

From the Headmaster's Chair

By John Moncure, Ph.D.

This month I want to share a discussion I had this morning with a substitute-in-training.

You may not have considered the subject but, yes, we prepare substitutes to work in our classrooms. It only makes sense: unless the candidate was a Montessori child or parent she will be essentially unprepared to meet the comparatively sophisticated needs of the students in our classes.

Substitutes are required to read the thirty policy and procedure documents of the "Expectations Manual"—including such mind-numbing titles as "Daily Routine", "Natural Disaster Procedures", and "Playground Rules". The last is actually an interesting read, as I recall, originally penned by Mrs. Clark with her class. They familiarize themselves with the "Staff Historical Resource File"—a collection of letters, admonitions and encouragements including an essay from last school year on incident reports, an instruction from 2010 closing a weakness in our pick-up procedures, a directive on security from 2003, and thoughts on respect from 2000. Heady stuff.

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Falling in love with a good book

By Chrissy Muehlbauer

You might find that to be a strange title coming from the Infant Room, but as an avid reader, I cannot stress enough the importance of reading to your child and exposing them to books right from the start. Although the general consensus of our class is that fiber content (taste) of the book is more relevant than the actual content of the book, we use every opportunity we can to encourage the infants to embrace a lifelong love of books!



Bryce Enjoys a Good Book

Research shows that even a very young infant can show interest and focus on the pictures in a book, and this early recognition of the pictures will lead to an understanding of the meaning of pictures

"Book", continued on page 3

Office Notes

By Karen Porter

Many thanks to all the parents for providing us with your child's completed paperwork. Our DSS inspection went well. Please remember if your child receives any new immunizations we will need an updated immunization record. The Parent Handbook has been recently revised in compliance with DSS. Please review the handbook online at <http://www.montessori-camden.com/handbook.html>, there are links on the index page which will take you to each topic. An Evacuation and Emergency Plans document has also been added to the above page, please review this as well.

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They observe in several classrooms, using a form called "Guidelines for Observing in a Montessori Classroom" that asks questions to help them know what to observe. Finally they meet with me to discuss their observations and seek clarification of anything that confused them.

The new substitute came to my office after visiting the Toddler and Primary classes, and she shared her observations with me. I told her that I thought two of the greatest gifts of a Montessori education were the deliberate encouragement of the sense of order and concentration, and the development of sophisticated social skills.

I asked her if she had seen any conflicts in her travels through the campus. At first she said no (remember, she was observing children ages 16 months to 6 years). I told her that probably meant that the children were able to work together well without resorting to assistance from an adult. Then she said, "Well, now that you mention it, I did see two children have a little conflict." My interest piqued, I asked her to describe it.

"Two girls [age 5, their identities to remain veiled]," she said, "were helping set up lunch, placing the small tables in a row." She went on: "One girl picked up a table and had trouble carrying it alone, so the other offered to help. The first girl insisted and kept bumping shelves around the table. So the second girl offered again, and finally the first girl agreed to be helped and they finished setting up

"Chair", continued on next column

Calendar of Events

Montessori Workshop II

- February 7th, 9-10AM or 6:30-7:30PM, Lower Elementary B, discusses Sensorial Materials. Open to all who have completed Workshop I.

Progress Reports

- February 10th – No school except Infants. For others, Rainbow Day. Teachers send out scheduled times; parents may request appointments on days other than the 10th.

Upper Elementary Environmental Camp Trip

- February 15th to 17th – Upper Elementary students go to Barrier Island.

Winter Break

- February 20th to 23rd – No school except Infants. For others, Rainbow Day.

MEPI Conference

- February 24th & 25th – No school. Professional development for faculty at annual international conference.

Montessori Education Week

- February 27th to March 2nd – ceremony on February 29th at the State Museum

Scholastic Book Fair

- March 8th – Information to follow.

Staff Development Day

- March 16th – No school except Infants. For others, Rainbow Day.

"Chair", continued from previous column

the tables without further incident."

My heart warmed! A young lady unfamiliar with the subtleties of a Montessori classroom was able to see for herself how children are capable of resolving a difference of opinion peacefully. Even better, these two girls did it automatically, and without drama or a need for assistance from their teachers.

