



Classroom II News

January-February 2011

We want to thank you for your generosity to the teachers and children of room II. We received thoughtful gifts for the holidays and we are grateful. We want to thank the Harris family for their Classroom gift card which will help us to supplement our materials. While we enjoyed the restful break with our families it was very nice to return to the routine of the classroom, witness the excitement of the children, and share stories of our adventures outside of school. We are back in full swing and this newsletter will let you know of: upcoming exciting events; new courses of study; some Montessori Philosophy; ideas for your families.

Intern News:

Classroom II has an a.m. intern (Mr. Brann) and a p.m. intern (Mrs. Pepper). As Mr. Brann & Mrs. Pepper journey through their intern year after a rigorous course of study last summer, we are excited to share in their journey particularly through lessons related to their year long project. This project is an in depth study on a subject which they have chosen based on the children's interest and their expertise. In the morning we have embarked on a discovery of plants and gardening. In the afternoon we have incorporated elements of Central American culture in the environment. We have explored bulbs (parts of a bulb and the witnessed the growth cycle) and prepared guacamole and we are looking forward to more lessons to come. These lessons will flow throughout each area of the classroom (Practical Life, Sensorial, Science, Math, Language, Geography and Art). One of the beauties of the half day program is that the teachers and interns design and share materials and lessons with both the morning and afternoon programs.

What did you do today?

Have you ever wondered what your child did at school? You get in the car at dismissal or sit down to dinner together asking some variation of the question, "What did you do today?" The dreaded response, "I don't know..." leaves you unsatisfied. Here are some of the things we have done or are planning to do in the next few weeks. Hopefully knowing the names of the choices will help you to spark some interesting conversation about your child's day in Classroom II.

Practical Life: Orange peeling, strawberry slicing, sewing a book mark, dusting, watering plants, polishing silver, guacamole making, jam spreading

Language: Writing a letter, rhyming words, pattering, story sequencing, building words, reading series, tracing with metal insets, articles, verbs

Math: counting 1-9 with stamps, sand paper numbers, teen board, tens board, big lay out, snake game (exchanging), fractions, number building, counting chains

Geography: Continent Maps (current focus: Europe & Asia), Southeastern United States, Animals of continents, flag making, directions & mapping

Sensorial: Geometric shapes, Geometric solids, color mixing, color grading, mystery bag matching (tactile), matching scents

Science: Hair, Skin, Eyes, Mammals, dissolving, chemical reactions, simple machines

Music & Story: Snow is falling (English /Japanese), Sing about Martin, Sambalele (Frank Leto), Mr. Brann and the Harmonica, Mrs. Pepper and musical instruments, Bluegrass Music, Zin! Zin! Zin! a Violin by Lloyd Moss, Animal Orchestra by Scott Gustafson, Mole Music by David McPhail, Owl Moon by Jane Yolen, When I Was Young In The Mountains by Cynthia Rylant

Remember, this is a sampling of some of the choices available (or soon to be available) in some of the areas of the classroom.

The Third Year of Primary

The Montessori program for three to six year olds is designed to last three years. With many educational options available for the five to six year old student some parents who are considering a non-Montessori elementary education may wonder how important it is for their child to complete the last year. There are many factors that make the third year an important one to include.

The Montessori curriculum is very precise. Each lesson builds upon the prior one thus giving the child a solid foundation. When the students first enter the program they work with materials that are very concrete but by the third year the students are ready to work with more abstract materials. It is a time when learning is internalized and reinforced.

There are many complex concepts that the third year Montessori student is introduced to that are usually not a part of a non-Montessori program. Third year students are given lessons on such skills as addition and subtraction with trading, multiplication, division and identifying parts of speech. The lessons are presented with materials that are hands-on and so they are very developmentally appropriate. This learn by doing method provides the background the child needs to truly understand and to prepare them for more abstract learning regardless of where they go for their elementary years.

Although the Montessori materials are a critical component of the third year the social aspects of being a third year student may be even more important. Third year students become the role models and helpers in the classroom. As the younger students admire their knowledge, discipline, and eagerness to learn, the older students continue to develop their self confidence and leadership skills.

The older children have many opportunities to become peer tutors. The younger children often ask them to demonstrate a material or for help when they are not sure what to do next. Research has shown peer tutoring to be

beneficial to all involved. The tutor giving the lesson is often able to show and explain in a way that is meaningful to the younger child since it wasn't that long ago that they were "in their shoes". The tutor also reinforces his own knowledge and experiences a sense of accomplishment from helping others.

The Montessori Classroom is a very warm and caring environment. Respect and concern for others is an integral component. The children and teachers feel a strong sense of community and feel connected to one another. After having spent two years with the child the teachers know the child very well and are in a good position to determine what needs to be done to prepare the child for the elementary years.

The third year in a Montessori classroom is a special one for the students, parents, and teachers. It is a time for the students to demonstrate and celebrate their independence and a time for teachers and parents to marvel at the growth that has occurred.

Montessori Philosophy & "Planes of Development"

The child's inner processes of development of mind and personality are what Montessori refers to as psychic development. Each child, regardless of culture, has a "painstaking teacher" or "special psychic force" which is innate. (The Absorbent Mind, p. 8) Through the process of psychic development, spontaneous learning occurs in children (a prime example is the spontaneous acquisition of language and culture). The full potential of the psychic development of the child requires the prepared environment, freedom within limits, and love.

Psychic development begins at birth and flows through several distinct periods or **Planes of Development**. The Planes of Development are periods during which infants to young adults have distinct learning characteristics. The Planes of Development are divided as follows:

Birth – 6 yrs focus on independence, coordination, concentration and self discipline/order, dynamic personality changes

6 yrs – 12 yrs focus on social involvement, moral justice, sense of wonder, calm/stable with physical/mental growth

12 yrs – 18 yrs focus on trust, self expression, self reflectors, commitment to responsibility, human sexuality (similar to the first plane)

(The Absorbent Mind, pp. 19-20)

Events Calendar

Parent Education Night, February 3rd, for more details check Thursday Kids Mail

Breakfast Café, February 11th, for more details check Thursday Kids Mail

Valentine's Day, February 14th Cards will be exchanged. Please send 30 cards for a.m. or 20 cards for p.m. (This includes students & teachers) Each child should **sign the "from:" portion** only, leaving the "to:" portion blank. Bags will be provided for your child's card.