



# Rochester Montessori School E-Newsletter

Whole Child \* Whole World

Volume 2, Number 4

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## Education as Formation

A Montessori Reflection from the Director, Patrick Sheedy

One of the hardest things to do is respect the child. It seems like a no-brainer and I'd bet that all parents, if not most adults, would claim to have respect for children. And while there is a fair amount of social focus on education and child services, I challenge the understanding that many people have about respecting children. Not that these efforts are not well intended and not that these efforts are not valuable. On the contrary, all efforts at supporting children in their self discovery and development are a step in the right direction. The question then may be framed around what, in fact, is respecting a child?

Central to this challenge is the focus of the current educational scare in the government and media about standardization test scores, and uniform student achievement most notably codified in the "No Child Left Behind Act". This scare has struck fear in the hearts of even the most educated and intelligent adults and has become the focus on many educational reforms – usually driven by the government and other non-educators. Most reputable educators oppose many, if not most, of the ideas upon which the NCLB Act is based because the goal of education, for most, is not to amass knowledge to pass tests and reach standardized goals year after year. The goal of education, especially at RMS, is to help children become the kinds of people that will affect positive change in the world by looking at things with holistic frameworks and then acting based on respect, responsibility, and compassion. In order to allow this to happen, we must get away from the idea of standardization of information first with the values and character development as a peripheral afterthought. We must reverse that and start with values and character development as the core and move outward to consciously incorporate needed information. A famous Montessori, one who has visited our school on various occasions has illustrated the difference by stating that education should be about formation not information; it is about inspiration and not memorization.

Let's face it, many of the issues that we deal with today were unfathomable when we were children, and as adults we have been marginally successful at finding lasting resolutions to some of the new issues we face, let alone some of the longer standing and on-going issues. Our prisons are fuller than ever, war rages and our fellow Americans are asked to kill but are provided with very vague understandings of what we are fighting for, the environment is

ever becoming less stable and only superficial proposals exist to remedy the situation, political infighting and cross fighting prevent progress inside and outside our borders, the socio-economic gap is as wide as ever, and our media focuses on violence, tragedy, and divisiveness rather than peace, celebration, and unity. So, rather than a focus on the mere acquisition of facts and figures, our focus must be on the development of structures that allow for assimilation, analysis, and synthesis of information – the formation of the person and what that person does with information is where our attention needs to be.

At RMS we are not interested in preparing children to simply fit into the world that we adults have created. Our task, our vision is greater and nobler than that. We are intent on helping children realize their full potential so that they may be agents of positive and unifying change. In order to do this, we must respect the child's natural growth – we must resist acting on the prevalent fear and we must focus on the quality of the child's character. We start, as all education should, with an understanding of the nature of the child and the nature of learning. Upon that we must place the deep respect and reverence for the child and our education must reflect that and we shall do that by allowing the child, to the best of our ability, to grow unhindered by the unresolved issues that we adults carry around with us. A key component here is assuming the attitude of service rather than help. We are not satisfied with simply helping the child accomplish tasks, learn information etc. We must service the child's need to be independent and we must allow life to flourish as intended by nature.

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## PTSA

The 4th annual Staff Appreciation Holiday Cookie "Exchange" was once again a big success. About 60 RMS families brought goodies on Dec. 20, to share with our wonderful staff. I think that's a new record!

What a wonderful way to say "Thanks - we appreciate all you do!" to all of the grown-up people here at RMS. -And thank YOU, to all you parents who participated, and a special thanks to the "elves" who helped with the boxes - Kathryn Gardner, Sapna Janas, Michelle Hoffman, Kari Stonelake-Hopkins, Connie Dahlberg, Sarah Field, Niniek Pranoto, and Janine Yanisch.

PTSA Leadership:

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## From the Office

Re-Enrollment takes place February 1-15. All returning and non-returning families should submit enrollment forms during this period.

Remember: weekly "Event Reminder" emails are your source for up to the minute information!

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## Children's House News

From Willows Guide, Kate Faruolo

The Willows classroom is growing! We are busy orientating three new children. Two of our new ones, Madeline Behfar and Olini Riba-Marmolejo, are transitioning from the Toddler program. Our third student, Arjan Chahal, is new to our school. It has been so rewarding to watch the older children giving them lessons and showing them around the classroom. It is nice to see the self-confidence and knowledge they have gained by being in the CH program for 3 years.

