

# Montessori Pathways' News

Montessori Pathways

The best way to discovery!



School

# December

*Joy, feeling one's own value, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and capable of production are all factors of enormous value for the human soul.*

~ Maria Montessori



## Thank you!

Thank you, parents and kids, for your thoughtful Christmas gifts to our Montessori Pathways Team and for the many beautiful Christmas cards with a lot of wonderful wishes and very warm words!

Your understanding, cooperation, help, support, and appreciation are priceless for us.

I hope that everybody had a wonderful time during this holiday season. May everyone's New Year be filled with happiness, love, and prosperity!



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

We call them "Montessori moments" – those moments that are so golden and precious that they are indelibly etched into our hearts forever. One of Montessori alumni, Gabriel, visited our Elementary class and made a wonderful presentation about **Hannukah** to our Elementary students. They loved learning more about this holiday and traditions.



Undoubtably there was **Christmas Spirit** present at school during the whole month of December. Listening to Christmas music, singing songs, decorating the school and classrooms, and working on Christmas gifts for parents were a major part of the learning process in December.

One of the magical moments was a visit from **Woodstock D200 Orchestra** at our school. **Thank you, Lyndra Bastian** (Maelyn's mom), for bringing your students to us. Christmas music that was played by high school children brought such an inspiration to our school.



The favorites of the month were **Spirit Week** at Pathways, **"Reading Under the Stars"** family night, **Winter Art** and **"Secret Santa"** Party for Elementary students, tons of Christmas work and projects for primary students, **visiting Crystal Pines** Rehab Center by Elementary students and sharing handmade Christmas Card with the residents... December was truly happy and festive for our kids!





## Parents' Corner



### Transitions: The Benefits of Holiday Breaks

With the holidays swiftly approaching, you and your child are likely to find yourselves facing many changes in your daily routines. Trips to visit family, changes in eating habits, busy schedules with early mornings and late nights — all of these things may make your child's everyday activities change significantly.

And because a child is still learning to embrace life skills such as flexibility and resilience, having long periods of time off for the holidays may initially take your son or daughter by surprise. But with planning, you can make the most of the holiday break from school, have a lot of fun as a family, and watch your child bloom as they head back to school refreshed and ready to learn.

#### How a Break Benefits Your Child's Learning

We all need breaks! Short breaks during activities can greatly benefit your child's learning. After long periods of focus, the brain is depleted of neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin. A shift in focus to rest and replenish is necessary and healthy. A longer break, such as several days for holiday celebrations, can allow you and your family to get needed sleep and rejuvenation in the form of entertaining activities like shopping, cookie making, and visiting relatives and friends.

#### Routines Are Also Helpful to Young Children

Of course, as Montessori teachers well know, regular daily activities that children can count on help them develop a sense of confidence and exploration within understandable boundaries. But as parents know, holiday schedules can play havoc with regular activities. Here are some ways you can counteract the change of routine that happens during the holidays when your children are home from school:

#### Plan ahead!

Create a bucket of 10-, 20-, and 30-minute activities that you can invite your child to engage in — the more, the better. Then as you focus on your own tasks of cooking, card writing, online shopping or other activities, encourage your son or daughter to pick their own activities out of the bucket and do them. When your child grows restless, invite him or her to switch to a new activity. This mimics the schedule of a Montessori school day, which may help your child navigate their free time more smoothly.

#### Take breaks.

Your child needs break time from their activities. And so do you! Movement is not only good for your brain, but good for your body also. As your child winds down from an activity, use one or more of these methods to take a brain break with them:

- **Move** — Stretch, take a brief walk, do a yoga move or two, or shake and wiggle your body.
- **Use music** — Turn on a favorite song and dance to it. Or sing a song or two with your child, clapping to keep time.
- **Draw** — Pull out a notepad and doodle. Choose something in the house or yard to draw. Pull out the crayons and color a page or two in a coloring book.

- **Breathe deeply** — Mindful practices like deep breathing are relaxing. It's also a great way to teach children to be less reactive — a useful tool for later in life.
- **Play a quick game** — Charades, twenty questions, or a similar game that moves fast is a fun way to switch things up. And it keeps your child engaged in discovery — another way to bring in the Montessori approach at home.

