



Montessori Matters

Children, RMS, Community, Montessori



Visiting Montessori teachers from Poland, the Mayor, *LOVE4*, Montessori Week ...
This month of February promises to be filled with excitement!

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The Annual Fund

Many thanks for your Annual Fund contributions. With 22% family participation, we have now raised \$10,678 towards our goal of \$25,000! How can we appeal to the remaining 78% for your help and support?

On the Calendar

The Annual Fund Continues

February

- 7 Birches Parents' Morning Visit 7:50 – 8:30 AM
- 10 Welcoming Ceremony with Mayer Brede, 9:45 AM
- 10 *LOVE4* 6 PM
- 15 Board Meeting 7:00 PM
- 16 E1 Parents' Meeting with pizza dinner 5:30 – 7:00 PM
- 16 Oaks Parents' Morning Visit 7:50 – 8:30 AM
- 20 *School Closed: Presidents' Day*

Essential Montessori

By Paul Epstein, Ph.D., Head of School

"Montessori" refers to a person, an educational philosophy, a curriculum, and a profession. Authentic Montessori schools found throughout the world have built upon the educational legacy of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952). This legacy, now 105 years old, engages children in holistic learning experiences that address all aspects of growth: cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. Those experiences guide children to more fully develop their unique capabilities as well as habits and skills of lifelong learning. Children learn to initiate and complete activities. They become confident, self-directed, and self-reliant. This in turn leads to high achievement, creativity, persistence, communication, problem-solving, and working effectively in teams. These outcomes are essential for the ever-changing future that now characterizes our daily lives.

These outcomes also result from the core Montessori principles: When interested, children become self-motivated; this leads to becoming self-disciplined. When self-disciplined, children engage in mastery learning and fully develop their unique capabilities and potential. Illustrious graduates of Montessori programs include Larry Page and Sergey Brin, founders of Google; Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon.com; Will Wright, creator of "The Sims," the best-selling PC game in history; Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis; Julia Child; Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Nobel Prize winner for literature; Helen Hunt, academy award winning actress; Anne Frank; and Peter Drucker, "The Father of Modern Management."

Authentic Montessori takes place in schools led by Montessori educators who are specifically educated and certified for the ages of the children enrolled in their classrooms. Montessori teacher education includes courses in Montessori philosophy, child development, observation and child study methods, and curriculum content and



Famous Minnesotan explorers, authors, doctors, athletes, entertainers, authors, and politicians “appeared” during the E2 Writer’s Café.

materials grouped as practical life, sensorial, language, mathematics, and cultural (history and science) studies.

Montessori educators prepare classroom environments to meet children’s specific developmental and personal needs. Each classroom is a multi-aged, multi-graded, heterogeneous group of children. Standard Montessori classroom groupings are infant classrooms; toddler communities (16 months to 33 or 36 months); children’s house (ages 2.9 to 6 years); lower elementary (grades 1 to 3); upper elementary (grades 4 to 6); middle school (grades 7 and 8); and high school (grades 9 to 12). Over 150 learning activities, known as the Montessori materials, can be found in both Montessori children’s house and elementary classrooms. These materials embody concrete representations of abstract ideas or process. The materials are grouped and sequenced as language, mathematics, science, history, and more.

Several essential characteristics make up the Montessori pedagogy.

Children receive an individualized approach to learning. Montessori education builds upon the apparent fact that children are “designed” to learn. Dr. Montessori was an early pioneer of today’s well accepted constructivist-based learning theories. Montessori

education also builds upon the related fact that no two individuals learn in the same way or at the same time.

Children’s learning is motivated by specific stages of development. Child development occurs through environmental influences and genetic and psychical designs. Children, unlike other mammals, continuously and intentionally invent themselves. Children spontaneously explore and interact with the environment of people and things. Children seek that which satisfies their educational needs. What children seek and how they engage with their environments is developmentally specific. From birth until about three, children unconsciously absorb sensory input and build neurological connections. According to Montessori, children are compelled by a series of “sensitive periods” or dispositions. These are, again, developmentally specific. A sensitive period is an overwhelming force, interest, or impetus directing children to learn from particular qualities and elements of the environment. Examples of the sensitive periods for children from birth to about age six are movement, language development, order, small objects, music, grace and courtesy, writing, reading, spatial relationships, and mathematics.

Children during their elementary school years engage differently with

2/9: VISION and HEARING SCREENING

Vision and hearing problems can delay your child’s learning. We feel it is important to assess these regularly as well as when a concern arises.

On February 9th nurses from the Olmsted County Public Department will be here to do vision & hearing screening.

Students to be screened include:

- ✓ Grades first and third will have both vision & hearing screening.
- ✓ Grade seven will have only vision screening.
- ✓ Any student who is new to the school.
- ✓ Requests made by teachers.
- ✓ Requests made by parents.
- ✓ Students with known vision or hearing loss.

Any student who does not pass the initial screening will be rescreened by the Public Health Nurse. Any referrals are mailed to the parent after the rescreening. The referral should be completed and sent back to the school to be included in that child’s health record.





