

WMS Happenings

September 2011

Head of School News, by JJ Griebel

Welcome!

What a great pleasure it is to welcome everyone to the 2011-2012 school year at Webster Montessori School. I know I speak for the entire staff when I say how much we missed seeing all of the children each day. The building seemed a bit too empty this summer without the hustle and bustle of the daily school routine and the excited buzz of learning.

When my own children attended here I truly considered Webster Montessori School to be a home away from home. I know the staff has also formed relationships with their peers and the families that make up our school community.

This feeling we all have about Webster Montessori School is just what Dr. Maria Montessori envisioned when she started her first classroom. She called it the "Casa De Bambini". Often Montessori schools refer to each classroom as the "children's house". However, this translates more correctly from Italian as "Home of Children". Dr. Montessori developed an environment that reflected the *home* – a community mixed ages, work caring for the environment called practical life, opportunities for safe exploration, lessons in grace and courtesy, etc.

It is comforting to know our school is a home away from home -- exactly as it is supposed to be.

This fall, perhaps I should say... Welcome Home!!

Calendar of Events

- September 29th: Curriculum Night, 6:00 pm
- September 30th: Spirit Day
- October 1st: International Dinner, 3:00 pm
- October 7th: Staff Development Day, NO SCHOOL, Wrap-around open
- October 10th: Columbus Day, NO SCHOOL, Wrap-around open
- October 12th: Auction/Wine Tasting Fundraiser Event Planning Meeting, 6:00 pm
- October 18th: Board of Trustees Meeting, 6:00 pm

October 20th: Children Teach Parents Night, 6:00 – 7:00 pm
October 21st: Spirit Day
October 22nd: Parent Work Saturday, 9:00 am
October 27th & 28th: Parent Teacher Conferences, NO SCHOOL, Wrap-around open
November 1st – 4th: Sweets for Troops Candy Collection & Canned Goods Drive
November 4th: School Pictures
November 8th: Coffee in the Café
November 11th: Veteran's Day, NO SCHOOL, Wrap-around open
November 15th: Board Meeting, 6:00 pm

Office News

Just a few reminders:

- Please make sure you look over your child's emergency information that the school has on file and make any changes that need to be made and return the forms to school **as soon as possible**.
- Please make sure that the school has both parents' cell phone numbers.
- If you will be using Wrap-around on October 7th (Staff Development Day), October 10th (Columbus Day) and October 27th & 28th (Parent Teacher Conferences), please fill out your Wrap-around forms and return them to the office by the deadline dates.

Toddler News, by Kim Gerrie

Welcome Toddler families!

I am so excited to continue the school year with this wonderful new Toddler class. The children have already begun to adjust to their new school schedules including group story time, independent work periods, community snack, outdoor time and songs. Mrs. Lorie Dennis has been working hard, not only in the classroom with the children, but also on potty training each day. I am looking forward to spending this year with her, along with the rest of our Montessori Toddler Community. Thank you for all of your support.

Toilet Training Tips...

As parents witness the magical life before them growing rapidly into an energetic, curious toddler many consider a major milestone they are soon to encounter... toilet training.

Instead of viewing this process as daunting, consider it as a developmental step, children wish to achieve for themselves as they build and reveal their strong, confident personalities. Recognize your child's strengths and efforts to please those around them as they adapt to societies requirements. Children naturally want to identify with admired grown-ups closest to them.

At a stage when they appear to be "rebellious" and constantly exploring limits, when any request from parents meets with an automatic "No," toddlers seem to be capable of mastering complex behavioral steps independently. Specific examples of this point in the second year (usually) include motivations to brush their teeth, shave like their fathers, dress and walk like their mothers, and many more. There is no doubt that this is an ideal time when they can be guided to learn about societies rules on toileting. For this reason particularly, a window where the child is capable and willing to exert strong, personal drive and will into the process is extremely critical.

When we expect children to be dry and clean all day we are requesting a very complicated task. They need to feel the urine or bowel movement before it actually occurs, in addition, to hold onto it and seek the special place we have designed to dispose of it. The child must be ready to allow it to disappear forever! Although it may seem silly as an adult to consider such and extreme with our toileting business, mastering the process is a lot to expect of small children, but it is not impossible.

It is important to provide the child with a calming, accessible toileting area (sink and toilet) conducive to their size and physical capabilities. Yes, it is true that eventually children would probably learn to train themselves, however, parents may guide their child by showing the steps and suggesting the idea, but, they should allow the child to follow through and master his or her own process at his or her own speed. It is best to allow the child to achieve toilet training as he or she does any developmental step- with all the excitement of success and the ego reinforcement each new step generates.

Signs indicating your child's readiness for toilet training...

