

WMS Happenings

January 2012

Head of School News, by JJ Griebel

One of the most interesting aspects of my role here at Webster Montessori School finds me observing in our classrooms regularly. It can be very easy as an administrator to become focused on all of the operational details of keeping the school running smoothly. These are everything from planning events and paying bills to ensuring the heat is on and the driveway is plowed. So, I make a point to visit the classrooms and take the time to reconnect with the most important part of our school; the learning that goes on for the children. It is these times when I am quietly observing that I hear some wonderful discoveries.

When I observe the Toddlers I am amazed at how diligently they take materials out, work with the items, and put them away. Those items can seem so big for our littlest students and yet they handle them so well. Our Toddlers love to ensure all the chairs not being used are pushed carefully under the tables. And, I recently heard a Toddler exclaim "I just cut it all up and I made a mess!!" Such a joy found in making that mess and what focused concentration as the student picked up every tiny piece of paper.

Our Primary students are quite excited to show what they are doing and they are so proud of one another. One student was reading words for another to write using our moveable alphabet. "Wow, these are big words!" our student exclaimed to his partner. Another budding writer noted "There are two kinds of y's – one in fly and another in penny". Yes, I thought, you're right, why didn't I think of that? My favorite times are when students declare "I did it!" I get to observe this proud moment of joyous accomplishment every time I visit a classroom.

Our Elementary students are making their own discoveries, often motivated by a desire to be bigger and better than anything around them. A favorite observation of doing things better is hearing a student marvel "You can do 27 times 27, or you can add 27 plus 27, 27 times." Or, one student asks a friend "Are you higher in math than me?" and then declares "We're learning so much, so quickly!" Yes, my young friends, you are! Even at this age I've heard them delight "Yeah, I did it!"

I invite each of you to come observe in your children's classrooms. Take a moment out of your day focused on the details and connect with the joy that your child finds in his classroom. Remind yourself about why you chose to give your child a Montessori education. Observe in the next level up and consider what the future will bring for your young student. You'll be happy when you can say "Yeah, I did it!"

Calendar of Events

February 9th: WMS Open House, 9 – 11 am & 6 – 7:30 pm
February 14th: Valentine's Day Bake Sale
February 17th: Spirit Day
February 20th – 24th: President's Week, SCHOOL CLOSED, Wrap-around Open
February 27th – March 2nd: Montessori Education Week
March 7th: Coffee in the Cafe
March 11th: Daylight Savings Begins
March 15th & 16th: Parent Teacher Conferences, SCHOOL CLOSED,
Wrap-around Open
March 20th: Board of Trustees Meeting, 6:00 pm
March 28th: WMS Open House, 9 – 11 am & 6 – 7:30 pm
March 30th: Spirit Day

Office News

Please note: Re-enrollment contracts will be distributed in March.

Just a few reminders:

- Please let us know of any changes to your phone numbers and emergency contacts that occur throughout the year.
- Please make sure that the school has both parents' cell phone numbers.
- Please sign up in the office to observe in your classroom.

Toddler News, by Kim Gerrie

Dear Toddler Parents,

We have finally settled back into our regular school day routines following a busy holiday season. The toddlers have been making a lot of progress as a class and have been engaging in much more social activity. In following their movement to experiment with communication, we have begun to find ourselves leading many more language-based lessons. Please continue to encourage this motivation to absorb language by considering the vocabulary and discussions that relate to each setting you are in with

your toddler. In addition to constantly exploring work throughout the rest of the classroom, we try to constantly incorporate discussions regarding the wide variety of weather conditions we experience here in Rochester, NY. Although these conditions are usually not favorable to us, the toddlers share a mutual interest in experiencing and learning about each and every component of nature as well as the weather that comes along with it. An extension of this topic is covered in my newsletter included: "The Importance of Nature"

A Newsletter from Kim Gerrie

The book inspiring this newsletter:

Last Child in the Woods by Richard Louv, has entirely driven me to expose its message in "Saving our children from Nature- Deficit Disorder." The book goes into detail on how our world began, and ways in which nature has changed in both physical and conceptual ways over time. It criticizes so many of the changes occurring today and our ways of life, while also instilling hope and ambition into its readers. I hope I may accomplish even a bit of what this book has done for me in your reading this letter, I have copies available for you if you wish to borrow one.

Amplify Your Senses...

To dedicate time in seeking nature as a human being of any age is a necessity to discovering our inner spirit and purest motivations as human beings. It is what naturally supports our race to develop into these massive populations while also sustaining our every advancement. Besides providing us with food to eat, oil to drill, minerals to aid our health, and water to drink, nature also provides for us in offering the full human body experience of simulating and amplifying all senses simultaneously.

