

Montessori Pathways'

News

January, 2014

“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.”

Maria Montessori



We garnished the outdoor bushes with our popcorn Christmas tree garland, and noted that birds and squirrels were eating this treat when food is scarce for them.

Notes from Ms. Alena

It seems that this winter decided to show us the beauty of the polar region climate up close and personal. But isn't it strange to have - 20 or - 40 degrees outside in Chicago while it's + 45 degrees in Alaska?

Kids really missed recess time this winter. But even while staying inside during this cold weather, the teachers and kids tried to create great activities after lunch to have more and more fun together.



One day, the preschoolers invited me to see “*The Frog Prince*” puppet show. The kids together with Ms. Laxmi made the puppets (the prince, the princess, and the frog) and performed a mini-show taking turn. Thank you very much, my friends! You are amazing actors!

I would like to thank Ms. Melody (Ashley's mom) and Mr. Chris (Treyson's dad), who helped us shovel our sidewalks during windy and snowy days.

One of the events we had this month was our *parent evening* “**Thinking About the Future (Montessori Kindergarten and Elementary Year)**”, where Ms. Patty, Ms. Katy, and I demonstrated the spiral nature of Montessori education, whereby the skills learned in the Kindergarten year are studied at a deeper level in the Elementary years.

Continued on the next page

“When we thought about our daughter’s progress at Montessori in particular, we discussed how much progress she had already made – we were amazed by her burgeoning math skills, her beginning writing, her ability to select work and focus...we thought perhaps the ‘third year leap’ was something she was already experiencing. She had been so prolific and learned so many new and diverse things, how much more could she grow in the following year?...”

...Both of us have seen how the Montessori method would have made a world of difference for our own educations – for one providing a more engaging, less punitive environment that actually promotes learning, and for the other an environment that promotes actual and intentional learning, rather than simple memorization of facts without actually connecting the facts with long-term knowledge that builds upon itself. I relish the opportunity for our children to be in control of their education; to explore and learn because it’s something that they want to know, rather than something they will need to know for a test; to know that their learning, and not some arbitrary test, is both an objective in itself and a door to their future.” ([From Creeping to Leaping the Kindergarten Year – A Montessori Parent’s Perspective](#))



[To read more, please visit : http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?p=2019](http://mariamontessori.com/mm/?p=2019)

When you observe an Elementary Montessori class at work, you may find it difficult to get a sense of the big picture with so much going on. In one area, some students are working on math, some are reading, while others are working on science. In the corner, a teacher is giving a lesson to a small group of children, while occasionally glancing up to keep an eye on the rest of the class.



The Elementary classroom may appear to be unstructured, but this seemingly random, yet obviously purposeful activity, is basic to the independent learning and self-directed activity of the Montessori approach.

Each child is considered as an individual. We can see a vast range in the level of curriculum on which the children are engaged. Montessori teachers strive to challenge each according to his or her developmental needs and abilities.

“Montessori Elementary gives children the opportunity to continue to progress at their own pace in an environment that nurtures love of learning. Children take responsibility for their own learning and have daily opportunities to make decisions and choices in a child-centered classroom. They are exposed to many complex concepts at an early age through the use of wonderful concrete learning materials.

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It is not unusual to see seven-year-olds in a Montessori classroom constructing atomic and molecular models. Nine-year-olds analyze the squares of trinomials, while ten-year-olds solve algebraic equations, and twelve-year-olds compute the square root of large numbers.

What parent who has watched her children thrive both intellectually and socially in the Children's House wouldn't want this to continue in the Elementary years?"

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In February, we plan to have the pre-kindergarteners visit the Kindergarten class, and the Kindergarteners visit the Elementary class. I know that the kids will be really excited to be a part of the Kindergarten or Elementary class during the day.

Coming School Events

- We invite all parents and kids to our ***Story Reading Family Night on Thursday, February 27th from 5:00pm to 7:00pm.***
- ***On Friday, February 28th State*** Certified Vision and Hearing Technicians from the McHenry County Department of Health will be conducting ***screening of the students' vision and hearing.***
- ***The registration for the upcoming 2014-2015 school year and Summer Camp 2014 has begun***

We would like to make sure we accommodate our current families before opening registration to new families; therefore we are beginning enrollment for our current families for the 2014-2015 school year and Summer Camp 2014.

