



Center News

November 2019

Directors Notes

Elementary Elements
Volume 1 Number 2

Dear Parents,

It happened quite by happenstance. And in recounting it, I'm not really sure how it did happen. But a few weeks ago I found out that Erin's (who works in our front desk in the office) mom went to Anna Maria Elementary school as a child and had my mother as her second grade teacher. Erin went on to tell me that her mom was so happy to hear that her granddaughter was at a school that taught children to read with Words in Color because her mom had such fun learning to read that way and thought that should be the only way to learn to read.

My parents taught public school in the 1950's and 60's. My dad was the chemistry teacher at Manatee High school and my mom taught 2nd grade at Anna Maria Elementary school. It reminded me of a time when Dr. Gattegno, creator of the Words in Color approach, said that the children who learned to read with Words in Color would always remember how they learned to read. And with Erin's mom, here was another example of that statement.

I've spent a lifetime thinking about children and how they learn. I've continued to believe that the children who have difficulty learning to read do so because we don't know what to do to enable them to learn more efficiently. We easily label children and even blame them for not learning. It seems that sometimes children learn in spite of what we do.

So this awareness causes me to think of some of the things that we could all easily do to make it easier for children in school. Here's a simple list:

1. Don't teach the children the names of the letters until after they have learned to read. Knowing the names of the abc's doesn't help a child learn to read. It only helps a child spell out loud or alphabetize words.
2. Don't ask children to memorize a word list for reading. Studies show learning by sounding out words is the best way to learn to read. It's called phonics!
3. When sounding out words, sound out vowels and syllables, not letter by letter. When a child learns to sound letter by letter, she sounds very disconnected as she reads and it's difficult to understand some of the words when they are sounded out so slowly.
4. Learning to spell is different from learning to read. In learning to read, the child needs to move quickly to get the word for understanding what one is reading. In learning to spell, the child needs to slow down and examine closely which letters are used for which sound in order to know what sound to voice. For example, phone uses ph for the sound of f. That needs to be noticed so that one writes the ph and not just the f even though the ph is not what one would normally voice in phone.
5. Avoid homework sent home from school! Instead enrich your child's own self education by sharing your life experiences with your children. Studies show homework does not cause kids to do better in school. And it steals your kid's creative time.
6. Look for schools that don't manipulate children with grades, stars and other rewards. Self-motivation is much stronger and more effective. In fact, you cannot motivate your child, only you child can do that.

So, have I gotten you thinking? That was the purpose!

More later

Janice Mattina

Nest
Teacher: Ms. Christine
Assistant: Ms. Rosa

We are beginning to enter the time of normalization in our environment! This is the time when we observe the children and we see everyone working harmoniously on concentrated work. We begin to catch a glimpse at the start then we see the concentration and independence growing for longer periods of time.

“Maria Montessori spoke of wisdom and discipline that are waiting to be awakened in the little child. Repression has been at work upon him, but his shell is not hardened.”

The children tell us so much with their behaviors. It is not to say, let them do whatever they want. What we see is the child who wants so much to be independent, even at a very young age. We as adults tend to take the easy way and do it ourselves, or just not let the child do it. While understandable in our busy lives, this is what Maria Montessori meant by her term repression.

In the Nest, we are working to teach them to be independent. With the lessons we put out for them as we observe their needs, these lessons call out to them. We show the child the proper way. When a child decides to disrespect the material, they may not use it. When they are ready, we ask, “Would you like to try again?” The answer most times is “yes.” Then on their next attempt, we see the inner discipline developing. It is such a precious sight to be able to observe self-control and independence. We are first working on our relationship with the child. They then gain trust in us and know we are here to help them.

We began water work this week which is a very busy area in our environment. When I told the children I would show them what to do, they were very attentive. They know we will let them do their work as they choose when they have these beginnings of inner discipline. This is just the beginning of their big work and we are so privileged to guide them. There are also many ways the child can help at home, even a child as young as 18 months. Some ideas are picking up, sweeping, helping to put dishes away when unloading the dishwasher (silverware sorting) or handing safe dishes to the adult, folding wash cloths while an adult is folding bigger items, and chopping food for a salad or other recipes. There are many chopping tools that are safe for young children and montessori-services.com is a wonderful resource for these items.

This month we have also been working on our Grandparents Day gifts. The children were full of joy as they painted and prepared their gifts! We are wishing everyone a very happy Thanksgiving Holiday!

Christine Wood

*Quote taken from an article which first appeared in The Call of Education, Vol 1, Number 3, 1924



Primary 1
Teacher: Ms. Saleha
Assistant: Ms. Amy

We welcomed the fall season by learning about plants and leaves in our classroom. The children enjoyed scrubbing our classroom's pumpkin before Halloween, then received a sensorial experience by carving it. They had a fun time taking turns counting the 411 seeds it contained and then proceeded to plant some and are now watching them grow.

The Montessori approach lends to giving the children real experiences in their environment and gardening does just that. Many skills are acquired by participating in such an activity amongst which delayed gratification and care of the environment are highly valued in our classroom.