The development of a child's nervous system revolves around sensory experience, beginning with their first breath of air on earth, and even the during the mothers pregnancy. From then on, an infant and toddler begin absorbing every minute of every day into their distinctive self, eventually leading them to discovering

The unusual case of a child today who has genuinely connected with her natural world and has developed a true appreciation for natures gifts, was shown in this book... It also demonstrates an unfortunate example of how nature is becoming so limited to upcoming generations.

But one girl, a fifth grader wearing a plain print dress and an intensely serious expression, told me she wanted to be a poet when she grew up. "When I'm in the woods," she said, "I feel like I'm in my mother's shoes." She was one of those exceptional children who do still spend time outside, in solitude. In her case nature represented beauty- and refuge. "It's so peaceful out there and the air smells so good... For me, its completely different there," she said. "It's like you're free when you go out there. It's your own time. Sometimes I go there when I'm mad- and then, just with the peacefulness... I can come back home happy, and my mom doesn't even know why." "I had a place. There was a big waterfall and creek on one side of it. I'd dug a big hole there, and sometimes I'd take a tent back there, or a blanket, and just lie down in the hole, and look up at the trees and sky. Sometimes I'd fall asleep back in there. I just felt free; it was like my place, and I could do what I wanted, with nobody to stop me. I used to go there almost every day." "And then they just cut the woods down. It was like they cut down a part of me."

individual passions in life and the unique spirit that lies within them. The purest way to provide these children with a chance to unfold and radiate all life within their spirit is to (as an adult) be the bridge that introduces nature and exposes it in such a way that the child begins their natural exploration and experiences the world they have been born into.

"I like to play indoors better 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are"
~A 4th grader from San Diego

An Augmented Reality...

The relationship between children and nature has been reconstructed and diluted to an extreme over the past twenty to thirty years. Even the concept of nature itself to most children has transformed from a way of life and exploration, to an off limits, unproductive, boring and dangerous mystery. Past generations have experienced a childhood revolving around outdoor games, forts in the woods, climbing trees, swimming in nearby lakes/ponds, fishing, hunting, and a total engulfment in nature. Today it is rare to observe a child with this kind of connection to the outdoors, and unfortunately lots of outdoor exposure today occurs in car rides and brief walks in and out of destinations.

This situation has been obvious to me growing up during this phase of major technological advances with outdoor activities slowly vanishing from childhood. Luckily I was involved in so many sports year round that I only observed this problem in the ways my friends idealized "play." However, recently I was in a diner watching the news... I was shocked when a report was given on nearby schools and the newest and more "convenient" way to take a field trip. This consisted of a class in a computer lab at school, taking a dual sensory experience of a nature walk. By considering this transformation and attempt to mirror the outdoor experience through only animated visuals and audio, I began to feel so thankful for my practical experiences on past field trips as a student, as well as terribly sorry for the children who are no longer being given the outdoor education that is so crucial in human development.

Fortunately I am now in a position to not only research and learn ways to overcome this matter independently, I can share the importance of the outdoor experience with parents today, to enlighten them on the benefits as well as ways in which to accomplish the ideal exposure to nature...

Primary News, by Lisa Maltese

Many thanks to the families who attended the Silent Journey Friday and Saturday of last week. I hope it gave you and 'inside' look at the many opportunities a Montessori classroom can offer. Taking the time out from your busy schedules and committing to this experience means a lot.

Our full day program began after the holidays and the children are adapting nicely to the change in their routine. They are responsible for setting up their table for lunch and

each child has a lunchtime duty. Washing the lunch dishes and wiping down the tables are just a few jobs that need to be done after lunch is over.

Please be aware of the quantity of food your child eats. Start out with smaller portions if you are unsure of how much to pack. Your child will tell you if they would like more. The best way to ensure this is to have them help you make their lunch, or let them do it themselves. Packing their lunch the night before will give your child time to choose what they'd like. They know how much they can eat and will pack accordingly. Huge portions of food are very overwhelming to the child and they feel as if they must finish every last bite. This kind of pressure is upsetting and often results in the child being too stressed to even eat at all. Please take this into consideration when you and your child prepare lunch or any meal at home.