We will send the information and re-enrollment forms soon.

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*

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Notes from the Elementary Class (North room)

Ms. Katy

I hope everyone is keeping their spirits up this time of year! Although the days are short and cold, we do get the amazing opportunity to experience, not only one, but two Polar Vortex's! Lucky us! Hopefully, the days will begin to warm up and we will be able to return to going outside for recess and maybe even gym! This school year has, however, given us some great weather to discuss and has become an area of year long exploration. We began the school year discussing what we already knew and *what we wanted to know about weather*. We also discussed the difference between climate and weather. We read a Readers Theater script about weather, discussed cloud formations, recorded temperature, graphed temperature data, performed temperature experiments (including making ice cream in a bag!) and incorporated adjective work to describe the weather. Our focus in the upcoming months will now turn towards how the weather affects humans and how humans affect the weather.

As a group this month we studied the different *Biomes of Africa*. We learned about the Samburu people and created a simple version of the beaded necklaces this culture makes. We also learned a little about African music and read the folk tale Abiyoyo.

After reading this story and listening to the music, the class decided to turn it into a play.



Students broke into groups to come up with prop lists, sound effects needed and what we could use for the setting. We are hoping to be able to share this short play with the other classes and possibly families at the upcoming reading night at school.

We also completed our introductory presentation of the *Common Human Needs* which ties into almost all the work we do in the Montessori classroom.

The first year students have been working hard at mastering dynamic addition using the stamp game and continuing their work on subtraction and addition facts. We began learning about verbs using verb command cards and the verb grammar chart. In zoology, we completed studying the external characteristics of the different types of vertebrates. For mammals, the children found a picture of a mammal in a book, drew it, and labeled the parts.

One student found a picture of a fox and an experiment in the book that explained how to create “fox ears” using construction paper. He found that the shape of the ear is what allows the fox to have such amazing hearing!



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The second years have been working on multiplication. They are beginning to see some of the patterns of multiplication through the different bead bar works they have been presented. We have also studied the internal characteristics of the five different types of vertebrates. We reviewed the different types of sentences: exclamatory, command, statement and question. The second years were asked to find an example of each of these sentences in a book they are currently reading. During silent reading, the second years have really enjoyed reading the biographies of many famous people as well.

This month we also began learning about *different peacemakers and difference makers*. So far we have learned about Martin Luther King Jr, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Tubman, Will Rogers and Confucius. By learning a little about these people, we are able to see how much the world has changed because of people, just like you and me. Along with that, we are able to discuss values such as honesty, integrity, bravery and even humor!

I would like to thank parents for attending conferences this month and also bringing in items for the sharing basket.

A small sample of lessons this month:

Group Lessons: Reading Logs, Africa Biomes, Common Human Needs, Temperature Experiments, Peacemakers, Graphing, Weather Game, Sentence Editing, Sight Word Spelling and Vocabulary Development

Math:

- ***First Years:*** Stamp Game Addition, 1000 Chain, Greater than and Less Than, Measuring, Graphing
- ***Second Years:*** Multiplication Bead Board, Multiplication Bead Bar Exercises, Stamp Game Multiplication



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Language:

- ***First Years:*** Green Series Spelling, Labeling Objects in the Classroom, Verb Introduction
- ***Second Years:*** Contractions, Grammar Symbolizing, Phrases and Sentences, Types of Sentences



Zoology: Internal and External Characteristics of Vertebrates

Geography and History: Africa Countries and Flags, Africa Biomes, Land and Water Form Mat, Africa Country Research, Parts of a River



Art and Music: Samburu People Necklaces, Winter Painting, African Music Exploration



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Stay warm!

Ms. Katy

Kindergarten Extended Day News

Ms. Patty



The kindergarten children returned from the long winter break refreshed and ready for their challenging work! We began the month studying about *animals in the winter*. We learned that animals hibernate, migrate, or adapt. We were surprised to learn that bears are not true hibernators! Instead, they go into a deep sleep called “torpor”.