Famous Minnesotans (not all shown) Ojibwae, Lakota, Voyagers, Charles Lindbergh, Ann Bancrofts, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Gary Paulsen, Kate DiCamillo, Charles Schulz, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Charlie Mayo, Mother Alfred Moes, Bob Dylan, Patty Andrews, Steve Zahn, Prince, Judy Garland, Joel Coen, Garrison Keillor, Joe Mauer, Patty Berg, John Madden, Lindsey Vonn, John Roethlisberger, Roy Wilkinson, Jesse James, Dorothy Molter, Paul Bunyan, Jesse Ventura, and the state symbol.

their environments. Their curiosities and interests seem boundless as they quest for understanding reasons behind why things and events are the way they are. For these reasons, the Montessori elementary curriculum is known as the cosmic curriculum. Adolescents learn differently as required by their developmental needs. They seek opportunities to engage in groups and to make meaningfully important decisions.

Children maximize their learning in specially prepared environments. Because children are guided in their learning by development, each Montessori classroom offer developmental appropriate learning activities designed for children to maximize age-specific capabilities. Children use the Montessori materials and engage in exploration and discovery. A child chooses a material and repeatedly works with it without interruption and with tremendous concentration. The child “learns how to learn”: the materials are designed to control error and show the child “mistakes” which the child learns to self-correct through further exploration of the materials. Maria Montessori wrote,

“Education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not only by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment.”

Children require freedom and independence. Central to Montessori philosophy is an understanding of freedom. Children must be allowed to freely follow their personal interests and desires to explore, interact, and discover. Excessive external directions, motivations, and rewards are not necessary; these thwart children’s intentions for development. Instead, children will more fully develop when they freely choose to engage with the specially designed learning activities. When allowed to pursue their interests, children understand and learn more. When children freely choose, they experience responsibility or a sense of personal purpose. Children also more completely learn that all choices open natural consequences.

Movement is a necessary requirement of freedom. Young children are limited in their quest for independence until they develop coordination. This requires movement, and movement is an essential component for well-being and the integration of the self. Movement is essential for neurological growth. Montessori classrooms are filled with manipulatives and other hands-on learning activities. The materials, by design, invite repetitive use and concentration. This in turn leads to the strengthening of the hand and coordination.

Meaningful activity leads to integration, serenity, and concentration.

Children explore their environments to more fully develop themselves. By contrast, adults use themselves to build, and destroy, environments. Montessori noted that when children engage in developmentally appropriate and meaningful activities, they become peaceful, pleased, and invigorated. When children engage in lengthy periods of focused concentration, there is a noted absence of aggression and covert or overt hostility.

Surprisingly, children accomplish self-discipline. When children concentrate, their bodies become controlled and stilled. Instead of reacting to impulse, children engage with their learning activities for remarkably long periods of time. With each repetition, a child strengthens his/her coordination and movement and experiences success with the exercise. Curiously, children become self-disciplined through movement. That is, the child integrates movement and knowledge (the distinctions explored and discovered in the materials) and experiences self-confidence and self-esteem. External motivation and external rewards result with reaction and not self-discipline. Self-discipline refers instead to accomplishment and self-mastery. Discipline is not immobility; self-discipline is the exercise of conscious choice, conscious acceptance of responsibility, and recognition of the limits of reality. This stage





E1 students have sent letters to friends and relatives with Flat Stanley who is now touring the world including Amsterdam (left) and Kenya (right).

is seen in older children who also naturally demonstrate a desire to be of service to others.

The Montessori experience leads to the development of intelligence. Initially, a newborn responds to his/her environment. Intentional responses come with the onset of intelligence. The development of intelligence begins as young children form conscious distinctions. The Montessori materials help children differentiate types of sizes, colors, shapes, weights, sounds, and smells. The materials for older children assist with the development of writing and reading as well as mathematical, scientific, and historical reasoning.

The Montessori experience also leads to the development of creativity and spirituality. Montessori noted that as children achieve self-discipline, they become even more focused. After an initial mastery of the materials, children will spontaneously use the materials in new ways, innovate, and make further discoveries. Children will also become more peaceful, gracious, and appreciative. They champion social justice and naturally express concern for the well-being of others.

The Montessori teacher plays an essential role. In practice, the Montessori teacher forms a respectful relationship with each child. The Montessori teacher

is also an observer of children. Because instruction is individualized, the Montessori teacher must recognize each child's personality, learning styles, preferences, interests, and growth. The teacher is then more of a respectful guide intending to help each child to fully develop his or her unique capabilities and potential. Based on observation, the Montessori teacher/guide continuously prepares the learning environment and learning materials. The Montessori guide presents the use of materials and other learning activities according to individual needs and learning approaches. The guide keeps records of presentations given and notes children's progress and achievements.

A Montessori life with children is all at once demanding, fulfilling, challenging, and comprehensive. It is also amazingly rewarding.

Flat Stanley's Adventures

By Miss Diane

An E1 reading group read about a boy who woke up one morning and realized that he was four feet tall and only one-half inch thick!. His name is Flat Stanley. He wanted to go on a trip. His family folded him up and mailed him to

California.

The E1 students then wrote and mailed their letters with pictures of Flat Stanley to friends or relatives who may live in places other than Rochester. They were asked to show him around and write about the places where they live. The letters ended with, "Thank you for helping me with this project. I wish I could fold myself up and visit you too."

My goal was to have the students learn about other places, other people, and to make reading "real."

You are invited to see the reply letters and pictures that we've received. They are on display in our hallway. So far Flat Stanley has "visited" Kismu, Kenya; Amsterdam; Huntsville, Texas; and Fort Scott, Kansas. He has also been spotted in Maine and in some of the other states. The students are very excited to see the mail coming back and to read about Flat Stanley's adventures.