We continue to work on body control in the classroom. Being mindful of work on the floor and other children in the room is especially challenging. If a child is rushed out the door every morning or rushed out to music lessons or whatever, it can carry over into the classroom. As parents, we need to be aware of ourselves and how we move and act during busy times of the day. If we rush through meals or rush to get ourselves organized; grabbing handfuls of items and tossing them into the car or in a bag or whatever else, this impulsive and erratic movement will be what your child sees. Then, during class time, we witness him/her jumping over rugs, carrying more than one piece of material at a time, and even forgetting to put work away before starting something else.

Being models for our children and giving them a little extra time to get out the door will result in less stress. After a while you will find yourself with a few extra minutes to read a book or play a short game with them before you head out!

Primary News, by Lisa Van Vechten

As the New Year starts and the snow finally falls we have been looking at nature and how it is different in the winter. We have been learning about plants and how they are still very much alive even during the winter. We planted paper white flower bulbs and are anxiously waiting for them to bloom. We have been discussing the difference between a bulb and seeds as the beginning of a plant. Having a plant at home that your child can care for will offer them an opportunity to follow along with these lessons in school.

During December we examined the various winter holidays such as Hanukkah, Eid, Diwali, Los Posadas, Christmas and Kwanza. We looked at the fact they all share lights as a part of their celebrations. We enjoyed cooking foods from some of the holidays such as latkes (potato pancakes). The class Holiday Celebration in December was a

festive one, thanks to all who were able to contribute food etc. The full day children enjoyed their Pot Luck lunch as a holiday celebration also.

We have been working on the continents of Europe and Australia. The children have been looking at photos of life on those continents, learning about the flags of countries in these continents and cooking some food from these continents. We had tea (decaf) and scones from England and lamingtons (a dessert cake) from Australia. Thanks to Mr. Brody who visited our classroom to share with the children his experiences in Australia as well as show them an Aboriginal musical instrument called a didgeridoo. The didgeridoo is a hollowed out tree trunk that makes a variety of sounds which the children found fascinating. We will be making our own didgeridoos from paper towel rolls.

We have been learning about air and how air is always around us. To demonstrate this process we had a dish pan filled with water and placed vases/jars with a variety of shapes into the water. We saw that air bubbles escaped from the vase showing us that air was inside the vase. We learned that while we could not see the air we did see the expression of it through the bubbles. Salt was another science topic we have been learning about. We read a book on salt and salt crystals. We learned where salt comes from and the fact that each salt crystal is called a cube with six sides. Filling a jar halfway with water and salt and placing a stick in the jar we grew salt crystals as the water evaporated from the water.

We welcomed a new student to our class on January 3rd. Her name is Gianna and she had been a student in our toddler community. The children have been very kind to Gianna and are enjoying having a new friend to show lessons too. We welcome Gianna and her parents to our class.

We have had several current families as well as prospective families observing the children during their work time. I encourage you to set up an observation time to see the progress your child is making in school. You can set up an observation with Mrs. Giorgione in the office or with me.

With the winter season in full swing and the additional clothing winter requires I encourage you to please put your child's name on their clothing. Many children have clothing from the same manufacturer and without a name on the item it is difficult to identify who the item belongs to. Thank you.

We celebrated Three Kings Festival on Friday January 6th. Thanks to Mrs. Vargas and her students for baking us a pastry treat called a *galette*. The galette has a bean hidden in it and the child who gets the piece of pastry with the bean is the king or queen. In our class Michael was the first to find the bean so he became the king. He then chose Gianna to be the queen. Mrs. Vargas's class made crowns for our king and queen which Michael and Gianna wore. Thank you Mrs. Vargas and class!

We have been discussing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his dream of peace and harmony among all people. We have read books about him, sung songs about him and discussed ways we can be kind and make peace. Some ideas on kindness from the children are: giving hugs, being nice, making a friend a picture, sharing a toy and taking turns.

As the winter season is here it is tempting to stay indoors due to the cold weather. Offering your child outdoor time each day is very important for their development. Tasks such as shoveling, feeding the birds, or brushing snow off of the cars are all activities that will be enjoyed by your child. Enjoy.

