

MONTESSORI AND ME

December/January 2009



"Our schools show that children of different ages help one another. There are many things which no teacher can convey to a child of three, but a child of five can do it with ease.

Maria Montessori

From Erica...

I hope you all enjoyed a restful Thanksgiving break. As we begin the month of December our students continue to work diligently on their academic progress but also start thinking about holidays and the Holiday Program. This year, our new music teacher, Paula McKay, will be directing the Holiday Program. Paula has already begun working with students on the songs they will be performing. I was lucky enough to eavesdrop on a music class and was quite impressed! I can't wait to hear the rest and hope you are looking forward to the Program too.

On December 8, 9 and 10th we will be hosting our Fall Book Fair sponsored by BookEnds. This is a great place to pick up some holiday gifts. There's no better gift than a good book (and for younger children, someone to read it with)! There will be a wide variety of books for all ages (including adults). A sign up sheet for volunteers is posted outside my office.

On December 10th we will have our H1N1 vaccination clinic for students in Kindergarten and up. I will be sending out more detailed information (times, etc) within the coming days.

The Kindergarten, Lower and Upper Elementary, and Middle School students will be going to see Coppelia on Friday, December 10. This classic ballet is being performed by the State Ballet of Rhode Island at the RIC auditorium. The teachers will be discussing the ballet and the story it tells prior to the trip.

Due to popular demand we will be debuting Bagels with Dad on January 13! Invitations will be sent out closer to the event but please mark your calendar now: Wednesday, January 13 from 8:30-9:30 am.

As you flip through this newsletter, I encourage you to take a few moments to read what is going on in other classrooms, especially the elementary and middle school rooms. They're working on some very interesting projects, including extracting genetic material from vegetables!

Happy Hanukkah! Merry Christmas! And a very Happy, Healthy New Year!

Holiday Program December 18 10:00 am

Please join us for our annual **Holiday Program** on Friday, December 18 at 10:00 am. All students will be participating in the Program.

Each student is allowed 2 guests to attend the Program. Students will be dismissed immediately following the Program and they and their guests are invited back to the multipurpose room for refreshments.

The **Holiday Bake Sale** will take place before and after the Program (bakers and buyers needed!).

Dates to Remember November and December 2009

December 8-10	Book Fair by BookEnds
December 10	H1N1 vaccination clinic (subject to change)
December 11	Field trip to Coppelia (Kindergarten thru MS students)
December 18	Holiday Program 10:00 am
December 21- January 3	Holiday Break
January 4	School resumes
January 13	Bagels with Dad 8:30-9:30 am
January 18	No School/Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

**Units of Study: Primary Program
December**

Geography: Europe
Cultural: Traditions and Celebrations
Science: Botany
Grace & Courtesy: Greetings and Introductions; Giving and Receiving Gifts
Music: Tchaikovsky
Artist: Ansel Adams
Author: Jan Brett
Rhyme/Poem: Little Jack Horner
Saying: Look before you leap
Special Days:
Hanukkah: December 11
Winter Solstice: 12/21
Christmas: December 25
Kwanzaa: December 26:

January

Geography: Europe
Cultural: Martin Luther King, Jr.
Science: Reptiles & Amphibians
Grace & courtesy: Telephone manners
Music: Mozart
Artist: Manet
Author: Jonathan London
Rhyme/Poem: Three Little Kittens
Saying: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you

**Units of Study: Elementary/MS
December 2009**

Cultural: Traditions & Celebrations
Grace & Courtesy: Greetings and Introductions; giving and receiving gifts
Music: Holiday music from around the world
Art: Degas

January 2010

Cultural: Martin Luther King, Jr., National Thank you month
Grace & Courtesy: Telephone manners
Music: Handel
Art: Ansel Adams

TV Raffle Kick-Off

Tickets for this year's TV Raffle will be distributed prior to the Holiday vacation. We are once again raffling off a brand-name 42" HDTV.

Each family will be given 5 tickets to sell. Tickets are \$10 each.

The winner will be selected prior to the Super Bowl. What better way to watch the action than on a brand new HDTV? You'll feel like you're really at the game!

