

Montessori Pathways' News

April, 2011

Notes from Ms. Alena



It seems that we have skipped spring time this year. I hope our friend groundhog Phil will be more careful with promising us an early spring next year.

Regardless, we had a chance to enjoy many other things during April.

We are really glad to have **new friends in our school:** *Shawn and brothers Milo and Skyler.* Welcome to our Montessori Pathways family, boys.



In the middle of the month we invited our parents to our last **Parent evening: "Be a Montessori student."** The parents had a chance to participate in the entire working cycle and could better understand what happens in the classroom during the morning.

It was hard to present all of the opportunities that our kids have during their three years in the primary Montessori classroom in one short evening. However, we hope that it was really helpful for the

parents to feel the Montessori atmosphere in reality.

"Of all the Montessori Parent Nights, Be a Montessori Student was probably my favorite. It's great to understand the theory behind what the kids are learning in each academic subject area, but it's even better to experience how they learn. I enjoyed selecting different works and moving through a day in the life of my Montessori student. I have a much better idea of what my kids do at school than I did before."

Christine (Evelyn and Calvin's mom)



Thank you to all of the parents who joined us during this evening. I really hope that next year we will see many more parents at our meetings. Believe me, there is always something new, interesting, and helpful you can open for yourself about Montessori Philosophy and Education.



In the end of April, the weather was finally on our side and a lot of families joined us for the **“Spruce it up!” workshop**. We had a great team that did a lot of work to awaken our outside area after winter time.



It was so wonderful to see the kids working with the parents and the teachers together to make THEIR school beautiful. We need just one final touch- to decorate our school with plants and flowers.

We will have “planting day” on Saturday, May 21st, 10:00am-1:00pm.

Everybody is WELCOME!

The last ***Open House will be on Saturday, May 14th, 11:00am-2:00pm.***

And our School Year will finish with ***The Kindergarten Graduation Ceremony***, which will be held on ***Thursday, May 26th at 5:30pm.*** (Additional information is coming soon).

The last day of the school year is Friday, May 27th.

Then, we will have Summer Camp preparation week –**May 30-June 3. No school this week.**

And then –YEAH!!!- ***Summer Camp (and a lot of enjoyment) will begin on Monday, June 6th.***

I think it is time to finalize your decision about how your child(ren) will spend the best time of the year. And please remember that social, emotional, and academic development shouldn't ever take a break.

I wish everybody a lot of sunny days and enjoyment!

Warmly,

Ms. Alena

Notes from the classroom: Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine

It's hard to believe that the school year is entering its' last month. It seems as though it was just fall, yet here we are about to begin May! April sure was wet outside, but inside we had a wonderful time exploring activities associated with spring, Easter, Earth Day and Arbor Day. Many meaningful classroom activities aim to create a connection with school and what is going on in the world at large. During these last few months of school, we begin to see changes in work choices in every aged child.

The foundational work of the year shows itself as the children themselves begin to blossom with choosing new and challenging works that naturally lead into their next school year in the fall.

This time of year, many of our older children are practicing their **clock work**. As they now are able to skip count by 5's with confidence, the natural progression to skip counting on a clock makes sense to them and they easily grasp the concept.

The Montessori clock is a hands-on activity that first requires the child to order the individual number tiles, then position them correctly on the clock. The vocabulary is presented to the child naming the minute hand and the hour hand. When a child first begins this work they only practice reading the o'clock numbers. As the child progresses over several days or weeks we present the :30, :15, :45 and then each time interval of :05 minutes.

Some children will also practice *writing the numbers* or drawing the appropriate arrows on clock papers, while others are still working just with the materials. Telling time almost seems like an outdated skill in today's world of digital clocks and cell phones instead of wrist watches, however just like so many other works in Montessori, *the understanding of and ability to complete the process* is often the most important part.

The ability to concentrate, focus, organize and independently follow through and finish are foundational skills that are the building blocks of later academic work.



In April, as a class we conducted **two science experiments**.