Snow and the Solar System seem to be "alive" in our classroom!! We finally were able to put lots of snow collage exercises in the art area! We also put fresh snow in our sand table each morning. The children need to wear mittens while they work! We have been observing the snow slowly melt and watching it become water. We have added planet work to our science area. The children are enjoying working with the 3 part planet cards and the various space puzzles we have out. The work has inspired them to draw the solar system and our walls are becoming quite colorful!

Some of the older children have been writing reports and creative stories about space. Did you know that Jupiter can fit 1,300 Earths inside it?! You may hear them also singing, "The Family of the Sun", as they go about their day! Next week, the afternoon children will create their own paper mache solar system and hang it up in our classroom. Yes, Pluto will still be there, but we are adding its twin dwarf planet, Charon!!

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## Specialist News

From Music Specialist, Connie Jelatis Hokes

### **Multicultural Day, or, Oh say, Can you see???**

A belated thanks to all who helped with and participated in the RMS Multicultural Day Celebration. A big "thank you" to those of you who taped "Happy Birthday" in different languages. What a wonderful thing to experience. I only regret that more people weren't able to hear the songs as well as they deserved to be heard. We are fortunate at RMS for so many things, especially our new building and all of the opportunities it offers. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go in developing a suitable

performance venue. The students work hard on their performances and are so pleased to share them with their parents.

We have a number of problems with our present performance space, most notably seeing and hearing -- two things vital to the enjoyment of a musical performance. I've looked into various kinds of multi-purpose platforms, but the costs are prohibitive and we lack adequate storage space. I am constantly wracking my brain to figure out ways to cut back on the audience noise and better project the performance music and speaking. (Even with a microphone, I felt it was almost impossible to be heard through the constant buzz that echoes so voluminously in our multi-purpose room.)

Thus, I am putting out a plea for ideas and suggestions on how to improve the space we have so that performances can be more enjoyable for both parents and children. Any and all ideas, no matter how fanciful, are welcome. Perhaps with enough input, we can come up with some feasible solutions. I know they're out there, if we can just discover them. Future performances could benefit greatly.

### **AOSA (American Orff Schulwerk Association)**

I had another amazing three days at the national Orff conference in November. It is always so encouraging, affirming, inspirational, and energizing that I can't wait to get back and share with the students. This year the conference was held in Omaha, Nebraska, which is a lovely city. It's always difficult to have so many things in the area to enjoy, because all of my energy goes to classes, workshops, and performances. I never want to miss a minute of the learning opportunities available during this conference.

If anyone is interested in learning about Orff Schulwerk, I have a half-hour video that was given to me at the conference. I will have it available in the music room for anyone to check out.

### **Music Classroom Notes**

During the first half of the year, we worked on games and music that use solo singing voices. These give the children opportunities to truly internalize the music, as well as take pride and joy in their abilities. All groups also worked on the difference between beat and rhythm. In December, we took advantage of the students' experience with the "Nutcracker" by listening and moving to the various ways Tchaikovsky uses his music to represent different characters and events. We paid particular attention to the contrasting sounds of the legato, or smooth, Arabian dance and the bouncy Russian dance. The students enjoyed listening to and moving with this music. We also listened to the Waltz of the Flowers, and the students learned about the harp and played glissandos on a folk harp.

E1-1 students learned and explored rhythm patterns (adding eighth notes and sixteenth notes) using the song "Dinah." With that piece and others, they extended their musical understanding with instruments. These students particularly impressed me with their grasp of the music from the "Nutcracker." They know the story well and could identify most of the different parts of the story by listening to the music.

E1-2/3 students have been singing both an Aboriginal greeting song, "Abeeyo," and a traditional song, "Little Tommy Tucker" in two parts. They do an amazing job learning and carrying the parts, one in canon and the other with harmony. You might ask them to tell you the "Tale of Lemons and Pickles." This nonsense story provided the students with an opportunity to play a variety of pitched and un-pitched percussion instruments. Again, they exhibited some surprising abilities to listen to and play complimentary rhythms.

