

## Mrs. Baumgart's class newsletter

We have had a wonderful beginning to our school year. It is amazing to watch how quickly both the new and returning students are forming a cohesive group. Our class is becoming a community; a Children's House. The returning children are happy to be back and the new students have acclimated quickly. We have a lovely group of children in our class. Misty Brown, my assistant and I enjoy working with them. We are having fun!

The oldest students, the Kindergarten group, are willingly taking on the roles of leaders and models for the younger students. I recently heard one of the older children tell a three year old that "When I was little, this was hard for me too!", as they helped them with their work. Priceless! The younger children are fascinated by the more complex work that they see the older students working on. It is not uncommon for a child to come home showing basic understanding of a concept generally above their level. This is due to the power of the "Absorbent Mind" that Maria Montessori noticed was inherent in this age child.

I continue to give the basic lessons of "Grace and Courtesy" that help the children learn how to be part of our community and the larger world. A favorite challenge has been how to walk in between two close mats without stepping on either one. This is important preparation for walking around the long bead chain mats that will be in use very soon. Another important lesson is how to observe a lesson or a friend's work without interrupting them. Not only does this promote respect for other people's work, it is important preparation for the parent observations that will be starting soon.

Observing is the best way to understand how our class works. We welcome all observers; parents, other teachers and perspective families. Because we so frequently have visitors to our class, it is important that their presence does not interrupt our class. The best way to get a true picture of our day is to be sure that your presence does not change what you have come to see. True observation means that you will just watch and not interact with the students. Of course you may say "hello" to any child that greets you, but then look away to discourage further interaction. If a child should want to continue interacting, just politely say "I'm observing the class, please don't interrupt my work.". The children generally respect that and then get busy elsewhere. I have found that if you have a conversation with one child, then soon you have a group around you. If that happens, you will not get to see

what a typical day is like. The returning students are very used to observers, but the new ones and the youngest members of our class might be curious at first. Of course your own child will generally not be able to forget your presence! It is important to watch the whole class, not just your child. It is fascinating to watch the social interactions and the varied types of work going on. If you have questions or comments, I would be glad to answer them at a later time.

We are enjoying the cooler weather of fall. The children are beginning to notice the changing leaves outside. The Botany Cabinet helps the children realize how varied leaf shapes can be. It is fun to try and figure out what shapes most closely match the leaves of the various indoor and out plants. We particularly enjoy watching the large Cherry tree outside our front window as it changes from season to season.

The older children are beginning to learn about the beginning of our country. We are currently looking at the monuments and other famous buildings in Washington, DC. We are learning the Pledge of Allegiance, which we recite each day during our 1:00 group time. This week we will read about Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas. Later in the year, we will also learn about people such as Betsy Ross, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. The children love to learn about how life was lived long ago!

Hopefully, many of you will be able to come and see our class in action. I am sure you will enjoy your observations. It is the interactions of the children and their work within this classroom that make it a "Children's House"! - Sandy Baumgart