The first involved three sets of white carnations, three jars, water and purple, spring green and blue food coloring. Each set of carnations was placed into a jar filled $\frac{1}{2}$ way with water. Then each jar received 10 drops of one of the three food colorings. As a group, on the first day we all predicted what we thought would happen (there were many interesting comments by the children who helped each other to figure out that the flowers might change color).

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On the second morning, many children immediately went to check the process of the flowers. Surprisingly, the spring green water had turned almost all of its' white carnations a light green color, the blue water had only slightly tinted a few of its' flowers, and the purple water did not have any effect on its' white carnations. One of our new friends mentioned that at his old school they had a similar experiment using celery stalks. The children all agreed we should try this as well and a child-direct extension was created. Be sure to ask your child about this experiment and what happen with the celery!

No celebration of **Easter** would be complete without **coloring eggs!** However, we did not want to stop there, on the last day of school before the Easter holiday we had a great small group activity with the children. Each child was invited to choose one colored egg, and then we used our five senses to explore each egg just as we always do with a tasting activity.

The next step, gently tapping the bottom of the egg to start a small crack to allow for **peeling** was presented. For many of the children this was brand new and their gentle nature had them needing help to get an initial crack going. Each child then peeled his own egg and then waited until everyone was finished. Again we used our five senses to explore the peeled eggs, pointing out *similarities and differences*.

Next, each child watched as we presented using a special tool, an egg slicer. Each child watch quietly as they each took their turn **slicing and counting** their total number of pieces. Since we only had one egg slicer, *waiting patiently and taking turns was a part of this lesson*. As we worked through each step we named **the parts of the egg**.

Finally, it was time to eat and enjoy their egg slices. Did your child want to peel his or her own eggs at home on Easter?



The last day of April was **Arbor Day**, a day of celebrating trees. Some of our older children began with an activity of **looking at a real living tree sapling and closely exploring its' root system**.



Next, they learned the names of **the parts of a root** and finally chose **to create a book or poster** about these root parts. As a whole class activity we then invited the older children to tell the younger children what they had learned about roots using the live sapling. We discussed the three basic elements that are needed for plants and trees to grow: *air, water and sunlight*. As a group *we decided that we needed to plant this tree sapling* so that it could grow and live, but should we do it inside or outside? The children finally decided inside would be best so that

we could make sure it would get enough sunlight and water while it was still small.

Each child took a turn helping place small rocks for drainage in our pot, scooping soil and finally watering the tree sapling. We discussed that just like the dwarf frogs living in our room, we would have to take turns watering our tree on a schedule to make sure it remains healthy and grows well.

Looking ahead to May, we have already “planted the seeds” so to speak for **planting with the children**. We just read *Jack and the Beanstalk* last week and will soon be reading the classic *The Carrot Seed*. The children will then have the opportunity to plant both green beans and carrot seeds in their own individual cups. The daily observation and care of their germinating seed will be a truly meaningful activity for all of the children.

We sure endured an April abundant with rain showers; but we survived and even thrived with some very creative and delicious **cooking/ food prep in the Practical Life area** of our classroom. While we waited for a warm day that didn't rain or a sunny day that was actually warm, we *baked muffins, cinnamon toast, and bagels and tasted a variety of different vegetables and fruit*.



A huge thanks to our classroom parents who supplied all the ingredients that made the rainy days fun and interesting! Your children very much enjoyed *washing, slicing, cutting, peeling, measuring ingredients and especially tasting* their work. A particular favorite of all was the process of **cutting and squeezing fresh oranges for juice**; many oranges make little juice but we added some "Cutie juice" to stretch our harvest and it was a very popular and delicious treat. The children honed their *fine and gross motor skills* and enjoyed re-squeezing oranges from the younger children to see how much more juice could be yielded.

We talked about the **various parts of citrus fruits** (and tried to name as many as we could) such as the peel/rind, pith (white part), seeds, and the pulp which was leftover after squeezing. Many of the children wanted to keep the seeds to plant which led to a conversation/lesson about where citrus fruits are usually grown.