#### Keep up the learning.

Just because your child is at home, you don't have to totally nix all opportunities to learn and discover. Consider incorporating these Montessori-style, learning-based, fun activities into your holiday plans:

- **Read a book with your child.** During the holidays, you get the bonus of having more time for reading. Pick a long book, like *Charlotte's Web*, and read a chapter or two nightly before bedtime. Or invite your child to pick a book they can read to visiting relatives, which is fun for everyone!
- **Listen to books in the car.** That long drive to Grandma's house doesn't have to be filled with mindless videos. Play a book your kids will enjoy instead. Take breaks between chapters to talk about it and speculate what might happen to the characters next.
- **Practice math skills in the kitchen.** While you're cooking holiday meals, invite children in to practice fractions, adding and subtracting. Have them count the cups of flour poured into the mixing bowl, or count equal numbers of cookies into gift bags.
- **Invite discovery while shopping.** If you do holiday shopping, engage your child in a game of discovery. Encourage them to closely examine artistic items at a craft fair, telling you about the colors and materials they notice. Let them describe objects that catch their attention.

All these activities are related to the holiday and can be fun, while also allowing your child to continue their Montessori learning. This way, they'll be ready to step back into school once the holiday is over.

#### Prepare Your Child to Go Back to School

One final thing to do before student holiday breaks end is to prepare your child to return to the routine of the classroom. By doing so, you make their transition easier and help them ease back into the learning process successfully.

- **Sleep** — Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep. Ideally, keep them on their regular sleep schedule so they won't be dragging on school mornings.
- **Eat breakfast** — With holidays, our eating habits may go out the window. But keep your children in the habit of eating a nutritious breakfast.
- **Get organized** — Before school starts back up, make sure your child's school items and clothes are clean, organized, and in place.

Enjoy your family time and see you in 2025!



## COMING SCHOOL'S EVENTS

### in January

- ◆ January 6 (M) - School resumes after Winter Break
- ◆ January 17 (F) - ELEMENTARY Parent / Teacher Conference Day (Virtual)

The link to sign up for Parent/Teacher Conference will be sent on Thursday, January 2nd.

No school for Elementary Students on Conference Day, January 17th.

- ◆ January 20 (M) - No School (Martin Luther King JR. Day)
- ◆ January 15—31 - Returning Families Preferred Re-Enrollment Period

*The new year arrives with new problems and questions for us. In the beginning of every year, the parents of 5-6-year-old kids have to make a very important decision – what is the next step for my child? Where should he/she continue his/her education?*

*There are two common things we hear every year from the parents.*

*The first one is a question “Will my child be prepared for public kindergarten or elementary?”*

*It is very important to understand that if we would prepare our students for traditional kindergarten, then we would not be Montessori, but the same conventional school where kids of the same age (but still developmentally very different) learn the same material at the same time based on the teacher's plan.*

*While offering a versatile learning opportunity to our students, the major goal of the Montessori schools is preparing our students not for public kindergarten or elementary level, but for real life, which more and more requires great thinking and organization skills, independence, initiative, creativity, ability to work as a team, leadership skills and so on. We provide a child centered, multiage environment, where kids are learning at their own pace through a hands-on experience, exploring, discovering, making connections, and developing all necessary life skills without being stressed.*

***It is important to understand that the Montessori Kindergarten Year is the final and very crucial year in the primary 3-year cycle of the Montessori environment.***

*The second thing that we hear every year from many parents is that “being in a Montessori environment during one or few years was enough for our child's development. It is time for him/her to move to a public school like most of his/her friends. He /She will be fine there.”*

***There is no “enough” in education and no bounds in a child's development. And being “just fine”- is this what we are looking for for our kids?***

*So, if you are still open to exploring all of the options and possibilities for your child's education, check our coming January and February newsletters in for more information about what Montessori environment offers for the next level of your child's development.*

- ◆ January 29 (W) at 5:30- 6:30 pm- “The Magic of Montessori Materials” - Students' Working with Montessori Materials Presentations for Parents (Elementary and Primary Classes)



# NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS



## Ms. Bridget, Ms. Carole

*"As different as we are from one another, as unique as each one of us is, we are much more the same than we are different. That may be the most essential message of all, as we help our children grow toward being caring, compassionate, and charitable adults."*

~ Fred Rogers

Three weeks was all we had to pack in so much fun and learning. The students look forward to this time of year and the fun holiday traditions.



The month began with science demonstrations. The students were able to pick a demonstration that explains a scientific concept from many books that I brought in from the library. Each child creates the "magic" at home and then brings the materials in to show their classmates, then parents and then the primary classes. The students enjoy this as each child becomes the expert of their demonstration.



