


Montessori Pathways' News

September, 3rd 2010

Notes from Miss Alena



And so the first week of the school year has already come to an end. Typically this is a vital period in the life of the school, as the first week determines the pace for the rest of the year.

Our school's first week went by with great confidence and organization.

The teachers played a large role in this success. During the preparation week, they looked over the materials carefully, re-arranged their rooms and set up a stimulating environment for your children. We thank them for their hard work because a great prepared environment is key in our students' success.

Another contributing factor was how many of our friends were with us during Summer Camp and were thus already familiar with the school's routine and rules. Those who had a summer break or are new to our school quickly began to work whilst looking at their classmates, many of whom are Kindergarteners and are already quite independent and organized.

Another big plus was how many parents attended the orientation meeting where a lot of organizational information was covered, and consequently have been following all of our rules and procedures. We thank everyone for that. Once again this confirms how important and necessary parent meetings are. I wanted to reiterate some of the vital points from the meeting to ensure a smooth beginning of the week to come.

Every child has a **Blue School Bag**. This is an "everyday" bag. Anything the school needs to send home or vice-versa, the kids bring in this bag.

During this week, there were a few times when a student wanted to take home something he or she had done throughout the day, but the bag was empty. Please remember that if your child says that he or she made something today but the project is not going home, the teacher believes that the project is not quite ready to go home—maybe the glue or paint hasn't dried yet or it's not fully finished yet or there's simply no point in sending home scraps left from a "cutting activity." Those can be used in a different activity.

I would also like to point out that the parents' reaction is very important. When you pick up your child from school, don't ask "what did you make today?" For the kids, this is like a signal that they must bring something home and thus begin to gather any small piece of paper they'd cut or drawn on that day.

In reality, as Maria Montessori had pointed out, unlike us adults, *the children value the process much more than the result.* It is during the working process that the young ones formulate who they are as an individual. *"The adult works to improve his environment while the child works to improve himself,"* Maria Montessori.

As such, it is much better to ask your child "How was your day? What did you learn? What did you discover?" But even then, do not expect a full report of the day from the child. Throughout the day, children give answers to hundreds of questions from their classmates, their teachers and themselves. And often the typical answer at the end of the day is "nothing." However, this definitely does not mean that the small individual wasted the day. He did a lot of work that is both difficult and rewarding, adding new knowledge and discoveries to the ones already instilled in his mind. Sooner or later you will see the result.

There's Nothing in My Bag Today



Today I did my math and science,
I toasted bread.
I halved and quartered.
I counted, measured, used my eyes,
and ears and head.
I added and subtracted on the way,
I used a magnet, cylinders, and memory tray.
I learned about a rainbow and how to weigh.
So please don't say, "anything in your bag today?"



You see, I'm sharing as I play.
I learned to listen and
speak clearly when I talk,
to wait my turn, and when inside to walk.
To put my thoughts into a phrase,
to guide a pencil through a maze.
To find my name and write it down,
to do it with a smile, not a frown.
To put my pasting brush away,
So please don't say, "what, nothing in your bag today?"



I've learned about a snail and a worm,
remembering how to take my turn.
Helped a friend when he was stuck,
learned that water runs off a duck.
I looked at words from left to right,
agreed to differ, not to fight.
So please don't say, "did you only play today?"



This year we also asked the parents to bring a pair of “**inside school shoes**” for the kids to change into when they come to school or after outdoor activity time. This will allow us to keep the school clean, as a lot of the activities the children do are done on the floor.

And if your child still does not have a pair, please send it in the Blue Bag. And please don't forget to label them with your child's name—new names and faces are hard enough for them to remember.

From time to time, each family will receive a “**Sharing Basket**” list where the teachers will indicate what they would like to be brought for various activities in the class.

Please remember that the kids love to prepare something at home to share with the class: to bring it to school, share it with their classmates and thus know that they are a vital part in the life of their class.



On Friday, our older students went on a **practice field trip**. The Kindergarteners, along with Ms. Karen, prepared the rules that they will follow throughout this year's field trips. Next, each Kindergartener took a younger student as a partner for their journey to collect living and non-living things (this was Ms. Terri's idea) in brown lunch bags that the students



themselves had decorated earlier.