Many of the children made their own **rain clouds complete with lightning bolts and rain** in the **Art area** of the classroom. This also led to a discussion that you can't actually hear lightening, but can hear thunder. We introduced the concept that light travels faster than sound, so one usually sees lightening followed by thunder - still kind of an abstract concept at this point but you never know!

As we let our grown butterflies fly free, some made their own "Painted Lady" butterflies and they brightened our classroom very nicely this month. We also shared **observations about the changes to our outdoor environment** such as sprouting flowers, green grass, buds on trees and the smell of spring.

At this time of year, there always seems to be an increased level of confidence in the children; many have learned to zip their own (and sometimes even a friends!) coat, the children know where each students work file and closet is as well as which shoes/coat belong to who.



They help with folding laundry, putting away dishes and silverware, straightening/dusting shelves, sorting pencils according to color hues, and setting lunch tables - even the morning students who don't necessarily stay for lunch enjoy setting the lunch tables!

The sense of community in our classroom has blossomed this year! You all should be so proud to see your child offer help or assistance to a friend or teacher - everyone contributes on their own level, and they will keep this sense of self confidence throughout. (Trust me, as the mom of a graduating high school senior, the Montessori experience was the best start I ever could have given my child!!!!)



Happy spring!

Ms. Jocelyn and Ms. Christine

Notes from the classroom:

Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen

The Gifts of Montessori

Words from Keynote Speaker at National American Montessori Society Chicago Convention Ken Robinson

Recently we were privilege to attend the National Montessori conference in Chicago. Among the many interesting speakers and ideas, Ken Robinson stood out for his passion and for his insightful thinking about the purpose of education. He is not a Montessorian by profession, yet his thoughts about education so closely parallel Montessori's thinking and objectives, that he was invited to be our keynote speaker.

He began by reflecting on the times in which we live contrasted with how life was lived just a few decades ago. The differences are almost inconceivable.

1. In the 1950's, people traveled 2 – 3 miles per day maximum. They lived local lives.
2. In the 1960's, only 4 electronic gadgets were available: telephone, television, record player, radio. The pace of change is almost incomprehensible.
3. In 1972, you took for granted you would get a job if you graduated from college. It was ridiculous to think otherwise unless you did not want to work.
4. Today, we are living in times of revolution on a global scale. There is no precedent in history for comparable change.

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So what is the implication for education of our young children? He sees education as a race: between education and catastrophe. Instead of simply using the current model of public education, only doing it better, we need to rethink the whole premise of education.

- Education needs to be creative. Creativity needs to be central. We have to cultivate innovation. Our children need to be adaptable. They will be facing unprecedented problems on a global scale.
- Education needs to be PERSONAL. Many people never discover their talents. We need to be able to do something for which we have a natural aptitude. Then learning becomes intoxicating. It resonates with our natural spirit and natural energy. Development of **human resources** is a prime goal.
- Education needs to help develop skills in interpersonal relationships based upon cooperation, respect and mutual sharing of ideas. It needs to help people learn how to function as an individual within a community.



The above are principles incorporated into Montessori education. They are basic to the framework and philosophy of Montessori. Dr. Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person. He must do it himself or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years spent in the classroom because that person is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. The goal of education, therefore, is to help cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.



We do this by first, by allowing the child to experience the excitement of learning by their own choice and second, by helping to develop their natural tools for learning so that the ability will be at a maximum in future learning situations. Montessori has a long-range purpose for fostering education in addition to the immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child.

Natural tools for learning:

What are the natural tools for learning that we are developing at this age?

Concentration: This tool was addressed indirectly last month since a major component includes self-control. Self-control permits the child to work in a classroom with others, ignore distraction, focus on an activity to completion and increase time on task.

The environment is designed to “protect” the child’s concentration. When we see the child deeply involved in an activity, we do not engage with the child by praising, commenting, correcting, etc. We respect their deep focus and observe their activity. No learning takes place without concentration.