A Very Happy Birthday to...

Lia G	December 1
Gavin L	December 1
Alex B	December 4
Theo M	December 8
Teddy A	December 19
Moses D	December 22
Olivia C	December 23
Hayden H	December 29
Alaina W	December 30

Isabel R	January 3
Ruby W	January 8
Nathaniel B	January 22
Mick H	January 28



From Mrs. Healey's Wee Threes...

November was a big break-through month! Everyone is becoming more independent and self-sufficient, and when children do need help they ask each other first—before me. They enjoy their interaction with their middle school book buddies on Tuesdays, and now on Wednesdays, four kindergartners from Ms. Bethany's class join us to try our works, mentor, and give lessons. Sometimes our children like to give them lessons too.

In sensorial, the red rods are new and exciting. Sometimes the biggest challenge is getting them all back in the stand. In December we will explore some of the red rod extensions like "the maze," where the children can take off their shoes and walk around inside it. We have expanded our geometric shapes unit to include the geometric solids, and we have learned to recognize (and say!) sphere, cube and triangular prism. In math we are tracing sandpaper numerals and working on one-to-one correspondence. When we use the spindle box, we are recognizing zero and putting no spindles in that box.

In practical life we learned table setting and table manners. It is really hard to wait for everyone to be served when a tasty cupcake is placed in front of you—but we had plenty of practice with four birthdays this month. Flower arranging also was new. The vases are arranged daily—some by color, some placed only in the peace corner and some arranged without any flowers at all. The use of scissors, glue and hole punchers has been a big thrill!

As part of our botany unit we have been doing "parts of a leaf" and "parts of a tree" puzzles, and we identify real leaves from a variety of local trees. We also examine the parts of an acorn with a magnifying glass. When we do a yoga tree pose we "plant" an acorn first, allowing its shoot to take root, before we "grow" to a very tall oak with lots of leaves. In science, we also have learned about the difference between magnetic and non-magnetic objects and vertebrates and invertebrates. We are trying hard to keep our own vertebrates on the back of our chairs while working and eating...

In the language area, children are working with the metal insets, which are preparing their pencil grips and strokes for writing. Steven Kellogg was our author in November and we enjoyed *A Hunting We Will Go* and any book with his dog *Pinkerton* in it. At circle we've been *Going on a Bear Hunt* almost daily. We've also been singing a few new silly songs: *Wobble, Wobble, Wobble*, *Albuquerque is a Turkey* and *If all of the Rain Drops were Lemon Drops and Gum Drops...*"oh what a world it would be!"

We are looking forward to the upcoming holiday music program that the children are rehearsing with Ms. Paula. Last week, upon their return from music class, one child announced, "Mrs. Healey, we have to give you a lesson on the snowman song!" And they did!

From Ms. Bethany...

November provided many learning experiences for us. What a great month! We started out with some new practical life works such as spooning cranberries, pouring turkey shaped pasta, and scooping up metallic colored leaves. One child brought some beautiful Indian corn to share, and we ended up turning that into a twisting activity. Each child had a chance to twist off the beautiful kernels of corn and gather them into a bowl in the practical life section. We then had the chance to examine the "cob" afterwards, and we could imagine that this is what the cob looks like after a rat or raccoon has eaten all of the kernels. Our plan is to create an art project with all of these kernels once all of the twisting is complete.

More on the note of corn...We read a book called *Corn is Maize: The Gift of the Indians by Aiki* and we learned many facts about corn. The Native Americans introduced corn to the first settlers from Europe. We learned that there is recent scientific evidence that corn existed in the Americas more than 5,000 years ago. We then planted some of our Indian corn that we twisted off, and to our surprise and delight, the kernels rooted and sprouted in less than a week after planting! Ask your children about our corn plants! We even have a chart showing the 5 different stages of a corn plant as it grows (thank you Ms. Leah), and our plants are already between stages 4 and 5! The children are very excited about this. We then read *The Popcorn Book by Tomie de Paola* which taught us new facts about corn and popcorn, and we learned *The Popcorn Song!* That was fun.

