

# Montessori Pathways' News



## Elementary Parent Curriculum Night

In October, the Elementary and Kindergarten parents were invited to our Elementary Curriculum Night.

Ms. Bridget displayed some of the materials in different areas to show our parents how the Montessori multiage and hands-on environment helps our students be successful in and enjoy their learning process.

This year Ms. Bridget concentrated on History and Geography. While parents are always concerned more about the math and language curriculum, Cultural Study is a very beneficial area for Montessori students in many ways.

The Montessori Geography and History curriculum emphasizes cultural studies, introducing children to different cultures from around the world. Through hands-on activities and sensorial experiences, children develop a deep appreciation for the wonders of the Earth, animals, and the diverse cultures that inhabit it.

Montessori begins with presenting children with the whole, a 'big picture' view, while slowly narrowing in on details. This makes information more developmentally appropriate as well as giving children a sense of the interconnectedness of all things. This approach also leads to some overlap with other subject areas, which is a good thing!

The other benefit of Cultural Study in Montessori is that while students are independently searching for more and more information for their topic, they have a chance for a very deep and detailed study, as well as learning how to do and manage their study independently – a skill that they will be using a lot in their life.



Thank you Ms. Bridget for such an informative evening and thank you, parents, for finding the time to participate in it!

## Halloween at Montessori Pathways

We appreciate everyone's effort in preparing the **Halloween celebration** at our school. Some parents decorated their children's classrooms, many of you contributed a lot of items for the Halloween party, the teachers prepared the Halloween crafts and games, and some parents hosted the activity stations. It was such a busy, exciting, and, at the same time, peaceful morning at school.



Our elementary friends planned and organized their party independently and enjoyed it in the afternoon. They started with a Halloween Feast and then played Halloween games. The hit of the Party was a Haunted House that they created in downstairs room. Two options of Hounded House were created and offered—scary and non-scary.



## Parents' Corner



### Practical Life: The Soul of the Montessori Classroom

*"Any child who is self-sufficient, who can tie his shoes, dress or undress himself, reflects in his joy and sense of achievement the image of human dignity, which is derived from a sense of independence."*

*~ Maria Montessori, The Child in the Family*

Children are naturally curious and want to participate in the activities of daily life they see all around them. Maria Montessori developed the Practical Life exercises to give children the opportunity to practice those skills, gain independence, and become fully functional members of their community.

Some parents, new to Montessori, keep asking us why their kids are doing all of this sweeping, mopping, dusting, polishing, scrubbing, washing, cooking, etc. while parents are expecting their kids are working on math and language.

It's important to educate parents about the crucial role that Practical Life exercises play in their child's social, emotional, and academic development, providing a foundation for confidence and success.

These activities help children develop their motor skills, refining both large and small muscle coordination. A child may repeat a particular exercise over and over, perfecting her movements and developing concentration. Pediatric neuropsychologist Steven Hughes found that children's strongest link to their brains are their hands, noting that repeated motor movements develop the pathways in the brain that help children learn.

The child is learning to follow a complex motor sequence, independently, in order to fulfill his or her own desires and needs. These skills, when taught early in life, allow children to believe in themselves as well as develop the self-discipline needed for success throughout their lives.

Math, reading, and language all require one to have the ability to focus, to be able to follow logical and sequential steps, to make intelligent choices, to see a task through from start to finish, to persist when one makes a mistake, and to correct one's mistakes—and all of these are present in the process of learning and practicing the practical life activities.

#### The Exercises

In the preliminary exercises, children learn basic life skills such as pouring, cutting, folding, and spooning. In the applied exercises, children learn how to care for themselves (hand washing, dressing and undressing, etc.), as well as the environment (polishing furniture and washing their own snack/lunch dishes, for example).

The other two areas of the Practical Life curriculum are Grace and Courtesy, (which include asking for or offering help, letting someone pass, covering a sneeze or yawn; using "Thank you", "Please", "Excuse me", etc.), and Control of Movement, (carrying scissors, walking around a rug, the Silence Game, etc.).