Order: Attention to order, sequence, and detail are keys to problem solving. An orderly mind also frees the child to pursue interesting and intricate activities. The classroom environment is a strong support for developing order. All activities have been carefully thought out and have detailed procedures to them. There is a regular sequence of actions. As the children grow and mature, they become increasingly adept at more complex activities. Also the older children can assist the younger children in setting up activities for success.



Coordination: Development is important now so that later, the child can successfully work with more complicated and intricate academic materials. Without coordination, the materials themselves can become an obstacle.

Independence: As children become increasingly independent, they gain competence, and with competence comes confidence. With confidence comes a sense of adventure and eagerness to learn. Children become more willing to take a risk. They become more creative in their work. They enjoy the feeling of success.



At Home: Since there are many opportunities for practical activities in the home, parents should encourage each child in those “chores” that interest them. Many activities that we consider mundane are very interesting to your child. If your child wants to wash dishes, sort objects, polish silver, or pour milk for example, parents should require orderly procedures like those encouraged in the classroom so that good working habits may become second nature the child.

“Off the Shelf”: Painting at the easel

Easel painting is in use almost all day every day. It is obviously an opportunity for children to explore color or to explore brush strokes or to paint a complex picture or many steps in between. I want to highlight the PROCESS and the ORGANIZATION of the activity to appreciate not only the artistic value of painting, but the value of developing the natural tools of learning when using the easel..



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Set-up requires the following:

- Putting on and buttoning the paint shirt
- Clipping the easel paper onto the easel
- Writing your name on the paper
- Getting water in the container for rinsing the brush
- Getting water in the pail so it is ready for cleanup
- Choosing the colors you would like in the paint palette

Painting procedure for “success”: (Procedure becomes more exact as child gets older.)

- Dip brush into rinse water
- Drip off excess water on edge of container
- Dab brush on sponge to further absorb excess water
- Choose color of paint.
- Repeat process.

Note: Many of the kindergarten children will plan their pictures first by sketching with a pencil.

Clean-up process:

- Take picture down and hang on the bulletin board to dry.
- Use sponge to wipe off excess paint from easel. Sponge needs to be periodically rinsed to be effective.
- Use small towel to dry the easel.
- Wash the paint palette in pail of water. Dry.
- Wash the rinse water container and dry.
- Empty the pail of water into the sink and dry the pail.
- Get the floor towel and dry the floor.
- Get the art cleanup tray for any residual paint.
- Unbutton paint shirt and hang up ready for next person.

Classroom highlights this month



Welcome to Shawn and his family Sally, Jeffrey and Alia. We are happy to have him join the morning classroom group.

The caterpillar release was a big highlight. We had to wait weeks for the whole process to be completed. Imagining the children’s joy when, on a Monday morning, they entered the classroom and ALL of the caterpillars had emerged from their chrysalis. We waited a day or two for the new butterflies to strengthen their wings and then released them outdoors in a ceremony on a sunny day.

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It is hard to overstate the fun the children had **dying their spring eggs**. It is still a bit of a surprise/mystery how an egg can be submerged for just a moment and transformed in color. It was a small group project, so the children waited patiently, shared colors, and took turns dying their eggs.

The kindergarten children decided they wanted to dye their eggs and then submerge them in a different color to see what happened. So we enjoyed that.

The kindergarteners made **deviled eggs**. It's true. As a group, we sliced the eggs open, took out the yolks, mashed the yolks and added Miracle Whip, mustard, salt and pepper. They were delicious. What was the common comment by the kindergarteners? I love the way the egg feels!!!!!!

Thank you to all who sent the hard-boiled eggs.



Our speech pattern this month is:

April showers bring May flowers.

(We should have an abundance of May flowers after this April.)

