

The Montessorian

AMS Newsletter

February 2011

Dear AMS Families and Friends

I hope everyone enjoyed a wonderful long weekend in celebration of our families and loved ones. Spring is right around the corner!

Re-enrolment and programme planning for next year is always an exciting time for administration. Thank you to all our parents and grandparents who continue to show faith and confidence by trusting the education of your children to AMS. I have attached a beautiful article entitled "Why Our World Needs Montessori". I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did. It will also be a good reference source for you when you are discussing with friends and family the reasons you have chosen the gift of a Montessori education for your children.

Starting in March, I would like to offer Tea with the Principals on a monthly basis. Susan Mueller and Sandra Patterson will join me in a relaxed setting where parents' questions will be answered relating to all aspects of AMS. I will publish the dates for these Teas in early March.

Once again, thank you so very much for your on-going support and for helping us to ensure that we are doing the absolute best for our children. Please remember that I would be delighted to personally sit down with you and share any ideas or concerns you may have.

With Love, Brenda Glashan

Congratulations to our Chess Team!

AMS was proudly represented by 18 students of grades 1 to 6 in the **Aurora Chess Tournament** on Thursday Feb. 24. They were among about 250 students from all over Aurora and the competition was serious. Each player played at least 5 games and showcased his/her chess talents. Trophy winners: **Jon Lev- grade 6; Mackenzie Streb- grade 5; Jake Kandaharian- grade 3; William Zhang-grade 2; Matthew Toth - grade 1**

New Hot Lunch Provider

Our new hot lunch supplier, Kid's Kitchen, is providing lunches to our students, 5 days a week beginning February 28th. Orders can be placed on-line at www.kidskitchen.ca

From The Library

The **MS Read-a-thon** has wrapped up. It ran from January 17th until February 14th. Teachers worked with their students to set classroom goals for minutes read and funds raised. The children from Ms. Middleton's class were captured on the front page of *The Aurora Banner*, reading their little hearts out! Thank you for a job well done! Final Read-a-thon totals will be submitted in the next newsletter, so stay tuned!

Family Literacy Day took place on January 27th to celebrate adults and children reading and learning together. Simple activities like board games, card games and word games are a great way for parents and children to practice their literacy skills and have fun at the same time.

The library will continue to be open every Tuesday and Thursday until 4:30 p.m. for the remainder of this school term.

That's a lot of typing!

Katya Harbauer, from room 123, has created an amazing alphabetical aggregation of 171,000 words. The scroll took her 5 weeks to complete. She will be donating this to the school library. Thanks, Katya!

Outdoor Recess

It is vital to a child's well-being, both physically and mentally, to have some unstructured free play in the outdoors every day. If your child is well enough to attend school, they are expected to participate in all aspects of the school day, including outdoor recess. Please be sure that they come to school prepared with a warm coat, snow pants or slush pants, hat, mitts or gloves, and boots. They should also have a change of clothing (not necessarily uniform items) in their lockers **at all times** as the coming spring weather will likely be wet, as usual.

Open House For Upper Elementary

Open House for upper elementary took place on the evening of January 27th. Once again it was a very successful event. The students worked diligently for weeks on their projects and presentations, and there were many words of praise from proud parents and visitors. Level 7-8s from Mr. Rossiter's room presented their Science projects in the Gymnasium – everything from Solar Energy to The Effects of Motion on the Human Body could be viewed and many of the exhibits had an interactive feature – well done senior students!

Level 5 students from the rooms of Ms. Liznick and Mr. Beyzaei were pleased to present their Ancient History projects. Visitors traveled back in time to see Ancient Gods, models of great wonders like the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and the Roman Coliseum, as well as precious jewelry and artifacts from over two thousand years ago! Also, special mention to Julian Settino, Jenna Skurnac, Jiwon Min and Alessia Bomben for their highly entertaining skit featuring the mummification of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Akmen Talkedalot. Level 6 Students presented their awesome and awe - inspiring inventions as well as models and artwork they created representing Early Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. Excellent job, everyone!

White Elephant/ Garage Sale

This year's White Elephant sale was another tremendous success. Thank you to everyone who donated so many great items, both new and used! Proceeds will go to our elementary classrooms to help fund special events and purchase items from our student wish lists.

Level 6 V.I.P Program

Level 6 students from rooms 117 and 118 are into the third week of the V.I.P program presented by York Regional Police Officer, Constable Lemon. This program is aimed at age specific issues such as bullying, cyber – bullying, vandalism, and Ontario laws as they pertain to young adults. Lively discussion and debate, as well as informative visual aids help to deliver important messages that concern our children today.

