

Montessori Pathways' News

DECEMBER



Notes from Ms. Alena (Head of School)

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.

The most popular works that I observed in Primary classrooms this time were maps of different continents and countries; word building / story building booklets; posters of various geometric designs; animal tracks, parts of reindeer and snowman booklets; and a lot of our Kindergarteners were excitingly involved in multiplication and division work. Usually, both of these materials become the hit of the class in March-April.

Our Elementary friends continued with a lot of reading, research, writing, and calculation, as well as with a lot of community work.

You should see how proud the kids are while sharing their projects with me and I am so excited and proud of their confidence.

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

A few days before Winter Break we had very special guests in the South Room. Sam's dad Eric and grandpa Morfar came with a presentation about Swedish traditions. They shared *lussekatter* and *Glogg* with our students and taught them about *Tomten*, which really sparked our kids' imagination.

Are you curious about all of these new words? You can find a detailed explanation in the South Room's news.

Thank you, Mr. Eris and Mr. Morfar for such an exciting experience for our students!



AFTER SCHOOL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

We are glad to announce that the following classes will be offered as an After School Program to our students during the second semester (January – May, 2019)

Monday – 3:00 – 4:00pm – **Taekwondo**
 Tuesday – 3:00 – 3:45pm – **Yoga**
 Wednesday – 3:00 – 4:00pm – **SNAPology** *
 Thursday – 3:00 – 3:45pm – **Dance**

These after school classes will start right after the Winter Break, on the week of January 7th.

Please check your emails for detailed information.

Sharing Spirit Together

One of the most exciting parts of December was that the Elementary and Kindergarten students' visit to the Fountain Retirement Community.

Our students and teachers started with planning, organizing, and preparing the Christmas performance for our friends. A lot of singing practice and playing of simple musical instruments followed.



When we arrived at the Fountain Community, our smiley little faces were loved right away.

Our kids started with Christmas songs and poems and were enthusiastically supported by our friends. What a great chorus was created through the blend of younger and older generations.



The visit concluded with some lemonade and a great conversation. Questions and answers were coming from both sides. We found out that the oldest member of the community is 90 years old, one of the friends is from England, some of our students would like to be an artist, ballerina, hockey player, teacher, princess, pilot, etc. in the future. The sweetest question from our friends was: "Can we borrow your kids at least for a day?"

It was an amazing experience for all of us. We wish our older friends many more happy and healthy years!!!



"The Nutcracker Suite!"

Hopefully everyone enjoyed "The Nutcracker Suite!" performance presented by the Montessori Pathways' students as a great conclusion of the first school year semester.



While practicing songs, dances, and poems, our students learned about the Russian composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, his beautiful ballet music, and the Russian balalaika (string musical instrument).



This music touched our students' hearts so much. Our Elementary students enjoyed these melodies during lunch time almost every day and were inspired to create a few of their own beautiful dances.



**Thank you everyone for coming
and sharing the holiday evening with us!**



Coming School Events



Montessori Pathways



- ◆ **January 7 (M) – School Resumes**
- ◆ **January 15 (Tu) – 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. Bridget on Tuesday, January 15 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 15.

- ◆ **January 21 (M) - No School** (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
- ◆ **January 15 – 31 – Returning Families Preferred Re- Enrollment Period**
- ◆ **January (TBA) - 1:00pm— Sledding at Veteran Acres Park – Kindergarten and Elementary students**
- ◆ **January 25 (F) – all day by appt.— Elementary Parent / Teacher Conference Day**
 - **No School** for School Day Elementary Students on Conference Day
 - Child Care is provided for ESD (7:45am - 4:15pm) / All Day (6:45-am-6:00pm) Elementary students



NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS



Ms. Bridget

The greatest gifts we can give our children are the roots of responsibility and the wings of independence.”

~ Maria Montessori

Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow...in the Elementary classroom.

We have really enjoyed our time together playing in the snow and working together on projects. Deeper research is occurring with the three types of rocks as well as Arthropods. I see kids pouring over books more often now learning about the topics in greater detail both independently as well as with a friend. When we return from break, we will continue the enjoyment of learning.



Math has been explored by more this month. Many have tried out new materials to figure out how to do the basic operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The most common and exciting phrase heard is, “This is SO easy!”



