

# Montessori Pathways' News

March



*These children have free choice all day long. Life is based on choice, so they learn to make their own decisions. They must decide and choose for themselves all the time... They cannot learn through obedience to the commands of another. ~ Maria Montessori*

## Notes from Ms. Alena (Head of School)

Getting more confidence by this time of the year, our kids are exploring many new things, doing more wondering work, and helping younger friends a lot.



Many students did a lot of map work as a part of cultural study, spent a lot of time reading books or journaling, doing deep study of plants and animal kingdom and creating booklets after that, are moving on to the next level of math discovery. Building and working on 2, 3, 4-digit numbers or exploring all 4 math operations are the most favorite works for many of our Pre-K / K students at this time of the year.



This time of the year, we observe a lot of positive changes and satisfaction in our kids. Way to go, our friends! Two more months of blooming!

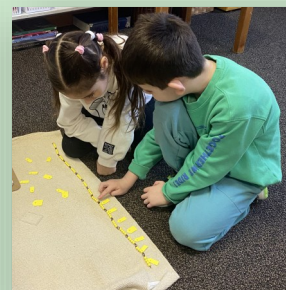
## Elementary Class Visit Days for Kindergarten Students

During two weeks in February-March, our kindergarten students were invited to spend a morning in the Elementary classroom.

Our elementary students have created lovely invitations for their younger friends and personally passed them out to the kindergartners. The kindergarten students were so excited to know that they are very welcomed to visit our elementary class and that their older friends are looking forward to showing them around. Some of the kindergartners were constantly chatting with their classmates about it. On their visit day, they were so ready to explore the new environment.



It was interesting to observe growing leadership maturity in the Elementary class when our Elementary students were able to demonstrate their ability to make a presentation and help with work to their kindergarten friends, while successfully working with their own materials according to their work plan.



It was a very inspiring experience for our students. All Kindergarten students were very proud to be a part of their older friends' group, noticing a very welcoming and helpful atmosphere in the classroom.

## Multicultural Study in Montessori

"If during this period of social interest and mental acuteness all possibilities of culture are offered to the child, to widen his outlook and ideas of the world, this organization will be formed and will develop; the amount of light a child has acquired in the moral field, and the lofty ideals he has formed, will be used for purposes of social organization at a later stage."

— Maria Montessori, *To Educate the Human Potential*

Montessori Classrooms are full of materials which encourage children to explore learning about other customs, cultures, and peoples of the world. The Primary classrooms first introduce the Montessori globe which helps the child to understand the existence of land, masses, and water. When this concept is solidified, the globes are then offered in color, highlighting each of the continents depicted in a different color. At this point, the children learn the names of Africa, Asia, Australia, North America... most often around the age of 3. Then they find puzzle maps and flags of the world, inviting the exploration of countries, capitals and flags of the different nations of the world. As they get a bit older, especially in Lower Elementary, discussion begins into the culture of a country: the languages that are spoken, the clothing that is worn, the customs and holidays celebrated, the foods that are eaten.

At Montessori Pathways, the students are quite blessed to be surrounded by others who speak different languages, who have roots from all over the world.

Every year we are lucky having such a sweet leprechaun (Ms. Bridget) who can share lots of interesting information with our students about Ireland and its culture and traditions.

*~ Thank you so much, Ms. Bridget for such enjoyable St. Patrick Day at our school. ~*



## DR. SEUSS WEEK

"Readers are leaders" is probably the phrase that people heard quite often. Reading is a great source of knowledge and learning new things. However, raising children to be a reader in the era of technology has become challenging. Parents may need to build a habit of reading for their children since the beginning of their life. Several research suggests that reading in early ages could lead to better school performance and result in bigger or better success when the children grow up and become adults. Therefore, it is recommended to support children with reading from very young.



When parents have positive attitudes towards reading, they are prone to pass this attitude to their children toward literacy. Children will love and be reading if they see that YOU are reading. When parents share books and read out loud with children, they can enhance the understanding of the world for their children as well as their social skills and the ability to cope with different situations.

Dr. Seuss week was one of the great chances to read with children and to read for children.



*~ Thank you, Parents and Elementary Students for escorting our little friends to the World of Reading this week. ~*



## Parents' Corner

### ~Montessori and Freedom of Choice~

**One of the key features of Montessori homes and classrooms is that children have choices.** Most of us try to structure choices into the lives of our children. Even toddlers can play with this toy or that toy. They can wear their green pants or their blue pants. They can eat an apple or an orange for snack. They can decide to sit on mama's lap or daddy's knee. Life is full of choices. Why is choice important in schooling?

