



Montessori Pathways School News

December 2016

Notes from Head of School

by Ms. Alena Baradzina

Joy, feeling one's own value, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and capable of production are all factors of enormous value for the human soul.

~ Maria Montessori

The three weeks of December truly kept our school busy. The kids spent time decorating their classrooms, preparing gifts for their families, and practicing songs and poems for the winter celebration.

Despite the anticipation of the holidays, kids continued to work hard. Quite often, many of the students come to share their work with me. You should see how proud they are during this moment and I am also so excited and proud of them.

This month brought a lot of extremely cold days to us, but the kids still had a chance to spend some time outside and enjoy the snow and sunny weather.

I hope that everybody had a wonderful time during this holiday season. May everyone's New Year be filled with happiness, love, and prosperity!

Special Guest

This month we had a very special guest at our school. Our students had the wonderful chance to meet James Klein, Amelia's dad, who is doing a truly important job as a firefighter. Mr. Klein gave a very informative presentation about fire safety and how firefighters help people in case of emergency.

Thank you, Mr. Klein, for your time and for everything that you and your colleagues are doing to help people in the community.





“Holidays Around the World”

Hopefully everyone enjoyed the “**Holidays Around the World**” performance presented by the Montessori Pathways’ students as a great conclusion of the first school year semester.

While practicing songs and poems about different winter holidays, our students learned that it doesn’t matter what you celebrate – Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa. All of these holidays bring the spirit of love, peace, sharing, joy, and happiness of spending time together!

Thank you for coming and sharing the holiday evening with us.



Thank you!

- ≈ Thank you, parents, for all your help and support in preparation of holiday snacks that concluded our Winter Celebration!
- ≈ Thank you, parents and kids, for your thoughtful Christmas gifts to our Montessori Pathways Team and for the many beautiful Christmas cards with a lot of wonderful wishes and very warm words!



Daily Activities Pictures

I hope that everyone enjoyed the set of your child’s daily activities pictures. If you still did not see them, please check your emails for the set of pictures, discuss, and enjoy them together with your kids.



Coming School Events

- **January 2 (M) – No School** ('New Year' observed)
- **January 3 (Tu) – School Resumes**
- **January 12 (Th) – 6:00pm - Montessori Fun / Educational Night for Pre-K and K Students and Parents**
 - **“Good Enough VS Becoming Accomplished – Montessori Kindergarten and Elementary Education”** – Workshop for Pre-K and K Parents.
 - **Bingo / Pizza Night** – for Pre-K and K Students.

In continuation of the parents' education, we would like to invite the parents whose children will be going to Kindergarten or Elementary class for the next school year, to our annual parent workshop “Good Enough VS Becoming Accomplished” that will be held by Ms. Karen and Ms. Amber on Thursday, January 12 at 6:00pm. Your kids are welcome to enjoy a Bingo/Pizza Night on the same evening.

The new year arrives with new problems and questions for us. In the beginning of every year, the parents of 5-6-year-old kids have to make a very important decision – what is the next step for my child? Where should he/she continue his/her education?

*There are two common things we hear every year from the parents. The first one is a question **“Will my child be prepared for public kindergarten or elementary?”***

It is very important to understand that if we would prepare our students for traditional kindergarten, then we would not be Montessori, but the same conventional school where kids of the same age (but still developmentally very different) learn the same material at the same time based on the teacher's plan.

Our school prepares our students not for public kindergarten or elementary level, but for real life, which more and more requires great thinking skills, independence, initiative, creativity, and so on. We provide a child centered, multiage environment, where kids are learning at their own pace through a hands-on experience, exploring, discovering, and making connections.

And the kindergarten year is the final and very crucial year in the primary 3-year cycle of the Montessori environment.

The second thing that we hear every year from many parents is that “being in a Montessori environment during one or two years was enough for our child's development. It is time for him/her to move to a public school like most of his/her friends. He /She will be fine there.”

There is no “enough” in education and no bounds in a child's development. And being “just fine”- is this what we are looking for for our kids?

So, if you are still open to exploring all of the options and possibilities for your child's education, you are more than welcome to attend the Parent Night on January 12.