It was very interesting to see the children pay such close attention to nature, noticing the tiniest details. A favorite were holes on the leaves that were left after an insect took a bite or two. The children had a great time creating stories about bug parties or caterpillars that were filling up on leaves to become beautiful butterflies in the spring. The trip was a successful first try for the Kindergarteners to show true leadership.

Many more interesting events await us and we will be sending more information about them in the near future.

Wishing everyone more warm days during this fall!

Miss Alena

Notes from the classroom: Miss Jocelyn and Miss Christine

Wow, what a great first week of the new school year! Meeting new friends, trying new works and getting back into the routine of the school year has made for a busy and productive first week. In lieu of an official school newsletter for the week, Ms. Christine and I wanted to send you big hello, pass on a few reminders, and fill you in on a few ways you could help out in the classroom this year.

In an effort to promote self-care, we are requesting that your child have one pair of inside shoes that can remain at school for the whole school year. If you have not yet sent in a pair, please do so as soon as possible. The best choice for inside shoes will allow your child walk without slipping and to put them on independently. Please write your child's name on the inside of these shoes.



Please remember that you are always welcome to come in and observe class from our observation window. Your child will not be able to see you, but you can see what your child is working on and how they are doing during class time. Because most Montessori work is a process that does not have a final take-home product, parents are invited to come in and



watch the class in progress. You may be surprised to see just how much work your child does every day!

New this year, our class will have Montessori tasting activities as part of our regular morning class time. Tasting activities offer each child the opportunity to taste new healthy foods in a low-stress, Montessori way. Each month we will offer each child the

opportunity taste one new fruit and one new vegetable. In addition, to exploring these whole foods, we will also compare the tastes of similar foods in different forms (fresh cucumbers and pickles) or foods that look similar but are different (jicama and golden delicious apples) **I am hopeful that each family can commit to shop for and share the food for one tasting activity with our class community.**



This week we had a birthday girl in our class, Kate! We celebrated with candles, songs and birthday cupcakes that Kate brought. Happy 4th Birthday Kate!

Finally, I'd like to send a great big **thank you** to Gracie Nelson's family for sending in fresh cut flowers from their yard this week. Flower arranging is a great Montessori activity and we always need bouquets of fresh cut flowers. The inexpensive bouquets from the grocery store or flowers from your home garden are perfect! **If each family could plan on bringing in one bouquet of flowers on two different weeks during the school year, every child will have the opportunity to work on flower arranging all year long.**

We have such a wonderful group this year and look forward to having a great school year. Remember, I'd love to hear from you if you have questions or concerns about your child, so please don't hesitate to share important information, schedule a meeting or just touch base.

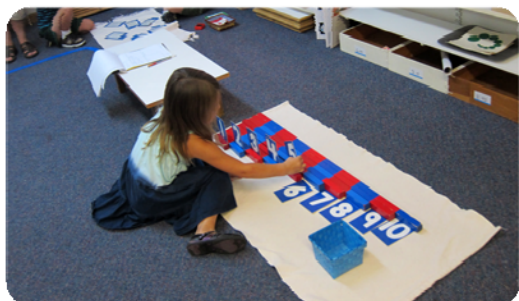
Warmly,

Miss Jocelyn and Miss Christine

Notes from the classroom: Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen

Of course we would like to extend a big welcome to the new families and a big welcome back to returning families. What a beautiful week we have had. So many little "wonders" already emerging.

We began the week with a celebration of Ava's birthday. We told her "personal story" and enjoyed the ice cream treats the family sent in. Because it was a weather-perfect day, we shared the snack outside under our beautiful new pavilion. When we celebrate your child's birthday, please feel very welcome to come and join the class to celebrate. We do try to make each story personal with some generic elements to it (ex. When you were a baby, you could cry, sleep, smile, etc. Babies cannot). Then we tell how the child grew and developed skills, etc. You are also welcome to send in LARGE photos of your child at a much earlier age ----- as a baby, a 1 year old, etc. In this way, the idea of change and growth becomes more visible and meaningful to the class. The birthday child did not always look the way they do now!!!