**Each one of us has our unique gifts and talents.** One of us may be a fast reader, another a math whiz, yet another has a talent for all things mechanical. One may be a swift runner while another is a great cook. We are not all the same. Nor are all our children the same.

You can take ten children of exactly the same age. They may be different heights, different weights. Their skills and capabilities may be vastly different. Some are early bloomers, some are late bloomers. **Some learn through visual input through what they see, some learn best by listening with their ears and some need to touch to learn.** They all learn but they may have vastly different tastes in what interests them and when they are ready.



*If these very different children go to the same traditional school and they have a teacher who lovingly offers them what the curriculum offers for that day, some are interested and ready for the new information and challenges, but some are not. The new tasks are just perfect for some, way too difficult for others and far too easy for others. It may be that some of the children are just smarter than others. But it may also mean that some are developmentally not quite ready for the tasks but in six months they would be perfect. Others would be a lot happier in the next grade up.*

**Maria Montessori understood all these learning differences and created an environment for children where they come in each day and choose what they want to work on.** At the beginning of their first year in Montessori they might choose between doing a puzzle, stringing beads, or looking at a book. Each day the teacher shows them new lessons and soon they have a larger choice. Eventually the choices include writing and reading, addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division with concrete materials. It includes biology and geometry, art, and music.

The free will of each child is gradually being educated. Each choice they have is constructive, developmentally appropriate, and interesting. Montessori's biographer E.M. Standing suggests that **freedom to choose is not freedom to do anything you want, but freedom to do the right thing.** For a child the right thing is what he needs to fulfill the next step of his development at any given stage.



When a child chooses his work instead of doing what he is told to do, he often develops a more genuine interest and learns to follow the direction of what we call the "Inner Teacher." The child begins to value the inner satisfaction he gets from doing the work that corresponds to his inner developmental needs and he is calm and joyful in his learning.

Not every child chooses to do every lesson. But that is OK. Each child chooses what he needs. There are multiple ways to teach essential skills, so a child who does not want to do one lesson, may choose another that gets him to the same goal. But in Montessori, we realize that not every child reaches those goals in the same way or at the same time.

Montessori gave a series of lectures about freedom of choice. She makes a powerful argument that the roots of tyranny are in adults forcing children to obey their commands. When a child spends his entire day, year after year, following the instruction of adults and has no right to follow his own interests, he may come to believe that his own interests are unimportant. He may come to believe that his thoughts are not as important as the thoughts of the adults who are teaching him.

*Montessori believed in discipline. But she realized that the way to reach it was by creating environments where children found engaging materials to use. When they are fully engaged in the work that appeals to them at their particular level of development, they become self-disciplined. You see in Montessori classrooms a group of three-, four- and five-year-olds hard at work. No teacher could command such discipline, yet the children freely give it to their own self-chosen work.*

Freedom of choice becomes a habit of mind. Freedom to explore your own thoughts and interests can open the floodgates to creativity, as it has with such Montessori alumni as the co-founders of Google, Wikipedia and Amazon.com – all Montessori graduates.



## REGISTRATION FOR THE 2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR IS WRAPPING UP!



We would like to announce that we are finalizing our Re-Enrollment for 2025 – 2026 school year and registration for Summer Camp 2025.

Thank you to all of the families who have returned the re-enrollment application for the Summer Camp 2025 and/or 2025-2026 School Year. We are so ready to move on.

- *At this point, we are full for our Summer Camp.*
- *Our Elementary class is also full for the next school year.*
- *We have only a couple spots left in our Primary classrooms.*

We will be distributing these spots on a first-come first-served basis, and we have many highly interested new parents visiting for them.

It is your final chance to get a spot at our school by submitting your application and \$50.00 re-enrollment fee. The part time schedule must be approved by administration prior to re-enrollment since not all options are available now.

If you have already returned the registration form with the re-enrollment fee, please remember that **your child is only considered registered once the 10% security deposit is paid and it is due April 15** or depending on your payment plan

By submitting your 10% of the annual tuition deposit on time, you secure your child's spot at our school for the next school year, can lock in your child's current classroom, and any other special schedules and arrangements made with the school.