Tis the season to celebrate light and love. Many people celebrate holidays during this time of year. The common part of all celebrations is that they celebrate with light—Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Diwali, Winter Solstice and Christmas. We have been reading about each one and learning about others as well as ourselves.



This month, we have begun to examine the art of goal setting. We began by kids just selecting a random number as to the amount of works that they could accomplish in one day. This is an important part of the process. Kids need to learn what is a realistic goal or not. Some choose 5! Not very realistic. After, a few days of this, they get better at making good predictions.



We then take it a step further by having everyone think about these work choices that they are planning to accomplish. Are they big works? Will the works take a long time or are they quick works. This also helps them with time management. They will begin to assess how long it takes them to accomplish different types of work.



Soon, students will be making wise choices, being more motivated to complete realistic goals and will manage time wisely. These are all outcomes of Montessori education.



DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

Elementary Class



NEWS FROM THE EXTENDED DAY KINDERGARTEN CLASS



Ms. Karen

Where to begin?

It has been a busy few weeks. But I want to begin with a thank you to Miss Alena and to the staff who substituted for me the first week of December. Allowed me the opportunity to take a trip to El Salvador, visiting that country as a delegate from the Sister Cities program.

We visited several small villages in the countryside, including Chilama, the sister city supported by our Crystal Lake group. "Our" village hosted a special fiesta, children welcomed us with banners, balloons, song and dance. Each of us were overnight in a home with a host family from the village, an experience to remember!

At "home", I could share a bit of the story with the kindergartners, bringing black sand back for them (many volcanoes in El Salvador) and rocks collected from the beach on the Pacific Ocean. Also, we located El Salvador on the map and shared a few stories about the lives of the people in that country. What was universal was the warm welcome we received everywhere we went.



The Fountains

Closer to home, theme of "the gift of giving" continued. The Kindergarten and Elementary children were so excited to sing at the Fountains, a retirement home between Crystal Lake and McHenry. We talked about the "Gift of Giving", our recurring theme. We had approximately 25 residents in attendance. The kids were terrific! We had practiced a bit every day for almost 2 weeks, so they appeared ready, confident, and comfortable. It was, I think, a special and memorable afternoon for everyone.



Skills

Again, we did lacing, this time around the Christmas Song. It is always interesting to note how much easier a skill becomes, even when it is just the second time doing it. On the days of lacing, the children were so concentrated, so focused. And much more independent than the first time we did this kind of activity. The project requires a bit of advanced fine motor activity because each hand is required to do something different. They were so eager to finish both the placemats and the Christmas song project.



Highlight a work:

Bankers game addition is being started by several children. What makes this a special activity is the actual building of numbers using concrete material. We can construct quantities such as 2,456. The materials show not only place value, but also patterns, the relativity of the quantity, and exchanging (we learned it as "borrowing and carrying"). We begin with addition, but move into multiplication (repeated addition), division and subtraction. Love of math requires an experience designed to show an actual understanding of the concepts and process contrasted with mechanical memorization. That is exactly what the Montessori materials provide.



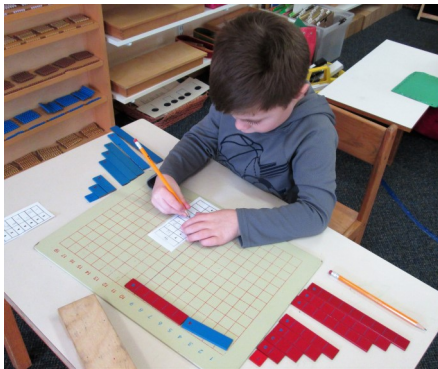
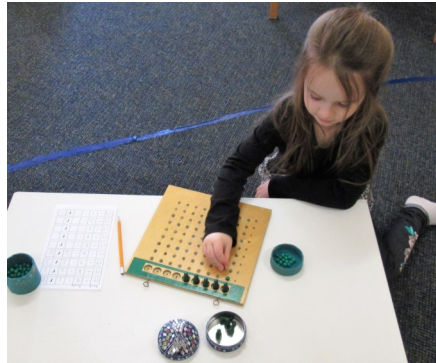
A Festive Friday

On Friday, the last day before our Christmas vacation, we ended with a festive popcorn party while I read "A Night Before Christmas". It was a fun ending for the class on the last day.

