



Montessori Messenger

October 15, 2014

Dedicated to the joy in education and the lifelong desire to know.

IN THIS ISSUE

Dear Parents,

This is the first issue of the Montessori Messenger 2014-2015. This publication comes to you four times a year and is prepared by our teachers with the hopes of giving you a glimpse of the Montessori Method as practiced in our classrooms. We plan to share information on upcoming happenings and events and eventually included some articles from our students.

The classes are settling into routine as the children become acclimated to the open classroom, which offers them freedom with responsibility. You are encouraged to observe a class in session now and again as the school year progresses. Observations should be done as unobtrusively as possible so as not to change the day for the students. Observe quietly from behind an observation window or sit quietly, if invited in, and refrain from interaction with the teacher or the children. Make arrangements after the observation to speak to the teacher outside of class.

We are asking for your help in our attempt to curb infection. This is an especially urgent plea this year with enterovirus D68 in the news. Please keep children with any signs of any infection at home. These signs are fever or diarrhea within twenty-four hours, respiratory distress, rash, or inflammation of the eyes.

Please help our teachers focus on their duties during pick-up from the playground. Adults lingering with their child causes distraction on the part of the staff who should direct their attention to the care of the children in their charge. Please make pick-up as brief as possible and keep cars moving in the drive.

Thank you for your trust in placing your child with Danville Montessori School. You will be amazed with your observation of our independent workers. I hope to see you observing throughout the school year!

Pat Critchfield

THE LEARNING CYCLE OF INDEPENDENCE AND SUCCESS

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The Learning Cycle of Independence and Success

By Gaye Haralu

“Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.” – Maria Montessori.

A primary objective of the Montessori prepared environment is to create a safe space where children can succeed at being independent. This includes everything from making choices about their “work” to following directions with that work and then earning the opportunity to explore the materials. Every success leads to the child’s confidence in her abilities and a willingness to trust herself and try new things.

The Montessori environment is rich with opportunities to learn and perfect skills. The child is encouraged and trusted to try new lessons and grow in his experience of engaging his environment. Following directions and self-correcting materials assist the child in succeeding. The child learns to take great pride in his work and the intrinsic reward of that satisfaction.

Time and motivation are all that is required for the child to succeed. Often children are not given opportunities in “everyday life” because it takes too much time or too much energy in our very busy world. The Montessori environment gives the child time to try and practice until she is satisfied with her work. If adults do everything for the child because it is expedient, the child will be delayed in taking responsibility for himself. Additionally, the child will be hesitant to trust in his own abilities.

“Meet the need of the child” is a common directive in the Montessori environment. If the child is motivated to build the Pink Tower for the 100th time, the freedom of the Montessori environment allows him to do just that. The child may later be shown another lesson that will open up new venues for his exploration. Finally, allowing the child to do real work promotes a sense of being needed and important. Children know when they are helping to do real food preparations as opposed to pretend ones. Children know when they are really helping with the laundry and doing real cleaning. Creating opportunities for the child to help in real and significant ways demonstrates our trust in the child, our wonder at their unique gifts and our appreciation of their genuine efforts. The independence that results from these opportunities fuels the child’s self-esteem and will serve him for a life time

Class Meetings Enhance Self Esteem

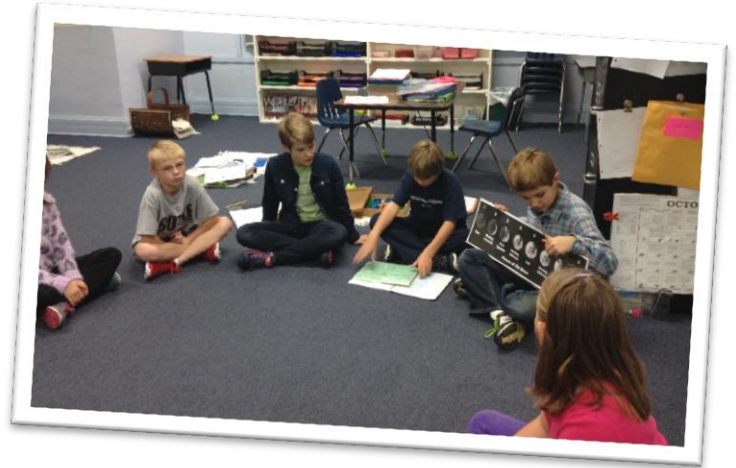
By Pat Critchfield

Visitors observing any of our Montessori environments throughout the school will be treated to the sight of a multi-age community engaged in independent, responsible choice. Stay a bit longer. Looking deeper into the dynamics of the social fabric, one sees cooperative effort in the form of spontaneous peer teaching and group problem solving. The adults in this environment, sensitive to the need for the child's initiative, success, and affirmation, refrain from unnecessary intervention in this essential process of social learning.

