

Montessori Pathways' News

February 2016

"I hear and I forget.

I see and I remember.

I experience and I understand."

~ Confucius



Notes from Ms. Alena

(Head of School)

The Elementary and Kindergarten Demo Classes were the most exciting part of February. Parents were able to get an idea of what the daily work cycle is like. Unfortunately, it is impossible to demonstrate all of the amazing and miraculous moments, that we, teachers, can observe every day, during just one hour. However, the parents witnessed the enthusiastic and hard work that the kids demonstrated even during the late evening.



The education of a very small child does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life."

~ Dr. Maria Montessori

"What an awesome experience! Thanks for the opportunity. If only all parents could witness what children are capable of in a structure, thoughtful, nurturing environment; the education system would finally change in our country."

~ Mom of 5 years old student



We would like to extend our appreciation to all of our teachers, students, and parents who contributed their time, energy, and enthusiasm in preparation of and participation in our first Demo Classes!

Coming School Events

Registration for the upcoming 2016-2017 School Year and Summer Camp 2015 has begun!

Thank you to all of the families who have returned the re-enrollment application for the Summer Camp and next School Year.

If you have decided to continue your child's education at Montessori Pathways, please complete the Registration Form for Summer Camp and / or Re-Enrollment Form for the next School Year and return it to us, along with the registration / re-enrollment fee, no later than March 15.

The 10% tuition security deposit is due April 15, 2015.

It is important that we know who is enrolled in Summer Camp and the School Year as soon as possible so that we can make the appropriate plans for hiring staff. Students who are enrolled just prior to the start of Summer Camp or School Year cannot be guaranteed a spot in the class.

- **February 29 - March 4 – Dr. Seuss Week**
- **March 3 (Thursday), 5:30-6:30pm – Family Fun Fair Night**
- **March 5 (Saturday), 10:am – 1:00pm – Open House**
- **March 9 (Wednesday) – Kindergarten and Elementary Class field trip -**
"Festival of the Sugar Maple!" at the Coral Woods Conservation Area in Marengo.
- **March 16 (Wednesday), 9:00am – 11:00am – Picture Day**

Please dress your child(ren) appropriately. If your child does not attend school that day, you can bring him/her between 9:00am -10:30am to take a picture. In this case your child will have a chance to be included in the class picture.

- The **Parent / Teacher conferences** will be held by appointments on
 - **March 18 (F) – for South Room (Preschool and Pre-K)**
No school for Morning and School Day South room students
 - **March 21 (M) – for East room (Preschool, Pre-K)**
No school for Morning and School Day East room students
 - **March 21(M) – for South room Kindergarten students**
 - **March 22(Tu) – for East room Kindergarten students**

Please fill out the conference schedule form and return it to school by Wednesday, March 9.

- **March 28 – April 1 - Spring Break**

The school will be operating for All Day students during Spring break.

As always, if you have any comments, questions, or concerns, feel free to contact us via e-mail
montpathways@hotmail.com

*Best regards,
Ms. Alena*

Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)

Ms. Amber

One hundred nine years ago, Maria Montessori opened the first Montessori school in Rome. As a well-educated and well-read professional woman, she studied teaching methods and children, specifically how they learn. Montessori concluded that children essentially taught themselves by absorbing knowledge from their surroundings. As teachers or parents we have the task of preparing the environment in which our children learn, and then we give, as Montessori said, *“instructions... merely in a hint, a touch—enough to give the child a start. The rest develops of itself.”* [Dr. Montessori’s Own Handbook] Also we *“must have a kind of faith that the child will reveal himself through work.”* [The Absorbent Mind] We can see examples of this every day. Children really do reveal themselves through work (or lack of doing work). They can figure things out; if we give them a start and *let* them work.



It is hard to believe we are two-thirds done with the school year! Our work days are flying by, and at this point in the school year, your Lower Elementary child should be doing maximum effort demonstrated by completing at least one Math and one Language work per day, along with part or all of a Culture work. (Upper Elementary students may be completing at least four to six work activities per day.) Working with this concentration and effort allows the child to stay current with the information presented, and to progress to the next concept or topic. They should be “practicing to perfection,” meaning they practice a concept repeatedly until they master it. The practice continues year after year, so they do not forget what they have learned. For example in Math, students learn operations such as static addition with four-digit numbers. They practice until they grasp the concept. Then they move on to dynamic addition. Later, they practice skills that move them toward memorization of addition facts (an abstract concept.) Once addition facts are memorized, continued practice comes into play to speed up the recall process. The learning process begins with the hand and moves to the brain. These are all step-by-step processes that take time and repeated practice to master.