As the weather began to change, Ms Suzy brought in some really fun winter art projects to get us excited for winter.



We began to decorate the room and prepare our Christmas tree. We made cards for the seniors at Crystal Pines and then caroled at their facility.



We had fun dressing up for Spirit Week. We had a presentation about Hanukkah from a former student, Gabe, and then learned to sew on a sewing machine thanks to another former student, Samuel.



We also planned our holiday party with appetizers, a punch and Secret Santa gift exchange.



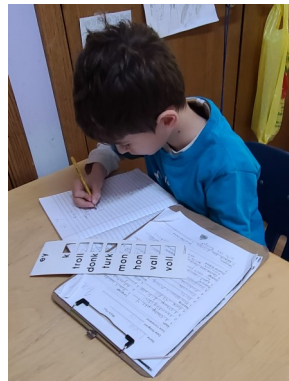
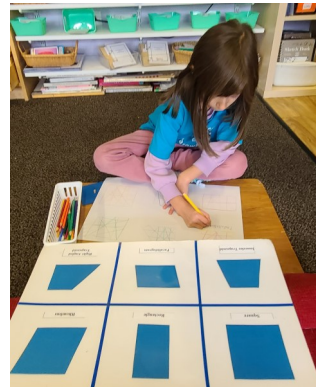
The focus this month was math and reading. I checked in with all students on math and reading. Some students received new lessons as well as reviewing other lessons. Some received new open workplans where they learn more independence of choice. Some moved from just reading to recording comprehension questions. Some moved from picture books to chapter book discussions. Students are getting more comfortable in subjects areas that are their interests.

In the new year, we will continue to learn and to grow in our social and emotional development.

As we head into the new year, my hope is that the spirit of love and understanding for all that I have seen often on the classroom will carry over from 2024 into 2025. Best wishes for an exciting and fun-filled year of growth and learning!

# DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## Elementary Class



## NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Masha, Ms. Laxmi



Welcome to winter and the holiday season! We started the season by assembling, fluffing, and decorating our classroom Christmas tree. The kids took pride in making each branch fluffed just right and picking their favorite ornaments to adorn the tree. Some children added to the room décor by making paper garlands, cutting and gluing Poinsettias, and crafting Christmas Trees from triangles.



Our room was festive just in time for "Reading Under the Stars" Night! Thank you to everyone who came and helped bring 'The Snowy Nap' by Jan Brett to life! The children acted out the scenes of the book, looked for our Hedgeie craft with a scavenger hunt around the room, and got Hedgeie ready for winter with a leaf bed while enjoying some milk and cookies themselves. We hope you enjoyed the night as much as we did!



Spirit Week then brought additional excitement as we looked forward to each other's fun outfits every day and learned more and more about each other! We rounded out Spirit Week with an amazing caroling visit from the Elementary Class and a beautiful performance of some Christmas classics by Woodstock D200 orchestra.

The last week before break brought additional excitement with our first significant snowfall of the season, allowing the children a chance to get the snow shovels and sleds out for some extra fun before we went on break.

We have also seen children more drawn to the complex and multi-step practical life activities such as hand washing (which has over 30 steps to remember!), polishing metal, wood, and glass, caring for class plants, washing towels, scrubbing tables, washing vases, and so much sewing! Each of these complex activities allow the children to practice sequencing in remembering the many steps needed to complete the activity, problem solving as they inevitably stumble into an unexpected or forgotten step, motor control, and resilience. In a world with so much instant gratification coming out kids' way, it is important for them to develop the grit and perseverance needed to work through long and challenging tasks that come their way. And, perhaps most importantly, they are developing a sense of responsibility. A child was polishing a wooden bird that is a décor piece sitting on our shelf and was telling his friend that "the bird was looking dusty and I don't want our beautiful bird to be dusty." Sense of responsibility and care of his environment and community!

By now you have also received and seen the projects that your children carefully worked on throughout December as their family Christmas gifts. Some children chose to paint their Christmas trees, working through a layer of blue background, alternating green shades for the tree, and their choice of colors for decorating the tree, while others chose to sew Christmas tree ornaments adorned with sequin and bead ornaments, which they sewed on one by one.

The children worked together to help explain the process to each other and support their friends when they had questions or needed additional encouragement. We heard a lot of "you're doing such a great job!" and "you've worked so hard on this!" exchanged between the children as they worked to highlight each other's accomplishments – what a beautiful gift of community they have given each other!