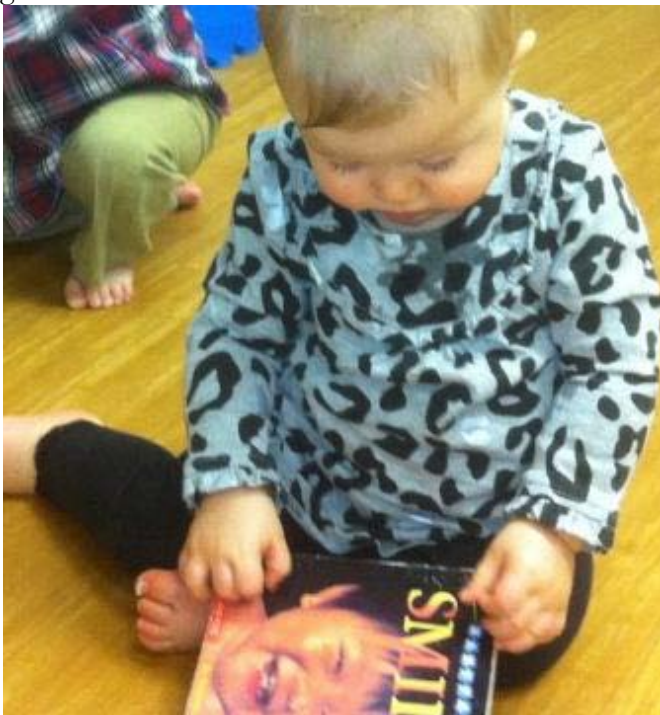
Now I admit that had the story been about two boys age 3, the result would have been less certain. But the process of social maturation works well with both boys and girls. Montessori teachers are so accustomed to the social skills their children exhibit that their expectations of children can become skewed, and they "promote personal and planetary peace and live as though it were already present" (the last item in the Code of Ethics) to which our faculty subscribes and which is one of the documents substitutes read and sign.

and words, not to mention the language development that is encouraged by listening to the tone and inflection in your voice as you bring the book to life.



Avie Engrossed in Literature

In our Infant Environment, we focus on books that portray reality and real life objects. Children believe everything we tell them, so we strive to portray to them the reality of people, family, and the environment in which they live. Books are an important part of our day, and you will not only see us reading to the infants, but also witness the infants enjoying a good book on their own!



Langley Looking at a Book



Life at Buildings and Grounds

The other day we received this email from Mac Willetts, Board Member and Chair of the Building & Grounds Committee, describing an exchange he had in his efforts to make sure we didn't cut any underground utility pipes or cables when we removed the concrete by the side door of the Upper Elementary classroom.

I am thinking of how to do a script screen written for a Saturday Night Live Skit. Lady asked me for name of Construction company, and I said "the Daddies are doing it."

She asked, "So the company doing the excavation is called 'The Daddies Construction Company'? Sir, who are you and who do you work for?"

I said, "I am one of the Daddies." She then went on to say, "Sir, we have to know who is doing the work so we know who to hold responsible for damage!" I said, "Well, just list the school as the Responsible Party."

"Sir," she replied, "you know the Locate is done with an allowance of two and a half feet on either side of the marks for accuracy of the Utility."

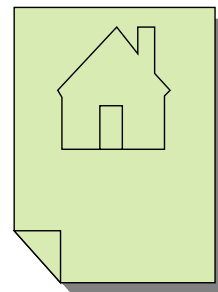
I said, "Ma'am the entire piece of sidewalk is only maybe 20 inches wide. Maybe we don't need this Locate."

"Sir, it is a requirement you call for a Locate before you make any Excavations anywhere!"

Mac concluded: Oh gee, give me a few days and I will have my ration of grog and I will get really wound up and act it out myself for you... it is unending... if a child can call 911 and get an ambulance for an ailing parent, why can't a grown man call 811? Even better: at the outset for the call, a recording came on and told me, "if this is an emergency call, hang up and dial 911! Otherwise hang on for the next available operator."

Sent from Mac Willetts' iPad

Any volunteers to serve on Mac's committee?