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The kindergarten students had the opportunity to spend a day in elementary learning side-by-side with older children and giving the elementary children more chances to mentor a younger student.



As we prepared for **Demo Night**, we discussed work habits and expectations. Other highlights this month include working on teams to complete a Native American study, the “colder than cold” ice cream experiment and “cross my heart” train track effort during our Valentine’s celebration, and getting back outside during recess.

As we march into March, elementary students will be expected to work on their handwriting and their writing skills, along with Math, Geometry, and Language assignments. We will continue our poetry study, learn more about vertebrate animals, learn about maple sugar, and dig up more facts about plants. Our adventures in South America will come to an end, and we will move on to other new Culture topics. Spring Break is just around the corner!



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A couple reminders --- It is still cold outside, so children should always come to school dressed and prepared for outdoor activity. If homework is sent home, it is the student's responsibility to do it, and return any homework to the classroom. Encourage your children and help them to make appropriate choices, and to be responsible for themselves and their things. It is easy for them to blame Mom or Dad, but then they are not learning to be responsible or accountable for their actions. Learning really is a step-by-step process toward a goal or success. Give the child a start, and let the child carry out the process to the end.



Kindergarten Extended Day News

Ms. Karen

We have begun moving along our study of invertebrates/ vertebrates with looking at fish: their common characteristics and needs. We brought in smoked fish to prepare for tasting. As we prepared the fish, we could see the backbone running through the fish body, the actual gills, fins, scales (typical but not necessary for fish). Extending those ideas, we could show how the fins helped the fish to propel itself, how the gills helped the fish breath underwater, how the shape of the body helps the fish move efficiently through water. By the way, every child loved the taste of the smoked fish and asked for more! It is perhaps a new menu possibility for our family -----purchased at the Jewel. In the curriculum, we will be moving onto amphibians.



We are looking forward to our field trip to Coral Woods in March. The idea: one of the gifts of nature. We will see the full process of making the syrup.

Now, at this time of the year, we are seeing applications of mathematical thinking so often in so many circumstances. Sometimes it is simply organizing the table for Wednesday art --- children, on their own figuring out how many places are needed including how many children are absent and additionally including the teacher in their calculations.

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Sometimes we hear the expression “Oh that’s so easy!” in response to problems and equations that were not internalized just a few short months ago. Sometimes we hear the excited discovery: “I found a shortcut” and we hear the satisfaction that goes with being a “discoverer”! Sometimes it is seeing patterns, relationships and connections that exist in math ----- “Oh those squares (of the numbers from 1 - 10) look just like the sides of the pink tower!” Of course they do since the pink tower is actually the representation of the numbers 1 - 10 represented as squares and cubes.

All these discoveries and seeing of patterns that exist in math is foundational for an understanding and LOVE OF MATH! It is blossoming all around us.



Three dimensional works are becoming popular in geometry ----- ex. construction of a cube (3 dimensional) from paper (2 dimensional).

The children have also been very active in working on number facts: addition, multiplication and division including an understanding of distributive division with remainders.

In language, the children have been reading words of objects found in the environment, finding them and bringing them to the rug -- making a collection. They are increasingly competent at sounding out words which gives them the ability to write. A favorite activity has become writing riddles and Knock Knock jokes. Adds lightness to the classroom.



It is difficult to write a newsletter in February without referencing Valentine’s Day. The children were totally occupied with writing their Valentines, sewing them around the edges for effect and decorating them personally. The sewing was decorative, but also provided the experience of measuring and following a pattern.

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This month, our Pre-K friends visited the Kindergarten Extended Day class, and had a great experience of working together with their older friends.



The demonstration class last Thursday was a first for Montessori Pathways School. It was a highlight and we really want to express our thanks to all who participated in any way.

Notes from the Art Class (*Kindergarten and Elementary*) *Ms. Susan*



In February, the elementary and kindergarten art classes had lots of fun trying new projects and techniques.

