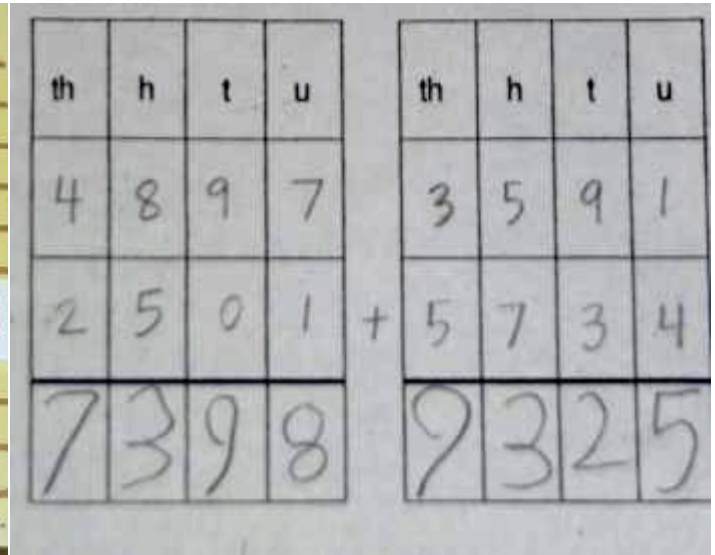
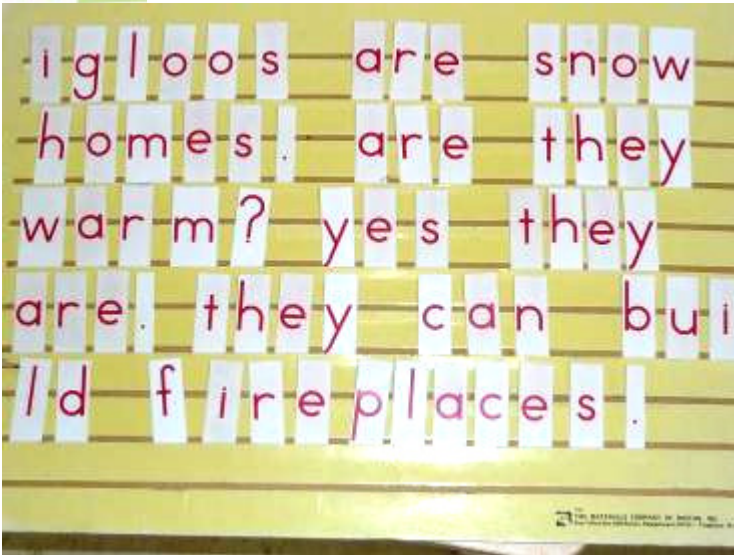




# Montessori Matters



*(left) A kindergarten student's spontaneous writing seems timely with snow in our weekend forecast! (right) Kindergarten addition work with regrouping.*

## Toys for Tots

E2 plans to collect toys for "Toys for Tots." Each student in E2 will raise money at home by completing various chores. The students will then use the money they have earned to purchase and donate a toy. Some ideas students generated for earning money include shoveling, babysitting, doing laundry, and preparing dinner.

E2 encourages all students and their families to participate in this opportunity to help children in our community. Toys need to be new and unwrapped. You may drop toys at school in the front entry way between December 13th and December 22nd.

## On the Calendar

For calendar dates, go to [www.rmschool.org](http://www.rmschool.org)

## Rochester Montessori School

Individualized Instruction • Academic Study • Spanish • Environmental Education • Technology in Instruction • the Arts and • becoming an International Baccalaureate Middle School program.

*Because how children learn influences who they will become.*

## That Incredible 3rd Year

By Paul Epstein, Ph.D.

A number of analogies quickly come to mind: The final act; the last quarter of a playoff game; the concluding chapter; the 3rd year.

The 3rd year at Rochester Montessori School refers to kindergarten, third grade, and sixth grade. By design, the 3rd year is a year of culmination, a year when earlier lessons and experiences now come together. During the 3rd year, children naturally integrate, build upon, and benefit from those earlier experiences and lessons.

The focus of this article is on the kindergarten 3rd year.

Many parents say they initially bring their children here for childcare. The plan calls for their children to then go on to traditional schooling. For many parents, however, something wondrous happens instead. Their children demonstrate incredible accomplishments in language, mathematics, geography, and science. The children have become amazingly independent and self-reliant; they can do so much for themselves. They have begun to learn how to learn. It's natural, then, to question the original plan and to ask, how much more will children grow and learn during the 3rd year?



***The emerging ability to think equivalently enables kindergartens to complete incredible work. (left) A map of state capitals. (right) A map of South American mountain systems.***

The kindergarten or 3<sup>rd</sup> year is a special time in a child's Montessori education. During this year, children make impressive academic progress, build confidence and self-esteem, take on leadership roles, and further their enthusiasm for learning. This occurs because we have set high expectations, and our instructional approaches are designed to further children's cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Our kindergarten curriculum is designed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year child to integrate the activities and experiences they enjoyed as toddlers, three- or four-year-olds. Younger children engage in a style of thinking known as congruency and similarity. When they were younger, for example, they combined and sequenced a variety of objects based on identical shape, color, and size. Or, they arranged objects based on similar sizes. The ability to think in terms of congruence and similarity enable children to relate counted quantities to numerals and phonetic sounds to printed letters.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> year is a time when children engage in deeper learning and further their abilities to read, write, and think mathematically. Kindergarten children are beginning to think in terms of equivalence. If their school's curriculum does not offer these experiences, children will not develop this ability fully.

By design, the 3<sup>rd</sup> year kindergarten curriculum

offers children lessons in which they more fully understand scientific concepts, recognize geographical locations, and explore cultural traditions. Kindergartners also take classes in art, music, physical education, and Spanish.

3<sup>rd</sup> year children combine and blend phonetic sounds, read and write words, sentences, and even entire books. 3<sup>rd</sup> year children enjoy writing the names of animals, plants, insects, and the names of nations or states. They like to classifying pictures of animals or insects based on habitat. The children will also investigate the process of arithmetic. They are interested in knowing addition math facts such as  $5 + 3$ . They are also drawn to study place value using materials. They may, for example, add  $5,621 + 3,945$  or subtract  $5,462 - 3,913$ . This typical kindergarten year work is possible because of their emerging ability to think equivalently. The children use other materials for multiplication and skip count (*ten, twenty, thirty...*) to 1,000.

As five-year-olds mature, they apply the concept of equivalence to geometry. When they were younger, they learned, for example, to identify a right triangle. As kindergartners, this lesson is now "boring." Instead, they are ready to discover that two scalene right triangles are equivalent to a rectangle. Three equilateral triangles are equivalent to a trapezoid.



As they discern equivalence, the children also enjoy comparing the many different ways cultures satisfy human needs for food, shelter, transportation, and clothing. They also investigate a variety of land forms including archipelagoes, peninsulas, and isthmuses. These are but a few of the many challenging learning activities found in the Children's House classrooms at RMS.

The kindergarten 3rd year is a dynamic year, a year of integrating and making cognitive connections. It should not be a time for starting a different way of schooling. It is, instead, a year of extraordinary learning and completing the first half of childhood. What happens next, during the elementary years, is another story.



(above) Two kindergarten 3rd year students work together and use place value materials and compute sums such as  $3,576 + 4,658$ .



(above) A kindergarten 3rd year student labels the nations of Asia on his map. The third year is a time for understanding people throughout the world satisfy basic human needs through equivalent cultural practices.