- **January 16 (M) - No School** (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
- **January 16 – 31 – Returning Families Preferred Re- Enrollment Period**
- **January 26 (Th) - 27 (F) – Elementary Parent / Student / Teacher Conference Days**
 - **No School** for School Day Elementary Students on Conference Day, **January 27 (F)**
 - Child Care is provided for 4:15 / All Day Elementary students that day.
- **January 27 (F) – Chinese New Year Activities Day for Primary Students**
 - * Parents are welcome to organize morning activities or presentations in the classroom

News from the Elementary Class (North Room)

by Ms. Amber

December was quite a month! Starting before Thanksgiving to winter break, the excitement level rose in the classroom. Keeping a regular routine going was tough; some days it was an overwhelming challenge for students to be motivated to work. On other days, they surprised themselves with energy and enthusiasm to complete their tasks. Sometimes they can even surprise us. One example was an impromptu reading circle. Preparations were being completed for a group activity, when one student suggested that they read while they waited (very patiently, I may add). Another student pulled chairs into a circle, and a third brought a bin of books to the circle. As more students arrived the circle expanded, but the quiet reading activity continued. We discussed the meaning of the word *impromptu* before doing the group activity.



Outdoor recess during winter weather is always a fun time: shoveling snow off the green turf to play hockey, sledding, and making snow angels. Excessive cold led to indoor game time during recess.

Rehearsals for the Winter Celebration added to the excitement as students, with whole hearts and souls, practiced their lines and songs. They reveled in the musical experience, and what a fantastic performance they gave us!



“Culture Catch-Up” was the theme during the week before our winter break, as students worked to complete outstanding culture work. We set up two lines of work rugs down the center of the room with culture materials laid out on each. Students moved from one “station” to the next. It was a fun, cooperative way to finish work, and provided chances to work with new partners.

“The essence of independence is to be able to do something for one’s self. Adults work to finish a task, but the child works in order to grow, and is working to create the adult, the person that is to be. Such experience is not just play... it is work he must do in order to grow up.”

~ Maria Montessori

This month we started “Character Commitment” beginning with *caring*. Like grace and courtesy, character needs to be learned, guided, coached, and encouraged. Being a caring person and a caring friend is an admirable trait, one that will reap rewards. Montessori students are quick to jump in and help their peers, or tell them what to do. However, this can be problematic when the help is not needed, not wanted, or is too forced. Yes, they are trying to be caring, but they often have not learned to be diplomatic about it. Some children have the need to be right all the time, and this usually causes angst for them and their peers.

As parents, we can help guide a caring character in our child through modeling; having situational discussions using “what if” questions; and emphasizing the fact that as much as we want or try, we cannot always be right. Children can learn to treat others the way they want to be treated, with caring and kindness, when they realize how important it is, and because they really do like to be treated that way.

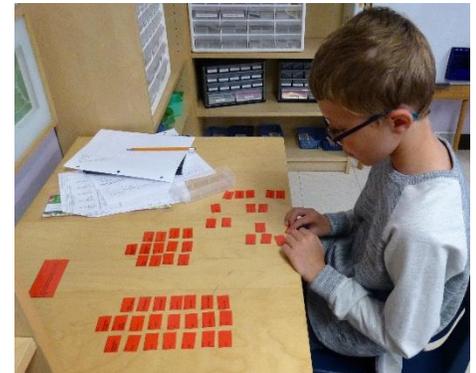
Now as students start a new month and a new year, new studies will focus on biomes, weather, Africa, stems, leaves, amphibians, reptiles, civilizations, peacemakers, metric measurement, and health and wellness. Students will also work on punctuation, building proper sentences, and start weekly spelling practice.

January is typically a hard-working month as students settle back into the routine after a two-week rest. Conferences will take place the end of January, and your student will be involved in this conference as he/she sets a goal to work on for the remainder of the year. Conference details will be sent home soon in the *Yellow Folder*. Happy New Year!



December Photo Gallery

Elementary Class



News from the Kindergarten Extended Day Class

by Ms. Karen

Well, December has truly flown by. It was fun and special with many delightful moments.

Do you remember, as a child, the excitement of the first snowfall? Well we saw it - the children frolicking and rolling in the snow. Pure delight! First snowfalls are like that (last snowfalls not so much!)

Discoveries: We were clapping rhythm patterns, when all of a sudden one child shouted out: "That's Jingle Bells!" And, sure enough, it was the rhythm for the song. They were so happy with their discovery. So, of course, we invited Miss Alena to come in so we could share the discovery with her.

We were working on penmanship: one child discovered; "that's a diagonal line!" And, it was, which also gave us the opportunity to demonstrate vertical and horizontal lines.

Group presentations included a continuation of biology with vertebrate and invertebrate. the children enjoyed cutting out pictures and categorizing them on their large poster.