**Please note:** All families enrolling and submitting 10% of the tuition after April 15<sup>th</sup> will be considered "newly enrolled" families, and will be subject to a new enrollment fee of \$50.00 for Summer Camp and \$100.00 for 2025-2026 School Year.

**Spots in Primary level are already limited** and cannot be guaranteed - "newly enrolled" families will be enrolled on a first come, first serve basis. Classroom and any other preferences will also be up to administrative discretion based on availability.

**We opened a waitlist for our Elementary and Summer Camp programs.** The candidates for these programs might be accepted if a spot opens up.

We are looking forward for an amazing summer and next school year adventures!

### IN APRIL:

- ♦ **March 31 (M) - School Resumes**
- ♦ **April 7 - 10 (M-Th) - Elementary Class 4-day Trip to Nature's Classroom in Hartland, WI**
- ♦ **April 11 (F) - Virtual Elementary Parent / Teacher Conference Day (North Rooms)**
  - \* **No School** for all Elementary students on **Conference Day, April 11.**
  - \* **The link to sign up for P/T Conference was sent to all families in March.**
  - \* **The Zoom link** for your virtual conference will be sent to you **on Friday, April 4.**
- ♦ **April 17 (Th) at 5:30—7:00pm - Montessori Family Night: "Come and Work Together!" – Parent / Child Work Cycle in Primary Classes (East and South rooms)**
- ♦ **April 21—24 – Earth Week**
- ♦ **April 23 (W) / Rain Day—April 24 (Th) - Spruce It Up / Mulching! Doughnuts with Grownups!**
- ♦ **April 25 (F) – No School / Teachers Institute Day (Staff in service)**





## NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS



Ms. Bridget, Ms. Carole

The kindergarten students completed their visits to our class, and we are excited to welcome our upcoming first-graders back for their second visit, which is a full day visit in April.



This transition time always brings two items to my mind. One, wow! Look how far the first grade has come! First graders now are more independent, writing and reading have improved and confidence in math and other areas have grown. Plus, they are such good teachers to the other younger students. Second, being in community makes a family feel in a Montessori class. We all look out for each other, help and are kind to each other. We have made new friends and are willing to continue to learn new things about our "old" friends. Seeing ALL of my students jump in to help these new people says a lot of who Montessori kids are.



March is also Women's History Month so, we learned about a different woman each day during our morning meeting. Thank you to all of our moms and grandmas who were interviewed by your child. It was fun to hear what each of you, AMAZING women, said.

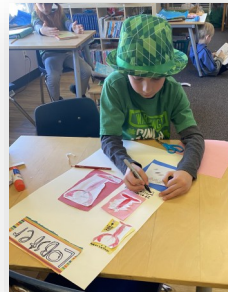
We always sing songs and learn a bit about Ireland as St Patrick's Day is in March. I share a bit about the history, geography, storytelling, and culture of Ireland. Kids enjoyed a gold coin, Irish Soda bread and some Irish music. We also did some Irish dancing moves.



Research is a huge component of the elementary Montessori classroom. They are eager to know more, more, and more about everything. Many will write quite a lot of research; others will write the minimum of facts (however old you are!). It is a joy to begin to observe topics that they love and want to spend deep dives into these topics.



Since we have been going to the library all year, the students are now mostly independent from me at the library now. I love that they can navigate the library, use the computer to find books, locate call numbers with a little support, ask the staff for assistance and were able to find research books for their chosen topics for our research projects. They used these books to gather notes, draw pictures and designed a presentation and visual board. Their Invertebrate presentations were enjoyable, and their artwork was creative.



Finally, independence is also improving in each child's work. Students are working ahead on math, language and their reading. I have observed more students completing the work needed to accomplish and move on to a new lesson. Writing has improved as well with both spelling, flow and punctuation. Making choices independently and knowing how to do the work is a huge accomplishment for many. Helping others and teaching others is when one can really see growth in children.



We are getting excited and preparing for our yearly trip to Nature's Classroom Institute.



# MARCH PHOTO GALLERY

## Elementary Class





## NEWS FROM THE PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN AFTERNOON GROUP

Ms. Masha, Ms. Kathy



The love for maps and geography this month has been spilling over into the afternoon group as well.



Beyond making of the maps, children are exploring the animals, plants, flags, and landmarks of different continents.



Animal classification remains of strong interest, with more and more children writing out facts about fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals with the moveable alphabet.



Others have been testing their knowledge of three part cards by using the moveable alphabet to label the pictures by sounding out each word, be it of parts of a Leprechaun or the names of planets, knowing they can check their work with the control cards.