Violin Virtuosos

Level 5 students from rooms 117 and 118 will be performing a recital for their parents on the afternoon of March 1st. Ms. Wierzba has been very pleased with her all – violin ensemble and she is looking forward to this special performance which will give the students an opportunity to show off their musical skills.

Valentines Day

All the children in grades 1-8 enjoyed a hearty morning of activities focused on retrieving Mr. Beyzaei from the clutches of a mad scientist bent on stealing the secret formula for Valentines Day. In the end, the mad scientist was outwitted, and Mr. Beyzaei was safely returned. Thanks to the L.I.T. (leaders in training) group under Mrs. Tal who very effectively organized and ran the event.

Southlake Hospital Roadshow

Grade one students enjoyed the **Southlake Travelling Road Show** presentation where volunteers from our local hospital engaged the children in activities to help them better understand what happens at a hospital.

Making Connections

The grade four students, as part of their language program, wrote nursery rhymes and then visited the Toddler rooms to share them with the youngest children at AMS. The toddlers were enthralled by the older students' performances, and the grade fours were thrilled to share their work with such an appreciative audience.

Open House

On January 26, the children in grades 1 and 2 had an opportunity to show their parents some of the special things that they have been working on so far this year. In the areas of math, language and culture, students were eager to present their work and share their excitement for learning.

On January 27, the grade 3's and 4's had their turn, with the 3's presenting either work on habitats or projects on the Mesozoic Era. The excitement was enhanced by the visit of a very large flying reptile. The grade 4 students, not to be outdone, donned costumes and explained to onlookers some of their work on the Middle Ages. They also joined in a lively medieval dance around the maypole.

Ski Days

On January 28 and February 11, our elementary students and many of their parents enjoyed a beautiful day on the slopes of Snow Valley. For many, it was an opportunity to learn a new sport they may embrace for a lifetime. For others, it provided a chance to hone their skills and enjoy their friends in the crisp winter air.

Medieval Times

As part of their study of the Middle Ages, the grade four students visited the Medieval Times theatre on February 17. We were also fortunate to have two cast members from Medieval Times visit the classroom on February 22, to answer student's questions about this time in history, and the show.

Winter Carnival

On Friday, February 25, we held our annual Winter Carnival, featuring sleigh rides, special treats and plenty of exhilarating winter contests. Thanks to the P.A.C. for organizing and running this wonderful event. All the children and staff had a winter blast!

Casa News

National Anthem

Our day in the Casa Program begins with *Oh, Canada*, at 9:00 am. Thank you for arriving before 9:00 so that we are ready to sing our beautiful National Anthem all together.

Reading Volunteers

Reading is a wonderful accomplishment for our students. In order to reinforce the skill of reading, it is important that the child is given the opportunity to read over and over again. We welcome new volunteers, and really appreciate you making time to listen to our students read. If you can spare an hour or two (or more) per week, or alternate weeks, please arrange a mutually agreeable schedule for this event through your classroom teacher. *Thank your for your ongoing support!*

Library Program

As children work through the Language materials within the Casa program, including classroom readers, a student's readiness determines the timing of their individualized reading program and an invitation is offered by his/her teacher to join the Library Program. This event occurs in our main AMS library. Many of our children are happily participating these days, and we hope you are enjoying hearing your child read to you at home. Happy reading!

Clubs

Second term clubs are well under way. The third term clubs begin on March 28th- June 3rd, 2011.

Nature Walks

Yes, it's winter, but there is a lot for us to see and do outside. So, even as the weather warms up, please continue to bring splash pants and boots.

Spring Concert

We are practicing hard as the Casa Spring Concert; "Favorite Family Musicals" is fast approaching. The concert will take place on the evenings of April 20th and 21st from 6:30 to 7:30pm. The children are very excited to showcase their talents for family and friends and cannot wait to show you what they've got!

Valentine's Day

Our Casa children and teachers all had a lovely Valentine's Day together. The Valentine's exchange went very smoothly. Thanks parents for all your help preparing!

Toddler News

The Toddlers have been quite the busy bees this month. We were all excited to hear that Wiarion Willie, our Canadian groundhog, didn't see his shadow in hope that we may have an early spring.