1. He or she is over the excitement of just learning to walk and run.
2. Is able to sit down quietly to play for a period of time.
3. He or she demonstrates and interest in the toilet and what it is used for.
4. He or she shows imitative behaviors (brushing teeth, shaving, setting the table, mopping/ cleaning up spilled food or drinks.)
5. He or she is able to understand and participate in discussions about "needing to go." *It is important that the child understands why it may be desirable for them to "hold it" until getting to a toilet.
6. He or she shows strong evidence of wishing to place their possessions (toys, clothes, etc.) where they belong... It may even appear almost compulsive.
7. He or she is not in a violent/ tantrum period when adults confront or request a task.

Considering the above, do not worry if your child is not ready yet. There are many individualized reasons why they may not show interest in toileting just yet. It is certainly important to remember that a disciplinary approach is one that will fail and turn toilet training into a point of regression and fear a child. In turn, a child will then regress later on when they encounter any pressure, anger, or unhappiness towards caregivers.

To balance this, children who are given the opportunity to wait until they are ready are the ones who seem to train themselves almost instantly...for it is THEIR unaided triumph...one that is well worth waiting for.

Primary News, by Lisa Maltese

How quickly the summer has past! It is hard to believe that Fall is upon us. I've already noticed patches of orange and yellow leaves on the trees.

As our season has changed, so have our returning children. It was so good to see them again. And what an amazing sight it was to see them get right to work upon their return. They were happy to see each other and very excited to welcome the new children to their classroom. They have done a remarkable job of welcoming them into our family.

The new children continue to observe and learn the daily routine of the day, and look to the older children for guidance. I encourage our new families to be patient with their children. Some days it is easier for them to come to school than others, but they will become more comfortable as they come to know what to expect each day. Children are happiest when there is routine in their life. Now that school has begun, it is important to establish a solid morning and evening routine. Children need this time to prepare for their day. Setting a time to awake, get dressed, have breakfast and so on, is work that is necessary for their independence and the development of themselves. Keep your routine the same. Of course, life happens, and some mornings don't always go as planned. But be ready to start right back up again and you will see how smoothly your child moves through his day.

Just a reminder that the brown double doors will remain closed during arrival and dismissal time. Please say your goodbyes in the foyer and I will take your child into the classroom. It is not necessary remove their jackets or sweaters prior to my greeting them. Morning arrival is your child's work and he/she needs to be given the opportunity to do it on their own. Please be assured that if they are having difficulty with a jacket or sweater, I am right there to assist them. If you need to speak with me, I can do so right after all of the children have arrived.

Thank you to the families who have generously donated items on our classroom wish list. Your thoughtfulness means so much.

Enjoy this beautiful season! Please feel free to see me with any questions or concerns you may have. I look forward to spending this year with you and your child!

Primary News, by Lisa Van Vechten

I want to welcome all families and children to the 2011-2012 school year. I hope all of you had an enjoyable summer. Returning to school the children enjoyed sharing their summer experiences during gathering time. The children have now settled into the routine of the day. We have welcomed several new friends to our class and the current students are very excited to be able to offer them lessons and be of assistance to them. Several of the older students have commented how “adorable” the three year olds are! We have been discussing the fall season and signs of fall. We have been using our botany / leaf cabinet to learn the names of leaf shapes while matching them to real leaves from our classroom plants as well as leaves from outside. One child who was working with a spatulate leaf shape in the leaf cabinet remarked “this looks like a spoon”. These are the wonder and “aha” moments young children are exploring. We have been discussing what do plants need to live as well as caring for the plants in our classroom. Our class nature table offers a place your child can bring in items from nature to display. This leads to many conversations, lessons and further exploration of nature.

We have been discussing nocturnal animals as well as the terms prey and predator. Below I recommend a nice story book on owls by Pat Hutchins.

Thank you in advance for all of the yummy snack that parent’s supply to our classroom during the school year. Food preparation is enjoyed by all children and offers many opportunities for math, language, sensorial and geography lessons.

If you have a change in your household such as a parent traveling or a relative staying for an extended period of time please let us know. Knowing this information offers us the ability to support your child throughout the day if they become sad or unsettled. Thank you.

We have been practicing fire drills during the school day. Please consider having a home fire drill and a family meeting place. This is very important for the children to practice, so in the event of a true emergency they are prepared to exit a building quickly.

Please be sure you have sent in a change of clothes (labeled with your child’s name). Many children wear clothing from the same manufacturer and it is easier to return an item when it has the name on it. If your child is an extended day student please be sure to send in an extra pair of shoes or boots that the child can wear to recess.

I look forward to having you attend our curriculum night on Thursday September 29th from 6-7pm.

The extended day students will be taking a field trip on September 30th to Victor Apple Farm and October 14th to Chase Farms (to dig potatoes). Both of these field trips will support lessons we are doing in the classroom (with all the children) about the fall season and plants.