We enjoyed our *field trip* to the **Prairieview Nature Center** for their “**Animals in Winter**” program. We saw a puppet show where we learned all about what animals do in the winter. We then practiced making tracks in the snow like a deer, rabbit, and opossum! Afterwards, we took a hike through the prairie to investigate animal tracks and homes! We are using directed art lessons to create our own “animals in winter” book.



In the language

area, we completed a *winter clothing flap book* where we wrote sentences to describe each piece of our winter clothing (hat, scarf, coat, and boots). We have been *practicing reading sight words* in many different and fun ways. For example, we have graphed sight words and used a magnifying glass to read small printed words. We continue to *learn phonograms* and will be making our own set of word family mini storybooks.

Many of the children have been working with the *Bead Cabinet in Math*. This material introduces the concept of skip counting with short chains (represents the square of a number) and long chains (represents the cube of a number).

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The children were excited to find *the “snake game”* on the shelf. This activity is a part of the traditional Montessori math materials and is used to familiarize the child with all the possible number combinations to make ten. It also introduces the child to the concept of a “remainder” number.

We are looking forward to the month of February. President Lincoln and his wife Mary Todd will visit our classroom.

We will learn about teeth, heart/body, and money!

Thank you to all the parents that have driven/chaperoned our field trips. The children look forward to our trips which would not be possible without your support!



Sincerely,

Ms. Patty

Notes from the South Classroom

Ms. Patty, Ms. Ambreen

The first week back the children were so excited to get back into the classroom routine. December can be a very hectic time not only in the home, but in the classroom as well, with all the extra events that are happening. January is usually a time in the classroom where we see the children thrive all around, especially academically.



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The children were excited to find that several new materials were added to the shelves this month. **In the practical life** are, the materials have changed a bit to become a little more challenging. For example, the *easier tongs, tweezers, and spoons* have been replaced with ones that require a bit more precision and muscle development. These exercises help to strengthen the fine motor muscles in the hand and the “pincher” grasp a child needs in order in to hold a pencil properly for handwriting.

One of the most popular new works on the shelf is the “*dressing the teddy bear*” activity. This is a fun extension of the dressing frames. The child “dresses” the teddy bear in a variety of outfits that require zipping, buttoning, snapping, and tying! In the coming month, we will be adding beginning sewing to the practical life shelves.

In the language area, the children have been working with the “*moody bear*” *facial expression* material. This work requires the child to match each facial expression (happy, mad, sad, joyful, scared, and worried) with the correct picture. This work allows the child the opportunity to recognize the expressions and talk about why they think the bear may be happy, mad, etc. The development oral language is an important step in learning to read.



The older children continue to develop their reading skills. The children that were reading simple 3 letter words (cat, web, big, etc) have *moved toward matching sentences to pictures and beginning reading comprehension.*



In the math area, the children have been learning the concept of “greater than, lesser than, and equal to” with the number balancing scale. The child hangs a weighted number on one side of the scale and then determines which 2 numbers will make the scale balance (equal). This hands on material allows the child explore number values, addition, and subtraction. The next step is for the child to write the meaning of the symbols ($<$ $>$ $=$) which will be introduced in an advanced work.

The older children have been presented the positive snake game. The purpose of this material is to show the concepts of the changing number system (base 10 and ones place). It also teaches the concept of remainders in a math problem.

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We returned from winter break to find that our map cabinet was filled with brand new maps and controls! *Thank you Ms. Alena and all families, who participated in our fall Mums Sale Fundraising and made it happen.*

In geography the topic of discussion was on the continent of Antarctica. This continent always seems to be an interesting subject for the children; amazingly Antarctica is not only the world's coldest continent, but also the driest and windiest. During our studies the children learned that in spite of Antarctica not having any permanent residents it does have many research stations which scientists from all over the world occupy so that they can study the ice, snow and creatures that inhabit it.



The highlights of our discussions are notably the ones on the animals, especially the penguins. The children really enjoy talking about these flightless birds, as well as the many other fascinating animals that live on/around this southernmost continent. We have also been learning about what happens to animals during the winter time. We learned that some animals hibernate, migrate, or adapt. We made pinecone birdfeeders to help the birds that live in our area find food.

During our group time, we *read about the peacemaker, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* Through our discussions we hope that the children will gain a better understanding of Dr. King and his influence on their world. So many of the principals he stood for are those we emphasize in our classroom today; fairness, treating others the way we want to be treated, love for each other, and much more.