The Toddlers enjoyed saying "Gung Hey Fat Choy" to all their friends and family to bring in the year of the rabbit as well as making and sharing Valentine's to celebrate the day of love with their friends and families.

As always they continued with their Montessori work in the classroom as well as their outdoor play in the snow and gross motor play in the gym. The Toddler teachers and staff were all busy on Friday, February 18th, cleaning, sanitizing and preparing new and exciting lessons and activities for the children to enjoy this spring.

The Toddlers have many fun and exciting things to look forward to in March. We can't wait for the rescheduled Puppet Show on March 2nd at 9:30am. We will also enjoy the official arrival of Spring, St. Patrick's Day and some holiday time with our families.

Please remember to bring appropriate outdoor clothing for your Toddlers. We love to get outside for fresh air and are very excited to get back to hiking around the property and Montessori Mountain.

Beat the Winter Blahs Brown Sugar Hot Cocoa



Ingredients:

- 4 cups of hot milk
- 3 ounces of unsweetened chocolate
- 1/3 cup of water
- 3/4 cup of brown sugar
- 1/8 teaspoon of salt

Directions:

1. Melt the chocolate and the water in a double boiler.
2. Mix in the milk, sugar, and salt.

Mix it all together and pour into four cups.

Why Our World Needs Montessori

Many people wonder “What is Montessori Education?” I’m going to answer this question in the best way I can. In today’s crowded world of power struggles and ego trips, the Montessori method serves as a guide to raising unselfish, self-regulated, caring human beings who are problem solvers and have the self confidence to lead successful lives by their own efforts, rather than at the expense of their fellow citizens. The world needs as many people with these qualities as possible to shift the balance away from the good-of-the-few mentality that plagues many cultures today. The world needs Montessori.

Why Would You Choose Montessori For Your Child?

Every parent has the duty and the choice of determining which qualities they wish to instill in their child. Our habits and our methods of meeting life’s daily challenges inform our children of the ‘correct’ way to live, and they carry these teachings with them into adulthood. Maria Montessori, founder of the Montessori school of thought, firmly believed that young children have incredibly absorbent minds, assimilating all that they see, hear and experience. The child self, and subsequently the adult self, is created from this absorption of total surroundings. By thoughtful planning the environment in which children live and learn, the Montessori method provides the positive experiences most parents want their children to have in order to grow up with healthy minds, healthy attitudes and healthy life strategies.

If you think it’s important for a child to...

- be vibrantly inquisitive about new things
- enjoy the process of learning
- acquire fine motor skills
- develop an analytical mind
- work independently
- work without disrupting others
- work well with others
- be able to focus his/her mind on the task at hand
- respect others
- respect his/her own mind and abilities
- feel purposeful and valuable
- derive satisfaction from achievements
- become an independent, confident adult

... then you might wish to choose Montessori for your child.

How Does The Montessori Method Work?

There are two main principles governing the Montessori method. The first is that teachers (be they parents or Montessori directors) must respect children. The second is that children are born with an inherent, natural love of learning. With these two beliefs setting the tone, the Montessori method can be applied both in the home school and classroom environment. Over the past century, Montessori educators have developed an excellent set of tools and learning materials that enable children first to develop the basic skills they need to learn effectively, and then to use those skills to acquire knowledge in the areas of language, science, history, mathematics and all of the subjects considered essential to a modern education.

Youngest children develop focus, motor skills, methodical habits and a sense of achievement by mastering physical tasks such as sweeping, scrubbing, polishing, and scooping. Sequencing, sorting, and problem solving are made enjoyable with blocks, models and puzzles of all kinds. Math basics begin with beads and cards and counters, and language skills improve with moveable alphabets and language cards. Music and art play an important role in daily activities, and children investigate the habits of plants and animals. Older children then progress to more complex math, history, science and language arts with age-appropriate tools and materials. Throughout all levels, the child is guided to be orderly and tidy, and to help keep the classroom a good place for all of his/her classmates to work.

How Is Montessori Different Than A Typical Public School Program?

Unlike a typical public school program:

- the child is the focus of the Montessori classroom, not the teacher
- the child sets his/her own learning pace. Progress is not dictated by the average progress of the class or by school board timelines.
- Montessori learning materials are built around controls that signal to the child when he/she has mastered a subject or when more work is needed. This self-governing learning process removes any sense of failure or public shame a child might feel in a classroom where the teacher judges and ranks students against one another. There is no need to compete, only to achieve skills for one's own sense of accomplishment.
- Direction from the teacher is only provided as needed. Beyond this the child is guided to work independently, thus developing the ability to learn effectively on his/her own.
- Montessori classrooms are not laid out with desks for student and teacher. The learning environment is carefully constructed of shelves with beautiful materials that the children can choose from throughout the day.
- The end goal of a Montessori education is to develop a well-rounded, excellently socialized human being with a rational, inquisitive, well-organized mind.

