

March, 2011

Dear Families,

Throughout the year we have enjoyed watching the children grow and become a loving and spirited community. We have grown in numbers and we are all richer for it. The beginning of the morning is especially sweet as the "veterans" welcome each other with squeals of delight and offer the "newbies" reassurance and an invitation to join in the fun.

Since January, we have welcomed the following new children to our community: Andrew Loock, Lucas Rivera, and Zoey Powell. This week, Elizabeth "Bitties" Pitcock will also be joining us. Having so many new friends enables us all to learn and to grow. Lessons that may have seemed "old hat" for some of our veterans are exciting again as they watch the new children's enthusiasm for the materials. Many times I have turned around to help a new child and see that another child has already stepped in with a helpful direction or a reassuring pat.

Our new friends also help the adults see our environment and all the children with fresh eyes. I think we have the widest spread of ages and stages of development that we have ever had, and our shelves reflect it. We will soon have velcro through buckles; chunky bead lacing through button sewing; paper tearing through scissor-cutting; crayons through watercolors. We look forward to the warmer weather when we can expand our practical life work outdoors, with plans for a new container garden. In preparation, we are beginning seed germination this week.

It is heartening to watch the children become more and more independent. Learning how to take care of one's own physical needs is a primary focus in the toddler community. Many of our children are using the toilet and dressing themselves and putting on and fastening their own shoes and coats. The determination and pride they exude is priceless and there is a certain swagger to some of our old-timers!

Thanks in part to the PTO's gift for continuing education, Tracy and I are learning and growing, too! Tracy is taking a developmental psychology course at Lord Fairfax Community College. She recently gave a presentation to her class about Montessori's theory of sensitive periods and how Montessori materials meet children's needs for each sensitive period. I recently returned from the AMI Refresher Course where we studied the Montessori concept of indirect preparation. The activities and experiences that we offer a young child have multiple purposes - what is taught immediately, and what lays the foundation for future learning and development. The most important advice I took from this course is that infants and young children are constantly learning from the attitudes and behaviors of the adults in their lives. These impressions form the building blocks of a child's personality and self-concept, an unconscious process that is essentially finished by the age of 3. What a potent reminder of the vital importance of our work with babies and toddlers!

As always, thank you all for the trust and support that sustains our work.

Sincerely,

Elaine, Tracy and Elizabeth