The elementary class chose to paint sunset or night skies, in the swirling paint style of Van Gogh. Then, they chose trees, birds, dragonflies or lions to add to their composition, using only black paint to paint the silhouettes of each figure. They also learned about Children's Day in Japan, and how it is celebrated with displays of dolls and fish banners. Students folded and cut out fish banners, and decorated them with eyes, scales, and tail designs.



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Kindergarten class created tiger masks, learning to draw the face, stripes, and ears step by step. They also painted landscape scenes, using blended watercolor for the background, then drawing details in oil pastels. Their art journals were a favorite activity, with cutouts of birds, drawings of mermaids, and sketches of dinosaurs, ponies, and more.



Special news: This year, art instructor Susan Sieber received a full time position as Director of Development at Creative Arts Inc. nonprofit art studio in Crystal Lake. She is sad to leave Montessori Pathways, but excited about this new opportunity to teach art, run special art events, and help develop a community arts center.

The elementary class recently had fun going to Creative Arts studio for a birthday party, and were able to explore the small "arts cottage" behind the Dole Mansion where Ms. Susan will be working now. Susan invites everyone to visit the Creative Arts Student Art Show at the Dole on Friday, March 4th, 5-8pm, so students and families can visit, plus enjoy free face painting, art activities, and other fun.



Creative Arts instructor Linda Cannizzo will be taking over the art class at Montessori Pathways, and is looking forward to sharing her projects and techniques developed through her "Mini-Monet" afterschool arts class. Linda also instructs Zentangle and Mosaics, and enjoys teaching yoga.

Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Andrea, Ms. Eva

Unbelievably, February is almost over and we have been doing some interesting things in the South Room. After hearing several of the children say that they "don't like" or "won't try" certain foods, we started a **taste-testing activity** at line time. The first two weeks we tasted fruits, some they may have tried or at least seen before, and some they may not have. The fruits we tried were: papaya, guava, starfruit, kiwi, grapefruit, dragon fruit, and mango. It was quite encouraging to see that, even our most selective eaters, were actually more than willing to try and some even liked what they tried. Definitely the most interesting fruits were the starfruit and dragon fruit; both look very cool and also have interesting flavors. The children had some interesting guesses as to why the dragon fruit is called that: "it looks like a dragon egg," "it looks like a dragon egg on fire with flames," "it looks like a dragon with scales on its body."

After the fruit tasting we moved on to a **gustatory lesson**. Each day we tried a new liquid that triggered one of the four major taste areas: sweet, sour, bitter, and salty. We made a giant poster of the human tongue with these four different areas highlighted. For sweet we tasted caro syrup and water, for salty we tasted salt water, for sour we tasted lemon juice and water, and for bitter we tasted tonic water. The children found it very interesting. The next step will be solid foods that trigger the same four major tastes. Following that we are going to explore potatoes and the different ways we can cook them to create different tastes.

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In the practical life area of the classroom we have added more cooking as well, adding mini pizzas last week with more baking to come. We also have added the first steps of sewing and will continue to add a level of difficulty every few weeks. We are always working on grace and courtesy and it is wonderful to hear the children speak with such kindness and respect to one another, even when working out a conflict. All the work we do on community building in the fall really begins to come to fruition in the winter and spring and we have seen so many instances of children helping one another and going to one another for help. It's especially amazing to see 3 year olds offering their help to 5 year olds, and actually being able to successfully help their friends.



Speaking of helping, we would like to give a friendly reminder to parents to continue your child's independence at home whenever possible. If you are looking for suggestions please ask, we have a ton of ideas. Building in extra time in your schedule for your child to choose their own clothes and dress themselves independently definitely translates to their school life when they are expected to dress themselves in their many winter layers.



We have had two new friends join our classroom and we would like to offer a warm welcome to our Montessori community to Iniya and Gabriel. They both have already integrated themselves into our classroom community and we are so happy to have them both in our school.

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Pre-K Extended Day Class (Photo Gallery)

Ms. Andrea



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Notes from the East Classroom:

Ms. Christine, Ms. Carole

Hello East Classroom Families! We started out this month with observing Groundhog's Day on February 2nd. We learned that a groundhog is also called a woodchuck and is an animal that lives in a burrow and hibernates in the winter. The 2nd day of February, the groundhog is brought out to see his shadow for 6 more weeks of winter, or not see it's shadow which means an early Spring; most of the class thought this wasn't really accurate! Some students made groundhog books identifying it's characteristics and many loved making a paper plate art project where they could pop up their own paper groundhog to see his shadow or not.



