

Montessori Messenger

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Dedicated to the joy in education and the lifelong desire to know.

IN THIS ISSUE

Reflections on the Kindergarten Year

By Rita Finke

The third year child in the Montessori classroom has developed internal discipline built upon the ability to make responsible choices. These choices, based on interest and ability, results in the natural joy of learning which continues for a lifetime. In addition to making responsible work choices, our kindergarten students assume the responsibility of nurturing the younger children. It is heartwarming to witness the older children spontaneously give lessons to the three and four year olds. Peer teaching allows the kindergartener to assume leadership positions while reinforcing and clarifying their own knowledge. It gives opportunity for empathy and compassion to grow. In turn, our three year olds are motivated by the example of the older students.

Montessori teachers are in a position to know a kindergarten student very well because children stay for a three year cycle. Teachers enjoy a one on one relationship with each child. They know the student's personality and learning style. Teachers are able to match the immediate need of the child to a particular lesson and the multi-sensory material which will support the individual. The student sets her own learning pace and her success reinforces confidence.

WRITING IN THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

Page # 3



MEGAN DE ARAUJO INTERVIEW

Former DMS student. Grinnell College graduate...

Page # 4

UPPER ELEMETARY ARTICLES

Four articles by upper elementary writers.

Page # 7

Kindergarten (continued)

The third year in a Montessori classroom is a year of integration of all the child has learned in the first two years. Social, emotional, and academic growth is observable and commented on by parents. Developmental changes are evident. This year is the beginning of the transition from the absorbent mind to the rational mind of the growing child. The child is becoming a conscious learner and begins to seek reasons for his observations and ask why. At this point the child becomes an active participant in class meetings. They model giving complements and appreciation to other children and lead the discussion when brainstorming solutions to class problems becomes necessary.

The kindergarten student understands the world based on the impressions established through unconscious absorption in the first two years in the Montessori classroom. One parent commented, “Everything seems to come together in the third year.” Academic development, social, and emotional growth all come to fruition in the work of the five year old child. Allowing the child to complete the three year cycle enables him to take full advantage of his Montessori experience.

Important Dates	
January 19	No School – Martin Luther King Day
February 16	No school – Washington’s Birthday
March 20	No School – CKEA
March 30 – April 3	No School – Spring Break

Snow Policy: Closings will be announced on: WHIR – AM (1230), WRNZ – FM (105.1), WKYT – TV (27), WLEX – TV (18), or FOX 56. Danville Montessori will announce school closings due to inclement weather. Danville Montessori Daycare will be announced closed only under the most extreme conditions. We never take the one-hour or two-hour delays that area schools may take. When we open it will always be on regular hours.

Daycare will be open daily from 7:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. Monday through Friday except for the following holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving (Thurs. & Fri.), Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day.

Writing in the Montessori Classroom

By Pat Critchfield

The journey to written expression begins before the child enters the Montessori classroom. Ideally the child has been exposed to a rich linguistic environment in the home. This environment continues and is expanded upon in the classroom. Children are given continual opportunity for the exercise of receptive and expressive language in the open classroom, both planned and spontaneous. In addition teachers create labels for materials and people in the environment with the children watching and listening attentively. They are ever ready to respond to a child's query, "What is it?" with a written label. The children are exposed to contact with letter formation daily when tracing the sandpaper letters. With the acquisition of letter sounds, they are introduced to the moveable alphabet with which they compose words, phrases and sentences. Children begin to create stories, usually in the kindergarten year, with the moveable alphabet; pencil and story paper compositions follow when refinement of small muscle in the hand permit. The child leaves the kindergarten year, reading and writing, with the tools necessary to continue his independent search for knowledge and understanding in the elementary school.

The child begins the elementary school with extensive experience in oral language and the basics of written language. Fueled by developmental change and the quest to know why, the elementary aged child reads and writes for research purposes. The reason for observed phenomena becomes the target of individualized exploration.



