



Montessori Matters



The sounds of music filled the lobby this morning when the RMS band took “center stage” and welcomed everyone to School.

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Current Events

Many thanks for your Annual Fund contributions. We’ve now raised \$7500 towards our goal of \$25,000!

Lost and Found items are now awaiting your claim in the front lobby. Items not claimed by December 21st will be donated to the Goodwill.

On the Calendar

The Annual Fund Continues

December

23-30 School Closed: Winter Break.

January

- 2 School Closed: Winter Break
- 3 School Resumes
- 11 Children Moving to E2 Parents’ Meeting 6:00 – 7:00 PM

Jump Rope for Heart

By LuAnn Nicholson

We are excited to share that RMS is supporting the American Heart Association Jump Rope for Heart program. This is the 33rd year that Jump Rope for Heart has raised funds for the American Heart Association through fun activities and educational awareness programs. On February 24, 2012, the K-7th year students will be participating in this event during their physical education time. The children will be involved in a variety of activities that are heart-healthy and fun.

Look for informational material to come home with your child in January and February. Although the activity portion is geared towards the Elementary and Middle School programs, we invite, encourage, and hope that all Rochester Montessori families will consider supporting the American Heart Association through the Jump Rope for Heart Program. Our support will help the American Heart Association's continuing efforts to prevent heart disease and stroke through research and education.

Meet E1 - East

By Shannon McRaith

E1-East is led by Melissa Hagberg, guide, and Kim Lovrich, assistant.

When did you first hear about the Montessori Philosophy?

Ms. Hagberg I first heard about Montessori as an undergrad at SCSU. The professor that read my philosophy of teaching essay told me that what I wrote sounded a lot like Montessori education. He thought I should look more into it. At that point I hadn’t even heard of Montessori.



(left) EL-East, an elementary first-third grades classroom, is led by Kim Lovrich and Melissa Hagberg. (right) EL students checking the accuracy of their robot programming.

I graduated in May of 2008 and applied to various schools. I had a few offers in other states (Utah, Arizona, Texas), but I really didn't want to move out of Minnesota. I interviewed in Hutchinson, MN for a 1st - 3rd grade position.

It was a Montessori Charter school, and I was to co-teach with a Montessori trained guide who did not yet have her state license. However, she was let go the day before school started, and I was left with 27 kids (ranging from 1st - 3rd grade), Montessori materials that I had never seen and didn't know how to use, and no idea where to begin! That year was a really great experience for me, and I learned to develop classroom management skills.

The Montessori guide in the classroom next to me tried to help with lesson plans, but I also used a lot from my undergraduate training. I became more and more interested in the Montessori theory, and I did several observations in Montessori environments. I learned quickly that the environment was essential to the success of the children, and I was fortunate enough to see both positive and negative environments.

I would have stayed at that school for a long time. However, a friend's job was eliminated due to budget cuts, and we moved to Rochester in June of 2009. I

enrolled in the Montessori Teacher Education Master's program at the University of St. Catherine in June of 2009 and started here at RMS in August of 2009.

Kim I "happened" upon the Montessori philosophy, and it was a terrific happenstance at a time when my husband and I unexpectedly needed childcare for our first child. At the time childcare was all it was for us. Fortunately, through parent education Montessori the school, became, so much more than childcare for our family.

What made you decide to teach in a Montessori school?

Ms. Hagberg There are so many possibilities in the Montessori environment. I love the fact that my classroom environment is beautiful and welcoming. The children are comfortable and work peacefully together, and I truly love that my children are independent and have intrinsic motivation. They are such hard workers, and they can manage their time. That level of independence is even hard for many adults. I have such high expectations for the students, and they continue to amaze me on a daily basis by surpassing them.

