

March, 2011

Dear Parents,

It has been a busy month once again. We have survived snow pants and winter boots and everyone is a bit more independent because of it. It is always fun this time of year to watch as the children get ready for playtime and lunchtime after our morning group. The adults in the room reap the rewards of our labors throughout the school year and the children bustle around getting ready for the next phase of their day in a more independent manner. Our first Primary Conversation meeting was a success and parents were interactive, shared ideas and asked excellent questions. Our topic was Independence: How Home and School Complement Each Other. Independence for children is one of the greatest gifts we can give them. If we start small while they are small, by the time they grow into young adults they are well on their way to success. The progression of independence happens in small stages, but each small stage is very important in the overall picture. Please remember that independence includes the ability to keep oneself entertained. In this age of never-ending technological entertainment it is a gift we can give our children to be able to entertain and motivate themselves.

We have a student teacher working in our class. Children have the benefit of two adults presenting new lessons to them. The level of work varies from child to child and advancements are seen with each age group. Reading skills among the older children are increasing. We have children reading at all levels - three-letter words up to past and present tense verbs. If you come in and you see a child (or children) jumping around (or skipping, hopping, running, etc.), check their wrist to see if they have a little band on it. If they do, it means they are performing the actions when reading verb cards. If they are "walking majestically" they may be working on the adverb lesson - majestically is the adverb telling them how to walk.

The younger children are all working their way through the sandpaper letters and the four-year-olds are likely writing the letter formations on a chalkboard. They are likely also writing numerals too. Remember they start writing with chalk so it will be awhile before you will see papers coming home. Play activities are one of the best things you can do to assist your child with their writing skills. Any type of strengthening skills on a playground, in a garden, in a workshop or kitchen helps with their fine and gross motor control. Playing games with small pieces that they pick up with a pincer grip also helps. Games are also a great way to promote skills such as taking turns - not to mention they are simply great family fun. Some of the games that are fun for families include Yahtzee, Boggle, Memory games, Guess Who, Mouse Trap, CandyLand, Uno, A Barrel Full of Monkeys, and many more. Counting and symbol recognition can be reinforced in a fun way at home through game playing.

It is parent observation time according to our calendar. I am hopeful to see some parents come in to visit. It is nice for parents to see first-hand the loving environment your children are a part of. Some parents are also very surprised to see the level of independence and self-control their children have at school. Our next topic for Primary Conversations will be Freedom and Discipline (that topic was the one most voted for by participating voters). I am excited - it is one of my favorite topics also.

The Kindergarten students are finishing up a novel titled Farmer Boy, part of the Laura Ingalls Wilder series. I am continually astounded how some of the children can picture what I am reading from the descriptions in the book. The history of pioneer days is well thought out in this fictional novel. When we finish we will be doing a few science activities before embarking on a study of Hawaii. The aunt of one of our students is teaching a Montessori class in Hawaii this school year and we will be tapping into her expertise.

Van Gogh is our current artist on display. It is fun to see the children look at paintings in books and find them hanging on our walls. Thank you to Sandy Gray Murray for enriching our art lessons this school year. We actually did a lesson in the afternoon class with permanent marker. The children were remarkably responsible and had a fun time analyzing the emotions of Van Gogh's trees and reproducing them on their clear writing surface. We displayed them for awhile before sending them home.

During our past professional day several teachers and staff, including me, went to visit a Montessori School in Washington D.C. It was a lovely school with an excellent reputation. Watching the children was so fun and seeing their lovely environments was very inspirational to all of us. We did, however, all agree when we left there that we are very proud of Mountain Laurel Montessori School and our wooded, country setting. It is the most beautiful of all. The dedication of our teachers and staff is commendable and we all returned from that visit with deeper appreciation for our school. Thank you for sending your children to us.

Come and visit. Visit your child's class and visit other classes. Come and see Dr. Davis speak on Tuesday evening. We are providing a multitude of ways to learn more about Montessori education and education in general this school year. Please take advantage of our efforts. Take care.

Sincerely,
Carrie irre

P.S. I want to take this opportunity to thank all the people who help with baking, washing mats, reading with children, providing snacks and flowers, attending PTO meetings, assisting with fund raising, etc. It is all so helpful.