During the lower elementary years the children are given brief instruction in sentence and paragraph formation. Many opportunities and much time are given to unsupervised writing. Emphasis is placed on creativity and maintaining enthusiasm for expressive language and the writing process.

Upper elementary students have attained the maturity to reflect upon their written work. They are capable of attending to writing mechanics and the organization of a written piece. They have the background to critique themselves in the areas of grammar, sentence fluency, and transitions. Children at this age have the ability to objectify their work, benefit from the editing process, and target areas of improvement. Types of writing addressed at the upper elementary level are poetry, as well as expository, narrative, and persuasive writing.

Recently the upper elementary children expressed a desire to write a class newspaper and, as a result, are receiving lessons in journalism. The following articles are some of the first submitted. We hope to share more of the children's work at a future time.

Interview: Megan de Araujo

By Stuart Critchfield

Megan what memories do you have of your early childhood class at DMS?

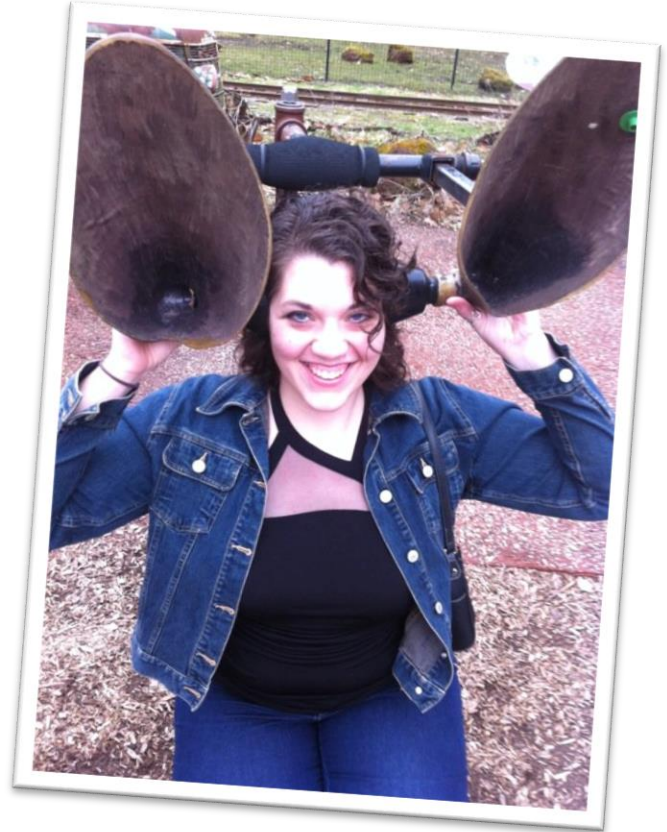
I remember at Montessori one of my friends (Morelia Chapin) had loaned the book *Dealing with Dragons* by Patricia C. Wrede to me for a book report, and, when I had finished with it, she gave it to me because I loved it so much. That is still one of my favorite books today, and I still have the copy that I was given years ago. I always remember the field trips, particularly going to Pine Mountain and to Key Largo. I remember snorkeling through the mangroves and around the coral reefs. I also remember that I was much quieter at Montessori than I am today. I remember being in a play as a silent oracle because I was shy and didn't really want much of a speaking role, but I still wanted to be part of the play.

Let's fast forward to today. Will you tell us about yourself in 2014? What exciting things are you doing now?

Right now I am working as a freelance lighting technician, programmer, and designer. I love working in theatrical and concert lighting, particularly programming automated fixtures. I did the lighting design for Smash Mouth at the Norton Center recently, so for anyone who saw that concert, all of the lighting was done by me sitting in the lighting booth and frantically pushing buttons. I do similar work across Kentucky and in the surrounding states for places like ECU, UK, and corporate events in Louisville. I have worked on the National Boy Scout Jamboree and music festivals around the state, including Louder than Life in Louisville and of course the Great American Brass Band Festival in Danville. I have also worked for a while as a lighting technician for Norwegian Cruise Lines on their ship circling the Hawaiian Islands.

