



Montessori Matters



After School Studies offer children a range of topics including drumming (left), robotics (right), pottery, Chinese art, dance, and more.

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Current Events

Many thanks for your Annual Fund contributions. We've now raised \$5000 towards our goal of \$25,000!

On the Calendar

The Annual Fund Continues

December

- 7 E1 Parents' Meeting with Pizza
Dinner 5:30 – 7:00 PM
- 8 Birches Work with Your Child
Morning 10:30 – 11:30 AM
- 8 Students Moving to Middle School
Parents' Meeting 5:30 – 7:00 PM
- 13 E1 Parents' Morning Visit
7:45 – 9:00 AM
- 14 Board Meeting 7:00 PM
- 15 Priority Enrollment Application Dead-
line for Siblings
- 16 Oaks Parents' Morning Visit,
10:30-11:30 AM

Only Once ...

By Paul Epstein, Head of School

Parenting is its own roller coaster with many joyful and happy ups. A child takes her first steps, speaks her first words, hangs school papers on the refrigerator, sleeps away from home, rides a bicycle, and scores a soccer goal. There are also difficult and sometimes fearful downs: the first really bad illness or stitches. Parenting means we sometimes give them what they want, and they are happy. It also means we sometimes insist when they don't want to, and now they are not so happy. Parenting is not easy. It is full time, and it goes by all too quickly.

My children grew up during three previous recessions. Each time we had to reaffirm priorities, alter dreams and plans, and make tough choices. Yet, we held firm to an essential non-economic reality: Our children would only be children once. We were determined to provide for their educational and developmental needs; these would come first. It wasn't always easy and yet, looking back, I'd do it the same way again.

"Being a child only once" is not a cliché. The statement identifies several facts about childhood. How children is much more essential than what children learn. This is especially true when we cannot know their future. We cannot know what they will need as adults. We do know that what we memorized will not serve our children.

Children learn differently from adults, and their once-in-a-lifetime learning approaches occur during three distinct age-stages: early childhood, birth to



Learning happens here! Research takes place in a variety of ways including using the timeline of life which offers a geological perspective.

age 6; elementary, ages 6 to 12; and adolescence, ages 12 to 18. Each stage is unique, and children outgrow themselves. They can learn only once as children and then again only once as adolescents. Once a stage is completed, they will never learn in that way again. How you learn influences who you will be as a person.

The learning experiences you give to your children will directly impact who they will be in their next stage and also as adults. In other words, children require specially developed learning opportunities that are designed to for them to maximally learn during each stage. Only then will they become who they are truly meant to become.

The learning experiences you choose for your children really matter. Research documents, for example, that an educational approach involving mostly memorization diminishes a child's learning potential. Learning to sit still in a desk chair and do seat work is not the purpose of childhood. If you truly want your children to learn to think, and to think well, then they

must be taught the skills of reasoning. How children learn influences who they will become.

Parents cannot assume all schools teach children to develop self-discipline, become self-reliant, learn to problem-solve, and learn to work effectively in teams. These are necessary 21st century workplace skills. However, each requires teachers who are trained to observe each child's unique learning approach. These outcomes require teaching children how to make choices and how to anticipate consequences. This is essential for life-long learning.

Again and again, research documents that children in Montessori schools have higher levels of achievement and higher skills in socializing, problem-solving, and communicating. Why? Because Montessori educators seek to maximize your child's learning potential. This focus is altogether different than readying your child for mandated testing.

Parenting involves difficult choices and sacrifices. As you consider your

child and her or his next years, I sincerely hope you will continue to gather information about the programs here at your Montessori School.

I encourage you to visit your child's classroom as well as classrooms in the next program. Please introduce yourself to those teachers. Please talk with parents of older children and attend parent information evenings. You may wish to read the research comparing Montessori and non-Montessori schools. I invite you to talk with your child's teacher and with me about your impressions and questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Meet the Birches

By Shannon McRaith

Mark Seifert, a guide in the Birches Classroom, originally went into education because his father is a business educator. Mark has always wanted to enrich the lives of children. His career began as a public





Sorting, sequencing, and classifying are a young child's first cognitive activities. The ability to do all three are essential prerequisites for reading, writing, and arithmetic. Larger projects, managing time, and creative problem solving require sorting, sequencing, and classifying.

school teacher. When he subbed at a Montessori school, he found that the children seemed much more confident and independent. They were learning more than children in regular education. Mark then completed his Montessori teacher certification.