In the midst of holiday cheer, we also have seen a continued interest in the Bank Game as more and more students are drawn to the lengthy and large process of setting out and combining 4 digit numbers in addition and multiplication. Other students are exploring odd and even numbers, the hundred board, skip counting with the bead cabinet, addition and subtraction with the strip board and beads.

As we progress in the year, more of our students are working on word building various word families (cat, hat, mat, sat for 'at' word families, for example) as they head into reading, others are working on spelling, and others still are finally getting the excitement of hearing the beginning sounds of words and identifying them in the moveable alphabet! We hope you continue this excitement over break by reading a lot with your children!

And while there was a definite exploration of winter history, fauna and flora with studies of penguins, reindeer, Christmas Trees, and world winter holidays, the most prominent draw has been to map making! Several of our students have challenged themselves to working with the map of the United States and the map of Europe, both filled with many smaller pieces to poke out, line up, and glue, and even more places that need to be labeled! Aside from the obvious study of the location, shapes, and names of these places, children are also practicing their ability to organize their work, stay on task, and keep track of where they are! It is a challenging work but one that brings a lot of benefits and pride to the children.

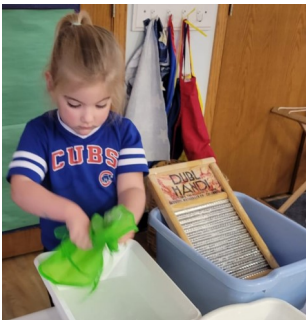
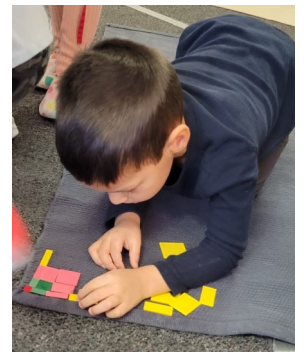
During Line Time, we have been making additional effort to have meaningful movement and stretching time with the children as they are having less time outdoors with the shorter and colder days. Our children need to have a chance for physical development not only for their overall wellbeing but also for their writing and reading skills! Did you know that being able to cross the midline, for example, (ie touching your left elbow to your right knee) is an important skill linked to being able to read across the page and go down to the start of the next line on the page?

We hope you have had a chance to read our recent note with additional ideas of activities to do with your children during break to keep their development progressing!

Have an amazing and safe holiday season. We can't wait to see everyone rested and recharged in 2025!

# DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## East Room



## NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Ellen



December is always a bustling month with so much to do and so little time, both in our lives and in the classroom. December 5th brought us "Reading under the Stars". Our annual family reading night. To set the mood, Maria Shapoval (Max's older sister and former South room student) played Christmas songs on the piano, bravo! Parents read to their children in small cozy groups. Then we read along and acted out bit parts from Jan Brett's "The Snowy Nap". Followed by a scavenger hunt, crafted a leaf hedgehog and of course ended it all with milk and cookies. Thanks to all who were able to attend! As always, it was a wonderful evening. If you did not attend watch for it next year. It is a highlight of the year for the children. There is nothing more special than coming to school in the dark and wearing your Pj's with friends!



Spirit week began on December 9th, the children were so excited during arrivals each day to see what peers had chosen to wear as their favorite, school spirit day (confused a few who thought we were going on a bus), pajamas day, favorite color, team spirit and what was going on for wacky day! As always it was an exciting week.

Another huge highlight of this particular week was a duo of drop-in carolers! On Wacky Day! Just Wacky and beautiful. First the Elementary friends came and caroled in the room! All were awestruck! Then the same day the Woodstock String orchestra of high school students (Maelyn's mom is a string teacher at the high school) arrived on a bus with huge and oh so beautiful string instruments came in and entertained us with the string versions of many Christmas songs! The children were able to touch and pluck the strings of the mighty bass, the cello, violins and I have missed some. It was amazing and a very magical day!



The older children set up the Christmas tree. They helped remove everything from the box and sort the branches by size and color and assembled the tree without assistance at all. The lights were strung, and all began to create decorations for our classroom tree. Candy canes with beads, 3 dimensional ornaments, and a paper chain. Many pokings of gingerbread men as well as snowflakes, were strung with care as well. Pre-K and Kindergarten children took a walk to downtown Crystal

Lake to see the trees and our school tree. If you have not done so yet check out Montessori Pathways tree in downtown Crystal Lake and enjoy the other trees decorated by the community as well. This would be a fun family outing.