The returning children have been helpful, kind and understanding in assisting the new children to find supplies, care for their belongings, hold their hand to take them to the playground, etc. We are building community step by step. Of course, all are learning their schedule. Some children go home at the end of the morning, some stay for lunch, etc.

Continued on the next page



We have reconfigured parts of the classroom and, following up on ideas presented at a week-long advanced seminar this summer in Northbrook Montessori School, we have added and slightly altered activities in the classroom. This is particularly true in Practical Life where children are already totally setting up their choice of activity such as carrot cutting or baking. All of our activities have been rethought and slightly modified, looking at each "work" through this lens of developing total independence in the classroom. Competence follows; it is the key to our children's



success at this age.

We are building routines and patterns through games. This week, we again took advantage of the weather by doing relay games, name games, and practicing how to line up (yes there is a process even to lining up).

Although there are a myriad of details we could write on, we want to close with the closing activity of the morning class on Friday -----the visit from the FIRE DEPARTMENT!!!! You can believe the children were excited. We practiced exact evacuation procedures used in event of an emergency and you will be happy to know the fire department gave us very favorable comments on our response to the LOUD fire alarm! Children were calm and orderly. Fire drills will continue to be practiced from time to time so that all will be well in the unlikely event of a real emergency.

Miss Karen and Miss Ambreen

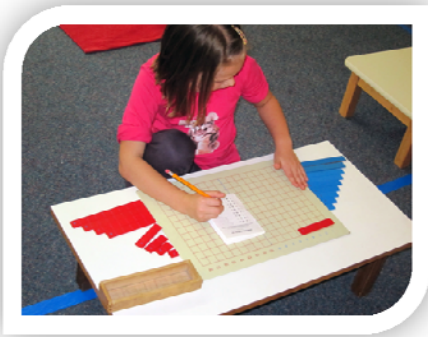
Welcome to Kindergarten Extended Day

Welcome to both the kindergarten children and their families! It has already been a busy, interesting and productive week with your children. I will be sending home little news notes periodically to keep you abreast of what is happening.

It has only been a few days and much has been accomplished. We have worked on learning each other's names (there are two groups that come together during this time), both their first and last. One of the techniques is to use the names as speech patterns and also as patterns to clap rhythm. This is actually laying a base for rhythm patterns in music. We have walked, run, tiptoed, marched and skipped on the line. Gross motor skill development will help children feel more confident and helps them to gain control over their bodies.

We began the first days with a question game: what is in the bag. Children love this game and it helps to develop logical thinking skills. We are learning that general questions (ex. "Is it a fruit?") are more helpful than very specific questions----"Is it a rock?" This has implications for general problem solving. The first few days, there was fruit in the bag. We then counted the children and divided the fruit accordingly---practical experience in division. Often there are math components in the lessons or activities that the children may not recognize as "math" because part of the curriculum is to put a strong emphasis on mathematical **thinking**.

There is a "work time" incorporated into each day. Monday and Tuesday, the children chose activities from the shelf and worked independently. Wednesday and



Thursday, we did group skill lessons: gluing and precise cutting. That may sound simple, but the children need to be able to organize many materials and develop specific skills so that the materials do not become an impediment to carrying out the activity. So, for example, to do a simple cutting and gluing activity, they need: glue container, a glue brush, a paper towel, scissors, materials for cutting and gluing and the background paper. Following the activity, they must learn how to put the materials back into their specific

place and clean the surface of their work space with the art clean-up tray. So, we are becoming gradually familiar with not only the activities on the shelf, but the location of supplies that are needed to carry out their work of choice.

Speaking of putting things away, at the end of the afternoon period, the children all participate in putting the environment back in order and making the room beautiful. Jobs include such things as straightening the activities on the shelf, sweeping the floor, wiping off and drying the table tops, putting the chairs on top of the tables so the floor can be cleaned, taking the laundry down to the laundry room hallway, etc. When we are all done with our jobs, the room does look beautiful and the children take pride in their accomplishment.



When we do a group skill activity (like cutting), usually we incorporate geometric shapes in one way or another and the vocabulary to match. Thus far we have trapezoid, hexagon and parallel lines.

Friday was a practice field trip so that the children can be very aware of the rules for field trips making the experience both enjoyable and safe.

So, for one week, looking back, the children have already accomplished so much.

Miss Karen