



Damariscotta Montessori School

Newsletter

Miss Casey's Primary Class

The week of observations and conferences is always a busy one. The children have not had much experience with having observers in the classroom and are excitable and inquisitive about it. Unfortunately this doesn't make for the most accurate observation but much can still be gained from just watching the class operate. Many of you noticed the community in the classroom and the level of independence of individual children.

Other things going on in the classroom include our introduction of a brief study of transportation and travel. In light of the coming travel season we felt that this is something that would really fit

"We must help the child act, think, and will for himself. This is the art of serving the spirit, an art which can be practiced to perfection only when working with children."

Dr. Maria Montessori

in with what the children will be experiencing. If you will be traveling for the holidays we would love to know where you are going and how you will get there. We hope to include all types of transportation methods in the discussions and job choices including but not limited to trains, planes and automobiles!

Miss Sarah's Primary Class

As autumn deepens, families gather. Winter holidays will bring countless families together, often traveling to visit. This week, we will begin to learn about such celebratory times with a unit on travel, visiting loved ones and North America. We will be studying how we prepare for visiting, modes of travel and talking about the people and places we will see. If you have a travel destination, abroad, out of state, or even here in

Maine, we'd love to know. This way we can focus on learning a bit about where the kids are going, and make the unit of study especially relevant and concrete. And, as always, if you have something special to share with the class, be it storytelling, an activity, or information, please get in touch, as we welcome you into the classroom!

Lower Elementary Class

November sees us settling into our school routines. We enjoyed your visits to our classroom. I thought I would talk a little about Science this week. The Elders are joining the Upper Elementary students for Science. At present they are studying the weather on our planet Earth. The Middles and Youngers are studying Zoology and Botany this year. In Zoology we are looking at invertebrates; those of the animal kingdom who do not have backbones. We start with the simplest of these phyla, the Porifera, or sea sponge. In Botany, we are studying the parts of plants, using the trees around our school as the subject of our study. For the Middles, who were introduced to these lessons last year, the work will be more in depth.

For the Youngers, this will be their introduction year. The Montessori method and materials promote reading and thinking skills, logical order and lead the child to make connections and comparisons among parts of our natural world.

The first lesson given by the teacher is called an 'impressionistic' lesson. This serves to introduce the children to the subject in a dynamic way that will engage their interest and curiosity. For our study of the tree we went outside and observed the beautiful big trees around our school, and discussed the different parts and their functions. In the case of the sponge, several real samples were available to the children to see and touch. This was followed by the child doing a 'scientific drawing' of the tree and the

sponge with appropriate labels. The children are given a sample, and encouraged to draw from the real object. The three part cards of the "Parts of the Plant" and the "Parts of the Porifera" are introduced. The cards are laid out as the teacher gives the group the vocabulary and the children match the labels to the pictures. The third part of the card is a paragraph detailing the definition of the plant or animal part. Younger children are encouraged to sound out and match the labels to the pictures. The older children add the definition and help the younger children to read and match

the cards. As always with Montessori materials, there is a wall chart and a book for the children to self-check their work. Lesson extensions may be different projects that will help the child express their new knowledge and further explore. For example, we are making tree journals, with drawings of our adopted tree in each of the seasons of the year and details about our particular tree. We will be doing sponge painting for an extension of the Porifera lessons.

Upper Elementary Class

This week in the upper elementary the children have been working on the timeline of "The First Thanksgiving." Our discussions centered on the Puritans and their role in settling the North East of what we now know as North America. Topics that we have discussed have been: the role of religion in the lives of the Puritans, religious freedom, separation of church and state, interactions with native people and the newly arrived Europeans, myths and history of the holiday of Thanksgiving. This week many of the children chose to do research projects from the timeline.

We've finished up our first creative writing project of the year. The children have done a wonderful job with the first piece of the year. The maturation of the writing is really fun to watch. The plots are getting more developed, dialogue is being used frequently, and there is more character development beginning to happen.

