

## Montessori Method

As the holidays creep up on us, I thought I would take this opportunity to share with you about how our environments address cultural differences and traditions. Part of the wonder of Montessori is that it brings together children and cultures from around the world. A large part of our curricula is based on the cultural area, and within that area our students are engaged in learning more than just geography. For a Montessori child, the world is our classroom. Learning about cultural heritage, food, landscape as well as traditions, the child begins to see the cultural differences in individuals and their celebrations. We believe that by opening our children's eyes to the different things that happen culturally around our world, they will be able to grow up with an understanding of cultures and recognize the beauty in all of them.

Of course, Thanksgiving is a traditional American holiday. Celebrated in our country to pay homage to the Native Americans, who were the real "first Americans," and the Pilgrims, who came to North America to find the new world. In the environments, the students have been reading stories about Native Americans, studying the travels of Christopher Columbus, learning about the boats that were used to cross the ocean, and learning about why the Europeans left their country to find a new land and the struggles that they had when they actually landed. Through these lessons the children are familiarizing themselves with the geography of both England and North America, learning Native American history as well as how both the Native Americans and Pilgrims, prepared food, built houses and survived the winter months.

Other holidays are celebrated by again, educating the child about the holiday and the traditions around that holiday, but also by exposing the children to the music and traditions of all cultures. We strive to look at many holidays and build activities into the curricula to educate the students on the true value of each holiday. Commercial holidays are of course promoted several months in advance in our culture. Children are sometimes overwhelmed with the input during these heightened times. In the classroom we strive to simplify and peacefully celebrate with each other. We Montessori teachers have the skills to tailor a celebration plan to fit our individual communities based on what is most meaningful to our children. So how does a thoughtful teacher create a celebration that equally focuses on the children, respects cultural and community concerns, and maintains a normal classroom routine all at the same time? Well, we incorporate a lot of wonderful information, with the belief that the more the children are exposed to the greater their knowledge of their world becomes. We believe our Montessori classrooms can be a powerful antidote to the inundating and overwhelming stimuli of commercial holidays. We maintain our calm, consistent, and peaceful environments during these seasons and give children a way to celebrate meaningfully the rest of the year. We wish you the same peace this holiday season.