

Montessori Pathways' News



November

Notes from Ms. Alena (Head of School)

I believe that November is a month that not only begins the holiday season, but also brings the spirit of giving and sharing. Following the Montessori approach, we at Montessori Pathways would like to teach our students the importance of sharing, giving, and helping, which will let them continue to be proud citizens of a country that is ready to help people around the world in any difficult situation.

Annual Community Harvest

"You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving."

~ Robert Louis Stevenson

We began November with a **Giving with Gratitude Week**, when kids and their families were able to donate food and other items to the **33rd Annual Community Harvest**, which will benefit clients of the Crystal Lake Food Pantry. Together we collected and donated **864 pounds** of food and other items.



It was a great chance to teach our students not only the importance of giving thanks for what they get, but also the importance of giving.



"Children must grow not only in the body but in the spirit, and the mother longs to follow the mysterious spiritual journey of the beloved one who tomorrow will be the intelligent, divine creation, man."

~ Maria Montessori

Thank you from the heart



- ◆ Thank you, parents, for all of your help, support, and participation in the kids' learning process, and for giving your kids a chance to feel the Thanksgiving spirit!
- ◆ Thank you to our Elementary students for helping to load the donated items for the Crystal Lake Food Pantry!



- ◆ Thank you, all our families, for the privilege to help your children grow.

Montessori Cultural Study

Montessori Classrooms are full of materials which encourage children to explore learning about other customs, cultures, and people of the world. Having multicultural environment gives even more opportunity to our children to be exposed to multicultural study. This month Ms. Laxmi, one of our Primary Teachers, talked to our children about Diwali, the Indian festival of lights that symbolizes the spiritual victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. Thank you, Ms. Laxmi, for sharing your holiday tradition with our students. Parents, if you have anything to share about your culture and traditions with our children, you are always welcome to come! Our children love learning about diversity!



Parents' Corner

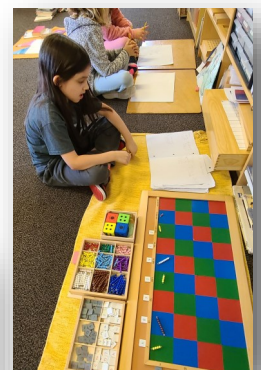
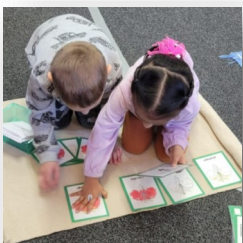


~ Process over Product in Montessori Classroom ~

It is not easy to be a Montessori Parent. Tolerating your child's shoes being on the wrong feet, sitting on your hands while they flip their coat thirty times before finally getting it on their body independently, and remaining unemotional but empathetic during meltdowns all come with the territory. Another aspect of Montessori that can be difficult to accept as a parent is the idea of valuing "process over product."

Most of the work a child does in their Primary class does not involve the creation of a physical product that the child can take home to show Mom and Dad, especially when they are on the younger end of the spectrum. Instead, the experience itself with the materials is what is important—not the completion of a worksheet, test, or other physical proof that a child has worked on a certain topic. That makes it tricky as a parent to know what your child is working on and how well they understand it. They are not bringing anything home for you to assess! And to make matters worse, when you ask your child what they did at school today, they answer, "Nothing."

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COMING SCHOOL'S EVENTS



in December



Christmas Tree Lane in Downtown of Crystal Lake

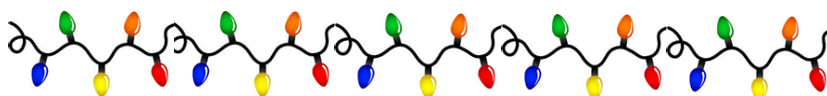
Montessori Pathways School loves to support Crystal Lake Downtown by sponsoring their amazing events. At this time of the year we are happy to participate in Christmas Tree Lane Decoration. Go and find the Montessori Pathways' Christmas Tree in CL downtown.

- ◆ **December 5 (Th) at 5:30pm —Family “Reading Under the Stars” Night** (Primary Classes)
- ◆ **December 6 (F) at 2:00pm —Elementary Science Demo Day** (Parents are welcome to attend)
- ◆ **December 9—13 (M—F) —Spirit Week at Montessori Pathways**

Every day of this week will be special. Kids and teachers are welcome to dress up according to theme of the day.