#### Spontaneous Contributions

At first the child acts solely for himself, washing a table for the sake of doing the activity. Later he will wash a table because it is dirty. Eventually, what were once exercises become spontaneous and natural expressions of community life. Unprompted, children will often help each other mop up a spill or sweep the dirt from an overturned potted plant.

As his world expands, each child comes to realize that he is an important part of the community, someone with something to give. Children feel trusted and respected when adults provide them with the opportunity to take part in the real work of their family and school. Perhaps this is one reason why Margot Waltuch, who trained with Maria Montessori, said that "Practical Life is the soul of the Montessori classroom."

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[Click here to learn more: "How Cleaning and Sweeping Prepare Children for Academic Success"](#)

[Click here to see our kids' Practical Life activities](#)





- ◆ **November 2 (Th) at 6:00-7:00pm - Montessori Educational Night: “How is Carrot Peeling Educational?”- workshop for primary parents.** (Child care for our current students are available per parents’ request)
- ◆ **November 1 - November 8 – Giving with Gratitude Week** (Crystal Lake Community Harvest Food Drive)

As Thanksgiving approaches, we would like to teach our students not only the importance of giving thanks, but also the importance of giving. Therefore, every year, we participate in the **Annual Community Harvest**, which will benefit clients of the Crystal Lake Food Pantry.

**We are asking that each family provide their child with a chance to select with their parents and purchase 5-10 items to bring as a donation to school any day from Wednesday, November 1 through Wednesday, November 8.**

The donated items will be delivered to Crystal Lake Food Pantry (42 East St, Crystal Lake, IL 60014) on Thursday, November 9 in the morning.



- ◆ **November 7 (Tu) at 1:30—2:30pm - Kindergarten and Elementary Class Trip to Crystal Lake Food Pantry for a tour.**
- ◆ **November 10 (F) - No School – Veteran Day / Teacher Institute Day**
- ◆ **November 17 (F) at 1:30—2:30pm - Kindergarten and Elementary Class Trip to Nature Center in Crystal Lake for guided “Weather” program .**
- ◆ **November 23 - 24 (Th- F) – No School (Thanksgiving break)**

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# NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS



## Ms. Bridget

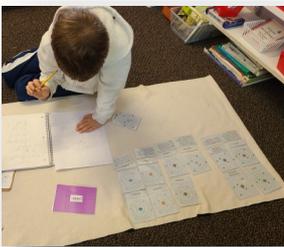
October is always an exciting month. Spooky stories are read, decorations begin to appear and we begin to build our Ofrenda to honor those people and animals who we have loved and have lost. It is a month of decisions of costumes as well as our celebration at the end of the month.



Students are now comfortable with the environment and have made new connections with friends. Older students offer help to younger classmates and younger ones easily ask the older student now in the class. It is at this time every year that the Montessori classroom is normalized and a busy hive of activity. I am able to observe work habits, behaviors and abilities of all students much better.



The sciences and cultural subjects are always the first work to be accomplished. Immediately, students want to begin their research. Some do it alone, most in groups. The hot item is atom exploration. Everyone loves building atoms with the Bohr model. Soon we will make compounds thanks to a new material that we received through the Mum Sale!!! Thanks again, parents.



Ms Rachel from our food service, Beyond Green, came to our elementary class. The students spent a wonderful time with Ms. Rachel, learning and tasting. Her class was about the different food groups: fruits, vegetables, dairy, protein and grains. We then tried various foods. It was a fun presentation.



The specials classes are an added fun to the end of the day. Art is still a favorite with Ms. Suzy. We have been working on Eye to Hand coordination in PE, Spanish words and phrases and Animal Evidence in Nature.

The kids have been planning and preparing for the Halloween party. The older students are heading the committees-games, food and decorations. Every child is on a committee to plan the party. On the day of the party, the committees of students will set up and clean up. After, we discuss what was liked about the party and what we will improve on for the next party.

