

October 2011



“Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.”

Maria Montessori

From Erica...

Welcome to the first newsletter of the 2011-2012 school year! The *Montessori and Me* newsletter is published monthly and includes recaps of events that happened the previous month, a listing of upcoming events (with more information inside the newsletter), a listing of the upcoming Units of Study for both Primary/Wee Threes and Elementary, an update from the OSMS Board, and an article from each teacher about activities in the classroom. It's a great resource to keep you informed about what's going on here at OSMS!

October is here and with October comes Parent Education Night and Parent Observations and Parent-Teacher conferences. Be sure to sign up for Observations and Conferences outside your child's class, and read inside this newsletter for helpful hints for observing. I think you'll be amazed at all the wonderful work going on in our classrooms!

Looking ahead to November I hope you'll all mark your calendars for our Ribbon Cutting Ceremony to celebrate our ownership of 100 Grove Avenue and all the progress made to date. The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony will be held on Sunday, November 20 from 3:00 to 4:30 pm.

Happy Fall!

Dates to Remember October and November 2011

October 4	School Photo Day (don't forget to turn in your order form or order online)
October 6	Parent Ed Night: A Day in the Life
October 7	Hat Day begins
October 10	No School/Columbus Day
October 11-14	Parent Observations
October 17-24	Parent-Teacher Conferences
October 21	Staff Hosted Pot Luck Dinner 5:30-7:00 pm
October 28	Grandfriends' Day
November 3	3 rd -6 th grade Read-A-Thon Sleepover
November 11	No School/Veterans Day
November 17	Kindergarten Thanksgiving Feast
November 18	Flu Clinic 4-7 pm
November 20	Open House (1-3) and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony (3:00-4:30)
November 22	Elementary Parfait Day
November 23-25	No School/Thanksgiving

A Very Happy October Birthday to...

Walter E.
Thomas W.
Aidan W.
Julia P.
Juliana C.
Stella D.
Keegan B.
Isaiah F.



**Units of Study: W3/Primary Program
October**

Geography: Land, Air, Water

Science: Living/Nonliving;
Vertebrate/Invertebrate

Cultural: Family, Maria Montessori,
Peace Education, Johnny Appleseed

Grace & Courtesy: Opening/Closing a
door; How to interrupt; Please
and thank you

Music: Musical instruments/marching

Artist: Van Gogh

Author: Lois Ehlert

Rhyme: Star Light, Star Bright

Saying: An apple a day

November

Geography: North America and USA

Science: Farm

Cultural: Pilgrims & Native Americans

Grace & Courtesy: Table setting and
table manners

Music: Dance & movement

Artist: Grandma Moses (Anna Mary
Robertson)

Author: Margaret Wise Brown

Rhyme: Little Boy Blue

Saying: Great oaks grow from little
acorns

**Units of Study: Elementary Program
October**

Grace & Courtesy: Opening & closing a
door; please and thank you;
lunch manners, pouring liquids,
table setting, Fancy Friday

Music: Vivaldi

Artist: Van Gogh

November

Grace & Courtesy: Appropriate
movement in classroom,
outside, sidewalks and crowds

Music: Aaron Copeland

Art: Charles Wysocki

**Picture Day
October 4**

Coffee Pond Photography will once again be taking school photos on Tuesday, October 4. Order forms were distributed to mail pockets last week. Orders must be placed ahead of time to avoid late fees. Checks can be returned with envelope/order forms or orders may be placed online (www.coffeepond.com).

Orders are placed prior to picture day but a full refund is available if you do not like your child's pictures.

Hat Day begins October 7

Every Friday the children are invited to pay \$1 to wear a hat while in school. The money we collect is donated to Heifer International at the end of the school year.

The teachers will read *Beatrice's Goat*, a story about a girl who gets a goat and is able to sell its milk to earn money to go to school. This story is a great introduction for our students to help them learn about Heifer International.

Heifer International is an organization that is dedicated to working to end poverty and hunger around the world. They provide children and families with animals (goats, chickens, rabbits, ox, etc) that enable these families to have a sustainable source of food and income.

**Staff Hosted Potluck Dinner
October 21**

Please join the OSMS faculty and staff for a potluck dinner on Friday, October 21 from 5:30 to 7:00 pm. The staff will be providing dessert and we ask each family to bring an entrée or side dish (6-8 servings) to share.