We learned our *Chicken Soup poem* this month. We brainstormed words that rhymed with “ice” (nice, mice, etc.) Due to the extremely cold weather, we decided that this month would be perfect for *making chicken soup with rice!* Thank you to all the parents that sent items for our soup cooking project!

January

*In January it's so nice
While slipping on the sliding ice
To sip hot chicken soup with rice
Sipping, once, sipping twice
Sipping chicken soup with rice.*

We would like to welcome our new friend Jimmy to our classroom! We celebrated Josie and Andrews birthdays this month!

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Next month, we will focus our studies on the presidents, teeth, and body. We will also celebrate the Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day!



Ms. Patty and Ms. Ambreen

Notes from the East classroom: *Ms. Christine, Ms. Laxmi*

We are off to a very chilly start this 2014. Although the weather has been harsh and not allowed us to explore outdoors, we have entertained many winter activities within our own classroom. We *garnished the outdoor bushes with our popcorn Christmas tree garland*, and noted that birds and squirrels (ok.....maybe the cat from across the street, too!) were eating this treat when food is scarce for them.



In addition, the children have enjoyed *making bird seed pine cones with lard (yum!) and rolled bird seed*. We have discussed our weather doesn't allow for animals to find food on their own, and that fat is important for their body warmth and nutrition. We have learned to identify animal tracks, literally in the snow outside, as well as an animal tracking/crayon rubbing activity in the Science area also.

Science: We not only noted *animal tracks* in the snow, but recently added an "*Animals in Winter*" activity. This material has the children learning about which animals Hibernate, Migrate or Adapt to their instincts and weather conditions. While the younger children enjoy classifying the animals into their appropriate categories, the older students have referenced encyclopedias and dictionaries to further *research the habits and life cycles of a group of animals*. It is a pleasure to borrow upper level reference books from the Elementary class for this enhancement to learning!

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Spanish: Appropriately, the "Weather" is this month's topic of focus. Some of the students are identifying weather terms such as "*Hace frio*" = "*It is cold*", as well as other terms but this particular one seems to just keep repeating itself when we discuss what our weather is outside! Sunny, windy, hot...yeah, we are learning them but have yet to experience the actual thing until spring.



Art and Practical Life: We have had to resort to making indoor *snowmen* with tissue, button eyes, "carrot" noses and scarves because we can't actually construct one outside due to the below zero temperatures! We also have created *sparkly snowflakes* and have added new materials to hone our fine motor skills in Practical Life. As always, *baking, apple cutting and carrot peeling* are a comforting

and popular activity. *Food preparation with snacks and also setting lunch tables, folding laundry, care of our plants and environment* are activities that most of your children enjoy helping with daily - remember to enlist their help at home.....they are surprisingly adept at it:~)!



Tasting Activity: Thank you for your contributions to the Sharing Basket so that we could make a *Citrus Fruit tasting activity*

available. Children enjoyed peeling and cutting Texas Red Grapefruit, Florida Navel Oranges, and California Mandarins - we located on the US map where the fruit came from and the climate there, the differences in size, color, texture and of course, taste. Here was our class vote:

- 7 for Florida Navel Oranges
- 2 for Texas Red Grapefruit
- 5 for California Mandarins



It was a popular line time activity and we will look forward to monthly, seasonal tasting experiences with the children.

Language: We have implemented new phonetic *word building exercises using short vowels - a, e, i, o, u*. In addition, matching sentences with pictures, word building with objects rather than picture cards, and phonograms.



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We continue work with each individual child at their level of phonetic sound recognition and challenge our pre and existing readers with a variety of books and hands on materials.

Math: We continue number recognition as well as the ability to associate the proper quantity with the numerals with younger students. Older children are working on *addition and subtraction equations*, the *45-layout (the understanding of the decimal system)*, the *multiplication and division boards*. We incorporate the solidification of *counting, estimating and predicting* into every area of the classroom; whether it's how many places to set for lunch, snacks to prepare, measuring amounts for baking, the real experience to navigate within the class is a hands on and tangible activity.