- **Monday—Montessori Pathways Day** (wear schools blue t-shirts on top of long sleeve shirt)
- **Tuesday—Comfy Day** (wear your favorite pajamas or any other comfy clothes)
- **Wednesday—Go Team! Day** (wear your favorite sport teams' jersey, t-shirt, and /or cap)
- **Thursday—My Favorite Color Day** - (wear anything of your favorite color)
- **Wacky Friday** (wear mix and match socks, mismatched clothes, make a crazy hair)
- ◆ **December (Surprise) —Caroling around the School** (by Elementary Class)
- ◆ **December (16) at 10:00am - Montessori Community Service—Elementary Class Trip to Crystal Pines Rehabilitation / Health Care Center.**

Our elementary students will share a holiday season spirit with Crystal Pines' residents.



- ◆ **December 23 (M) - January 3 (F) - No school; Winter Break—Enjoy the Holiday Season!!!**
- ◆ **January 6 (M) - School resumes**

NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS



Ms. Bridget, Ms. Carole

November has brought new discoveries and growth in a few areas.

There are many buzz words and phrases the Montessori teachers use often. It is sometimes hard to explain the terms without showing examples of these and telling stories about observances of these key parts to the Montessori child. This month, there are 2 that I want to share: the prepared environment and the importance of the three-year cycle.



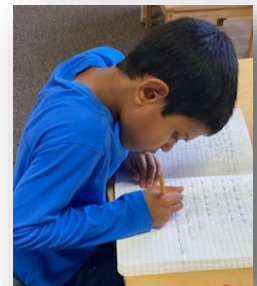
In the fall, Montessori teachers enter their classrooms and plan for their students. Questions flood our minds....*How should I organize materials to visually stimulate further exploration? Where should I put items to make it easily accessible to all children and encourage independence? Where would I want to set up my work in the class?* These are just a few.



One way I prepare the environment to create excitement is on our reading shelf. Weekly, I bring in new books. These are gathered from the library and put in a special location in the room. How I choose the books vary. Some are from recommendations that I get from the librarians, websites or award winners. Some are selected by students who write a book request. They record the book title and their name and then I order them from the library. Some books are part of a series that kids have latched onto.... right now it is the Dog Man series and other graphic novels. Finally, I might choose a book I have previously read aloud.

Then, I prepare a half hour of uninterrupted reading each day except for Friday. When I began doing this, it took some time for many to create the stamina to sit with a book, or books, for that long. As the year progresses, you can hear a pin drop during this time. **I read, they read.** Once this occurs, storytelling explodes. Vocabularies increase. Passions flare.

Writing changes. Once a week, I give a writing lesson and then allow students the time to write. I give them about 15 minutes to write and then increase the time as we journey into our year. We are now at 25 minutes. I write too. Then I allow anyone who desires to share their current writing to do so. We also now have individual dictionaries where students can write new words that they have encountered.



Finally, **the 3-year cycle** is the reason why I will never return to traditional education. Not only is it great for the kids: less time reacclimating to a new year, teacher, system, philosophy and rules, but it is great for the students and me to track and celebrate growth. To see growth in one year is possible. But to have the kids SEE their growth in all areas, one needs to be observing it with them over time. Maria Montessori and other child philosopher/educators noticed this three-year time period where kids are being exposed, cruising and mastering knowledge and social/emotional growth. Students recognize this in their academic and behavior changes. They sense it and I am able to validate it along with their peers.

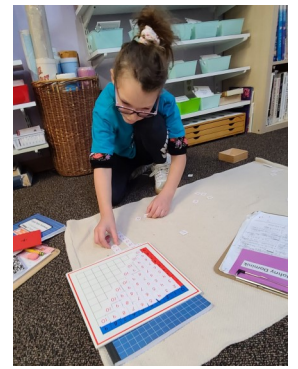
Work plans have been modified for better choices. Students are feeling more empowered to choose work and accomplish it in a timely manner. Ms. Carole and I are able to work 1 on 1 more easily with children who need a little boost. Students are making better partner choices.



Finally, it has been a month of gratitude. From collecting food from home, to writing things we are grateful for that we share daily to visiting our local food pantry for a tour to sharing items from their gratitude scavenger hunt. Students are realizing how lucky they are and are learning to be grateful for all of these gifts. We are ALL grateful for Montessori Pathways.

NOVEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

Elementary Class



PRE-K / KINDERGARTEN AFTERNOON GROUP



Ms. Masha, Ms. Kathy

After our trip to Veteran Acres Park to enjoy the last bit of warm fall weather, we had a slew of beautiful leaves to work with! We have sorted them by color, counting the number collected in each, and graphing the results. We then pressed the leaves and have been using them for creative art, such as the bouquet in a vase craft.



We also used some fresh leaves to make imprints on air-dry clay, cutting around the margins and folding the edges to make a small dish that the children then painted.