Our study about Thanksgiving brought many opportunities for learning. The morning class practiced grace and courtesy lessons and worked on the table setting tray which teaches the children how to properly set up a table setting. We also had the chance to try a lovely new work on sorting child-sized silverware. So hopefully those newly learned table manners showed up at your own Thanksgiving celebrations!

The kindergarten students had a most wonderful Thanksgiving feast. Our class made the stuffing, and all the kids looked very festive in their Pilgrim or Native American hats along with the bracelets and dream catchers we all made. It was a lovely time together.

The morning class listened to the story *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush by Tomie de Paola*, and they were able to hold some special Native American artifacts such as a pair of small moccasins, an Indian leather pouch with beads, and even two child sized Native American dolls. We also passed around some items from nature such as a deer antler, a porcupine quill, and real turkey feathers. The Native Americans were not wasteful. They used every part of an animal, and they drew artwork from all of the things they saw in nature. Lastly, we all had fun learning some Wampanoag words such as eagle-*wamp si kuk*, deer-*at tuck*, raccoon-*au sup*, and corn-*weat chi min* to name a few.

The Botany cabinet and leaf coloring works were very popular this month. Our study of leaves and the Botany cabinet will continue into December. We read a book about leaves that taught us about chlorophyll as the essential ingredient that keeps the green part of the leaf green. We also learned that the decline in light and temperature in the Fall triggers the weakening of the chlorophyll which in turn leads to the death of the leaf. We learned the *Leaves are Falling Softly Down* song, and the morning class all enjoyed the song *I'm a Little Acorn*. I would like to add that, apart from these seasonal lessons, there were also great many works being used in the math and language sections of the classroom. It is always so nice to observe progress in those areas too.

December will be short, but we will learn more about Europe, traditions of giving and receiving, and we will study about different festive holidays which take place in the month of December. The kindergarten kids will color and explore the map of Europe, we will color some flags from certain European nations, and we will make a small book about the types of animals found in Europe too. The kindergarten students will also have the opportunity to go see a ballet! I am looking forward to teaching about the famous musician Tchaikovsky, the artist Ansel Adams, and exploring some wonderful books by the author Jan Brett, another favorite of mine!

Lastly, our parent volunteers have been just great! You know who you are! We thank you so very much for the library books, the flowers, the Indian corn, tracing and preparing the push pin works, the apples and cucumbers for food preparation, doing laundry, and cleaning the classroom! Thanks a bunch! I hope to see all of our parents at the Holiday Program.

From Ms. Betsy...

I can't believe November has come and gone. It seems as though our absentee rate has slowed down and I do hope that we are all healthy from here on in.

This past month we had a great time studying leaves--we made leaf rubbings, leaf booklets and matched real leaves to pictures. We also started our unit of study on Europe and I can't believe how good the children are at doing the puzzle map of Europe--they do a much better job than their teacher! Several rainy days gave us plenty of time to explore dance and movement. We jumped, hopped, wiggled, tiptoed, skipped and galloped. We twirled as partners to the rhyme "Jump Jim Joe" and even danced the minuet to Mozart (a particular favorite and darn cute to see). The kindergarten class worked very hard preparing for their Thanksgiving feast and had a delicious time. The corn bread and the mashed potatoes seemed to be the favorites.

In December we will continue our unit on botany by looking at seeds and flowers. We will take a close-up look at the country of England and will read books by the ever-popular Jan Brett. We will look before we leap (a really hard thing for preschoolers to do!), listen to Tchaikovsky, eat latkes, and talk about all the wonderful December holidays we celebrate. In January, we will finish up our look at Europe by focusing on France (we'll even learn to speak a bit of French) and we'll start our two-month unit on reptiles and amphibians. Our author of the month will be Rosemary Wells and our musician will be Mozart (another excuse to do the minuet!).

I hope everyone has a peaceful and very happy holiday, and, as always, thank you to all the parent volunteers who help keep our class running.

From Ms. Leah...

