

## News from Classroom V

When we start back to school each August, the year ahead seems so long, but with so many active learners and so much material to cover, it goes by at an ever-increasing pace, and suddenly we are almost halfway through the school year!

While both classroom teachers, Ms. Balsam and Ms. Stone Dodson, are new to the class, most of the children are returning students and have helped us get to know them and have also been wonderful at leading the way for the new students. We also have a great group of parents who have been invaluable in contributing their time, talents, and assistance. With their help, we have been on some excellent field trips to see the UK Art Museum, a performance of “The Monkey King”, and the Falls of the Ohio. We teachers are so grateful to have such a group of adults committed to their children’s education and experiences.

We have also had some great in-house performances and activities, such as the Lexington Children’s Theater, storyteller Antonio Rocha on International Peace Day, and most recently, the UK Opera Theater. Upcoming events include a trio of folk tales written and performed by UK Theater Department freshmen, and a visit from Anthony Redfeather Nava, who will bring his traveling museum of Native American artifacts.

Continuing what is now a tradition, the third year students from all three classrooms spent two school days and the night between them at Camp Shawano with just teachers, a bonding experience that includes hiking, games, meal preparation, and the challenge of a climbing wall. In the spring, the entire class, along with the other lower elementary classes and lots of parents (we hope) will spend the night at the environmental 4-H camp in Carlisle, Kentucky. Mark your calendars for April 26-27 now!

At our first Parent Education Night in October, the focus was on the Practical Life curriculum, a crucial component of the Montessori philosophy. From toddlers to upper elementary children, the aspects of what we at the lower elementary level call Everyday Living were discussed and demonstrated. The skills learned from these mostly hands-on activities contribute to the feeling of community we all

seek, and the gratitude to all the previous generations that Maria Montessori wrote about. Parents who give their children opportunities to contribute to the family will be richly rewarded- children love to feel that they are appreciated for even small tasks, and children of this age are capable of almost anything. It adds to their sense of independence and responsibility, qualities near and dear to the Montessori way.

Lower elementary children can choose their clothes and dress themselves, prepare lunch, take care of family pets, fold and iron laundry, water plants, work in the garden, dust, straighten and clean, take out garbage, do recycling and composting, set tables, and wash, dry, and put away dishes, among many other chores. The practical life exercises in the classroom help children own their classroom, and they feel pride in its maintenance.

In a few short weeks, we will begin a new calendar year and be impressed with their absorption of knowledge, independence, and imagination. We will continue our academic studies as well as refining skills of conflict resolution and interdependence. In the meantime, we hope that families will enjoy the Thanksgiving and winter holidays and appreciate the fleeting nature of the stages that their children pass through- enjoy your children at every opportunity and phase!