One area of a Montessori classroom that supports the child's development is Practical Life. This is the foundation of our three year curriculum and involves four areas, Care of Self, Care of Environment, Grace and Courtesy and Movement and Coordination. The lessons start out simple with a few steps such as dusting or spooning beans from one bowl to another. They then increase in the number of steps and become more complex when the child is ready for the next challenge developmentally. Table/chair washing or table setting offer more steps and opportunities for developing concentration. Each level of a lesson your child is exposed to is working to strengthen and lengthen the child's concentration. Montessorians observe this procedure during what we call "The Three Step Work Cycle". The three steps involve taking a piece of work off the shelf, working on it and putting it away. These steps are life skills not unique to Montessori as we can all relate to setting up a task, doing it and putting it away. Following the three step work cycle there is a period of refreshment as the person feels accomplished at completing a task. The feeling of accomplishment and concentration is solidified through repeating the lesson until the child has mastered it. We all know how good it feels to acquire a skill. This process advances the child's self esteem through their achievement of the lesson. This is a beautiful process to see and can bring joy to a teacher and parent as the young child moves forward in their development. In her book "Discovery of The Child" Dr. Montessori says "Repetition is the secret of perfection, and this is why the exercises are connected with the common activities of daily life".

If you have a talent or treasure you would like to share with the students please let me know. We welcome parent visitors sharing a topic with the children. As we start the school year we look forward to each day with your child. The young child brings delight to the day so thanks for sharing your child with us!

RECOMMENDED BOOK:
"Good –Night, Owl" by Pat Hutchins

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY:
Tinker Nature Center, Henrietta NY
Reptile Show – Oct. 1st @ 11:00am

Primary News, by Paula Vargas

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our new students:

Derek Bezek, Nathan Nguyen, Joy Burwell, Kate Poutre, Mae Quinn, Henri Rayton, Micah Rivera and Taiga Tani. They are integrating nicely into the class with the help of

the older students. We were looking forward to seeing only two of our senior members returning in June and had the pleasant surprise to see Tanish return from India and Adi and Akhil stay in Rochester. The older children came back in and went to work straight away and with the addition of the younger students they have been very helpful in guiding their younger peers through some basic lessons and showing them around the classroom. Mrs. Mattuzzi and myself are looking forward to a good year since we have such a nice group of children.

The older students are expanding their math and language skills while the newer students are learning classroom routines, how to lessons such as rolling a rug, pushing in chairs, carrying trays without spilling the materials etc.

Snack schedules are sent home with the older students first with the new students picking up the duties at the end of the year. One item we consistently ask for is cut flowers as we use these for flower arranging. However you don't have to wait for your turn at snack to bring in cut flowers since this is a very popular activity we always welcome floral contributions.

We are looking forward to a good year. Thank you for your cooperation.

Some notes for home:

Just as we prepare the environment for the children to work in we ask for your help as parents to prepare your children to be able to come into class in the morning. Having a consistent early bedtime such as 8pm is very helpful to your child. If they come in well rested they are more interested in the materials and are better able to have appropriate social interactions with their peers. If they are overtired often they have little or no patience with their friends and every interaction can be difficult. On the other end of the schedule, getting up in the morning, please refrain from letting your child watch TV. This sets up scatter in their focus and attention. Quiet play with Legos, puzzles or books is a better alternative if they are all ready for school and have to wait for an adult. The more prep work you can do at night to get ready for a smooth departure in the morning the better. Some of these preparations could include: making lunch, picking out clothes to be worn the next day, bathing, set the table with dry foods for breakfast. Designate a staging area for book bags, boots etc. by a door if possible. Check daily for permission slips and notes. This can be tricky because sometimes the children move the slips. Generally check the lunchboxes and all the pockets in the box as well as the backpacks and their compartments. Six to eight in the morning and the evening are the most difficult times of the day. Anything we as adults can do to facilitate our departure in the morning can make it easier for our children and ultimately for us.

Elementary News, by Jo Landis

We are all happy to be back to school. Our work is progressing well and we are very busy per usual.

The psychological characteristics of the second plane of development are evident in all of the children. We have therefore set the classroom accordingly. We are now preparing for “going out” events. These events will build independence and enhance further self construction in each child.

The 6-12 year olds must “go out” as part of their developmental process but also must be ready. The children “going out” must have self-control. You can help at home by setting limits and giving more responsibility to your child.

The six year old children will be spending most of their time in the classroom but the 11 or 12 year old students may be going out weekly depending upon their work schedules.

For going out the children first prepare in the classroom. They must complete their project work. The purpose for going out is three-fold:

- for further study
- to find information not available otherwise and
- to answer the need of going into society

Suzanne Van Damme is our “going out” coordinator. If you would like to assist in “going out” activities, please let me know. We will need drivers and Suzanne will need coordinators and assistants for each trip. The “going out” groups are small. There are generally four children per group, sometime eight. We look forward to developing this portion of our curriculum with all of you.