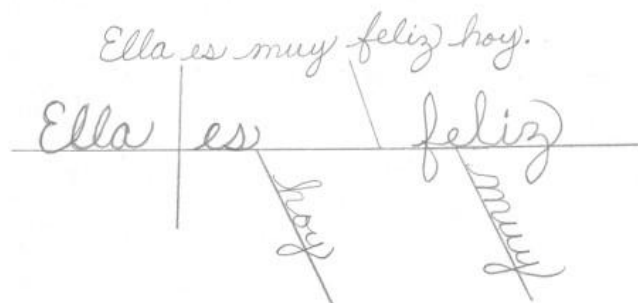


Upper Elementary: January's Busyness

By Alice Clark

The Upper Elementary class seethed with activity in January. As novice grammarians, we have explored the eight parts of speech through study and experience and learned about predicate adjectives through the experience of diagramming. We attacked the “Great Apostrophe Mystery” and are becoming proficient in applying helium to commas when necessary. English has multitudinous (We have outlawed “a lot” as being a poor excuse for communication.) rules and exceptions that challenge all of us.

In our growing knowledge of Spanish, we worked with the vocabulary of *los números, los días de la semana, los meses del año, y las fechas*. Each day we wrote and spoke in Spanish. And each day we wrote and spoke in English.



Diagramming Sentences in Spanish

Our science studies centered upon reproduction in flowering plants, the science and impact of tornadoes, and the ecosystem and adaptations of everyone’s favorite cephalopod, the octopus. J.D. presented a fantastic recap with pictures from a *Smithsonian* article that he found about the things that an octopus can mimic. Jin worked on a video of our skits that showed the work of the parts of the flower in reproducing plants.



Flower parts by JD and Gil



Science is based upon observation. As Megan

“Busyness”, continued at next column

“Busyness”, continued from previous column

wrote, “Observations are important because they make room for more questions, to ask and to answer. The more questions you find, the more you learn. Curiosity leads you to more observations and to learning new things.” I enjoyed another outcome of observations—beautiful drawings and watercolors from the UE students.



Ned’s Flower Art

William’s father liberated our outdoor classroom (he has a jackhammer) so that we can use it as a natural extension of our learning environment. Immediately, the UE students took charge of cleaning and organizing the area for their use. They scrubbed and even sanded the picnic tables for an open-air lunchroom and prepared a storage area for our sports equipment.



Lauren (above) and Megan (left) work to clean up the newly-available UE outdoor space

Idioms

Brenda Coleman

The Lower elementary class has been working on idioms. The students were introduced to the term through the song “Footloose”. The song from the movie sound track of Footloose (with Kevin Bacon) was very popular in the late 1980’s; now is a very popular song in our classroom.



The students found the lyrics of the song and had the opportunity to sing along with the video displaying the words. They found great pleasure and humor in learning such expressions as “Raining cats and dogs”, “icing on the cake” and “add fuel to the fire”.

Allowing the children to learn concepts through music is not only fun, but the experiences created a memorable opportunity they will be able to recall when needed.

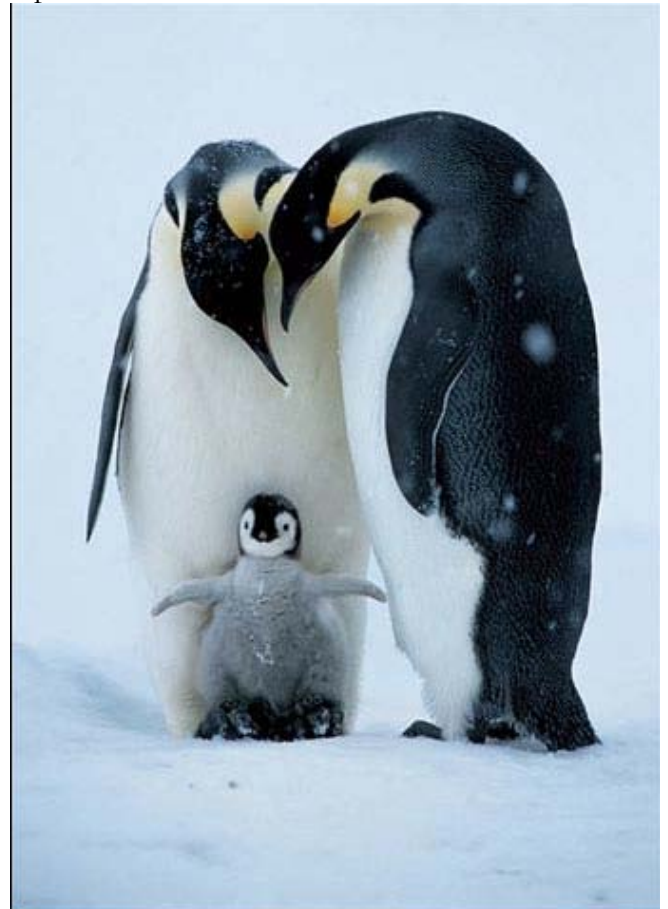


From the Tundra to the Desert

By Ms. Karen

The children of Primary C have had an exciting month discussing the environment of extreme opposites, Antarctica and Australia.