Wishing you a warm and happy holiday season filled with memorable family traditions.

DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

Kindergarten Extended Day Class

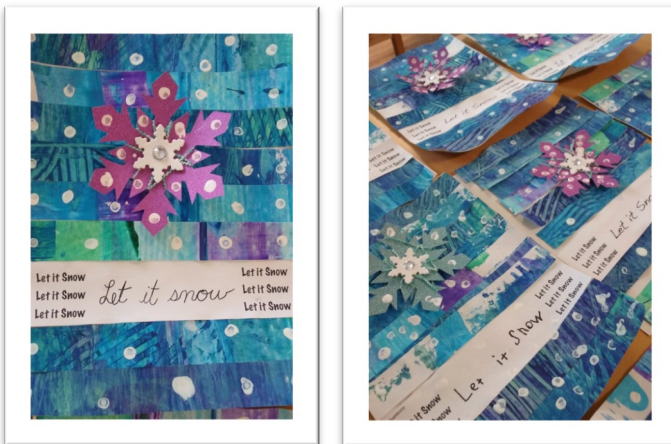


NEWS FROM THE ART CLASS (KINDERGARTEN AND ELEMENTARY)



Ms. Jennifer

December has flown by as your children & I have been creating some festive & colorful, holiday-themed artwork. We started out with a 9" x 12" Mixed-media snowflake collage. It incorporated a die-cut glitter-paper snowflake, die-cut white craft foam snowflake, plastic jewel, yarn, and the children's personal handwriting, which my husband scanned in and designed to be a personalized feature for each child's piece!



When I showed the kids the sample of what they'd be working on, they immediately recognized that it incorporated the paper they hand-painted one week prior. This was a group project, in that I offered the students several piles of paper strips consisting of the entire class's artwork. They commented, "ooh, look at this one," or "I call dibs on that one!" They traded strips with each other to create a more diverse color pattern for their piece. It was so fun to see all the beautiful variations of hand-painted papers that they created. The colors, patterns, & mark-making were all quite mesmerizing, and could really be appreciated when they were cut down into strips to reveal every streak and splatter up close. And, they really turned out beautifully! One of the classroom teachers even commented how she liked seeing the blue/purple colors with the snowflakes rather than the typical red & green that you'd expect this time of year. Color me happy with this project! So fun!



Next, we created an Origami Christmas Tree Scene, consisting of 13 folded, construction paper squares & die-cut shapes, clear glitter paint, white tempera paint splatter, & silver cord for the "JOY" banner. I created the background ahead of time, using alcohol inks & a mask for the hills. (We will definitely be doing this technique as a class, outdoors when the weather is better, as good ventilation is necessary with the alcohol inks.) The kids did a tremendous job with all the folding, (39 folds per student!)



Didn't they come out great?! I am so thankful to all of the students, my daughter, Abby, & Ms. Bridget for getting all of the die-cutting done during the week. Thanks for adding to your busy schedule on my behalf! As I was out sick one week this month, I couldn't have gotten this project done before Christmas break without you!

Happy Holidays to all of my students, co-workers, & friends at Montessori! Can't wait to create more amazing art with you next year!



NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Andrea, Ms. Urana



Although December is quite a short month at school, we still manage to pack in the activities while we are here. We have added some more seasonal and holiday themed activities throughout the classroom: 3-part cards of the snowman, 1-10 counting with snowflakes, language works matching holiday objects and words, several practical life activities that are holiday themed but still target fine motor skills and organization, as well as a variety of art projects - many with a reading and/or writing component added in.



Do not be surprised if you see more than one version of the same map 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.

The geography area has been very popular this month, especially with some of our younger children. 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 the other continents, learning the countries of each individual map.

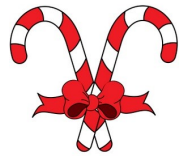
The children have been very busy practicing for our Nutcracker Suite Winter Celebration performance. It is quite a challenging set of songs and they are doing such an amazing job singing all of the lyrics. We have also made some props for the show and they have been very excited to participate in creating those.



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.



NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM (CONTINUATION)



Ms. Andrea, Ms. Urana

On the Thursday before winter break, Sam's dad, Eric and Sam's grandpa who he calls Morfar, visited our classroom and shared some of their Swedish traditions with us. They had baked *lussekatter*: special sweet yeasted buns flavored with saffron and studded with currants or raisins. The saffron gives them a golden color that represents the light (bringing light to the dark days of the Swedish winter).



They also served *Glogg* which is a mulled spiced wine that is usually served warm. Of course, for our class they were kind enough to find nonalcoholic *Glogg* made with fruit juice. They also taught us about the *Tomten*, small bearded creatures who, at night, take care of animals. Eric read us a picture book about the *Tomten* and afterward it seemed that almost every child had a story about how they had seen the *Tomten* at their house. It was very enchanting to hear their imaginations take shape into little stories about their encounters with the *Tomten*. It was so wonderful to share in Sam's Swedish holiday traditions and to learn so many new things about their family customs. Thank you to Sam and his family for sharing with our class.



Ingredients for Swedish Glogg

- 1 liter black currant juice, grape juice or 1 liter other berry juice.
- 2 -3 cinnamon sticks (broken into pieces)
- 5 cardamom seeds.
- 2 teaspoons citrus peels.
- 4 -5 cloves (crushed or broken)
- 1 pinch nutmeg.
- 2 -3 pieces fresh ginger.
- 1 anise seed (optional)



As we approach the end of December, this is always a great time to work on our grace & courtesy skills. Now that the children are more than comfortable in their classroom community, we really focus on being the kindest and most helpful friends that we can be to one another. For the past four months we have really taught and modeled how to be a contributing and independent member of the classroom community, and now is that time of the school year that we really see that begin to happen more naturally, as second nature.



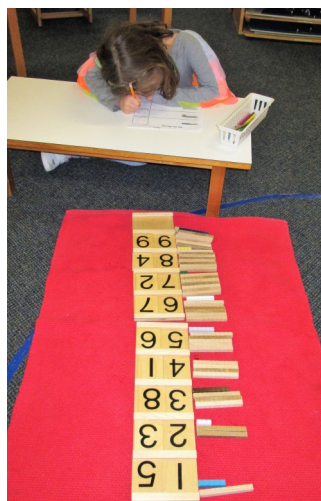
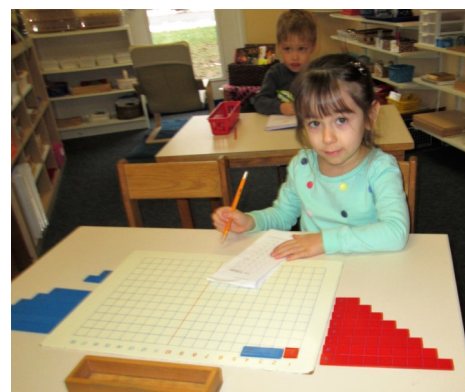
Children see someone in their class in need of help, and they are offering their help without teacher requests. We also have a class rule that when someone needs help, they ask three friends before asking a teacher; and we have seen that become more natural also. This helps the teachers, but it also builds confidence in the child that is helping, independence in the child that is seeking help, and stronger and more meaningful relationships among the children. We have also recently seen so much evidence of how these children are growing more independent and mature. Almost daily we hear children exclaim that they "did it all by myself." And this can range from hanging up their jacket without help to setting up a very challenging multi-step work: it's all part of the Montessori philosophy.



We wish you all a wonderful fun and restful winter break and look forward to what the New Year brings to the South Room.

DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

South Room



PRE-K EXTENDED DAY NEWS



Ms. Andrea

Our little group of Pre-K continues to grow as our young children continue to grow out of their need for naps. We have added some new children to the group, and the children who have been in Pre-K since the start of the school year continue to grow in their afternoon work choices. That extra time in the afternoon is such a great opportunity for the children to continue work from earlier in the day, and also to work more one-on-one with the teacher. I am able to really get more in-depth on many challenging works.



NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM



Ms. Carole, Ms. Christine

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all of our East room families! We hope you are enjoying a warm and relaxing winter break with your family. We would like to share a very heartfelt thank you for all of your support and kind contributions that help us sustain a positive and friendly environment for our children.

We started the month trimming our classroom tree - it is a busy and exciting time of year!



