

October 2010

Hello to all,

Once again we find ourselves starting October as a strong community. The activity in our classroom gets more focused each day. As children acclimate to the freedoms and limits in the classroom they begin to enjoy getting to know one another and connecting to Dr. Montessori's intriguing materials. Through grace and courtesy lessons and good modeling the children learn a respect for the environment that never ceases to amaze me, even after observing my children's classrooms way back when and for the last thirteen years enjoying my own class. And enjoy the class we do.

During the morning hours when the whole class is together there are many highlights. The lessons of practical life give the children opportunities to practice self-help skills such as dressing frames and accuracy of pouring through a spout, creative activities like painting, modeling with clay and arranging flowers, and the social and practical skills of preparing and eating a snack. Thank you to all of the families that have provided snacks for our class - please note when it is your turn we have a child with severe peanut allergies and our labels need to be checked closer than ever for products that were prepared in a facility where any nut products are processed. Those products are off limits. So far our snacks have been very creative and have included many fresh fruits and vegetables. Thank you! Also thank you for the lovely flowers parents provide for our flower arranging lesson. The small vases the children create from them provide such enjoyment for us.

We have a wide array of language cards that the children love. They can be heard discussing living or non-living pictures, classes of vertebrates, or naming some invertebrates they see in pictures. Language cards also include occupations, actions, common community symbols, parts of the body, etc. The possibilities are limitless and we enjoy different interests throughout the school year. Sound games are also a favorite small group lesson and start the ball rolling for children to learn to read. Sandpaper letter tracing and moveable alphabet work are enjoyed as well.

Our repertoire of songs is increasing and I often hear from one of the young children when I ring the bell, "Is it time to sing?" Johnny's Hammers is a favorite and is the most popular request. We also enjoy some songs about apples and many of the classic favorites.

Counting in all forms from simple to complex can be heard throughout the day. Children counting snack items on the simple side, and children counting money by ones, fives and tens on the more complex side, and everything in between.

For those of you who have children who stay for lunch, the lunch group has been enjoying the covered porch all but two rainy days so far. If you haven't seen our covered porch yet, it is behind the toddler classroom and has tables just the right size for primary students. During the lunch period the children get to enjoy each other's company and get some fresh air prior to their playtime. Our youngest children eat in a smaller group and, when outside, eat on the back porch next to the playground. We will continue to eat on the porches while the weather permits and then adjust to our indoor routines.

The Kindergarten-aged children had opportunity to attend a field trip to Waterpenny Farm hosted by Nicholas Plaksin's parents, Rachel Bynum and Erik Plaksin. We thank Nicholas' s parents for entertaining us with a lovely picnic spot, giving us opportunity to feed chickens and collect their eggs, and pick and eat to our fulfillment the best cherry tomatoes I have ever tasted. We went on a scavenger hunt during our trip and saw a beautiful heron hunting at their pond. It was a lovely afternoon and enjoyed by all. Thank you to all parents who attended and chaperoned this trip. We have been studying the life cycle of the hen since that time and have a picture series the children can organize by stages. The conversation this invokes is amazing and listening to five-year-olds read to each other is my pleasure.

This group also has had an ongoing study of Henri Matisse. Artist and parent, Sandy Gray Murray has provided me with examples of Matisse's work and prepared lessons for the children to educate them on the life of the artist. She has also designed materials for the class which give them opportunity to create

some of their own examples of his cutout style. Other lessons include matching cutouts to their actual real life pictures, similar to what Matisse did in his later artwork.

Charlotte's Web is our current novel and we are enjoying it very much. When we finish we will begin studies of Washington D.C. Note our intent to read Farmer Boy from the Little House series, in January. If you are looking for some good read-aloud material prior to that time, the first two books in the series are titled Little House in the Big Woods and Little House on the Prairie. Reading aloud to your children is a wonderful way to invoke in them a true love for reading - and vocabulary building. I am so impressed with the Kindergarten children's inquiry to vocabulary words as I read aloud to them each day.

We welcome you to take advantage of our observation period beginning October 11th. It is a great opportunity for you to learn more about the Montessori way of learning and see your child's class in action prior to our first conference day on November 1st. Please call the office to schedule these two important events.

In the meantime enjoy this fall weather and the Festival of Leaves Parade.

Sincerely,
Carrie Irre