It is this worthy end goal that truly sets the Montessori method apart. Unlike typical public education goals of having a child obtain proficiency in basic subjects considered to be essential by the public school system in order to receive a graduation certificate, the Montessori method focuses on the whole person and his or her need to develop habits and life skills that will serve them well as adults far beyond the classroom setting. If you attended a public school, chances are, you've forgotten the majority of the dates, facts and figures that you committed to memory in order to pass your finals.

These particles of trivia are unlikely to be playing a major part in your present day life. But the attitudes you developed toward learning, the habits of organization you learned, the very way in which your mind was forming during your formative years is absolutely affecting the way you handle life's challenges and opportunities today. The Montessori method strives to produce adults who adapt to new situations, learn new skills, and interact with others in a positive, productive way throughout life.

Is The Montessori Method Superior To The Average Public School Method?

In 2006, Dr. Angeline Lillard (UVA) and her colleagues conducted a study of Montessori and non-Montessori students in two age groups: five-year-old and twelve-year-olds. The results of this study indicated that the kindergarten-aged Montessori children tested higher in both math and reading than the public school children, using the Woodcock-Johnson Test Battery. The Montessori students also displayed more advanced social cognition and executive control, and demonstrated a greater concern over concepts of fairness and justice. The older group of Montessori children evinced a stronger feeling of community in their school than their public school counterparts and tested higher in math and writing skills.

An earlier study, conducted in 1991 by Alciilia Clifford and Carol Takacs, reached much the same conclusion. In general, Montessori students were more proficient at language arts, mathematics and expressed more positive attitudes towards their school. This study concluded that Montessori students were more likely than public school students to complete their education rather than dropping out.

The success of a Montessori school is largely dependent upon the qualities and gifts of the director and teachers. Some schools will be superior to others. Parents should actively interview and investigate any Montessori classroom to which they might be considering sending their child. Statistics like the above indicate that Montessori-educated children test higher and have better social skills than their public school peers, but it remains vital that the parent choose wisely for the individual child.

Why Does Our World Need Montessori?

To answer this question, let's go back to the beginning. Maria Montessori first began developing her methods in the early 20th century while she was training to become Italy's first female physician. She was assigned to observe a ward of children who had been classified as mentally retarded by the government. These children were being raised without the benefit of outside stimuli or toys of any kind. Montessori saw that the little children were so desperate for activity that they picked up crumbs from the ground and rolled them about in their fingers, just to have something to do. Montessori spent the next few months of her life providing these children with her basic educational materials and at the end of that time, the children were able to pass national tests, and even to test higher than so-called 'normal' peers.

Montessori learned that adults are prone to underestimate the intelligence of children in general. In today's world, toys, games and educational materials are dumbed down for the child 'consumer' to a never-before-seen low level. We don't simply give a child a set of wooden blocks or a book. We give him flashing cartoons and flickering video games with a deafening explosion per minute. As a result, we have youngsters who are unable to concentrate, focus, play on their own, understand the rights of peers, or pay attention to anything that isn't being spoon fed to them via the dubious medium of constant, unceasing entertainment.

Oftentimes, parents are shocked to discover that their children become 'functional' the moment they are given something interesting, useful and engrossing to do. Meaningless, adrenaline-filled boredom is replaced with purposeful activity and the child is suddenly focused and able to concentrate. Montessori materials provide that 'something to do' that children so yearn for in their quest to become helpful, recognized, active members of the human family.

Concerned adults are shaking their heads over the disorganization, inequality, violence and general chaos of our modern civilization. Psychology has long recognized that our experiences in our formative years dictate a great deal of our adult behaviour. The antidote to the rude, selfish adult is the loved, respected child. A system of education that devotes itself to creating a safe, positive atmosphere in which children can learn, grow, achieve, succeed, and come to respect themselves and others get my vote.

The Montessori method has recently celebrated its centennial anniversary. Its contributions to the world – including many thoughtful, responsible, useful citizens – are ones which we can all appreciate. Congratulations, Montessori! May our world continue to benefit from your respectful philosophy for another hundred years.

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