The afternoon group was also fortunate enough to see "The Pout-Pout Fish" play at the Raue Center. While the main purpose was indeed to see and enjoy the play, we also noticed beautiful moments of our Kindergarteners guiding the Pre-K students on safely walking through Downtown Crystal Lake, awareness of the passage of time through discussions of seasonal décor in the storefronts ("Why are there Christmas decorations up when we haven't had Thanksgiving yet?"), and empathy as some students had questions about the theater and play and others stepped in to help them.

The afternoon is also a time for students to dive deeper into topics of interest, often working with different friends than during the morning work cycle.



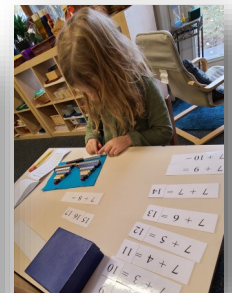
We are seeing more students eager to become writers with their journals, continued interest in skip counting with the bead cabinet chains, working together to understand addi-

tion and build words, and exploring geometry with Geometric Solids.



When the afternoon work cycle ends, the children work together to clean and reset the room for themselves for the next day, wipe down the tables, fold laundry, and prepare snack.

We frequently discuss the need to take care of the space that we all use and keep it orderly for our future selves, working together to create a beautiful space for ourselves and our friends. We encourage you to implement the same at home – sharing the responsibility with your children of working together to clean and reset the house at the end of the day!



NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

Ms. Kathy, Ms. Ellen



November has been a busy month. The children shifted focus, reluctantly, from Halloween to more of a Fall and Thanksgiving themes. What does it mean to be grateful? What is giving with Gratitude? Why do we bring food to school? The children were amazed to learn not every child has food at home. They were excited to be able to help. Helping others is a vital component of the Montessori classroom. We are seeing the children who previously needed help themselves with things, rise (without being asked) and help others. They have become competent at zipping coats, or doing specific work, which they themselves only recently mastered. It is a joy to hear, "I can help you!"

The children gain confidence with each new accomplishment, and it is reinforced through teaching others. This was abundantly obvious on our first snow day November 21, 2024! The children who started in summer camp or the beginning of the school year had No, and I mean No idea of how to handle all the outerwear they had. All the returning students stepped up to show how to take care of all that winter gear! Coats and boots go in one closet and snowpants on hangers in entirely different areas. Winter adds so many steps in caring for belongings independently. We have 25 coats, 25 hats, 25 pairs of boots, 25 pairs of snow pants, 50 pairs of hopefully labeled mittens (many of which are the same, so label them) 50, not to mention scarves! Whew! Please review the winter clothing procedure emails. If your child is not prepared with all the necessary gear, they will not go out. Mittens and gloves must be dried and returned to school dry with the labeled plastic mitten bag in your child's blue bag DAILY!

In November it was exciting to witness the change of the seasons. Leaf bouquets were gathered at nearly every recess. Children were raking and gathering the leaves to toss overhead only to have them rain down and repeat! The older children collected and pressed different leaves. We will use them for various art projects as well as leaf identification. Some children are exploring the Maple tree. We are doing leaf rubbings in different colors; they collected maple seeds and did bark rubbings. We discussed Maple tree sap and how it is delicious on pancakes!

We read "We are grateful = Ostalheliga", a native American morning blessing. The older children journaled what they are thankful for.



All enjoyed our Native American shirt making. Well once we got the hang of it! We made homemade bread. The hit of the month was making butter. We took a liquid and turned it into a solid just by shaking it? It changed color as well. It was delicious. All were amazed and really enjoyed it!



Fall is one of the best times to explore sensorially. The Sensorial area of the classroom offers exploration of the senses, sight, touch, taste, smell, and auditory senses. Sensorial is learning through discrimination of the senses. Maria Montessori designed the materials to help children classify, clarify, and understand the world around them. She observed that from birth children learn through their senses touching and manipulating the world around them. This area of the classroom sets the foundation for learning in the other areas. These explorations develop nerve connections stimulating the senses and heighten memory. The various qualities of each material is isolated, from the Pink Tower is big to small, the Brown Stair is thick to thin, the Red Rods are short to long etc. In each of the subcategories in the Sensorial area, the materials prepare the child for Math, Language, Geometry and writing as well. To an adult the Pink Tower looks simple. To the younger children it is complex and many of the middle qualities of size are not easily discriminated. The youngest children often build an uneven tower with smaller cubes placed in the middle. The tower topples and the child tries again, or an older child will help to build it. The child repeats the activity and repeats it until finally they master it. No one has noticed the Pink Tower resembles cubes of numbers, I will keep you posted! This simplistic material is built with ten cubes of $1 \text{ cm}^3 - 10 \text{ cm}^3$. It is the same as the cubes for the numerals 1- 10 which the kindergarten children were exploring. It sets the foundation for more advanced math work.