Sign up outside your child's classroom by Monday, October 17 (so we know how much dessert to make!).

Children's Room Staffing Update

At the Parent Corporation meeting I mentioned that Ms. Cheryl is out on a medical leave. We expect her to remain out of work until mid to late October.

Ms. Judi has been filling in for Cheryl and we are so grateful to her for doing so!

We welcomed Ms. Bella to our after school programs in September. Bella is an EPHS student who helps out in the Children's Room and Prime Time in the afternoons. She has been a huge help and is a delightful addition to our after school staff.

Repairs Update

*Our new roof has been installed and the skylights have all been replaced. Since the new domes are insulated we were able to remove the dirty plastic panels from ceiling level (no more dead bugs for the students to examine!). All the stained/broken ceiling tiles have been replaced.

*The security system has been moved to a new computer and so far, so good—the key cards seem to be working properly!

*The children's bathrooms are being rehabbed with new sinks and faucets where needed, new flush valves for the toilets, new paper towel dispensers, and new partitions and hardware (locks) for the stalls.

*Our new sign has been installed and plantings are in the works.

*The bubblers have been fixed, even the one outside the multi-purpose room that hasn't worked since we moved into the building!

There are other ideas and projects being considered, including outside landscaping as well as other bigger projects such as replacing the windows. All in good time!

Grandfriends' Day October 28

Each year we celebrate the generations by inviting our students' grandparents (or aunts, uncles, or special friend) to come spend a little time in our classrooms.

You will be receiving a note in the near future asking for the name(s) and address(es) of those you would like to invite. We recognize that some of our families are living too far from family to have anyone come. We have had parents come for Grandfriends' Day in the past and that is perfectly fine!

Music Program for W3s and Primary Student begun

Our music teacher, Ms. Paula, began her music classes with the Wee Threes and Primary students on Friday, September 30.

Each class is divided in half and spends 30 minutes with Ms. Paula. She reads stories about composers, sings songs, does movement activities, and teaches music (rhythm, tone, etc) to our youngest students.

Ms. Paula is also the music teacher for our elementary students (who I can hear playing their recorders as I write this!).

Namaste

Our third through sixth graders have begun weekly yoga classes as we move toward the new RI State Standard of 100 minutes a week of physical education (excludes recess). The new standard takes effect in September 2012. Yoga supplements their weekly physical education class.

The students have begun learning sun salutations and have been very enthusiastic about their yoga practice. Their frequent requests for more difficult poses indicate their willingness to be challenged!

Tips for Observing in the Classroom

In order to help you get the most out of your classroom observation the teachers have come up with the following list of suggestions:

- *Prepare your child ahead of time. Let her know that you are going to be observing in her classroom and that you want to see her work like she does when you're not there.
- *Turn off cell phones and pagers so they don't ring during your observation.
- *Please wait until the teacher opens the door and invites you in. Teachers will begin their day as usual and invite you in once the children have settled into their morning works.
- *Enter the classroom as quietly and unobtrusively as possible so as not to distract the children from their work. The goal of the observation is to see them at work.
- *If a child (yours or another) comes up to you, gently direct him back to his work.
- *Avoid conversing with other parents—it's distracting to the students.

Some children have a difficult time when parents observe and may have trouble choosing a work, or will choose to cling to mom and dad. If this happens don't worry. A staff member will try to intervene. At your parent-teacher conference your child's teacher will share with you what your child's more typical day is like.

Staff will typically not give lessons to children while their parents are observing so you can see your child complete a work cycle (choose, complete, return) and interact in the classroom independently.

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities:

1) Rubber Mulch clean-up: The mulch pieces in the playground migrate out of their "box" onto the blacktop and need regular "sweeping" to keep them off the blacktop where they pose a tripping hazard for students. Optimally it'd be great to have 3-5 parents who take care of this on a regular basis (2-3 times a week). We have a leaf blower that works really well for this—it takes about an hour and can be done on a weekend or at drop-off time.