We celebrated **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** by making peace dove hand prints, and a friend from our Elementary class came over and read a book he was researching on Martin Luther King, Jr. It is always such a rewarding experience to see a child that learned his sounds have the knowledge and confidence to share with the younger students!



Lastly, **Frosty the Snowman day** was enjoyed by the students this past Friday. We played indoor games of "Pin the Carrot Nose on the Snowman", "Ice Fishing", and "Snowball Toss", as well as a delicious snack of doughnut hole "snowballs", Frosty the Snowman story and sing along with the South room and Elementary classes. It is very special to see all of our students come together and have fun as one school community!

We welcomed Lia to our class this week; she doesn't speak English yet but has many new friends who are helpful and considerate with her new school experience.

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February will bring celebration of Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day, President's Day, Arianna's Birthday, and hopefully.....warmer weather! If any of our parents have a special idea, skill, craft, job.....that you could find a few minutes to come in and share with us, it would be a great month to come on in! Your child loves having you here to meet their friends and share in their school life and we do, too!

Thank you so much for all of your support and we are looking forward to a wonderful February!



Sincerely,

Ms. Christine & Ms. Laxmi

Notes from the Pre-K Extended class:

Ms. Ambreen

Happy New Year to everyone! We entered the month of January with icy and snowy weather, negative wind chills and winter in full swing. But nothing stopped us from marching forward on our learning path. All of our pre-kindergarteners moved forward with full energy and high spirits.

In Math, we were all very excited to work on take away quantities and equations i.e. subtraction. Playing with snow balls and making snowmen inspired us to work with circles from our geometry cabinet. We learned to count by fives and numbers 1-100 in even numbers.



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In language, our vowel of the month was ' i ' and we worked on word families using this vowel combined with other sounds. Each child worked on creating a play dough character and writing a story relating with it.



In Science, we studied the make-up and function of tree roots.

The cold and bitter winter conditions inspired us to study about Antarctica, the continent covered with snow all year long, and the creatures living there like penguins and seals. It was very interesting to know discover that polar bears do not live in Antarctica, but in North Arctic

In Arts and Crafts we created 3D paper snowflakes, flour dough snowmen and our beautiful winter scenery paintings with our thoughts on winter.

We are looking forward to our groundhog coming out soon and looking for their shadows, giving us a sign that spring is around the corner in a few weeks.

Until then, we are determined to move forward with the same enthusiasm on our learning path like hardworking ants marching one by one.



*Sincerely,
Ms. Ambreen*

Notes from the afternoon classroom:

Ms. Donna

Of our eight days of winter camp we were able to get out at least one day each week. The sun made us feel warm. We found lots of rabbit and squirrel tracks. We made our own tracks. They enjoyed using the sleds and going down the slides. We did snowmen art, played board and card games, did gym activities.

Continued on the next page





We used dice to play a snowman game. You started out with the shape of a snowman, each number on the die had a part assigned to that number, and the first one to dress his or her snowman was the winner. We also played put on Rudolph's Nose. There were six reindeer numbered 1-6. You won if you were the first to cover each nose. They were a nice bunch of winter campers. I enjoyed working with them.

January sure has been cold outside but we are keeping warm and active inside. We have been busy making different types of snowmen: foam, marble painting, and painting to name a few.

We also made mittens for our mitten game. Each child traced their hand on a folded piece of paper, cut them out and decorated them trying to make them look alike. Then they were given a mitten and had to match it up. We tried it several ways, the first being that they had to match the one they made, second by having another person's mitten and then finding the match.



Two of the children had us participating in activities. We learned about Chicago and Cars of the future. For the car, each child was asked he or she would like to see on a car. Our future car had a swimming pool on top. Who knows this might really happen!

The children read "Snow Soup" and then they acted it out. The main idea of this story that the fox was hungry and he tricked the rabbit, blue jay, bear and beaver into giving him things to put in the soup. Then the fox and all of the animals enjoyed the soup.



We were able to enjoy of gym time. We through small balls into a large bucket until all of the balls were in the bucket. We played mouse trap, sleeping giant, duck, duck, goose and practiced running, skipping, galloping, jumping, hopping and balancing on one foot. We enjoyed a great obstacle course that one of the lower elementary students set up for us.

*Warmly,
Ms. Donna*

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Happy Winter!