I was excited to learn that you attended Grinnell College in Grinnell, Iowa. It seems like such an interesting school!

Grinnell is a small liberal arts school about an hour outside of Des Moines in Grinnell, Iowa. I was a theater major, but I was able to study a little bit of everything. I



took classes in French, sociology, art, physics, and numerous other departments. The college's liberal arts philosophy and focus on critical thinking were a big part of the reason that I chose Grinnell. The classes were small, so I actually felt like I could ask questions and be heard. I was able to work with the other students to explore aspects of the course material that were interesting to us, not just what we were told to study. Grinnell actually reminded me in a lot of ways of Montessori. While I was at Grinnell, I was able to study abroad in London, which made the theater lover in me do backflips. My study abroad included plays almost every day, trips to Belgium and France, classes held in the National Gallery, and even an internship with a music promotion company.

When you reflect back on your educational journey, how does Danville Montessori fit in?

A lot of what I really loved about Danville Montessori was learning how to learn. I felt like I could explore what interested me and get a much more well-rounded early education than I would have elsewhere. I think my basis in the Montessori style of learning and teaching was what enabled me to begin thinking outside the box. I was able to figure out my own learning style and gain much more from my later education than I think I would have otherwise. Montessori fosters creativity and individuality, and I am extremely happy to have had that early and to have learned how to cultivate that in the rest of my education and life.



Grinnell College

U.S. News & World Report #19 National Liberal Arts College. 2014 Forbes America's Top Colleges #58 "The school is known for its strong social activism, ranking top among schools of its size in sending volunteers to the Peace Corps. Grinnell's social consciousness stems back to Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, when several Grinnell graduates became influential New Deal administrators. Between 55 and 60 percent of students participate in study abroad programs during their time at Grinnell. Notable alumni include jazz musician and composer Herbie Hancock and Intel co-founder Robert Noyce, nicknamed "Mayor of Silicon Valley." – U.S. News

When you think about it, were there any aspects of your Montessori education that carried forward to your educational journey beyond DMS or even to the person you are today?

I think that by watching my classmates and realizing early (even subconsciously) that there are many ways to learn and that not everyone learns at the same rate or in the same way was extremely helpful. Montessori allowed everyone to learn at their own pace. Most of the time I was blazing through my work, but I never felt like I was running out of things to do and learn. The beauty of a Montessori education is that there is always something else to learn, and if you complete all of the work you are expected to do, you can still keep going. I think another one of the biggest aspects of Montessori that carried forward was learning the value of asking questions and of hearing the opinions and ideas of my classmates and friends. We were all encouraged to explore a variety of topics and aspects of each topic, and quickly found out that not everyone had the same ideas. Learning that other opinions could foster discussion and a better and deeper understanding of a topic, rather than dissent and conflict opened an aspect of education that is not always present

(at least in the same way). The understanding gained from cooperative rather than competitive learning is something that I have tried to bring forward with me to every learning opportunity (both within and outside of a school setting).

Do you have any favorite memories or lasting impressions of DMS that you would like to share?

I will always remember hatching chickens in the classroom. I particularly remember a year when everyone got to name the chicks. Most of the names were cute, normal pet names, but one student named his “Extra Crispy.” Mostly, I remember the people. I still have friends that I made at Montessori, both students and teachers, and they will always be important people in my life.

How did your parents impact your academic success?

My parents are wonderful. They have always been supportive of what I wanted to do and have helped me figure out how to get there. They are genuinely interested when I talk to them about my day or my week, and that encouragement made it much easier to take on everything that I have done. They have never told me that I was not capable to doing something. Having that support system made it easier to take chances and explore the possibilities in my life with less fear and hesitation. I owe a great deal of my accomplishments to knowing that my parents will be there if and when I need to ask for help or advice. Always having someone to laugh and talk with makes any day better, whether the day was good or bad.

What are your plans for the future?

I would love to one day do lighting programming for a large show (Cirque du Soleil, Blue Man Group, a large concert, or something along those lines).