Holidays are a great time to create handmade gifts. The older 4-5-year-old children sewed on ornaments of sequins and buttons and one jingle bell and stuffed the tree ornaments as gifts. This was a great exercise for fine motor control and stamina, stamina, stamina. Kudos to all, they are magical and lovely handcrafted designs. The holiday project took some children over a week to complete. When they finished each child hung their ornament on the classroom tree and patiently waited for all to finish before wrapping individual gifts. Several children were able to thread a small eyed needle by themselves and a few even learned how to tie several types of knots.

The younger children painted a tree on canvas with a round sponge brush and shades of green. They were extremely interested and enjoyed painting as well, some a bit too much! Or the trees were very large?

Practical Life was full of red and green, pouring jingle bells, while the Math brought us tree counting and ornament counting which also included color matching the ornaments on a given tree. For example, the tree with one ornament had just one color to match but the tree with ten had ten ornaments colors to match. This is a lengthy process, and most children only had the stamina to lay it out.



In Language and Science, we added the favorites Parts of a Gingerbread man, Reindeer and Christmas tree. The children enjoy learning the names of the parts building their vocabulary, matching picture to picture and word to word, coloring, writing skills and fine motor. Not to mention attention to detail and visual discrimination needed to match the words to the correct part. Remember to "read" these little books with your child and if possible, set up a library for your child to store their creations. The older children composed Christmas lists with the movable alphabet, writing the lists in their journals or as a list for Santa.

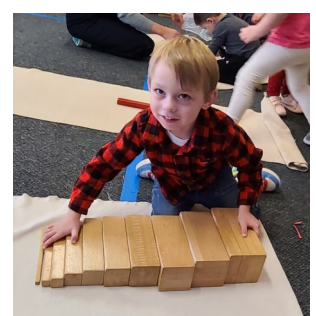
In the area of Geography and Cultural studies we talked a little about Hannukah, Kwanza which all fall on December 25th this year. As the holidays align our wish is that the world unites as one. The children loved learning the dreidel game, even without chocolate gelt. They children amazingly learned game very quickly recognizing the Hebrew letters on the dreidel and what each means.

Enjoy the break, have a magical holiday but most importantly stay safe and healthy!



# DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## South Room



# NEWS FROM THE PRE-K / KINDERGARTEN AFTERNOON GROUP



**Ms. Masha, Ms. Kathy**

Our Pre-K and Kinder group enjoyed one last field trip of 2024 – a brisk walk to Downtown Crystal Lake to see Christmas Tree Lane! The children walked around, noting the different decorations and guessing what the theme was intended to be.



There were many beautiful trees that they enjoyed posing with, but of course they were most excited to see the Montessori Pathways tree. Our tree was decorated with ornaments that had pictures of children working, and our students enjoyed looking through each one. Some even found their own picture or a picture of their friends!



However the most popular choice this month was the Christmas Tree ornament sewing, as many children wanted the additional time to add extra sequins and beads to their tree and get the edges sewn just right. The trees took a lot of patience and effort from our little friends and we hope you enjoy receiving them as much as we enjoyed watching the effort that went into making them!



During outside time, the Pre-K and Kinder group has been taking the additional time after the nappers go inside for some PMD (Perceptual Motor Development), which works on the child's coordination, balance, body awareness, and stamina! You can keep this progress going during the winter break with simple stretching and taking walks as a family to enjoy the lights outside.



Have a wonderful holiday season – we can't wait to see everyone again in 2025!

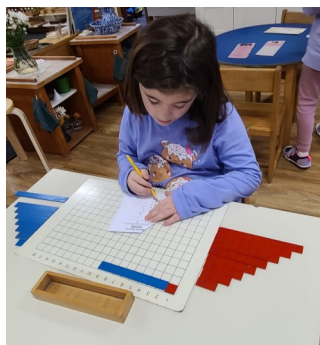


During our work cycle, we are seeing more children exploring working with new friends as they find new interests to explore, be it word building, multiplication, map making, or working with Geometric Solids. This is the time when children also tend to get more creative with their works, maybe choosing to paint a parts of a flower book instead of coloring it with pencil, or tracing the bases of the Geometric Solids to see their similarities.



# DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## Pre-K and Kindergarten Extended Day Group



# MORE WONDERFUL MOMENTS AT MONTESSORI PATHWAYS



*“An interesting piece of work, freely chosen, which has the virtue of inducing concentration rather than fatigue, adds to the child’s energies and mental capacities, and leads him to self-mastery.”  
~ Maria Montessori*