We also had presentations in fractions, just beginning with the meaning and function of the denominator. After the winter break we will continue to work with the fraction board, illustrating the function on the numerator and then discovering ways to make equivalent fractions. It is possible because our fraction boards are so well designed they allow for all of that plus addition, multiplication and division of fractions.

During the last week before break, we enjoyed Christmas art. The children have become independent in both weaving and sewing projects. They began in October and are now proficient. It is fun to see such changes. We also did printing the Christmas tree with printer's ink, then decorated it as inspired.

I hope they shared (and sang for you) their Christmas song we learned: 'Put a song in Your Heart for Christmas'. They were looking forward to sharing.

The child who has felt a strong love for his surroundings and for all living creatures, who has discovered joy and enthusiasm in work, gives us reason to hope that humanity can develop in a new direction.

~ Maria Montessori



A few parents have asked for recommendations for books for early readers. So, I went to the Crystal Lake library and consulted with the children's librarian. She is so eager to help. A great resource for us. There are 2 series that we looked at in particular.

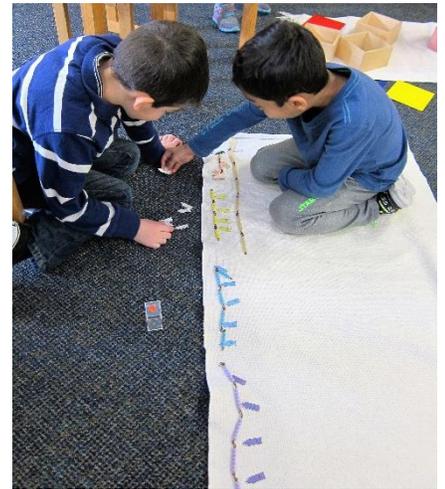
The first is a series by Mo Williams. The books in the series are fun, humorous, and have very few words. And the same words come up multiple times on the pages in the book, so the child, by the end of the book usually recognizes them. For example, in "I Love My New Toy", the word toy comes up 15 times, so the repetition helps the child become comfortable with reading the book. But the words are worked into a good story the children can relate to. The illustrations give clues and the type is large. And it is a short story the children can relate to. In "Pigs make Me Sneeze", the word *sneeze* is repeated 9 times. And children love these books. So, did I.

The second series she recommended are the Stone Arch Readers by Melinda Melton Crow. Again, the large type and the clues given by the illustrations are a help in early reading.

Of course, one of the most effective ways to have our children begin to read is by reading to them. And you can read to them for a long time, even after they begin to read. Because, as adult readers, you can read with fluency, with intonation, with excitement, with ease. That makes listening to the story riveting and the children do really want to learn to read. They can see the potential to read for fun, for information, for sharing. And they can see the possibility of reading with ease!

December Photo Gallery

Kindergarten Extended Day Class



News from the Art Class

(Kindergarten and Elementary)

by Ms. Linda

This month was all about winter in our art classes.



In the kindergarten class we started the month by creating a mixed media winter scene. The children painted a snowy background and then created evergreen trees and decorated them. They put it all together and added more snow for a beautiful scene.



The last art class before winter break they used snowflake templates to trace silver and gold snowflakes. They did a great job using a complicated template and filling the outline with a variety of patterns.



The elementary class worked with model magic clay to create a 3-dimensional winter scene. The students loved using the clay to build some very creative pieces. They were given a model to look at for the basic forms, and from there, added some of their own unique touches.



They finished this project by painting them with acrylic paints.



News from the South Room

by Ms. Andrea, Ms. Urana

Welcome to Montessori Pathways Family!

We are happy to introduce Urana Wold, our new Montessori Pathways team member, who is assisting Ms. Andrea in South room beginning mid of October.

Ms. Urana graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a Bachelor of Science.

As a child, Ms. Urana attended a Montessori school in Batavia for two years which, as her first introduction to a formal education, fostered a love of learning and independence. As a parent, Ms. Urana actively sought out a Montessori education for her own children with the hope of instilling within them that same passion and love for learning and independence.

While volunteering at the Sound Table in her daughter's class, Urana developed a newfound passion: guiding and learning from the enthusiastic and ever-so-inquisitive preschool children. She enjoyed working with the children so much that when the opportunity to formally assist in the classroom arose, she immediately took it.

Ms. Urana completed her paraprofessional Montessori Training during the summer of 2005 and spent the next ten years assisting teachers at Foundations Montessori School in Algonquin. She is looking forward to being part of the Montessori Pathways family!