Thanks Megan! It was great to hear from you!



Montessori School Compost

By Anna Gooch

Do you know how to turn garbage into rich soil? The upper elementary class at Danville Montessori School does. It is really easy if you work on it.

Dr. Haskett (Ben's dad) came to school in August to teach us how to compost. First the students got a pile of leaves and grass clippings. Then they dug a hole in the pile and put fruit and veggie scraps with egg shells and coffee grounds into it. The hole was covered back up and the pile was watered every few days. The pile has gotten smaller and will become rich soil by spring.

The fifth graders collect food scraps from the classrooms and kitchen each day. They use pitch forks to turn the fresh food into the pile. One day in the spring, they will put the rich compost soil into the school garden. The fruits and vegetables will become more nutritious and healthy. Hopefully, the students will continue to compost for many years.

Yoga Class at Danville Montessori School

By Evan Hutchinson

Have you ever done a half pigeon stretch? Well, the students at Danville Montessori School have. Every Thursday during the winter months, from 11:15 A.M. until 12:00 P.M. Shonna Storz teaches yoga to the upper elementary class.

Twelve fourth and fifth grade students lie down on the classroom floor to do a series of yoga poses. They also do yoga stories and partner yoga. They learn to slow their breathing to calm down. All this is done to relax minds and strengthen muscles.

Danville Montessori students have had yoga classes for the past four years. Most people will keep doing yoga for the rest of their lives. Yoga helps strengthen the body and mind and teaches people to be calm. People with strong minds and bodies can succeed in anything they encounter.

Neon Colors Plus Black Lights Plus Music Equals...A Puppet Show?

By Emma Nesmith

What do you think of when you hear the word puppet? Most people think of something that looks nothing like the puppets of "Imagine Ocean," by John Tartaglius. On October 28, 2014, the fourth and fifth grade class of Danville Montessori School was blown away by the talented puppetry of "Imagine Ocean."

The morning of the show, the upper elementary class of Danville Montessori set out to walk to the Norton Center for the Arts at Centre College. There they learned about puppetry and theater while going on an adventure with three playful fish named Bubbles, Tank, and Dorsal. The three were on a quest for hidden treasure. On the way they made new friends and sang fun songs.

All the students in attendance, as well as the Montessori School students, enjoyed “Imagine Ocean,” by John Tartaglius, and are hoping to return to the Norton Center for similar productions.

The Great Christmas Eve Haunting: Danville Montessori’s Trip to “A Christmas Carol”

By Jack Cusato

On December first the Danville Montessori School upper elementary students loaded into their parents’ cars. They were going to “A Christmas Carol” by Charles Dickens.

The children traveled to the historic Lancaster Grand Theater in Lancaster, Kentucky. They were seated in boxes next to the stage. It was a long wait, but Santa came, which made the children happy. Finally, the lights dimmed and Santa made a dash for the exit.

The play opened in a small office in London, England. A man was hunched over a desk. He was muttering to himself while scrawling something on a piece of parchment. The man was the aficionado of a business called “Scrooge and Marley,” and his name was Ebenezer Scrooge.

Scrooge had visitors in the office that Christmas Eve. Both charity seekers and his own nephew were dismissed with a “Bah! Humbug!” Scrooge’s underpaid, ill-treated assistant, Bob

Cratchit, was sent off for the holiday with an order to return early on the morning after Christmas. Cratchit retreated home to his merry but very poor family, which included his lame son, Tiny Tim.

Strange happening began to occur in Scrooge’s office that evening. Books fell off shelves and Scrooge’s desk moved. Later that night, Scrooge was visited by a ghostly visitor, the spirit of his deceased partner, Jacob Marley! He warned of three ghosts that will haunt Scrooge, Christmas Past, Present and Future.

Will Scrooge’s heart be lifted by the true spirit of Christmas? Will Tiny Tim live? These questions and more will be answered if you see this heartwarming rendition of “A Christmas Carol” in a theater near you.