2) Grandparents' Day:

- help stuff/seal/stamp envelopes with invitations
- bake refreshments for our visitors
- help out the day of the event...taking coats and escorting guests to classrooms (a sign-up sheet will be posted outside my office soon)

From the Board:

Welcome first to parents who are new to the School this year! We hope you and your children are settling in easily, and that you're feeling good about having chosen the Ocean State Montessori School. We admit that when our children began OSMS (some as long as 8 years ago!), some of us didn't pay very close attention to the place until October, when we had our first classroom observations. It was then that we saw how the Montessori philosophy was more than just rhetoric, and we're still awed and impressed by the independence of the students, the talents of the faculty, and the remarkable classroom dynamics here. We hope you enjoy your first classroom observations as much as we did!

As you know, the Ocean State Montessori School was founded as a parent cooperative, and one of the things that this means is that parents are involved in all sorts of activities that contribute to the quality of the School. Our Board is made up of parents from all the classrooms in the School, and we have committees of parents working on: Buildings & Grounds, Family Events, Communications, Finance, Strategic Planning, and Fundraising. All of these committees can use additional members to help plan and carry out events in support of the School. We've used the interests you expressed in your responses to the Parent Survey to alert the relevant committee chairs; but if you haven't heard from any of them and would like to join, or just learn more about, a particular committee, please just send an email to the committee chair (listed along with the names of the current Board members below).

Of course participation in school events is just as important as taking part in their planning, and we hope you'll use the newsletters as well as the website to keep track of all the goings-on this year. Of particular interest this month is the wonderful "Day in the Life" event on October 6th, and the faculty-sponsored Potluck on October 21th, and we hope you'll join us for both of them.

Finally, we would like to announce that October 11th is the start of the Annual Fund campaign. As you probably realize, we cover the great majority of our costs at OSMS with tuition, but what allowed us to purchase our building last year without altering our commitment to a modest tuition (by Independent School standards), was our ability to use savings generated by successful fundraising efforts, as we negotiated with the East Providence School Department, over the last few years. The Annual Fund is extremely important for us, as the money we raise is used not only to insure the long-term health and stability of the School, but to fund basic school improvements that may not have been budgeted for in the current year.

Again, welcome or welcome back, and we hope you'll be involved in as many of the OSMS parent cooperative efforts and activities in 2011-2012 as your time and energies allow.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors:

Roger Blumberg, President (Chair, Strategic Planning)

Rob Perry, Vice-President (Co-Chair, Communications)

Iliira Steinman, Secretary (Co-Chair, Fundraising)

Lesley Bunnell, Treasurer (Chair, Finance)

Scott Andrews

Jessica Archer (Volunteer Coordinator)

Maureen Brown (Chair, Buildings & Grounds)

Tucker Densley

Mike Healey

Naomi Ninneman (Co-Chair, Family Events)

Scott Oberacker (Co-Chair, Communications)

Patty Sylvia (Co-Chair, Family Events)

Andy White

From Mrs. Healey's Wee Threes...

The Wee Threes are off to a not-so-wee start! The children are internalizing the structure and culture of a Montessori classroom. They are working hard at recognizing their names on their coat hooks and cubbies. They are learning to be mindful of their own body and space and what it means to "keep your hands on your own body," defining their work space by choosing a table or work rug, and sitting "criss-cross apple sauce" at circle.

In the practical life area, there is plenty of fine motor activity—scooping fava beans, pouring beads and painting with watercolors. The children like the cleaning works—cleaning up spills and sweeping up pompoms. They are also drawn to gross motor works like hammering, rolling on the rolling mat, and doing "mountain pose" and "sun salutations" in the hall. We have been immersing ourselves in music by marching in the multipurpose room while playing musical instruments. We do a very lively rendition of *Star and Stripes Forever!*

In sensorial (a precursor to math) the children are learning to grade the brown stair from thickest to thinnest, and to build the tower of pink cubes—both materials were designed by Maria Montessori, and at over 100 years old, the thrills still hold up! The children sort by primary colors and also like to match the primary color tablets to objects and furnishings around the room. In the math area, the tumble down pegs, and the secret number apple box are favorites.

In the science and cultural studies area, the children are learning to determine the difference between things that are *living* and *non-living*. Our classroom pet—a beta fish named Peek-a-boo—has been determined to be living. *Magnetic* and *non-magnetic* is another science concept the children like to explore. We are learning about the seven continents through song, the globes and the continents puzzle map. We have started our peace education curriculum, and the children regularly seek out the "peace corner" for quiet reflection.