The elementary class meeting, conducted by the children daily, is the perfect opportunity in which to observe the resourcefulness of peer group problem solving. The agenda for the meetings varies slightly with the age of the children. The duty of chairperson rotates to all the children several times over the school year. In the upper elementary the child retains this role with its privileges and responsibilities for a week.

The upper elementary "Special Person" calls the meeting to order shortly after arrival in the morning. This child takes roll and delivers the daily "star report" on the night sky from a bulletin published by Abrams Planetarium at Michigan State University. This is followed by a call for Life's Gifts, which are appreciations for natural occurring phenomena, for an example, a spectacular view of the Harvest Moon or a particularly inspiring sunset. Next class members may offer acknowledgements wherein individuals may be recognized for specific accomplishments or helpfulness. The person acknowledged responds with "thank you." The teacher often models acknowledgements being sure to include all children over time. Sharing of special events in the life of individual class members is limited to a brief statement, as is all other input.

Planning, short and long term is brought up, if appropriate. Individual concerns are addressed prior to the conclusion of the class meeting. The group is called upon to address problems which arise and brainstorm solutions. Problems are sometimes due to a lack of responsible behavior on the part of an individual. Names



are not mentioned as the problem is analyzed and a solution that is accepted as fair to all is agreed upon. The solution must be related to the problem, respectful of all (no blame or shame), and reasonable from all points of view. Often the mention of the problem in context of the group is enough to extinguish it. Once all are in agreement on a logical consequence for misbehavior, the meeting is adjourned and children go to individual work. Should misbehavior continue, the teacher's duty is to see that logical consequences, agreed to by all, are implemented. The demeanor of the adult is calm, kind and firm. No recriminations are made.

Inappropriate behavior, either in the classroom or on the playground, is an opportunity for social learning. The group problem solving method embodied in the class meeting encourages responsibility, accountability, and self-discipline. It relies upon resourcefulness, group cooperation, and respect for the individual. Children learn to accept responsibility for their actions becoming agents of change in themselves and others. The class meeting enhances self-esteem in class members and imparts a feeling of belonging to all participants.

Reading in the Lower Elementary

By Stuart Critchfield

Unlike the Italian language in which Dr. Montessori developed her phonetic reading methodology, English presents significant challenges to emergent readers. In Italian each letter corresponds directly to only one sound. When the Italian child understands the one-to-one letter-sound association an explosion in reading naturally occurs. Unfortunately, reading English is not quite as easy.

In English there are more sounds than letters and this complicates matters significantly. The great challenge of reading English is that 26 letters make 46 sounds. That is 20 more sounds than we have letters for! This is a big problem, necessitating that some letters represent multiple sounds. As a result, rather than a simplistic system, the English language is more like a complex code.

That each vowel has a short and long sound is a hurdle emergent readers must leap. Discerning the short *ă* in **cat** from the long *ā* in **Kate** takes a good bit of practice. This sound duplicity is not limited to the vowel. Consider for example, the hard “c” in **cat** which makes the /k/ sound and the soft “c” in **cider** which makes the /s/ sound. Or hard “g” in **goat** distinguished from the soft “g” in **giraffe**.

Single letters having multiple sounds is hard enough! Complicating the process even further are digraphs and diphthongs, letter combinations that make a single sound. These combinations, such as **ea, ie, igh, eigh, tion, oo, aw**, were termed “phonograms” by Dr. Montessori. If a developing reader doesn’t know the phonograms then they will be unable to read otherwise simple words like **foot, action, or sleigh**.

Learning to read in the Montessori classroom is a systematic process in learning to crack the complex English code. Teaching the decoding process begins at age three. As our six-year-olds enter the elementary classroom they typically recognize the consonant and short vowel sounds. Most also recognize or are beginning to recognize the silent e long vowels and consonant blends.



Developing reading skills in the elementary progresses from the recognition of letter sounds to mastering digraphs, diphthongs, and the other letter combinations, which make a single sound. While most of our elementary students are relatively fluent readers, we continue to provide repetition with the phonetic and non-phonetic components of the language.

Lower elementary students continue to progress with phonetic readers, workbooks, word building and spelling activities. More fluent readers move on to Scientific Research Association (SRA) reading comprehension work, as well as to additional practice within a series of New Practice Reader comprehension books.

For readers at all levels repetition is vital to building letter and word recognition. To that end, it is important that children read frequently at school and at home. Help your child find reading material that is enjoyable and share time reading together. Frequent repetition with easier material is essential to reinforce the reading concept learned at school.

Important Upcoming Dates and Events

Oct. 19	Montessori Carnival, Run, Silent Auction 3-5 P.M, Boyle Co. Fair Grounds
Oct. 20	Individual Student Pictures Taken
Oct. 23-24	Upper Elementary Field Trip to Horse Cave and Mammoth Cave
Oct. 24	Last Day Box Tops for Education
Nov. 3	Elementary Conferences Begin - Schedules to be posted
Nov. 4	No school, Election Day
Nov, 26-28	Thanksgiving Vacation
November	Pre-k and Kindergarten conferences to be announced