

Snow still covers the ground in what is the coldest winter in recent memory, but the groundhog didn't see his shadow, daylight is lasting longer, and the first bulbs are starting to sprout, visible on those few days when the snow actually melts. In the classroom, the work that students have been busy with is growing in scope and depth, and the children are like the crocuses, ready to burst into bloom as spring approaches.

Our history timelines have reached the more exciting eras where life began, and the Paleozoic Era in particular has fascinated them. Our trip to Raven Run in November was very interesting and many children found fossils from the time when an ancient ocean covered Kentucky, so when they see these animals on the Timeline of Life, it connects even better for them. The third year students researched ancient life and are giving their report to the rest of the class. Now we are moving on to the Mesozoic and Cenozoic Eras, and expect the excitement to grow as we study dinosaurs and early hominids.

The Junior Great Books program has started for second year students and they particularly enjoy writing their own stories, often read aloud at circle times. The drive to create and share these works, along with the admiration and encouragement they receive from their peers, lets them become comfortable speaking in public, a trait shared by many Montessori-educated children.

The third year students also participate in the Junior Great Books Program, as well as caring for the trout we are raising and that they will release in the spring. In addition, they are now official Junior Master Gardeners and will meet regularly with their third-year peers from classrooms 5 and 6 for the rest of the school year, working in small groups and choosing botany-related experiments and projects.

Since we have had so much snow this season, sledding has become a favorite activity for some on the playground. There must be magic in those flakes (and for some people a lifetime fascination- ask your child about Snowflake Bentley), because there is no arguing or conflict on the hill- only the delighted screams of children flying down, often in chains of sleds, sometimes dumping all the occupants into the snowy bushes at the bottom. Even when they run into each other, sometimes knocking them over, there is only laughter and glee.

In December, we chose names and made gifts for each other- we call it Secret Giving. Because there were so many absent before winter break, we exchanged them after school started again in January. This is a community of caring, giving souls- they all seemed happy to receive and to give their handmade presents. Nora's mother, Jocelyn Cowen, visited and brought samples of wool, some fresh from the sheep grown by her family in Arkansas, and some finished yarn, in the process of being knitted, as well as pictures of the sheep and the farm they live on. Several children have since been inspired to learn knitting on their own after the brief lesson given by Ms. Cowen!

In January, Oscar's mother, Susan Larson, came to class to talk to them about Spain and the Spanish language. Max Kurtz, Vivie's dad, brought a copy of Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have A Dream" speech and shared it via laptop. Evan's mother, Julie Brock, kindly handles the Scholastic Books program that not only offers students and parents an opportunity to buy appropriate books, but the bonus points gained have allowed us to purchase many new books for the classroom as well. Upcoming visits from Kelly Bradley, Bill's mom, and Srikant Dharwad, Sanat's dad, will engage the children in statistics and physics. Thank you to all our parents for all you do, and a special thanks to these folks as well. If you have a business or hobby that you could share, please call us- we'd love to have you come to share. And as always, we encourage you to observe (call Joellen to set it up) and join your child for lunch if you can.

One last reminder: we have special classes on Thursdays (art, P.E., library, music, and Spanish) and have snack as a group before 9 am. If your child brings snack that day, it's a good idea to get here on time, and to provide a snack that doesn't require much preparation and is easy to eat from a napkin (chips and salsa don't work well, for example).