We started our month by talking about the Arctic air that met us back at school after our Christmas Break. It was really nice to have those temperatures to tie into our discussions about Antarctica. The children learned about many animals that live there and how they survive the seasonal long days and then the long winter nights. Talking about the emperor penguins is always a favorite because of their size and the special role the fathers have in the care of the egg/chick while the mother is away feeding. Along with our discussion about Antarctica, we talked about how we measure temperature and did experiments with a thermometer and ice.



Almost as if we had willed it, the weather became warm again for a few days, feeling just the opposite of the week before, as we began our discussion on Australia. The children learned about the

“Tundra”, continued on page 6

desert land, the beautiful Great Barrier Reef and the native Aboriginal People of Australia. The children did dot painting that represented the Uluru Rock in Australia. They also learned about the many animals unique to the continent.



Our artist of the month was Elwyn Lynn, appropriately an Australian, who was an abstract artist and whose work is admired around the world. The featured composer was Nathan Isaac whom was known as the "father of Australian music".

The children really get involved in our discussions about far-away places, and it is a joy to learn from them each and every day. We are looking forward to next month and the lessons to be learned and explored.

Sharing knowledge

By Kenia Dayeh de Bermudez

We are off to a great start and have gotten into a nice routine of choosing lessons and using our quiet voices. This month we welcomed into our classroom a new friend Laura Eads. The children are showing and sharing their knowledge without being aware of it. They've gained an appreciation for their achievements and are being naturally challenged by the achievements of others. It is nice to see how they have learned to help and be helped by other children because they interact consistently with children whose age and abilities are varied. They are learning to be patient, tolerant and serve as role models and teachers for the younger children. Their cooperation rather than competition becomes a natural response to all sorts of different situations and

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Reaching for the Stars!

By Ms. Meredith

Gross motor skills are movements that help children develop large muscle control in arms, legs and the entire body.

As a toddler, it is important that your child keep exercising these muscles to enable her to run, jump, throw, climb, etc. You can help your child by providing her with a large safe area indoors or out, in which she can move about freely.

That is why I came up with this wonderful game called "Reaching for the Stars!" The idea is for the children to jump up and try to reach for the stars. A couple of children (Khaden, Cullin, and Jordan) found it was easier to use chairs. I had to remind them that it feels much better to jump.



In this activity we the directors had to use dramatic voice and chant "Stretch, stretch, stretch up so high."



As the children began to jump we started chanting, "Jump, jump, jump to the sky."



Hail and Farewell

Joining:

Drew Spitzer to Infant
Mac Marsh to Infant
Bryce New to Infant
Dayne New to Infant
Langley New to Infant
Grey Russell to Toddler
Gentry Jay to Toddler
Gemma Powell-Nates to Toddler

Leaving:

Cobin Rabon

Transitions:

Alex Kirincich to Toddler
Laura Eads to Primary A

We welcome new students, congratulate those who have transitioned to another class, and bid sad farewell to those who have gone.

“Sharing”, continued from page 6

challenges. Children will help each other when cleaning up after work, putting things away and caring for the environment in general as well as each other. This is what really makes our Montessori environment unique. “Sharing knowledge occurs when people are genuinely interested in helping one another develop new capacities for action; it is about creating learning processes”. (Peter Senge)



With help from alumni, parents, and family the Upper Elementary students chipped in last Saturday to build outdoor gardens in the space near the County pool. The space was cleared of trees only last fall

Some famous Montessori Children



One of the most famous Montessori children was Anne Frank, who kept a diary through the early years of World War Two until she was arrested in 1944. She died in at Auschwitz at age 15 in 1945.

This front license plate says:

“My child is preparing to change the world!”



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