Urana resides in Huntley with her husband, Keith, 16-year old daughter, Brooke, and 14-year old son, Ryan. She enjoys reading, traveling, geocaching and scrapbooking in her spare time.



December was a very short month and it really just flew by. Because of its brevity, Ms. Urana and I decided to try something a little different with the morning work cycle. We noticed that our seven kindergarteners were almost always working just amongst themselves, which kind of defeats the purpose of a multi-age classroom (plus the kindergarteners have the opportunity every afternoon to work completely amongst their peers). So, we explained to the kindergarteners that each morning in December, we would like them to choose a different younger friend and invite them to work with them. It was truly an amazing success!

“Do not tell them how to do it. Show them how to do it and do not say a word. If you tell them, they will watch your lips move. If you show them, they will want to do it themselves.

~Dr. Maria Montessori

Each day there were new partnerships, children we might otherwise not see working together, and the best part was that they were building new friendships and really enjoying each other's company. It was a very successful experiment, one that has strengthened our classroom community, given the older children greater leadership opportunity, the younger children special time with the “big kids” and everyone the chance to get to know someone else a bit better.



It's always very interesting how sometimes the majority of the class will gravitate to one specific area for an extended amount of time. I'm not quite sure if it's a kind of subconscious peer pressure, in which they observe each other choosing from one area and then want to try similar work, or something else entirely. Whatever the reason, the math area in particular, has been extremely popular for the month of December. The children have been working on a variety of activities including: cards and counters, odd and even, teen boards, ten boards, 100 board, addition facts, the 45 layout, the bank game, and the bead cabinet.



The geography area has also been quite engaging and many children have been quite busy recreating maps. We always start everyone on the same map, the World Map or Continents Map, we begin with the “big picture” and explain that a globe is a model of planet Earth, where we live and that a map is a flat representation of what we can find on the globe. Our Montessori globe shows each continent as a different color: North America is orange, South America is pink, Antarctica is white, Europe is red, Asia is yellow, Africa is green, and Australia is brown. After the child masters the World Map, they will follow with North America and learn the countries of each individual map.

The maps are large wooden puzzles and the children use their fingertips to trace the outline of each country, as Maria Montessori explains: *“Little children, in fact, touch everything they see, thus obtaining a double image (visual and muscular) of the countless different objects they encounter in their environment”*



The presentation of the lesson incorporates auditory, visual, and touch. The movement of the tracing develops muscle memory and connects their movement to the image they see. I’m sure some of you may have seen a world map, or two, or even three come home. We always encourage repetition as a path to mastery, so you may see more than one version of the same map come home.

Some parents have been asking about beginning reader books that they can use with their children at home. These are two of the series that we use at school and can be found on Amazon.



In addition to the reading element, it’s always important to focus on the writing aspect. Have your child write as much as possible, using their knowledge to spell out words, even if they are not “right” or “correct” to you. The more they write, the more your child is building their self-confidence by using their own inventive spelling to express themselves. This will be extremely helpful when they begin to read and are attempting to decode the phonetic sounds of words and sentences.

We have also been focusing on more extended works and encouraging the children to choose “challenging work.” This is a very subjective term, challenging for a 6 year old will be very different than challenging for a 3 year old. We also have a “work in progress” folder system for longer activities that can’t always be completed during one work cycle and need to be carried over to the afternoon or next day. The children are learning to go back and finish what they began working on the day before. Not all of the Montessori works have a paperwork extension, and we do not push that on any of the children. However, if it is something that the child is ready for, will be successful at, and asks for, we may find a way to incorporate some form of recording of the work using paper and pencil. When a child is not quite able to record themselves, this creates another great opportunity for a child who can write strongly, to be a recorder for their classmate.

Overall, December was a very busy time in the South classroom. We hope you enjoyed your child’s holiday sewing craft (stocking and/or gingerbread person).



We ended our week with a popcorn party on Friday and the children helped prepare and eat two flavors of popcorn: garlic & salt, and cinnamon & sugar. We also said goodbye and good luck to Iniya and her family who are moving to sunny and warm California, they will be greatly missed but we hope to keep in touch.

We want to thank the Klein family: Dad, for your very informative presentation on your exciting job as a fire fighter and on fire safety; and Mom, for your presentation on your gingerbread house family tradition and for sharing your delicious gingerbread cookies.



We hope you have a wonderful break and wish you all a happy holiday and new year!