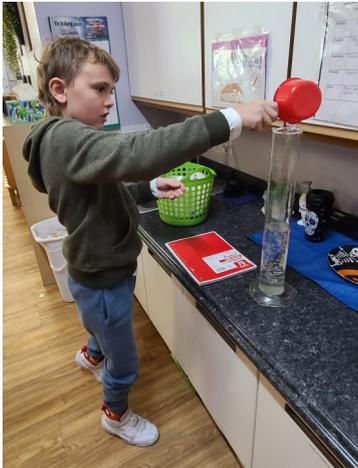
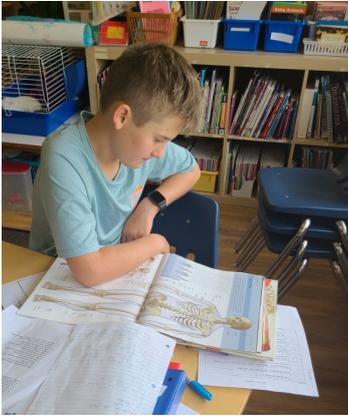
Finally, Curriculum Night was SO enjoyable with my student helpers Landon and Parker, our 2 Upper Elementary students. It was good to see everyone who came and I am glad you were able to see some of the amazing work that we do in elementary for History and Geography. Thanks for partnering with me to educate your child.

Many are asking for more math and grammar lessons and the reading groups are improving their understanding and the fluency of reading.



# OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

## Elementary Class



## NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Urana



Autumn seems to have finally arrived and has provided some great learning opportunities. The children have been pointing out the changes they are noticing all around them, especially on the playground. They have been collecting leaves in a variety of shapes and colors and have brought them into the classroom for some leaf prints and rubbings. Please feel free to send in any autumn leaves you might collect on your walks...we will use them in some way. The children have also enjoyed caring for our playground, raking the leaves, and bagging them.

October brought us pumpkin exploration. So many things to learn about pumpkins and gourds. First, we explored the outside: textures, bumps, lines, weight. Then we opened it up to explore the inside: textures, smell, etc. and we introduced estimation and had the children make an estimate as to how many seeds they thought would be inside. We counted the seeds, cooked the seeds, and tasted the seeds. We transformed our pumpkin into a classroom jack-o-lantern.

We learned the nomenclature for the parts of the pumpkin, both inside and out, and the life cycle with both a poster to make or the help of our 3-part cards works.

In Montessori works that are designed to introduce specific vocabulary we use 3-part cards, which are basically 3 sets of cards: 1) a card with both the picture and the word label, 2) a card of just the picture, 3) and a card with just the word label. These 3-part cards are found throughout the different areas of the classroom including: zoology, biology, colors, geometric shapes and so on. Even for those who are not yet reading, this is a great pre-reading activity because they are able to see the sounds, and use visual discrimination, to match the word labels based on the letters that they see. Montessori Three-Part Cards refer to card materials that children manipulate to internalize the information on the cards. So, for example, with parts of the pumpkin we will have cards with the skin, pulp, stem, leaf, etc. The younger children might just match the cards while having a real pumpkin to explore these new vocabulary words, while older children might want to make their own books essentially recreating the 3-part cards in a paper book form in which they color and label each separate part. It was fun to introduce parts of a bat and spider while we were in the spirit!



This month we have also incorporated a variety of Halloween elements into our classroom activities. Some children have been refining their fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination by poking out different seasonal shapes (autumn

leaves, acorns, bats, jack-o-lanterns, and ghosts, etc.) or by using tweezers to remove corn kernels from a dry corn cob. Others have learned to hold a crayon flat to create a leaf rubbing. Most of our practical life works have an autumn or Halloween theme.

For a scrubbing activity in the practical life area, we are using a small bumpy gourd to scrub and a small pumpkin to first draw a jack o lantern face and then to clean it off. It is a favorite. The soapy water is great for the development and strengthening of hand muscles, helpful in preparation for writing. This activity is also a great opportunity for organization; the children need to set out all the items they will need in the order they will use them, and then after the activity they must replace and clean everything, so it is ready for the next child.