I hope everyone enjoyed a wonderful and relaxing Thanksgiving break.

November brought so many changes; the leaves have fallen from the trees, our days are shorter and colder. Hopefully we will have our first snow flurry soon. With more cold weather coming please remember to send your child in every day with appropriate clothing that is easy for them to put by themselves. On snowy, slushy or wet days it is great to have a pair of dry shoes (or slippers with rubber soles) to change into for the classroom. For your convenience, we will be putting a basket in the hall to keep these extra shoes at school.

In November we talked about and experimented with how seeds travel, parts of a plant that we eat, and the life cycle of a plant. To illustrate these ideas we sent seeds flying, spinning and hitch hiking around our room, we tasted different parts of plants: seeds, stems, flowers, roots and leaves and we planted beans to observe and discuss their growth.

For December we will be studying different holiday celebrations. If you have a holiday tradition in your family that you would like to share with us please let us know. For geography we will be learning more about Europe, its people, geography and animals. Our music this month will be by Tchaikovsky. In our science unit we will continue our Botany by focusing on flowers. For Grace and courtesy we will discuss greetings and introductions and the art of giving and receiving gifts.

Thank you to all the parents who volunteered to help in the classroom this month.

Happy Holidays!

From Mr. K's Middle School classroom...

It's been a productive November in the Middle School, and in Upper Elementary Language Arts. The Upper Elementary students are in the middle of a poetry unit in which they are learning the basics of rhythm and rhyme scheme, as well as trying their hands at several different styles of poetry. The Middle School has begun their exploration of the ancient world by reading excerpts from the Code of Hammurabi and the epic of Gilgamesh, as well as spending time developing their own "ancient" societies. They will soon begin a literature unit on biography, and will continue their historical studies with a look at ancient Egypt.

The Middle School Store is going strong and would like to thank you for your business. Look for new Ocean State Montessori School magnets featuring the school logo on an attractive ceramic refrigerator magnet. These handmade magnets are a parent-student collaboration and they are a great way to dress up your fridge and support the school at the same time! As always, Wednesday is cupcake day. Thanks again and have a great holiday season.

From Mrs. Winston's Lower Elementary classroom...

I feel a chill in the air! Snow is not far behind. Be sure to have your child dressed for fluctuating temperatures—hats, gloves, boots, snow pants, etc., may be needed soon! Now is the time to get the winter gear out to see if it still fits. The general "rule" is the children have outside recess every day unless there are frigid temps or rain.

We are now wrapping up our Egyptian project. The book is complete and will be sent home each night with a different student so s/he can share it with parents. Enjoy the book and please return it the next morning so we can pass it along to the next family. A very special thank you to Judi Goudreau for spending the morning making "papyrus paper" with the lower elementary students. A great time was had by all.

Our Parfait Day celebration was a big hit. We have so many things to be thankful for—it was a nice event for all. The children are all looking forward to this joyous event next year!

The Ballet "Coppelia" is scheduled for Friday, December 11. We will all take a bus to Rhode Island College for the performance and be back at school around lunch time. In January I will be starting our annual quilt project. If you sew and would like to help in the classroom please stop by and see me. This will be an ongoing project during the winter.

Have a wonderful holiday season. I wish you joyful blessings in the coming year. I have been blessed this year with the spirit and enthusiasm of your beautiful children. Thank you for sharing them with me.

From Ms. Courtney's Upper Elementary classroom...

November has just flown by. We started the month at Rosasharn Farm in Rehoboth, MA where we learned how to milk goats, muck out stalls, press apples into cider, harvest fresh vegetables, and to appreciate how much work goes into producing food. We followed up our farm visit with a tasty stir-fry that we made from the 3 types of kale, chard, Jerusalem artichokes, and scallions. All of the veggies were harvested by the class, and, don't tell them I told you this, but some students were known to have had seconds, thirds, and fourths.

Our annual read-a-thon sleepover was a great success. We played grammar games, spoke with our new friends in China, drank hot cocoa, ate popcorn, and, of course, read. Some of us even slept. We started a new tradition this year: Parfait Day! It was a great (and tasty) success.

