

Hello Everyone,

It's hard to believe that our first month of this new school year has passed already! The students were happy to be back and settled in seamlessly. Our classroom is a very busy place. Currently, interest in writing is very high. Many students have experienced what Maria Montessori termed "the explosion into writing". This is an innate drive the children have to communicate their thoughts through drawings, story writing and handwriting practice. At any one time, one can observe children working with Movable Alphabets, Sandpaper Letters, paints, colored pencils; also handwriting practice with both chalkboards and pencil and paper.

Math work is also a favorite activity. The younger students are busy counting and tracing the Sandpaper Numbers. They enjoy finding a certain number of objects that match a selected number from around the room. One child might bring 2 pencils to the mat, another 7 cotton balls, etc.. There are variations of this game ending with the "Mystery Game" in which the children have to guess what number their friends have secretly chosen by the number of object that were collected. It's a great way to learn the number symbols. The older children are busy with the operations of addition and subtraction. These are frequently done with both the Bank Game using the Golden Beads and the Stamp Game. Work with the teens and tens continues with the Teen Beads and Board, Tens beads and Board and 100 Board. Math is in the air!

Lessons in science have been sparked by the changing seasons and the abundance of apples. The Kindergarten group took their annual fall field trip to Hartland Orchard in Markham, VA. Mr. Hank Green and his wife planned a lovely day for us. We learned about the life cycle of the apple, which reinforced what we had learned prior to the trip. We took a hayride, picked apples, enjoyed a picnic lunch, and had plenty of time to have fun in their wonderful play area. As frequently happens when Mountain Laurel students (in all levels) go out on field trips, we received compliments as to how knowledgeable, courteous and thoughtful our students were. The class also made apple sauce from the orchard's apples. Each child washed, dried, peeled and chopped up an apple. We also had work out for grinding cinnamon sticks and whole nutmegs. The ingredients then cooked all day in a crock pot. It sure smelled good. The children could hardly wait until snack the next day, when they got to taste it!

We have been celebrating the changing seasons with cutting out leaf shapes and leaf rubbing work. Interest in the Botany Cabinet has been renewed. Work with the parts of the tree, leaf, and flower puzzles and learning about the various leaf shapes is frequently seen. The oldest children have been learning about why the leaves change color, as well as how the changing seasons start the process.

The Kindergarten students have also been learning the "Pledge of Allegiance" and the "Star Spangled Banner. One parent has told me that their child wanted to recite the Pledge of Allegiance before dinner (instead of a more traditional grace!) The students proudly take turns each day being the flag bearer. Learning about our flag has sparked interest in drawing our flag, as well as those of other countries.

This Tuesday, Oct.11 at 7:30 PM, the staff and parents of our school have an opportunity to learn more about a very important topic, "Executive Functioning" (of the brain).. This will be presented by presented by Dr. **Varia** and Dr. Christi Guadagnoli of Mindwell. They will present a power point explaining Executive Functioning of the Brain and the development of the child to adulthood. Executive function is a set of mental processes that helps connect past experience with present action. People use it to perform activities such as planning, organizing, strategizing, paying attention to and remembering details, and managing time and space. They will also cover how to identify problems as well as typical development. I look forward to seeing as many of you all as possible on Tuesday.

We do not have school this Friday, 10/14, as our teachers will be attending (and presenting!) at the NAMTA conference in Columbia, MD. On Sunday morning, we have the honor of having been chosen to lead the last session of the conference. We will be sharing about how our school teaches the Cultural Studies area of the curriculum, from Toddler through Farm levels. We will be also be presenting the same topic at our whole school parent night on Tuesday, 10/18 at 7:00. This is an important area of the curriculum that is very integral to the development of the whole child.

We also encourage you to come and observe our class. It is amazing to see the wide variety of work and social interactions that can be seen at any given time. Please call the office to schedule a time, This ensures that we do not have too many observers at one time. We would love to have you come and see our class in action!

Sincerely,

Sandy Baumgart