January 6th was the anniversary of the first Montessori classroom 105 years ago. We celebrated by counting out 105 goldfish into a jar to show the children how much 105 is. We looked at photos of Dr. Montessori's first classroom and discussed the things that were similar, such as the materials and the things that were different such as the clothing the children wore. The Montessori classroom is a unique place of learning. Dr. Montessori developed her method of education through her observations of children following their natural development. Dr. Montessori created materials to meet each stage of the child's development. As the child interacts with his/her environment he is developing to his potential versus being treated as an empty vessel that the adult needs to fill with information. Dr. Montessori believed the hand feeds the mind. The Montessori materials which are manipulated through the child's hand offer the child the opportunity to develop concentration by fixing his attention on the task. We look to the Three Step Work Cycle as one way to create concentration. During the Three Step Work Cycle the child takes a piece of work off the shelf, works with the material and returns it to the shelf. This happens every day for all of us in many experiences. The Montessori classroom offers a community of mixed age groups (primary class has ages 3-6), child sized furniture, uninterrupted work time, a trained teacher who is a guide to the child's development and a noncompetitive atmosphere where each child works at his own pace. While there is the opportunity for individual work there are also many opportunities for group/community work. The Montessori curriculum includes lessons in grace and courtesy, movement, coordination of the body, Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, Science, Botany and Geography. You can also set up your home with some Montessori techniques to assist your child's development. Having low hooks where the child can independently hang his/her coat, stools accessible so the child can reach a sink to wash hands etc., having a shelf that is low in the kitchen that has plates, cups, silverware, napkins etc. accessible for the child, organizing clothing in the child's dresser that is accessible and agreeable to you so he/she can independently choose their own clothing, having toys (not more than 10-15 out at a time) on low shelves grouped by topic (all markers, all trucks) in baskets, a small rug the child can use to take out one toy/work item at a time as in school, not interrupting your child when they are working/playing (to allow concentration to develop) and assisting your child to complete the Three Step Work Cycle are just a few ideas to support your child. If you would like to discuss other ideas for your home I would be happy to speak with you. Dr. Montessori believed if we create the environment the child is then free to advance to his

potential. What a genius Dr. Montessori was and how fortunate we are today to be stewards of her method of assisting a person to develop.

ACTIVITY FOR THE MONTH:

SAT., FEB. 4, 2012, 10:00AM TO 4:00PM
GANONDAGAN NATIVE AMERICAN WINTER GAMES
1488 STATE RT 444, VICTOR NY, 742-1690

Ganondagan is a Native American site where the Seneca's lived over 300 years ago. There is a 17th century Long House. The winter games include demonstrations of Dog Sledding, Storytelling, Snowshoeing, Traditional Arts, Snow Snake Game and Native Foods.

BOOK OF THE MONTH:

***Swimmy* by Leo Lionni**

Swimmy is a fish that learns to disguise himself so he is not eaten by a larger fish. The underlying themes of courage and team work are present in this book.

Primary News, by Paula Vargas

Happy New Year and welcome back!

The children have settled back into their work nicely. The rhythm of the class has a nice flow.

We'd like to welcome a new student Shoei. He arrived in the U.S. from Japan in November and began school in January. If you see Mrs. Kurogi (with a baby 8 months) say hello and introduce yourselves. The older children are helping Shoeii integrate into the class as well as Mrs. Mattuzzi and myself.

Thank you to everyone last semester for your patience and good wishes. My health issues have resolved themselves. Thank you to Carol McCoon for subbing for me and getting the children started and an especially big thank you to Mrs. Mattuzzi for facilitating the transition while I was out. It made it easier for Ms. McCoon to do her job because Mrs. Mattuzzi could maintain the rhythm and expectation that we had already set up. She already knew two – thirds of the class with all their strengths and weaknesses which made the transition fairly seamless.

At the inception of 2012, we called the royal crown makers together in preparation for "Le Fete des Rois". In Hispanic countries it is called "Reyes" and it is also celebrated in France. We do the galette French version because the tart or "galette" is easier to make

and the children enjoy finding the “feve” (bean) in the tart so that they can be the king or queen. Mrs. Mattuzzi and the royal bakers make galettes for each class.

Recipe:

1 container of Pillsbury crescent rolls

1 can ‘Solo’ almond pastry filling

1 large bean

Preheat oven to 375.

Roll out half of the crescent rolls to form the bottom crust. Spread the almond filling to the edges. Insert the bean and cover with the remainder of crescent dough. Press the edges together with a fork. Bake for 10 to 12 min or until golden brown.

We are presently preparing for Chinese New Year’s celebrations and reading about different Asian New Year’s celebrations.

Elementary News, by Jo Landis

We can now see many changes as the children in our classroom continue with their work. Since September many basic lessons have been given in all areas of the curriculum. The children can now continue with their work much more independently. It is so nice to see them get work out on their own, complete the necessary research and come for further instruction.

How and why is this development taking place?

In the classroom we have prepared the environment, removed the obstacles, and granted the necessary freedom. Since these conditions have been met, the children are showing signs of change and growth. Many of the new students are writing independent reports from their research. They want to be like the older children and are planning work for a “going-out” project.