I really love the Montessori materials and all of the different ways they can be used and manipulated. A certain materi-

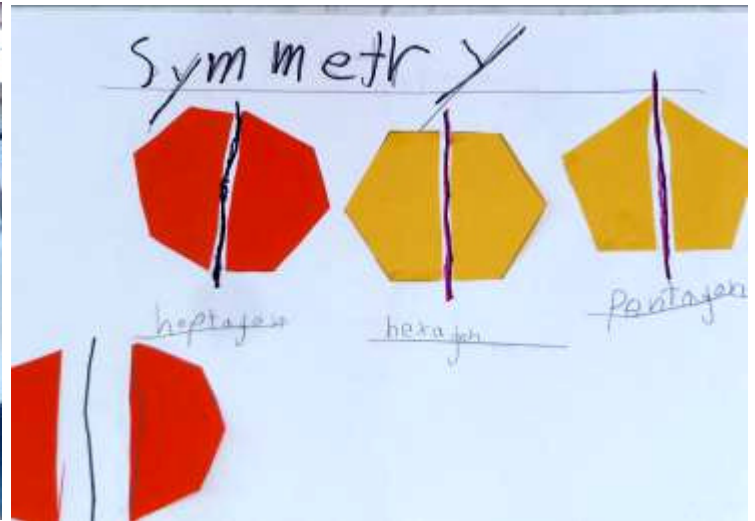
al may be used in several different ways and make for several lessons. I love the Montessori math, and I love that the children can LOVE math, which isn't always the case in a traditional school. The children really build a solid foundation in math by using the materials. The complexities of the materials continue to excite and motivate both me and the children.

Kim Teaching in a Montessori school wasn't a decision I ever really made. My being in the classroom here at Rochester Montessori School was another rewarding happenstance that put me in this place at this time.

What is it about Montessori that you can relate to the most?

Ms. Hagberg There are so many different learning styles, and I love that Montessori can reach all of those styles. I love that my students LOVE school and are excited to be here. The children here really have a passion to learn and constantly want more knowledge. I like the grace and courtesy that the children learn from a very young age. It continues through their elementary years if guides and parents are working together to foster it. I love watching the children carefully put away their work and take care of the materials and the classroom environment. I love to watch





Elementary math lessons are more readily learned and understood with manipulatives. The child lying on his side? He's checking his study of geometric symmetry.

them be kind to one another. Their willingness to help others and really care about each other is rare in an elementary setting. The multi-age grouping is really a beautiful thing. The kids learn from each other, and they are always striving subconsciously to reach their full potentials.

Kim I think for our family it is the idea that by allowing a child to develop according to his/her own innate developmental needs, the child will find and create peace within and around him/herself.

Why do you feel elementary aged children benefit from a Montessori education versus a "traditional" one?

Ms. Hagberg There are so many reasons, but I don't devalue the experience of a traditional education! After all, I had great experiences in my elementary years as a child, but I know that Montessori would have fit me better. Hands-on materials that build a solid foundation, grace and courtesy, multi-age grouping, meaningful projects and research, individualized instruction, character building, learning independence, learning how to manage their time appropriately are all reasons that I think Montessori education benefits children.

Having the same teacher for three years is a really important part of this philoso-

phy. The teacher comes to really know the children and know their strengths and challenges. The children get to know each other, and the older children help the younger children get acclimated to the classroom. There are very few distractions in the classroom because the children know what the teacher expects. It doesn't change from year to year, from teacher to teacher. I feel that because of this there are fewer behavior issues, and I rarely have to deviate from lessons to deal with behaviors. I love being able to spend all of my time and energy on giving lessons and not waste time on dealing with behaviors, which is not always the case in a traditional classroom.

Kim I think a Montessori education allows children to truly find themselves and to develop a solid sense of self and a love of learning much more so than a traditional education does. With that sense of self comes respect for self and others that is so obvious when you truly sit down with a classroom full of 25 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders from a traditional classroom vs. a Montessori classroom.

If you could choose one thing, what do you feel makes the biggest difference in a child's Montessori education versus a traditional one?