We have explored what vertebrates and invertebrates are. The children sorted pictures of vertebrates and invertebrates. We added our child sized skeleton to our room. A few exclaimed it was scary, but older children explained we all have a skeleton to support our bodies, the went to the mirror to look at their ribs. The children have been exploring the human skeleton and a few animal skeletons for matching. All enjoy dancing to "Dem Bones." Overall, we have had a wonderful October and look forward to our Halloween celebration.



We had a special presentation from Rachel with our lunch provider Beyond Green. She taught the children how to make a balanced plate and explained why we need all 5 food groups in our diets. She had sensory activities for the children to explore, gourds, plastic veggies to build a rainbow and a sensory bin for exploration. The lesson concluded with a sample of delicious fruits and veggies, multicolored carrots, peppers, different squash, cucumbers, and strawberries. Everyone found a favorite or 3! Her message was "Eat a rainbow"! We did!

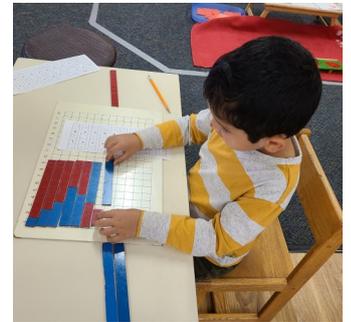


Thank you to all the parents who made our Halloween celebration so special and fun by providing donations of time or supplies. It was great fun! We couldn't do it without our volunteers!



# OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

## South Room



## NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Masha, Ms. Carole



As we near the end of the Normalization period, it's impossible to not reflect on how far our students have come in just two short months. Routine and order is established, community is formed, and a sense of classroom ownership takes over. The focus has switched from simply putting materials back where they belong to doing so beautifully. Children also take great pride in contributing to the beauty of their environment. After meticulously cutting the stems of flowers and pouring just enough water into a vase, they proudly offer to place their arrangement on a friends' table—an additional lesson of grace and courtesy. This month, we had an additional opportunity to contribute to our environment by replacing our lunch napkins! A huge thank you to Claire, Daniel, and Emery's moms for helping hem our new napkins! Claire, Daniel, and Emery had the chance to show them to the class during line time, and they were met with "wow, so beautiful!" and many a "thank you!"

As we moved into October, we switched out our apple themed activities for pumpkins, acorns, and leaves. You will quickly notice that many of our activities are updated monthly to include new points of interest, a detail that excites the child to try the same activity multiple times, leading to mastery. And so this month we re-ignited the love for numbers by counting acorns and pumpkins, and also by seeing older friends do more complex works like greater/less than, teen numbers, addition, multiplication, and working with four digit numbers.

In language, we are finding rhymes, opposites, go-together, sequencing, and things that do not belong. Not only do these activities build a child's vocabulary, they are also an opportunity to classify the world and practice explaining "why". And while today it is in the form of "the pumpkin doesn't belong because the other pictures are cats," several years from now, this same foundation will be used to identify an adverb from an adjective. We have also had an explosion of interest in sounds, word building, writing, and reading! And as more of our students have begun making books or writing down their work, our handwriting works have also gained much traction. We can see their handwriting improve literally right before our eyes!

Our Botany and Zoology areas have seen many Pumpkin Lifecycle, Parts of a Pumpkin, Acorn Lifecycle, and Frog Lifecycle books being made. We have a new set of Lifecycle Books courtesy of our Scholastic Book Club Rewards, and the students' interest is definitely piqued! Ms. Carole had even found a sprouted acorn on a walk, and we have planted it as a class in hopes of growing an oak sapling! Our students are hard at work trying to keep it comfortable.

In preparation for Halloween, we have also been scrubbing pumpkins both inside and outside the class. The milder autumn days have really helped us get the most out of scrubbing time! We then either hammer into the pumpkin (an important lesson in bilateral hand use) or get it ready to be a Jack-O-Lantern by scooping out all of the seeds together and cutting out a face, all the while reviewing the different parts of a pumpkin.