E2 students continue to surprise me with their beautiful voices and abilities. They learned a song, which along with part-singing is providing a basis for beginning their recorder work. Although the students vary in their abilities, we work on ways to incorporate the various levels of playing into a comprehensive whole that takes advantage of each student's abilities. Students were challenged with a couple of different hand-jives that provide fun (and, sometimes, confusing) moments along with another opportunity to work with different partners, small groups, and the group as a whole. Add this to an ensemble rhythm piece with various percussion instruments, including boom-whackers, and these students keep a lot of energy flowing in music production.

In January, we spent some time learning about Martin Luther King, Jr. The students learned and sang some of the freedom songs that were a part of the Civil Rights movement and continue to motivate and join people together today.

Starting soon, watch for "**Mallet Madness**" which will provide students at all levels an opportunity to work with instruments, pitched (barred Orff instruments) and un-pitched.

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### **Miscellaneous Thanks and Congrats**

Thanks to LuAnn for planning and facilitating the fall elementary trip to the Rec Center, and to the staff for their supervision. We all enjoyed watching the students have fun together. We look forward to future PE field trips. Congratulations to E1 staff, students, and art and language specialists on another delightful Writers' Workshop! It's wonderful for all of us to have opportunities to see the great things that are happening in our school. And it's always great for the children to experience how the different educational disciplines compliment and support one another. Bravo!

## Centenary Exhibit Tour Stops

### San Francisco

See article to the right for details of this tour stop.

### New York City

*A Montessori Journey* will be featured at the AMS 2007 Annual Conference.  
[Details](#)

### Houston

The exhibit will be featured in Houston in conjunction with the NAMTA conference.  
[Details](#)

### Toronto

*A Montessori Journey* will show in Canada at Humberstone Montessori School.  
[Details](#)

### Washington D.C.

*A Montessori Journey* will be featured at the John Paul II Cultural Center in Washington D.C.  
[Details](#)

### Minneapolis

The exhibit will make its final stop in Minneapolis during the NAMTA conference in October. This will be its permanent home.  
[Details](#)

## Montessori Centenary

News from the official Centenary of Montessori website

<http://montessoricentenary.org/>

Visit this comprehensive website to learn how you can help  
*"Champion the Cause of All Children."*

The below traveling exhibit, a part of the centenary celebration, will ultimately reside in Minnesota; consider viewing it at one the cities listed at left or in October when it lands in Minnesota.

## NAMTA Centenary Exhibit

### You're Invited!

#### Greetings!

*A Montessori Journey*, NAMTA's Traveling Centenary Exhibit, is beginning its tour during the 2007 Centenary Year. The tour kicks off in San Francisco on February 14.

#### A Montessori Journey

*A Montessori Journey*, an exhibition depicting the history and legacy of the Montessori method and Maria Montessori, kicks off its tour during the Centenary Year.

*A Montessori Journey* uses historical and contemporary photos as well as artwork, Montessori furniture and artifacts to dramatically depict the development of Montessori and showcase its legacy.

As a result of an international effort involving Germany, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, in cooperation with Centenary Committee of the Association Montessori Internationale, the North American Montessori Teachers' Association (NAMTA) presents this exhibit of more than twenty historical and contemporary stations, including a photographic collection that has never before been assembled in one place. Visitors can tour a life-size representation of the Vienna Haus der Kinder indoor/outdoor environment from the 1920s and 1930s, view rare period Montessori artifacts, and interact with a video library that brings alive the widespread and rapid diffusion of Montessori's vision. The exhibit culminates with a mural of children's art from Montessori schools around the world, visually depicting our planet from the origin of the universe to a vision of peace on Earth.

The Journey begins on Via Di Marsi, San Lorenzo, Rome, in 1907, and takes the participant through a visual encounter

with children through space and time, spanning a century. The exhibit features two routes, the historical route and the contemporary route. The historical route shows Italy, the United States, Australia, Spain, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, England, Ireland, Scotland, France, and India when their cultures first encountered Dr. Montessori's child-centered principles and prepared environments. The contemporary walk shows a wide array of countries with culminating Montessori themes touching on the spiritual convictions of Montessori's deepening vision of the universal child and peace through educational practice.



FIRST LOCATION: San Francisco, February 14 - 17  
TIME: February 14 and 15 - 9 a.m. - 4 p.m., February 16 - 9  
a.m. - 1:30 p.m., February 17 - 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
LOCATION: Bay Area Discovery Museum  
**More information on the Bay Area Discovery**

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