concrete representations of vocabulary.

Children love to match them, build towers, as well as match them to the knobbed cylinder sets. By this time of the year, the children are often building towers with several sets in a pattern. Thus they are working with relationship, pattern, and the fine motor challenge of building a tower of 20, 30, or even 40 cylinders.

The work is a favorite of all ages of children and is in use daily.

Author of the Month

This month is Eric Carle. He is a virtuoso at creating children’s pictures. To date he has illustrated more than 70 books and his stories are enormously popular. Several books will be especially pertinent now such as his Very Hungry Caterpillar and The Tiny Seed.

“Children need literature to try on life for size.”

Leland Jacobs

Notes from the Kindergarten Club: from Ms. Laurie

Along with the beginning of the warm weather and more sunshine, comes the end of the school year. It is a bittersweet time for me as I see the students grow and prepare for the upcoming first grade and the anticipation of going to elementary school. They have learned so much and are so happy at this time in their lives!

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We have been practicing first grade work and procedures in our room. Our subject areas of language and science are always based on biome study and animal classification. Weather is dry, arid and usually hot. Unlike the forests, and the arctic and the prairies, this habitat is sandy and dusty. We know a lot about the hardy animals of the desert: reptiles like rattlesnakes and lizards. We are working on a large "Animal" book. Incorporated in this book is information about the five major animal groups of study for the kindergarteners: mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and insects. Not only do the children display their knowledge, but they practice their best penmanship. They are developing their small motor skills and reinforcing muscle memory as well as building their memory of the spelling and reading skills.

We have been enforcing our language study by learning about nouns and adjectives. Remember grammar? Nouns are people, places, animals and things. Adjectives describe nouns. We have been doing a lot of dictation of words and are now practicing sentences. Sentences are words written together that have an idea. They must contain a noun and an adjective. When writing a sentence, start with a capital or upper-case letter and end with a period. The children have grasped this concept easily and their thought procedure is evident on their faces when we write in class.

The students are always willing to share their books, pictures and videos from home. Thanks to Medha, Addison and Dylan especially for sharing with the class. When one student shares an interest, their enthusiasm is contagious and we all learn more and more.

The subject of math is also been more focused on procedures and abstract problem solving. We usually have a whole class presentation of the materials such as the beadbar box or the chains followed by a review of operation symbols such as "the plus sign" "the equals sign" and the "multiply sign." Worksheets are given to practice the procedure and recording of our work.

Montessori always emphasizes the concept first then procedure. In kindergarten, we focus on understanding then different ways of proceeding to solve a problem. My main concern and focus for the students is that they are knowledgeable and comfortable enough at their work to approach problem solving with confidence in the first grade.

The kindergarten club time has allowed the students to monitor their pace and time and to increase their efficiency in their work. They are also able to socialize with their peers. This is an important time in their development to have opportunity with their fellow five and six-year-olds.

Speaking of socializing and enthusiasm, the kindergarteners are quite excited and exuberant about the upcoming graduation. While the excitement is quite delightful, demonstrating "grace and courtesy" is sometimes thrown by the wayside.

I have told the kindergarten students that I am going to enlist their parents as aides in courteous behavior particularly with the following rules:

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1. No interrupting
2. Respect the materials and each other
3. Follow directions (obey the teacher)
4. Use your "inside voices" when inside

The children are sincere about doing good work and having good friendships. As summer draws near they need a lot of review of the "rules." Your input is crucial.

The kindergarteners have been practicing for the "Three Piggy Opera". They are natural performers and with a lot of practice, the show should be really cute. Please check their folders for any lines and songs they need to practice. Any encouragement you can give them is appreciated.

Notes from the Afternoon Class: from Ms. Laurie, Ms. Terri and Ms. Donna

We hope you're enjoying the beautiful spring as much as we are. The children returned from break with a lot of energy. The last couple of weeks have been very busy.

We are finishing up the desert biome by adding more animals native to that environment, i.e., scorpions, gila monsters, armadillos and camels. The children have colored the animal pictures with colored pencils then poked them out with a poker or cut them with scissors. We enjoyed a video on desert animals. Did you know hamsters are from the desert? The children also loved learning about lizards. They lay eggs! The snake books have been a big hit. Our last "desert" project will be sponge painting lizards. At the children's request, our next biome of study will be tropical rainforests. Be prepared for information about howler monkeys and sloths.

Physical activity is an integral part of healthy child's development. Some kind of exercise is included in the afternoon program. Weather permitting; the children go outside to the playground. They are encouraged to play organized games or use the playground equipment. One grey day, we stay inside and play the "snake game" with the jump rope, do calisthenics, yoga and movement on the "line."

We are also preparing for the "Three Piggy Opera" that will be performed by the kindergarteners. The afternoon children are the set and prop masters for the play. They have been working on two of the pigs' houses using bi-fold presentation boards. The brick house was made with sponge-print bricks. First we mixed brown paint by adding all three primary colors of red, yellow and blue. We had good messy fun sponging on the bricks. Our second house is the straw house all of the afternoon children joined in by "drawing" straw with yellow, orange and brown markers. We then cut very fine pieces of "straw" from colored construction paper which we then glued onto our straw house. You just have to see them - they are so cool! The stick house is next!

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The afternoon class just finished a family portrait picture using geometric shapes. They used rectangles for bodies and circles for heads. The artists then added patterns outlined with and colored with crayons. It was a lot of work. The children chose whomever they wanted represented in their picture: sisters, brothers, aunts, grandmas and grandpas and of course moms and dads. The results are awesome! Come and see Montessori Pathways family portraits - on display next week in the front hallway!

Thanks to the parents who have been sending in bananas, strawberries and pineapples. The afternoon children have been using the dehydrator again. We have cut up four bunches of bananas. We first divided our group into pairs then we divided up the number of bananas. We cut them, peeled them and sliced them up very thin. Placed them on the racks and plugged in the dehydrating machine. We used the extra bananas for banana bread.

Early Spring is a good time for baking. Our afternoon community has also enjoyed baking oatmeal cookies, and strawberry bread. The aromas on baking day are heavenly. Thanks for your contributions.