It's hard to believe that the school year is nearly half over! December is always a month that just flies by. Your children are busy working indoors and having lots of fun outdoors. While their indoor work is important, the Practical Life skills associated with getting ready to play outdoors are equally important as well. Their time and concentration in organizing, prioritizing and getting themselves ready to go outside is immense. Please continue to encourage and support their independence at home.

To balance the natural excitement of the holidays all around us, we try to maintain a predictable routine and calmness to our days inside the classroom; but of course, we are always adding new and fun activities to our morning worktime!

We continue our daily work with individual letter sound acquisition. Many children are working with language materials designed to blend sounds together for pre-reading readiness. Our goal is to keep each child motivated and interested at their own, successful and appropriate level.



A popular work this month was the *Bead Triangle Extension* or *Bead Star Activity*: after the pentagon has been introduced, the kids count and build 5 bead triangles. Then, they move each bead triangle to the sides of the pentagon, creating a star and intricate coloring of each bead triangle. This

activity develops fine motor skills, attention to detail, and increases concentration.

Many other various holiday activities were also popular throughout the classroom: Christmas objects used for I-spy and beginning sound games, plus phonetic spelling and story writing in the Language area, Parts of the Reindeer in Science area, Snowflake Counting in Math area, and Print Painting with Christmas objects in Art area.



Saying Good- Bye

We are always looking for ways to care for each other, extend love and show kindness. Before Christmas Break began the children drew pictures and wrote messages for their friends who were moving away. During community time, the following day, we gave their drawings and other small gifts to them.

"Have a good time in your new house", "Hope you make new friends in your new school" and "We will miss you" were some of the thoughts expressed.



Our class very much enjoyed practicing our Holiday songs to share with you at the Winter Celebration - thank you so much for making such a big turnout in support of their efforts!

DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

East Room



NEWS FROM THE LATE AFTERNOON CLASS



Ms. Donna

We learned about some Christmas Traditions around the World.

Christmas greeting in English: Merry Christmas. In America, Santa and his reindeer deliver presents on Christmas Eve.

Christmas greetings in Spanish: Feliz Navidad! Las Posadas is a Mexican tradition in which people celebrate by visiting different houses in their neighborhood. They are invited inside for goodies and punch, and the children take turns breaking a pinata.



Christmas greetings in Swedish: God Jul! In Sweden, children believe that a gnome called a Tomten lives under the floorboards of their home or barn. He usually comes out for a visit after the Christmas feast, carrying a big sack of gifts and toys. Children often leave a bowl of rice pudding outside for the Tomten.

Christmas greetings in Polish: Wesolych Swiat! In Poland, on Christmas Eve, which is called Wigilia, families gather together for a big Twelve-course meal that consists of mostly fish, noodle and vegetable dishes. When the first star of the night is seen, families light their candles and Christmas trees and sit down to feast. There is always an extra place set in case a visitor comes.

Christmas greetings in Swahili: Krismasi Njema!. English is also an official language in Kenya, so many people just say "Merry Christmas!" At night in Kenya carolers go door to door in the village. At each home they visit, people offer them small gifts or money that they in turn give to their churches on Christmas Day. The churches in Kenya are decorated with balloons, flowers, and even Christmas trees.



ART:

- Foam reindeer
- Foam gingerbread houses.
- Gingerbread boys and girls on paper (trace large shape and add decorations).
- Color puzzle pages (color, cut and glue on paper to complete the puzzle).
- Large popsicle sticks to make Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer.



GAMES:

"Let's Play Dreidel " Players take turns spinning the dreidel. The letter that comes up tells what happens next:

Nun: Player gets nothing. Gimel: Player gets everything in the pot. All players put in one more marker before the next spin. Heh: Player gets half of the pot. If the pot has an odd number of markers, the player gets half plus one. Shin: Player puts one marker in the pot

"Cover the six Snowmen": Roll the dice, cover the snowman with that number then the next person has their turn. The person who gets all of their snowmen covered first is the winner

MUSIC:

Played our jingle bells to different songs.



DRAMA:

Children present plays that they had created to other students and some of our parents. They made a stage out of tables, drew sets to go with the plays, and made puppets to act out the scenes.



More Wonderful Moments at Pathways in December