Our authors of the month are:

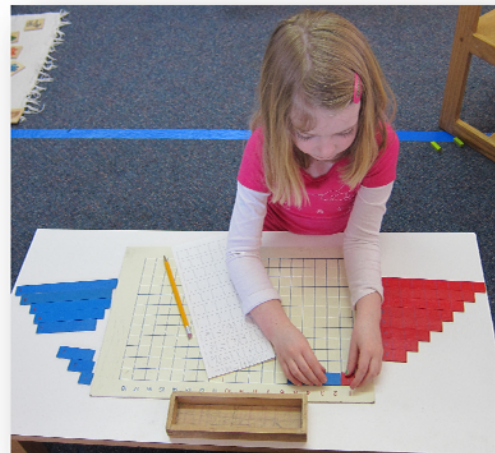
Audrey and Don Wood. These authors are new to me and I am looking forward to discovering their books. They were recommended by another Montessori teacher.

Words from Maria Montessori:

“A child’s work is to create the man he will become.”

“The child is father of the man.”

Ms. Karen and Ms. Ambreen



Kindergarten Extended Day News

I just want to say that this month has flown by! Looking back, it is amazing to see how much has happened! The recent (very recent) sunny and warm weather has increased all of our energy.

Curriculum

We have continued our science curriculum with the study of vertebrates. Previously, we studied fish. We moved on this month to **the study of reptiles and amphibians**. This included looking at the cycle of the tadpoles becoming frogs.



Cycle is a theme in our curriculum including caterpillar into butterfly, eggs hatching into adults and adults laying eggs, etc. Several children chose to illustrate the cycle by making circles and then drawing the various phases of tadpole development. When we studied reptiles, we illustrated the various categories of reptiles with a **“Reptile Tree”**.

Our special guest, Vakh, from the country of Georgia, was a wonderful presenter

(not to mention entertainer) for us. He illustrated our previous studies, drawing a chart for living/non-living, plants/animals, vertebrates/invertebrates and the various categories of vertebrates. So it represented a review (and preview) of our studies.



Of course, most memorable were the “guests” he brought to our room: **a turtle, a python snake, and a lizard**. We had hands-on experience with the lizard and the snake. The snake, in particular, was entertaining, crawling over and around Vakh’s neck and head up and down his arm, etc. Almost all

of the children wanted to touch and pet the snake. The lizard was entertaining in that it crawled up vertical walls and jumped from child to child as it was pet. Anyway, a very good time was had by all.



Other guests this month included our **drummers Helen Bond and Fode Camara** who is visiting from *Guinea, West Africa*. We began with getting out the globe and locating Guinea. Fode told us some stories of growing up in Guinea.

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He speaks 5 languages although he was unable to attend school. In that country, only 1 boy in 3 and 1 girl in 5 can attend school due to costs of materials, uniforms, etc. Also, the children are needed to help support the family.

I wish you could have joined us for the energy and fun we had. Echoes of the drumming could be heard throughout the school. We played drums and danced and simply had a wonderful experience with Fode and Helen. He had an easy going and friendly manner that pulled us right into the rhythms.

Mathematical Thinking

We enjoyed playing bingo together. Also we added “**mental arithmetic**” to our activities. Here is a sample problem we did without pencil, paper or concrete materials: $4 + 6 - 2 + 3 = ?$ A new term was doubling: $2 + 3$, double that answer, $- 1 + 4 =$.



We also presented **graphing** using miniature M & M's. (That added to the interest). So the process included *setting up* (make tags for each color), *categorizing* (put each of the M & M's under their proper color label), *counting each category* and *recording each individual color category on graph paper*, and finally *totaling every category* to be sure it matched the total M & M's counted.

We checked our final answer with an adding machine. We were almost 100 % accurate. (I think when the child was off by one or tow, it was because they had eaten them). The activity was then packaged up to be taken home.



Earth Day

We celebrated Earth Day by listing gifts we receive from the earth. There were many answers. The following are some of the ideas: land, oceans, flowers, trees, and safety (because the earth provides trees and we can use trees to build our houses and houses give us safety!). See the Earth Day art work displayed in our hallway.

Artist of the Month

We will be inspired by looking at Jackson Pollack's work and then having some very fun times imitating and using his methods.