As we started to see the first few signs of spring, including daffodils starting to pop out outside our windows, we decided to paint spring daffodils. We discussed the different brush strokes and shapes we could use to make the daffodils, the different colors we could see in the sky and on the ground at this time, and how we could use the primary colors and white paint to make all the colors needed for this painting. Now we have a beautiful daffodil field decorating our hallway in hopes of a warm spring around the corner!



March also marked our first hiking Friday for the afternoon group! On our way to Veteran Acres Park, some children noticed the spots we had stopped to observe during our fall walk, noticing the differences between fall and early spring signs. Despite the windy weather, we had a blast running around to rub the barks of different trees.



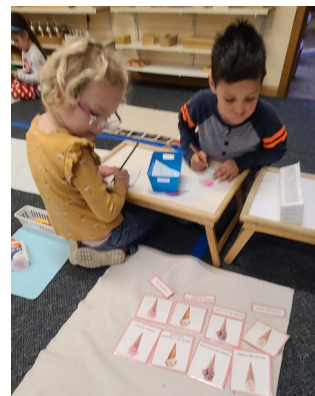
We finished with a walk around the pond, where we had observed many ducks and geese back in the fall. This time around, we saw 2 pairs of ducks and a pair of geese walking on the ice and swimming in the water, which prompted a lot of questions and observations - which one is the female and which one is the male duck? How do they stay warm in the cold ice water? Why are they dunking their heads in the water one at a time? A lot of very keen observations and thought provoking questions from our group, which we discussed at the pond and on our way back to school. We can't wait for the next hike!





# MARCH PHOTO GALLERY

## Pre-K and Kindergarten Afternoon Group





## NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Ellen



Another month has come and gone! Hard to believe but with it comes Spring and renewed warmth. We also have seen green buds peeking through the mulch outside of our window. The snow has melted, and we are anxiously awaiting the blooms. One child even exclaimed the days are getting longer. We talked about the daylight being bleak in December some children remembered it was getting dark at 4:15 dismissals.



We began our month talking about and reading Dr Seuss books in honor of his birthday on March 2. We read many Dr. Seuss books as a class, as many as we could fit in.



The children loved having extra special visitors to bring giggles and fun to our days. We began with Andy's mom Riya reading "Green Eggs and Ham", Tuesday brought Ava's mom, Jami with "Put me in the Zoo". Wednesday, we had Ellie's dad, Patrick read us "Oh Baby, the Places You will Go"! He did an amazing tongue twisting job! On Thursday Maelyn's mom, read "What Pet Should I Get?" and her brother Grayson (our former student) read "The Colors" book. We wound up our week with "One Fish Two Fish, Red Fish Blue Fish" read by Layla's mom, T.J. It is always special to have parents join us during the day. Thank you all for volunteering your time.



The Elementary children joined us to read different Dr Suess books to small groups. It is nice to see the interactions between different ages. The children look forward to it.



We also had special Dr. Suess crafts, making a cat in the hat, the balloon from "Oh the Places you will go", a Wocket for pockets and cat whiskers and nose popsicle stick mini mask.

The room is full of green, shamrock crafts, counting, rainbows and pots of gold and of course a favorite of all time, parts of a leprechaun is rarely on the shelf as it is in use daily all month. We may have to extend its cycle for all to have a turn to try it.



Many of the children are doing a study of Europe, including famous landmarks, flags, plants, animals and a map. It has been fun for them to learn where Ms. Alena, Ms. Masha and Ms. Ellen were born. Others have parents born in Europe and it adds context to their work.



It was nice to see all of you at parent-teacher conferences and tell you all the wonderful things the children are doing. Thanks to everyone who took time and came to share goals and expectations for their child. Although formal parent teacher conferences are twice a year, we are always happy to meet with you if there is ever a need.

We hope everyone has fun and relaxing spring break and look forward to the growth and excitement of the last few months of the school year.



# MARCH PHOTO GALLERY

## South Room





## NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Masha, Ms. Laxmi



This month has been a phenomenal representation of how winter and spring push and pull throughout March! From a balmy 80 degree Friday afternoon to snow that same weekend, but we are hoping that was the last hurrah and no more snow-pants in our future.