Our geometry studies with the older children have taken us to the discovery of the formula for the area of a circle. Last week we retraced how the formula (pi times radius squared) was derived, and began to use the formula to find the area of various circles throughout the school. The younger geometry group has been continuing the study of equivalence. Over this last week we have been working primarily on proving how shapes are equivalent, and recording those proofs.

Next week is a short week and we will be having our annual Thanksgiving Feast. The children will all bring in a dish from home, and we will heat everything here at school and eat at lunchtime. This has been a wonderful tradition since the elementary program began and we look forward to continuing it for another year.

Also, you will see a script coming home to you for our class play. This year, in order to preserve class time we will be holding the play in February. By the time you receive this newsletter we will have chosen play parts. The children will have about six weeks to memorize their lines before we start practicing. The play practice will begin after the New Year.

From Chip's Desk

The fall cleanup was a great success. Thank you to all who came by to rake some leaves! The school is really looking great!

As you are probably aware, we have begun our Annual Appeal. Each year we make a request for donations to the school to help us continue to provide scholarships, keep tuition to a reasonable level, maintain the building and

grounds, and plan for future expansion. Our goal is simple: 100% participation. We are grateful for gifts of all sizes, and thank everyone in advance for their help with this effort.

Lee Parsons, the Building and Grounds Chairperson, has put together a list of small (and not so small) projects that need to be done around the school. If you would like to volunteer

to tackle one of these projects, please contact Lee at 563-5255.

Positive Discipline Corner

Suggestions for Setting Limits with Children

The attitude behind what you do is more important than what you do. Maintain the dignity of all concerned when working with children on setting limits. Your attitude should be respectful and not authoritarian.

Be clear in establishing your limits. For example, if you are concerned about the noise level while your children are playing a game in the house, state that they can continue playing the game while the noise level remains such that you can easily carry on a conversation with another person. If the noise exceeds that comfort level, tell your children, "I see that this isn't working. Please put the game away. It is time to play outside." Be sure to avoid issuing multiple warnings, as this teaches children that they can go beyond the set limits.

Sometimes adults must quietly, kindly and firmly lead young children away from what they shouldn't be doing or toward what they should be doing. Do this with a friendly attitude instead of a scolding, controlling one. Sometimes it's most effective to eliminate words altogether. Use a friendly smile or a knowing wink instead.

Decide what you will do instead of what you will try to make children do. An adult might pull the car over, turn off the radio, and sit quietly until her children are quiet (having decided she won't have a discussion until her children are ready). Adults who have created an atmosphere of mutual respect in their homes will find this very effective. Let your children know in advance what you are going to do under certain circumstances, and then follow through with what you have declared – calmly and without lectures.

Thank You

- Anne Geisler and Kim Tolley for your help with the Annual Appeal letter.
- Kim Inman for your help with the sign board.
- Doug Rushton for building the bottle return.
- To everyone who helped with the fall cleanup: Lee Parsons, Amy and Bill Hinkley, Casey Beaudoin, Christopher Decker, Tom Greenleaf, Jess Herndon, Patrick Hunter, Amy McNaughton, Vicki Black, Ned Steinberger and Denise Soucy,
- Teresa Hewson for reading with the children in the elementary classroom.
- Carolina Rushton for teaching Spanish.
- Doug Rushton for publishing the newsletter.
- Katie LeBel for publishing the recent press releases.

Announcements and Dates to Remember

- Wednesday, November 22 – Friday, November 24 – Thanksgiving Break
 - Tuesday, November 28 – Classroom Meeting at 5:30 p.m., Community Meeting at 6:30 p.m. Soup and bread will be served at 6:15 p.m. Child care will be provided.
 - Tuesday, December 5 – Bring Your Parents to School Night at 5:30 p.m.
 - Thursday, December 7 – Elementary Field Trip (time to be announced) – Play at Lincoln Academy
 - Tuesday, December 12 – Open Board Meeting at 6:30 p.m.
 - Monday, December 25 – Monday, January 1 – Holiday Break (No School)
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