Ms. Hagberg I think there is a lot of structure and order in our environment,

which elementary children really need. I often have people come in and observe and ask how I get the children to work the way they are working. They've kiddingly asked if I brainwash them! People seem to expect chaos and are surprised to see the children being so productive and working independently. The children are capable of so much more than most people give them credit for. When they are given meaningful work, routines, and structure, they really excel and learn to manage their time and work peacefully amongst each other. Children at this age want and need the structure. They want their environment to be peaceful, and we talk often about what a peaceful environment looks like, sounds like, feels like, etc.

Kim It is the philosophy and the materials - because you cannot truly have one without the other - that make the biggest difference in Montessori education vs. a traditional education. The materials allow the child to learn so much more independently and in greater depth and with greater understanding than the textbooks and worksheets primarily used in a traditional education.

What's your favorite part of the school day?

Ms. Hagberg The Great Period, which is from 8:25 - 11:25. The children work in the classroom during this time, and I



give lessons throughout the morning.

Kim Hands down, my favorite part of the school day is the beginning of the day when I have the honor of greeting the children, welcoming them into the classroom and helping them transition from home to school. The children come in fresh with all kinds of great stories about what they did or learned at home the night before or over the weekend, and I love hearing their stories. Then, it's generally a relatively easy transition from the excitement at home to the excitement of the classroom and all that awaits them. "What are we going to do today?" is a question I hear with a lot of frequency because they are excited and ready to learn.

What do you like about working with this particular age group?

Ms. Hagberg They make me smile all the time. I am constantly learning new things. I also learn new things about myself all the time. They are capable of so much more than most people give them credit for, and I get to see this on a daily basis. They're so excited about learning, and I can get them excited during every lesson. The little things still matter to them, and they like being silly with me at appropriate times. I love the moments when I can just tell that something clicked for them. I love when I give them ideas for follow-up work and they go so far above and beyond anything I would have ever imagined.

Kim Some of my favorite things about working with this age group are: the level of independence they have; the excitement they enjoy surrounding their learning; their motivation to learn is right on the surface and so easy to see; and, they love their friends so much!

Where did you grow up and what/who made you want to become a teacher?

Ms. Hagberg I grew up in Saint Cloud, MN. I knew that I wanted to do something that made a difference in people's lives, but I wasn't always sure that I would be a teacher. My family urged me to become a lawyer or to go into sales, because I've always had strong leader-

ship skills, and I'm very persistent (or because they thought I was bossy and wouldn't take no for an answer if I knew I was right!). I always wanted to work with kids. I also tend to have a lot of energy and ideas, which is what you need to work with kids all day! I definitely feel like this is my calling in life, and I have yet to question my profession. I don't think that traditional education was my calling though (I taught in a traditional setting before I taught in the Montessori setting), and I feel very thankful to have found Montessori.

Kim I grew up in the Midwest. My family moved with some regularity so we lived in various cities in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Nebraska. My parents owned and operated group homes for juvenile delinquent boys and girls. I think it was through this experience in which I observed my parents teaching these boys and girls about life and the world and making a difference in their lives that I too wanted to make a difference through education.

Who is in your family?

Ms. Hagberg I have my parents, two sisters, a brother, and two dogs. They are all still living in Saint Cloud, which is hard for me at times because we are a really close family. My sisters and I are best friends and are very close in age.

Kim My family consists of me and my husband and our two daughters. We also have a sizable extended family.

What do you like to do outside of school?

Ms. Hagberg I love to read! I like to draw and paint when I get time. I like to cook, and I love to eat. I like to be active, but I don't enjoy running on the treadmill and would much rather play basketball, tennis, volleyball, or do anything that doesn't feel like I'm forcing myself to work out! I do really enjoy Pilates. I try to see my family as much as possible, and I have a very close group of friends that I keep in close contact with. I also enjoy spending time with people on the RMS staff, as our elementary team is a pretty close-knit group, and we have a

lot of similar interests.

Kim Outside of school I enjoy time paying it forward, spending time with my family, knitting, reading, walking and folding clothes.



(above) 5 year olds work on the multiples of five (5, 10, 15 ... 125). (below) Sorting numerals from 1 to 100.