Music

The children have been practicing their presentation for Mother's Day. It is their special gift to you.

Field Trips



We loved our trip to **Barnes and Noble bookstore**. They were so welcoming. We enjoyed seeing the various sections of books. A favorite section was the international book area. We found books about all of the continents and many individual countries. That was followed by the map section so we could find our way around once we got to a country. Also of interest: the science and pet section.

We then spent time in the children's section, enjoyed a story read by the staff and ended with cookies baked just for us. It was an enjoyable experience, sure to help foster a love of books.

Upcoming: a visit to an alpaca farm. More details to follow.

Ms. Karen

Notes from the afternoon classroom: Ms. Terri and Ms. Donna

Our April calendar was filled with spring time flowers and activities even though the weather was gloomy. We made **birds and nests with eggs out of modeling clay**. We practiced making pinch pots after softening the clay in our warm hands and rolling it into a ball to make the nest.

We also **colored Easter eggs** in the afternoon class, *but we colored our eggs first with the crayon to make a resist with the dye.*

We **planted seeds in peat pots** which have already started to sprout much to the delight of the children. We soaked the compressed peat pots in water

and watched them expand. Next, we chose which flower seed we wanted to plant. Our choices were marigolds (our choices were either yellow or orange), cosmos, or shasta daisies. We carefully placed 3 seeds in the center of the pot and covered them with peat moss and watered.



We celebrated **Earth Day** this past week by making our own **pictures of the Earth**. We used blue and green tempera paint to represent the land and water which we painted coffee filters for the earth. We added pieces of cotton balls for the clouds and dots of silver paint for the stars on the black paper background. Our work is on display in the hallway.

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Lastly, the afternoon class has been working on a **banner for the Mothers Day Celebration**. We were painting a background for the *Ugly duckling* play. The children mixed tempera paint for the sky, grass, pond, barn etc. and then painted the banner on the floor in the classroom. It is very fun to paint on large areas, we use our whole bodies.

We also **made sunset orange play dough for our younger friends** who weren't painting with us. The children enjoyed the warmth of the fresh play dough as they kneaded it and made it smoother.



Artist of the Month



Wassily Kandinsky.

He is a Russian artist who lived from 1866-1944 during the Expressionist movement as an abstract painter and graphic artist. He is considered a great master in modern art. He invented a language of abstract forms with which he replaced the forms of nature. He felt that painting possessed the same power as music and that line, sign, and color ought to correspond to the vibrations of the human soul.

Our **Kandinsky paintings** are also on display on the hallway. They are done on 4" x 4" water color paper with watercolor paint. We painted assorted circles in colors of our own choosing on four squares of paper. The children kept three squares and one square has been donated to a group kindergarten work which will be kept at school- for the 2011 kindergarten class. They did a great job!



Gym notes by Ms. Donna

Most of us are catching on to the skipping movement as well as jumping over a bar which is about 8 inches above the ground and land on two feet. We are also able to keep an egg on a spoon and walk from one side of the room to the other without dropping the egg. We hid different colored eggs under domes and marched to the beat of the drum.

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When the drum was silent the children lifted off a dome closest to them and did the exercise according to the color of their egg. (Yellow egg - jumping jacks etc.) We have been working on following three directions. (Walk on the balance beam, walk on the domes and jump with two feet over the bridge.)

The kindergarteners also learned a game called **Indian Pin Dodge ball**. Two teams, six balls, 3 pins per team. They had to stay on their side and throw a ball at the other team's pins which were being guarded by the three guards. If the pin went down it was down until all three pins were down. Some of the guards would knock down their own pins and the pin had to stay down. When all three pins were down a new game would begin with different guards.

Another game played by the kindergarteners was the **rescue race** using pool noodles. The ships are sinking the students must run to get the noodle and return to rescue one shipmate who takes them to land, the next person goes back to rescue the next shipmate. This continues until all are safe on land and they can start over.

Ms. Terri and Ms. Donna