In addition, the children classify sound by matching pitches and grading from loudest to softest, matching colors and the textures of touch tablets, various weights of wood using the baric tablets. Sensorial is an exciting and developmentally necessary part of the Montessori classroom. There is so much to explore in the Sensorial area of the classroom. Research it and you will be amazed!

Fall brings us so much, too much to mention, but we also added types of squirrels, parts of a squirrel, life cycle of a turkey etc. Look for these books when they come home and have your child, as with any book "read" the back to you. Let them retell their book. There are no wrongs or rights. It is what was gained from the experience? Did they gain cutting skills, poking skills, vocabulary, writing, etc....? They either know how to care for their belongings or not.

Remember each of us is an individual and learns at a pace made for only us.

NOVEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

South Room



NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Masha, Ms. Laxmi



November always brings a bit of excitement as the air starts to cool, the days shorten, the leaves fall, and the spirit of the holidays slowly creeps in. Ms. Laxmi helped us get excited for the upcoming holidays with an engaging presentation about Diwali, which was celebrated right after Halloween this year! She wore her beautiful sari for the occasion, shared about the traditions for this holiday, and showed how the festival of lights is celebrated with clay lamps. It was so fascinating for the children to see a different way to light something that seems so similar to the candles we use everyday at lunch time! We also realized that most holidays around the world during this time of year are celebrating light and harvest.

As we near Thanksgiving, we took a look at some other fall harvest holidays around the world – the people of the world are as similar as they are different! Of course, we also dove into the start of the Thanksgiving holiday in the US, and children were surprised to hear that there was once a “First Thanksgiving” with less than 200 people. We looked at some simple pictures of the people and food at that time to note the foods and clothes from back then. Some of our students noticed the similarities between the color of the traditional clothes of the Native Americans with the color of the tea dying shirts we were making in class! We noticed the fringes on their clothes, which the children also worked to add, along with beads and Native American symbols of their choice to adorn their shirts.



We came together to bake our own bread and homemade herb butter, which we shared together while wearing the handmade shirts in our own small Thanksgiving celebration. There was a lot of hard work and community work happening this month!

“Thanksgiving is about coming together as a community,” said one of our Kindergarteners. And come as a community we did! Not only for our school community, but also to help our community at large during Giving with Gratitude Week. Our students are often taken aback to hear that not everyone has a home full of meals, snacks, treats, and even necessities like diapers, but they are always so eager and excited to know that they can help and love to brainstorm items that they can bring in for the food pantry. Thank you to everyone for taking part in Giving with Gratitude Week – it really does resonate with the children and they talk about it frequently with much pride!

Despite the bustle of November, the children have continued their exploration in and outside of the room! The many fallen leaves to rake and collect outside have naturally led to a greater interest in botany – studying parts of a leaf, types of leaves, and recognizing deciduous versus coniferous trees. Zoology has welcomed exploration of the parts of a turkey and turkey lifecycle, as well as parts of a squirrel and types of squirrels.



Other students are exploring Geography with the study of land and forms (how does a cape differ from a peninsula?), Land/Air/Water, and maps of the world.

We are seeing a progression in the language area as more children are acquiring enough sounds to begin building words, while others are exploring syllables, and others still are reading their first books.



In math, we are seeing a continued interest in working with the bead cabinet, which allows the children to physically make squares and cubes of numbers, while also practicing the skip counting imperative for addition and multiplication. We have also been loving the Bank Game. Children work together to each build 4-digit numbers with unit beads (a single cube), ten bars (made of 10 cubes), hundred squares (made of 10 ten bars), and thousand cubes (made of 10 hundred squares) and label them. Then they sum the numbers (or multiply, or subtract, or divide) by literally pushing them together into a new set of units, tens, hundred, and thousands, and labeling their sum. It is a very literal and memorable way to work through the various mathematical operations in a hands-on way.

While our food preparation area has been as busy as ever in Practical Life, with apple slicing, carrot peeling, banana cutting, green bean trimming, coffee grinding, and cookie baking keeping everyone engaged, the true star of the Practical Life area this month has been sewing. Aside from the practical skills of sewing on a button or stitching fabric together, sewing provides a phenomenal practice in all the skills needed for writing. Holding a needle requires even more precision and refinement than holding a pencil. Tracking the movement of the needle along with the stitch translates to tracking their pencil on paper, and the words in front of them as they read. Remembering the movement of the hands needed to sew on a button versus a straight stitch versus a whip stitch requires practice in memory, recall, and great concentration. Sewing is known to develop and improve handwriting in a meaningful and engaging way, and we are excited to see it be such a hit with our group this year! We can't wait to see what they sew next!

NOVEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

East Room



MORE WONDERFUL MOMENTS AT MONTESSORI PATHWAYS



“The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth.” – Maria Montessori