We have also had several group Science lessons to spark conversation and ignite interest in the area. We looked at our Sandpaper Globe and found all the places land, air, and water are, discussing where we can find land, air, and water in our own lives and why we need them. This is where the beauty of the multi-age environment really shines! While our younger friends recall water being in their bottles for drinking or in the tap for handwashing, our older friends are thinking of lakes and river for fish to swim! Then we collected some to place in jars to keep on our very own shelves and use for sorting activities.

We also took advantage of the warmer fall weather to do a lesson on Living versus Nonliving outside in our playground, talking about what attributes each has before we went on a search for items to sort. Again we were met with interesting discussions between our different age groups of whether a fallen leaf of a living tree would still be classified as living—a fascinating question to ponder.

Our classification of the world eventually leads us to Invertebrates versus Vertebrates, which is a fairly complex concept. Luckily, with Halloween right around the corner, there was no shortage of skeletons for our class to get its hands on. Each of our students is now acutely aware of what a backbone is, and where theirs is located!

October also brought the start of our North America geography focus – we will be traveling the continents of the world through the year, and our first stop is North America. Some of our children have been exploring the places, plants, animals, and flags of North America, while others have taken an interest in our "people of the world" work.

A lesser talked about aspect of the Montessori environment is our focus on peace education. We are not only focused on learning the names of countries and cities, we are showing and normalizing how beautifully different but still similar our wide world and the people in it are. A fun book we read in class on this topic is "Same, Same But Different" by Jenny Sue Kostecki-Shaw.

Other ways we create peace in our class is with the use of a Peace Rose to resolve conflicts, a peace corner for students who need a moment to relax their minds, and practicing making peace in various ways during Line Time. So far, we have enjoyed listening to and watching a music box work, taking turns playing a Tibetan Signing bowl, listening to classical music (many violin fans in our class!), and simply creating silence while letting a candle burn. Silence is not an absence of something. Rather, it is intentionally created by the child with deep concentration and self-control. It may be hard to imagine our ever-mobile children simply sitting and creating silence, but they are incredibly capable of it and continue about their day with much more calm!



# OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

## East Room



# NEWS FROM THE PRE-K / KINDERGARTEN AFTERNOON GROUP



## Ms. Masha, Ms. Kathy

Our Afternoon Pre-K and Kindergarteners have the opportunity to dive deeper into the topics we discuss during the morning work cycle, explore more complex art techniques, and a chance to continue tackling larger and more time-consuming activities.

In language, many of our students are eagerly reading and writing.



Some of our friends were excited by the fallen leaves and wanted to bring them into a class to create a work with—this is how our leaf printing activity started.

To help with their handwriting, we had a group presentation on keeping letters on the baseline, as well as ascender and descender letters. And while this activity has been a great starting point in cleaner writing, it also served as yet another inspiration for some incredibly strong word building.

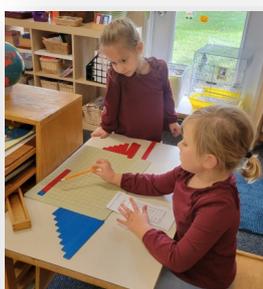


We also noticed new marigold, tomato, and pepper plants re-emerging this fall and combined with the chance to plant our school's hardy mums, we took one in to analyze and draw the parts of a plant.

And in preparation for spooky season, students had the chance to use oil pastels to create a beautiful scene of bats flying in the moonlight!



In math, we are seeing a lot of interest in teen numbers, skip counting, addition, and building four digit numbers.



# OCTOBER PHOTO GALLERY

## Pre-K and Kindergarten Afternoon Group



# MORE WONDERFUL MOMENTS AT MONTESSORI PATHWAYS



"Childhood is not a race to see how quickly a child can read, write and count. It is a small window of time to learn and develop at the pace that is right for each individual child. Earlier is not better."  
-Magda Gerber