The Montessori Math Monsters (aka M Cubed) had their first Math Olympiad meet this past month. Everyone worked really hard to use their math skills in this new Olympiad environment. I'm very proud of them. Our next meet is on December 16th – we all wish them luck!

There has been much ado about science in our class lately. The sixth and seventh graders have been extracting genetic material from tomatoes and planning their 3D models of DNA. The fourth and fifth graders have been looking at different inherited traits - turning their tongues blue in the process (to count the number of taste buds that they have). They are also creating a Community Trait Tree where we are looking three specific traits and how often they occur within our school community. Want to have some fun with your child? Ask him or her to say deoxyribonucleic acid three times fast.

We have much to look forward to in the months of December and January. There will be a field trip on December 11th to see the State Ballet of RI perform Coppelia, the classic ballet. We will also be learning about different holidays that are celebrated this time of year (and everyone looks forward to the first day of Hanukkah, when Ms. Erica makes potato latkes for the whole school). The winter concert will be held on the morning of December 18th. Ms. Paula has been working with our class to present wonderful program.

Special thanks to our parent volunteers: Cherrie Goff-George, Niki DeLuca, Pat Maier, and Denise Campbell. I wish everyone a happy holiday season and new year.

From Ms. Linda's Children's Room...

The holiday season is fast approaching. This is the time of year when the hectic pace feels like it takes over. Try to keep the children's routine as normal as possible. This helps everyone enjoy the special events more.

The children were very eager to learn about the Pilgrims: where they came from and how they journeyed here. We talked about landing in Plimoth and making friends with the Indians. We worked on many new activities like sorting and spooning Indian corn then making signs of tribal names with the corn. Some of the children replicated the Mayflower while others made autumn trees. We displayed these and our pinecone turkeys on the "gopher holes" for our Open House.

I hope everyone got a chance to read our "thankful" 4's displayed on twine garlands with seeded leaves. It was heartwarming to listen to the children's responses to "What are you thankful for?" We ended our Thanksgiving festivities by making Pilgrim hats and bonnets, or Native American headbands. We then snacked on turkeys (turkey-shaped bread spread with apple butter).

We would like to thank Rey, Micah, Thomas and their moms for bringing in oranges, flowers and squash. The children have enjoyed making orange juice from the oranges, and adorning the tables with flowers that they've arranged in vases, and tasting different types of squash.

Our Food Drive is still in progress as I write this. The children are very excited and working hard each day as we collect from the hallway box. Please help fill our cup!

If you are doing holiday shopping for winter clothing for your child, please remember we encourage them to dress themselves so please try to choose clothes that are easy to put on and take off. Make sure they have shoes to wear in the classroom if they wear boots to school. Also, LABEL everything please!

December brings about discussions of family traditions and different customs to be celebrated. It is a good time to start a new tradition with your children. Involve them in helping to celebrate the holidays. Maybe you could wrap a gift together for an elderly neighbor, or take some food to someone in need. Sometimes the joy of your presence is greater than any material present.

The Children's Room staff would like to wish you and your family Happy Holidays and Happy New Year!

From Ms. Laura's Prime Time...

Earth became our focus for much of November in Prime Time. Inspired by the concert "Music for a Green Planet" held at the school, we helped decorate the multi-purpose room. Students and I discussed ways to keep the Earth happy and healthy such as turning off lights to save electricity, picking up litter, saving water, putting trash in its rightful place and recycling. Keeping with the Earth theme, we took a look at other planets in the solar system. Kindergarteners created a mural of the solar system that can be found in the display case in the hallway. The students had a great time pretending they were astronauts walking on the moon. Next we looked at the geography of the earth and talked about the continents. Students worked on activities about different countries around the world. Looking ahead to December and January, the themes will include geometry: shapes and patterns, and the weather.

I've been seeing great social growth among all the students, and new friendships forming. Role-playing by the younger students has been fun to witness, and the older students have been practicing math and strategy with the game Dog-opoly, which they have been playing non-stop.

I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season and a safe, fun winter break!