We started the month of March with the exciting celebration of Dr. Seuss week! Thank you to all the parents who took the time and energy to share a Dr. Seuss story with our students. They looked forward to seeing each day's new visitor – an exciting way to break up the seemingly endless wintery days. To go along with the many Dr. Seuss stories were some new art and sewing works: gluing and cutting Truffula Trees, a hot air balloon for all the places you will go, and an adorable sewing of the cat in the hat. On Friday, we were in for a special treat as our Elementary friends came in to read Dr. Seuss books in small groups – we hope you can feel the care and awe the younger and older children have for each other through the pictures!



To round out the week of excitement, Vincent Barbosa (Stella and Roxy's Dad) brought his acoustic guitar to show the class. The children were intrigued to see the different parts of the guitar and how they work together to make beautiful notes, and everyone had the chance to strum the guitar. We were able to sing and dance to many of our favorite songs accompanied by his guitar, which put a fresh spin on beloved classics! Thank you so much for sharing your talent with us!



Before long, the room was filled with shamrocks and rainbows as the children prepared for St. Patrick's Day. Ms. Bridget visited us to briefly share the history of St. Patrick's Day, the meaning of the Irish flag, explain the lore of the sneaky leprechauns, and share a coveted golden coin with each child. Katrina Mason, Emma's mom, also came in to read Too Many Carrots to get us in a more Spring-like mood– thank you!

The Geography area has been getting a lot of traction this month. Map making is one of the most contagious works in a

Montessori environment. It seems as soon as one child begins poking or painting a map, there are suddenly many more waiting to do the same! The direct aim here is quite clear – for the child to understand their place in the world (I live on planet Earth, on the continent of North America, in the Country of United States, in the State of Illinois, and so on) and how the different places of the world come together. Not many adults can point out Nicaragua or Croatia on a map, but our children can! Indirectly, however, this work is all about patience, organization, focus, concentration, and spatial awareness. Rotating a piece just a bit or not taking care to make the lines just right ends up in a map that doesn't come together and cannot be deciphered by the child. The quickly learn this while working on the larger (more forgiving) Map of the World, before progressing into more complex ones like the map of Asia.

We have also seen a lot of excitement around ironing. Yes, we iron in our classroom! This is a work that is completely supervised with a teacher at the child's side for safety, so it is typically happening in the early morning as we get the room ready. Usually, we are ironing our lunch napkins, but one day we noticed that our flags of Europe were looking incredibly wrinkled as well. This led to a literal line of children with napkins and flags waiting their turn to ever so carefully iron out every last wrinkle. Similar to map making, the main purpose of this activity is quite clear – learning how to iron. But the true benefit is even deeper. The intense care needed to safely do this work is explained before the child ever touches the iron. They are completely focused on keeping one hand on the handle of the iron and the other behind their back. They are working on impulse control – they want to grab the napkin to move it while the iron is still nearby but catch themselves to first prop the iron up. They are concentrating on their work and their work only, for it is not safe to glance up at what is happening around them while handling a hot iron. And they are taking care of something for somebody else –learning to care for others. It is a seemingly simple, mundane task that does wonders for a child's focus and concentration.

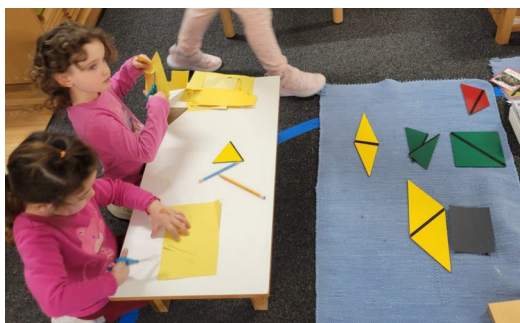


As we head into Spring Break, we hope you give yourselves and your children the opportunity to relax, recharge, and fill your cup with much needed family time. Many of our students are reading texts of various complexity– please provide opportunities to keep practicing reading at home. It can be as simple as the grocery list! For our pre-readers, I Spy with beginning but especially middle and end sounds is particularly helpful. And all children benefit from continuously counting – how far can they count during a car ride? And as always, and most importantly, read together! Have a relaxing Spring Break – see you in April!



# MARCH PHOTO GALLERY

## East Room





## MORE WONDERFUL MOMENTS AT MONTESSORI PATHWAYS



*"The child must learn by his own individual authority... and not to be questioned in his choice. Our teaching must only answer the mental needs of the child, never dictate them. He must have absolute freedom of choice, and then he requires nothing but repeated experiences."*

*– Maria Montessori, To Educate the Human Potential*