The week of the 8th, we celebrated Chinese New Year - this year is the year of the Monkey. We read a book about Chinese traditions such as cleaning/sweeping, red envelopes with money, dim sum, and making traditional dragons, lanterns and enjoyed tangerines as a group activity.

Additionally, we were happy to share in Valentine's Day activities such as making bags to collect friends Valentines; beaded pipe cleaner hearts, paper hearts, and beautiful watercolor hearts were created by all. The morning concluded with a holiday snack prepared by our friends. A very special thank you to our volunteer moms, Mary and Stacy - thank you for coming in with your creative ideas and helping our class have fun!



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During line time, we have practiced balancing on a balance beam with precision - the objective was to not ring a bell, or let a beanbag fall of one's head, or spill colored water from a full vial - they were so careful and proud when they made it all the way to the end with success! We also enjoyed "acting" out favorite stories such as "The Mitten" as a group and taking turns playing the various characters. They have also had fun exchanging places with one another on the line, drawing cards and mimicking the various animals of their chosen cards - we seem to have some very talented, budding actors and actresses!

We briefly discussed President's Day and noted birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington - what currency honors their service to our country.

As always, we continue personal attention and individual work with each child - we have observed growth and interest in each area of the classroom. Kindergarten and pre-K students are encouraged to choose a more academic work before a Practical Life or Art activity and most are happy to oblige.



Handwriting skills and the recognition of proper letter and number formation is in progress as well as association of a quantity of manipulative with the correct numeral - sometimes, the child likes to guess and we're working on slowing down and getting it right rather than just finishing the activity.

Phonetic letter identification is a daily work in process and we are working towards toward pre-reading readiness with many of our students. Finding a beginning word sound such as "S" is for....., identifying a missing vowel sound and just, basically, keeping your child challenged and engaged in an interesting and diverse learning environment is key to their love and success in learning!



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Our pre -K students have enjoyed visiting Kindergarten class, and our Kindergarten children have also been invited to experience the Elementary Classroom - it is amazing to see such leadership and ownership of their environment.

Thank you to families of Taylor, Natalia and Emerie for sharing beautiful birthday memories with our class - we enjoyed sharing their stories and look forward to sharing their 6th birthdays, too!!

Hope you all had a good February and we're looking forward to meeting with you for conferences in March. Of course, call or text at any time with questions or info.



Notes from the Late Afternoon classroom:

Ms. Donna

For February being a short month we have learned about a lot of things. We began with Groundhog's Day on Feb. 2nd. If we had had a groundhog at Montessori Pathways he would not have seen his shadow. As rumor has it, if the groundhog does not see his shadow we would not have 6 more weeks of winter.

Chinese New Year began on the 8th of Feb. and lasts for 15 days. People get new clothes and visit their friends. They eat oranges and clean their houses. Children get red envelopes which contain money. The last day there is a Lantern Festival.



We celebrated Valentine's Day on the 12th of Feb. We made lots of hearts. President's Day was celebrated on the 15th of Feb. We had no school that day but we learned that George Washington was our first President and Abe Lincoln was our 16th president and he was from the state of Illinois. A young girl said that Lincoln would look better if he grew a beard. He grew a beard.

ART: We painted large dots of paint onto wax paper, then we took a milk bottle cap and spread the paint around, after it dried we framed our work with a heart frame. We put foil on a heart shape, drew lines with a black sharpie and then painted the heart.

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We cut or poked out heads of Abe Lincoln and George Washington and put them on white paper which had a red top, white middle and a blue bottom.

Our hands became stronger by using a paper punch to punch around a paper plate and then lace it with yarn. We also punched holes on tag board and sewed with yarn through the holes.

SCIENCE: Again we used baking soda, vinegar and food coloring to see a chemical reaction take place. Baking soda was spread out on a tray, food coloring drops were put over the baking soda and then each child using a bottle dropper dropped vinegar over the food coloring drops. They observed lots of bubbles forming and the food color drops spread out.



STORIES: We listened to "The Three Little Pigs" on a tape by Melinda Sutherland.

GAMES: We played "Valentine Do You Have A Letter" and a game of Twister.

MUSIC: We had our famous band and marched around playing our instruments.