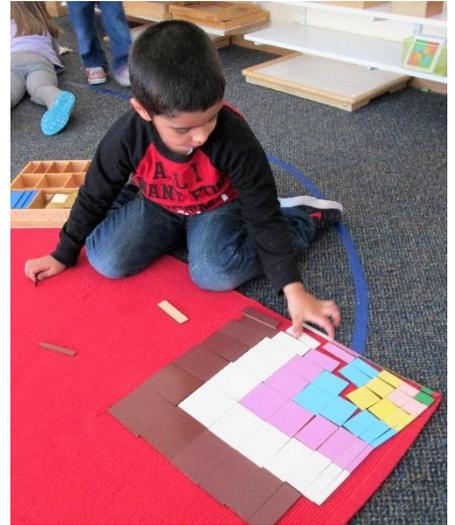
December Photo Gallery

South Room



December Photo Gallery

Pre-K Extended Day Class



News from the East Room

by Ms. Christine, Ms. Carole

Happy holidays to our families; we have enjoyed sharing the energy and excitement of the season with your children. Birthday wishes were celebrated with Sam, Brianna, Ellie, Jackson and Jack- it was a very busy month; thank you for sending beautiful pictures and treats for our class.

This month we presented the ever-popular baking activity and hope you have had the opportunity to sample your child's love of baking. It is sometimes a challenge to wait for a turn to bake and then decide whether to eat the sprinkles or put them on the cookies!



We introduced weaving with holiday ribbons and were amazed at how quickly the children were able to replicate the process! We also had fun making triangle Christmas trees and personalized ornaments for you.



We surely enjoyed the first snowfall and really appreciate sending snow pants, waterproof gloves and boots for the afternoon students. They love to play outside and we do when the weather permits (it wasn't very permitting last week)!

Your children were amazingly eager and enthusiastic when practicing our songs for the Winter celebration! Almost every day we sang and just want to let you know how much it meant to us to have such a great turnout and support for their effort!!

There is a great sense of community within the Montessori classroom, where children of differing ages work together in an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competitiveness. There is respect for the environment and for the individuals within it, which comes through experience of freedom within the community.

~ Maria Montessori



Thank you so very much for your generosity this holiday season and we are looking forward to a beautiful new year!

December Photo Gallery

East Room



News from the Late Afternoon Class by Ms. Donna

ART:

Gingerbread dolls (traced, cut out, holes punched, sewn, and stuffed).

Cookie cutter prints (cookie cutters are dipped into paint and printed on paper).

Large evergreen tree or a large snowflake are traced on paper and then decorated.

Beaded trees on green paper plates (a triangle was drawn on the green plate and a square was drawn under the triangle, beads were used to make lights on the tree by using yarn and a needle. There were 8 sets of lights. They started with 8 beads then 7,6,5,4,3,2,1. Some children added a star.



SCIENCE:

What might happen to candy canes when they are placed in different solutions? Some answers were nothing, melt or change color). We used 3 glasses the same size, 3 candy canes, 3 types of liquid (cold water, warm water, and vinegar). Place a candy cane in each of liquid. Watch what happens in the warm water (bubbles begin to form). Check the glasses every 15 minutes. After about an hour our candy canes in all of the glasses had disappeared.

What happens when you try to mix water and oil? You may mix them together but they quickly separate from each other. Now, if you add an egg to the oil and water and mix, they will stay mixed together.



BOOKS:

"The Night Before Christmas" by Clement C. Moore.

"Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins" by Eric Kimmel.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

WONDER WINTER CAMP with Ms. Donna

One of our books called "What Can You Do in the Snow?" by Anna G.

Hines is exactly what we were able to do at winter camp this year:

- ≈ Watch it fall
- ≈ Catch a snow flake
- ≈ Stamp a trail
- ≈ Hear the quiet
- ≈ Swoosh an angel
- ≈ Throw a snowball
- ≈ Build a snowman
- ≈ Slide on a sled



We learned a few things about Christmas in Mexico; how to identify nine different animals by their tracks. (Bear, cat, dog, bird, rabbit, fox, deer, horse, and raccoon).

We made cookies and banana bread. Cracking the egg was tricky but we were able to do it without getting any egg shell in our dough. We danced and went on bear hunts.



We had many art projects to choose from: snowman ornament, sled, reindeer, Grinch, salt and flour ornaments.



We put snow in plastic cups and placed them in the room to see how long it would take for the snow to melt.



We also put snow in cups and added different food coloring they looked like fancy cupcakes.

Our biggest hits were the snowball sock fights and the sleds outdoors.