We, as adults, ask what motivates this construction and activates the children’s potential. We see and realize that the development is done by the children. Only they can construct themselves. We cannot do it for them.

The children use their orientation to the classroom to find the way.

Every year we see this development come about and it is just as exciting every time it takes place.

You, as parents, are no doubt seeing many changes too. Keep guiding the children with the same guidelines of preparing the environment, removing obstacles and giving freedom with responsibility.

“Going-Out:

If you can drive for “going-out” events, please let Suzanne VanDamme, our going-out coordinator know. She needs and will appreciate all the help she can get for these events.

Classroom Needs:

- * Birdseed for winter bird feeding
- * A new CD player
- * A new carpet sweeper

Physical Education, by Saralin Mangialino-Rivera

Dear Parents,

I am so happy to have the chance to be the PE teacher at our school. It has been nice getting to know all of them and figuring out what makes them tick. I'm looking forward to more activities that we can all practice together.

We have had a really nice winter as far as snow is concerned so far. I will be taking the children outside as much as possible, so please be sure that they have hats, scarves, gloves, etc. If we do get enough snow then they will need snow pants as well.

Thank you for your support,
Saralin Mangialino-Rivera

Wrap-around News, by Mani Verma

Please note: Our Summer Program information will be coming out in March.

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had happy and healthy holiday! It is the beginning of a new year that will be full of fun. In Wrap-around we are learning the importance of friendship. We are working together as a large group and as small groups to accomplish tasks. Children are very interested in learning about winter animals. Where do the animals go when it gets cold? How do animals find food and keep warm in the winter? We will explore these questions by reading different books. Every day we read stories related to this season. Children like to do different crafts which involve small and large motor skills and their imagination. The older group is cutting snowflakes, doing word searches, Sudoku etc. The younger group is making snowmen, sewing mittens

and doing coloring. All the children enjoy playing with LEGOS, K'NEX, TRAIN TRACKS, CARS AND TRUCKS. Most of all, they love to play with their friends.

Weather permitting, we go outside every day! It is important that the children have hats, mittens, warm coats, snow pants and boots here *each day*. If your child wears boots to school, please send in some play shoes to wear inside (no slippers). We also incorporate fun ways to stay warm and fun time with hot chocolate.

Children are enjoying many after school programs. Elementary children are doing science experiments in science club. We will also offer Science Club for younger children later. The children are having fun in Yoga and Art classes. We will have more after school programs coming in March. We are offering a **Fun and Exciting February Break Program** for our Wrap-around friends. Please enroll your child and take advantage of them.

We enjoy working with children every day. We hope you all are enjoying the winter. Stay warm and drive safely.

Ongoing Programs

You can help our school with these ongoing programs:

- Box tops
- Soup labels
- Ink & toner cartridge / cell phones / electronic gadgets collections
- Target credit card
- United Way donor #1637
- Good Search

Your continuous support to Webster Montessori School is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Auction/Wine Tasting Event News, by Nancy Zurell

2012 Spring Event

It's hard to believe that it's almost the end of January and the 2012 Spring Event is only a few months away. We are continuing to receive great donations of products, services, and memorabilia from local businesses. I will update the bulletin board in the café soon with more information on what additionally we will have for the auction.

Also, the first major handmade item is well underway and in production. The children, directresses, support and office staff all helped with this project by contributing a handprint with their names underneath on a sheet that will be the backing for a large quilt. I would like to personally thank all of the parent volunteers and the directresses that helped to make this a reality.

We still have much more to do and, if anyone is looking for parent participation hours, please contact me at nancy.zurell@frontiernet.net.

Finally, as a reminder, the event details and the ticket pricing structure are included below. Formal invitations will be mailed to you shortly.

Event Details:

Category	Details
Date	Thursday, April 19, 2012
Time	6:00pm – 10:00pm
Location	Monroe’s Restaurant at the Historic Spring House
Address	3001 Monroe Avenue Rochester, NY 14618 (about 15 minutes from Webster Montessori School; very near I-590 South exit 2B)
Event Type	Buffet Station Dinner (<i>vegetarian options available</i>) Silent Auction Live Auction
Childcare	Will be provided at Webster Montessori School (contact JJ Griebel for more information)

Ticket Pricing Structure:

Purchase by Date	Ticket Type	Price
By March 1, 2012	Single	\$65
	Pair	\$120
	Tables of 8 (limited number available)	\$480 (\$60/person)
Between March 2 – April 10	Single	\$70
	Pair	\$130
After April 10	Single	\$75
	Pair	\$140