This independence and confidence that Mark sees is a part of what makes a Montessori education so compelling for young children. Mark believes that this is the one thing that he would like to convey to parents and understand about the philosophy. Montessori empowers each child to more completely fulfill their personal development. Unlike his traditional teaching experiences, Montessori is not a "cookie cutter" approach.

Mark loves to watch the children when they first come into the classroom in the morning and observe how helpful they are with one another. He's also inspired by the joy the children have when they have completed their work.

Originally from Iowa Falls, Iowa, Mark currently resides here in Roch-

ester with his wife, their three dogs, and their cat. In his spare time he enjoys golf and time with this family and friends. He also likes to cheer on the Iowa State Cyclones, Minnesota Vikings, and the Minnesota Twins!

Clarisse Hoag is also a guide in the Birches classroom. Clarisse always knew she would work with children. She came to RMS ten years ago, and has never looked back. She completed her Montessori certification because the method empowers children to become self-directed and self-reliant, and it cultivates their desire to learn. Clarisse finds that being a guide and witnessing children's love and discovery of learning is very rewarding.

Children between the ages of three to six are meant to develop language, mathematics, and self-discipline. These qualities are known as "sensitive periods" in the Montessori philosophy. The classroom environment is prepared to empower children, and Clarisse sees the children accomplish an extraordinary amount of work which serves as an incredible foundation for their future. She loves their smiles, stories,

questions, and resilience. She also enjoys learning from the children; they are the ones who show her what they need. Clarisse feels humbled by how much children can do, by their love, and by their desire to know everything!

Clarisse said that her favorite part of the school day is when the children come into the classroom. She enjoys their excitement in starting their day. She also enjoys sitting with the children at lunch time when she is able to have great conversations with everyone.

A Montessori education is a special and long life gift that you can give your child. She said, "You're not only giving your child an education, you are also giving him the tools to become the adult of tomorrow."

Clarisse is originally from France, and she currently lives in Rochester with her husband Brad and their dog Paco. She has one son, Robin, who lives in St. Paul. When Clarisse is not at work she loves to read; she also enjoys painting, cooking for family and friends, collecting vintage clothes, and visiting family overseas.



Meet the Birches! Fromleft to right: Clarisse, Mark, and Annette. (right) A 3rd year student in the Birches classifies animals according to their continent of origin.

Annette Hickey, the assistant in the Birches classroom, was a figure skater for Disney on ice, studied theater in college, and worked as a professional actor. She found Montessori through her children’s experience. She felt a draw to the philosophy when she saw how successful her own children’s Montessori education was. Now that she is in the classroom, Annette is truly able to see how much of their success is due to the freedom and choice that comes from being in the prepared environment. Annette believes if parents trust in the Montessori environment and in the guide, the child will have great success.

Annette believes the reason Montessori is still so relevant today is due to the philosophy, materials, and natural environment. Annette stated, “Dr. Montessori’s development of the learning materials, the training of the guide, and the method of how these entities connect with the child, have proved to be a true legacy of human kind. For the children who have been in the prepared environment, these materials and methods have served to aid independence, coordination, and order, and have provided a connection to the world

and all of its human relationships and natural wonder.”

Annette is originally from Dallas, Texas, but currently resides in Faribault, MN with her husband Tom and three children, Madeline who is 10, Sean who is 8, and Jack who is 7. Annette enjoys sewing, knitting, running, and traveling.

More Books for the Library

By Antonella Dahlstrom-Afcha,
E2 student

Our RMS library has a huge collection of picture books for Children’s House kids. But for older children, we only have a small collection of chapter books. The older kids would love to have more chapter books, especially if they can’t find anything good to read. If you find that you have an amount of unwanted chapter books, they would be greatly appreciated by all of the children. So then with all of the books, the kids of RMS will enter worlds of delight.



Scenes of Learning

Children use the *Snake Game* (above) to develop their understanding of addition and subtraction with regrouping. Regrouping occurs whenever, for example, units are exchanged for tens or tens are borrowed from one hundred.

A first knitting lesson (below) brought about sharing, cooperative learning, and a lot of conversation!