In language there is a variety of matching (a precursor to letter recognition): little to big art works, similar matching—air transportation objects to cards, and the inside and outside of fruits. The pushpin and writing boards are starting to prepare the children's grip and hand-eye coordination for handwriting. In addition to reading Donald Crews' many books, other story requests are: *Mr. Gumpy's Outing*, *Lemons are not Red*, and *A Visitor for Bear*. At circle we also like to sing *The Good Morning Song* (and greet our friends in different languages), the *Days of the Week* song, and *Rockin' in the Boat*. *I love the Mountains* and the *Wishy Washy Washer Woman* make for good giggles while we are waiting in the hall.

Please come to Parent Education Night on October 6 and see firsthand what your child is doing—and why!

From Ms. Betsy...

Walking feet, indoor voices, toes on the green line, crisscross applesauce. Put your hand on the teacher's shoulder! Can you get a carpet square, a work rug, your lesson card, your name card? Let me give you a lesson on the red rods, the tower of cubes, the spindle boxes (or the "spingle" boxes as one of my new friends says). Please find a work to do, walk AROUND the rug, and don't forget to push in your chair!

Whew! I am impressed, and I hope you are too. During the past three weeks, all of my new friends had to learn new ways of walking, talking, sitting and interacting. They had to learn all kinds of new jargon and do you know what? They did it! And they'll continue to do it! I've watched this happen for over ten years now and I am still in awe over how facile a child's mind is.

Everything we covered this month was a stepping-stone to being able to learn and function as a community. Our returning friends reinforced what they already knew by helping the new kids. Learning about land, air and water facilitated our upcoming lesson on the continents. And kindergarteners had lessons on listening, looking and cooperating to better enable them to work as a group.

October units of study include the paintings of Van Gogh, the writings of Lois Ehlert, and: What is a vertebrate? What is an invertebrate?

Our parent education session, "A Day in the Life", is scheduled for the evening of October 6th. Come see about those "spingle boxes", and maybe we'll do the "metal insects" too!

P.S. Just a reminder that first circle starts promptly at 8:30 am.

From Ms. Amy's class...

"Make new friends but keep the old..." a saying that rang true at the start of our new school year. Although we said goodbye to many of our friends in June, we met a lot of new ones this September. The Kindergarten students are learning to be role models to the younger children and the first year students are quickly adapting to new routines and rules. Our classroom is becoming a bustling community working hand in hand.

During the month of September, we spent time learning each other's names at our good morning circle, and remembering the ground rules of Safety and Respect. We recited the poem "Jack and Jill" and the saying "A place for everything and everything in its place" and learned the songs "Miss Polly", "She Sailed Away", "Light a Candle for Peace" and "Hello to All the Children of the World". We explored air, land and water, read a story about Johnny Appleseed and learned the difference between living and nonliving. We even learned how to take care of our classroom plants (let's hope we can keep them living all year). We read A Family Story by Todd Parr and Me and My Family Tree by Joan Sweeney and then talked about how each of our families is special.

We have been discussing the changing seasons and what happens in autumn. I have asked the children to look around when riding in the car, taking a walk or playing outside to see if they can spot signs of fall. Our class had their picture taken in front of a tree just outside our classroom. We will take a picture of the children and the tree every month until the end of the school year so they can track the changes in the tree (and themselves). Please check your child's extra clothes boxes and replenish or add appropriate clothing as needed. The classroom tends to be very chilly in the morning so please have your child dress in layers. During the month of October, we will begin talking about musical instruments. If you play an instrument, we would love to have you visit our classroom and play for us. Let me know when you are available so we can schedule a visit.

October is also the time for parents to observe in the classroom and conference with me. A Parent Education Night will be held Thursday, October 6 before Observations begin so you can become familiar with what to expect to see during your visit. This very important meeting can give you the answer to "What did you do today?" or "What is the Binomial Cube?" I will walk you through a typical day in the life of your child and explain each curriculum area. There is a sign-up sheet for Observations and Conferences posted on the wall outside our classroom.

From Ms. Leah...