In our classroom, we welcome Ms. Carol McCoon who is Montessori trained and will assist with many activities. Mrs. Verma will assist with reading and lunch activities. Mrs. Burnett returns as our classroom assistant and, as you know, is a valuable part of our team.

If you need work to complete your volunteer hours, I have many possibilities for you to pursue. A laundry assistant is needed right away. Assistants for teas will be needed in December and again in May and June. Animal assistants will be needed for all vacations. As the work develops we will have needs that I do not anticipate at this time.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to work with your children. I look forward to a very productive and interesting year.

Physical Education News, by Keith Moore

Good day!!

My name is Keith Moore, and I am the new Physical Education teacher here at Webster Montessori School! Here in the fall we currently are focusing on soccer and other games that combine soccer with another sports or games. As the weeks progress, other fall sports will be highlighted again with the blending of sports and games and various challenges to the rules.

As the weather is unpredictable here in Rochester, please have your participant properly attired for attendance. Also, as a friendly reminder hydration is essential to your student's success, so if at all possible send a water bottle along with proper attire.

Thanks, and I look forward to a healthy and active year!!

Wrap-around News, by Mani Verma

We hope you all had a wonderful summer with your family and friends. We are glad to be back for a new school year. We welcome all our new and returning friends. Our main goal is to provide a safe and fun environment for the children. In Wrap-around we also have few rules like our classrooms to have consistency in the program. Children are learning to respect each other, elders and the materials. We are constantly talking about having good manners. We have age appropriate active and calm activities in our Wrap-around rooms. Art activities are open ended to encourage creativity. We encourage reading through story times and quiet reading time. Children are enjoying playing outside. Please make sure they have sneakers and a light jacket to go outside and extra pair of clothes for Wrap-around.

We are offering couple of afterschool programs for children and still have a few openings. Sports program is for ages 5 and up and Music program is for ages 3 to 5 children. **There are separate enrollment forms for the Oct 7th (Staff Development Day) & 10th (Columbus Day) and Oct 27th & 28th (Conference Days). If you are planning to use Wrap-around these days please fill out the forms and return to the office by the due dates.** It will help us with the staffing arrangements for these days. Thanks a lot for your support. We enjoy working with children every day.

Board of Trustees News, by Christine Vargas

I would like to start the new year off by thanking two of our board members who have completed their term of service to the school's Board of Trustees. The first is Scott Mulcahy, who served as Finance Chair and 1st Vice President. The second was alumni parent Birgit Coates who was our Fundraising Chair and helped get our first Wine Tasting event off the ground. Both contributed a considerable amount of time to the school, helping us move the organization forward. While time is always hard to find, they had given generously of theirs, to advance the operational and strategic well being of your child's school. For this I am grateful, and I would ask that you consider extending your appreciation as well. (scottmulcahy2@gmail.com, and birgit.coates@gmail.com) For without capable and willing volunteers, the school does not function. Thank you Scott and Birgit for your long hours, and for the nights you were not able to tuck your own children in because you were here serving the families of WMS.

I thank the current board members for continuing your leadership this year. While we are in the process of adding more board members, our current members include:

Rob Carroll
Marcos Esterman
Jennifer Keirsbilck (community member)
Heidi LaDuca
Garland Nichols

We have a considerable amount of work ahead of us this year. We have started the schematic design to expand our building. As we clear key milestones, I will share an outlook on when we expect to start construction. There are many components to this initiative, which will be the main focus of the board this year. The ongoing responsibilities of the Board of Trustees include:

Establishing the Strategic Direction of the School
Oversight of the Performance of the Head of School
Financial Reviews and Budget Approvals
Annual Giving / Capital Giving
Collaborating with and supporting the Head of School in our circles of expertise

We also take on assignments to establish new programs and processes, which are then turned over to either the Administration or the Parent Volunteer body to handle on an annual basis.

The board meeting schedule has been altered from the printed school calendar based on availability of our board members. We meet the third Tuesday of the month at 6pm

at WMS. All parents and staff are welcome to join us to learn more about the work we are doing for the school.

With Warm Regards,
Christine Vargas
Board President
WMS Board of Trustees

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 Auction/Wine Tasting Fundraiser Event Planning Kick-off Meeting

We are kicking off the planning process for this year's major fundraising event early, so we can incorporate your feedback and have an even more successful fundraiser! Thank you to all of the families that have already volunteered. There are still a number of opportunities for parent participation. So I would like to invite those that have already volunteered and others that are interested in volunteering to please join us on Wednesday, October 12, 2011 at 6pm in the school cafeteria for a kick-off meeting to find out what the remaining open needs are and help plan the event.