Our first month of school has gotten off to a great start! It has been a pleasure to get to know our new friends and to see how our returning friends have changed and grown over the summer. In our morning circle the children are learning each others names and having group lessons on new materials and areas, such as snack and art. They are all learning how to be respectful and safe members of our classroom community, by pushing in their chairs when they get up from a table and walking across the room to speak to a friend to name a few.

During work time the children have been working individually and in small groups. We have been focusing on the "work cycle": choosing a work, taking it to an appropriate work-space, and returning it where and how it was found.

We have been talking about land, air, and water in geography. Thank you, parents, for helping with the samples of land, air and water, it is always meaningful to start with the concrete for this age group. For Science we began learning about living and nonliving through a discussion. After they figured out the main characteristics to describe a living thing (they change, grow, eat, breath and reproduce or make babies), we categorized some photographs into the two groups.

We have been discussing "what is art" and exploring different forms of artistic expression and mediums. We have talked about and read books by Donald Crews who wrote and illustrated many children's books. The children really enjoyed reading "Ten Black Dots" then creating their own works of art using a quantity of black dots.

During group kindergarten time with Ms. Betsy's and Ms. Amy's kindergarteners we started recording the temperature weekly. Please look for our chart in the hall across from our door. We have practiced how to be part of a larger group and cooperate to get an activity done. In our classroom we have been reviewing the materials in the classroom and exploring our kindergarten boxes, notebooks and folders.

There is so much to look forward to in October. We will be exploring the continents through our continent song, continent globe and map. We will investigate vertebrates and invertebrates. For Art we will be studying Vincent Van Gogh and trying to paint in his style. Our author this month is Lois Ehlert, whose colorful illustrations and enjoyable stories are sure to inspire some creative work.

Thank you to all the parents who were able to make it to Parent Orientation. If you were unable to attend or have any further questions about our classroom please don't hesitate to contact me. Please don't forget our next Parent Education Night October 6th???, to experience a day in the life of your child. This is a great way to become familiar with the materials and routine in our classroom. You will better understand what your child is doing each day and what your child is doing when you come to observe in our classroom. Look for a sign up sheet outside the classroom during the next few weeks for Parent Observations and Parent-Teacher Conferences.

I'd like to thank all the parents who have volunteered to help in the classroom. There are still a few opportunities left so be sure to check the sign up list.

Please remember that our room is on the sunny side of the building and it can get quite warm on sunny days. Please send your child in layers of clothing. It can make a big difference working in the classroom if you're not too hot.

From Mrs. Winston...

What a great start to our school year! There is much enthusiasm and energy as we start another terrific year. It is with great joy I welcome back my second and third year "old timers". I'd like to extend a big welcome to my first year students. I am honored each morning to greet twenty-three beautiful smiles with a warm handshake.

We are now in full swing following our daily routine. All of our weekly "specials" have started and we have all just about adjusted to the new days: Monday-Art with Ms. Lily; Tuesday and Thursday-Spanish with Ms. Blanca; Wednesday-Gym with Ms. Jen; and Friday-Music with Ms. Paula. Please make sure your child has well-fitting tie or Velcro sneakers for gym class on Wednesdays (no slip-ons).

Our annual kayak/canoe adventure was fabulous. Everyone had a wonderful time. There was quite a variety of wildlife to see this year—turtles were spotted, swans, and lots of minnows! After lunch the children had an opportunity to go back out on Brick Yard Pond and try a single or double kayak or a canoe. This adventure is such a fun way to build self-esteem and camaraderie among students and parents. Throughout the day I often heard "great job", "paddling is hard but I can do it", from one student to another. A very special thank you goes to all the mom and dads who were able to come along and chaperone. Without you this field trip would not be a success. Hats off to you all!

During September and October we will be researching the Time Line of Life in history. Geography will cover land formations, and Science will cover land, air, and water. Health will find us exploring personal health, hygiene and wellness. Jr. Great Books has started for the second year students so please be sure to check the hallway by the parent pockets for reading assignments to be done at home with parents. It is so important to make sure the book comes back to school so that your child can participate in the group discussion with Ms. Melissa. Once the first year books arrive they will start their discussion group with Ms. Turenne.

October will be a busy month. I look forward to seeing everyone on October 6th for Parent Education Night. I will be featuring the math curriculum. Come try the stamp game, finger charts or checkerboard. Parent Observation week starts October 11th followed by conferences. Please look for sign-up sheets outside my classroom door. As always, please stop by to see me if you have any questions. Happy Autumn!

From Ms. Courtney...

Our first field trip of the year was a great success. We went to the Audubon Society in Smithfield to learn about wilderness skills and navigating with a compass. While we may not be ready for Survivor Man, I did see our class building impressive shelters and debating which items are important to have with you if your plane crashes in the wilderness.

History works have been very popular this month. We are studying the U.S. government. During one of our lessons, the students asked if they could pretend to be the Supreme Court. How could I say no? They were quickly divided into a group of 9 justices, and 2 groups of lawyers. As president, I passed a law declaring that at the age of 10, all children had to leave school and enter the work force. The debate that followed was thoughtful and exciting. At the end of the day, in a 7-2 vote, they decided that the law was unjust and it was overturned. They are currently working on another case regarding violent video games.

Students have also been studying the animal kingdom. Of particular interest is a work that teaches students about Greek and Latin roots. The class has enjoyed using their newfound knowledge of roots to create their own animals. We have been introduced to the *Echinotopolystom* (a spiny-backed creature with many mouths), the *Biechino* (a creature with a double spine), the *Polychele* (a creature with many claws), and many more.

I would like to thank Roger Blumberg and George Boulay for driving us to the Audubon Society.

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

Welcome to the Children's Room. The children have settled in nicely... making new friendships and reuniting with old friends. Lunchtime seems to get a little easier each day as the children become more independent. They are all pouring their own milk and tending to their little (or sometimes big) spills. The children are working very hard learning each other's names and the classrooms rules (mainly about safety and respect).

The gopher holes, Lego tables, dress-up area and the water table seem to be the hot spots in our room these days.

We have explored different mediums in the art area. Ms. Judi got some fun answers when she asked "What is Art?" Most thought it was painting and drawing with crayons and pencils. After displaying some paintings and sculptures the children created their own lovely works of art. After reading I Love Colors by Hans Wilhelm the children finished art for the month with a project of color mixing.

We have been marching and waving our flags as we move about to "It's a Grand Ole Flag". Other movement that have taken us down the blue line are tip-toeing, skipping, galloping, and hopping. October will have us working with musical instruments.

There has been a lot of reading this month. The children have enjoyed Donald Crews very much. Their favorite books were Parade and Freight Train. They enjoyed the beautiful illustrations and would look at the books over and over. They had a special treat when Ms. Bella read the book in Spanish and they had a Spanish lesson in colors.

We also read about Johnny Appleseed (John Chapman) and celebrated his birthday (September 26) with lots of apple stories, songs and projects. We will continue working on them in October.

Thank you to all the parents who were able to attend the Parent Orientation. If you were unable to be there and have any questions about our afternoon classroom please don't hesitate to contact me.

From time to time I may look for some volunteers to help with some classroom "work". Right now I am looking for someone who would be willing to make some new bean bags for us (maybe a grandparent who likes to sew). Contact me if you are interested.

All sleep gear will be sent home on Friday to be laundered. Please remember to send it back in a **labeled** tote with a **small** animal or "friend". Check the clothes in your child's extra clothes box to make sure they are weather appropriate.

From Ms. Laura/Prime Time...

Welcome to a new school year! It is great to be back in Primetime Aftercare. The first month back the students concentrated on learning the routines and expectations for Primetime. For Kindergarteners, that routine includes two different group circle times, a rest time, snack (and the jobs that go with it) and free play. As for expectations, students came up with two basic rules: Be Safe, and Be Respectful.. We all "signed" the rule contract by tracing and cutting out our hands and attaching them to the posted rules.

Here are some things to remember: Thank you for waiting in the hallway at 3:30 dismissal for your child. It makes for a smoother transition. When it is your turn to bring in juice (it will be on a Monday or Wednesday) please leave a gallon labeled "Primetime" so that it can find its way to the right place. If your child likes to have sleep gear for rest time, only a blanket/pillow is allowed (no stuffed animals/toys). Lastly if we are outside (usually between 4:15 and 5:15) please use the hallway exit to access the playground, and the parking lot entrance to come back in if you need to. Thank you for not cutting through the classroom!

Happy Fall!