We are so grateful to our parent association (CEPA) for sponsoring the making of earth box holders that adorn our playground's fenced area. The children planted two varieties of organic lettuce starts and observed them successfully grow over a period of three weeks. Their faces beamed with excitement when it was time to harvest some leaves, wash them, dry them and taste a fresh salad as a snack. This was our first experience this school year consuming produce we grew and look forward to enjoying the herbs we planted in the second earth box.



Lewis, Dina and other friends enjoying freshly baked bread and lettuce for snack



Dina showing a filled up bowl of freshly harvested lettuce



Yiyi harvesting the lettuce leaves



River carving our Halloween pumpkin

Primary 2
Teacher: Ms. Crystal
Assistant: Ms. Tammy

School is now in full swing; we have a solid routine in place and the children are familiar with the environment and each other. Tammy and I can also see the children fully embracing and engaging with the materials. It is always a pleasure to watch this transition in the children within the classroom over the first few months of school. We observe the children working with great concentration, interacting harmoniously with peers and remembering to use classroom etiquette. Our classroom community is thriving, and this is a direct outcome of previous lessons on grace and courtesy, care of the environment and continuous presentations.

The children are loving the EarthBoxes and are excited to help with the care of our herb garden. Our carrots were unsuccessful, but it was a fun learning experience. We now have plans to plant broccoli! Be sure to have a peek and maybe even a smell! In the classroom we are developing the Botany area to support the children's understanding of food and where it comes from. The children also love and continue to care for their plants that were brought in at the beginning of the year. Botany is a part of the Culture area of our curriculum and the children have access to other lessons such as parts of a leaf, the life cycle of a tree and the leaf cabinet.

September 23rd marked the first day of Autumn this year, which brings many exciting events here at CMS. During our circle time we shared gourds, talked about the cooler weather and the leaves on the trees changing colors and falling. I highlighted our weather here in Florida verses other parts of the country. Together we shared our thoughts and observations of these changes. This always leads to lessons on seasons, botany and our annual Tree of Thanks.

Of course, we all enjoyed the festive Halloween fun. It was also the perfect time of year to introduce the children to and study bones, bats and pumpkins. The children loved looking at the classroom skeleton, Bob, to learn the names of parts such as the skull and rib cage and what they protect.

We also talked about the special holiday Diwali celebrated by Hindus. During circle time we found out that it is the festival of light. We discovered that Diya lamps light the houses, fireworks illuminate the skies and Rangoli patterns are found outside of homes. We then created our very own Diya's lights out of clay, colored Rangoli patterns and tried yummy foods. We had rice, treats and snacks all of which were kindly donated by our families who celebrate this lovely holiday. It was great fun!

Kindergarten children loved our visit to Windsor Gardens Assisted Living on Halloween for some trick or treating fun! We sang to the residents a couple of songs including "Five Little Pumpkins" and "Dem Bones." It is always a pleasure to see the delight on everyone's faces in this lovely exchange of fun! And of course, we had a really nice time at the theatre watching *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Our children were so well behaved and engaged with the performance.

Each month the children are introduced to a new artist. We started with Jackson Pollack and created our Galaxy using his technique of abstract painting. We then focused on Eric Carle in October and now Claude Monet.

Yoga is held every Wednesday during playground using a set of Yoga Pretzel cards. These cards provide a visual aide for the children to use as a guide to practice each pose. This is done in small groups of 4 or 5 for a bout 5 minutes, this is long enough for them to do around 4 poses. We do this while listening to our Composer of the Month. So far, these composers are Johann Sebastian Bach, Joseph Haydn and is now Mozart. We also listen to the music during arrival time and at rest time.

During the month of November, we are exploring what it means to be thankful and reflecting on what we are thankful for. Maybe try this at home during dinner time or any time! It's heartwarming to hear some of the children's responses. Each morning during circle time one of the children's responses is recorded onto a pumpkin sign that is hung on our classroom door; please check it out when passing by!

Thank you to all the volunteers and families who made it out to the annual Fall Art Festival. It was such a fun day together. We are happy to close out November with Grandparents and Special Friends' Day!



Primary 3
Teacher: Ms. Betty
Assistant: Ms. Giannina

This year our art studies began with the famous painter, Pablo Picasso. Since Picasso was born in Spain, we had a geography lesson using Europe as our focal point. We determined the location on our map, studied the climate, and read about some of the typical food and the animals that can be found in Europe. We read the book *Pablo Picasso* by Mike Venezia, and the children became interested in his art work. Some of the pieces that the children have particularly liked are the portraits that he painted. The children followed his art by creating and coloring their own self-portraits that now are part of our classroom wall art.

This year we have earthboxes located in the school playground. The children were super excited to start planting. Lemon balm and celery were the first herb and vegetable that the children were able to plant. They oversaw making sure that earthboxes were well watered and removed yellow leaves to make them healthier. We are planning to harvest the celery after December and sharing it with the other Primary classes to make a salad that we all can enjoy together. During this winter we are planning to make tea using the lemon balm leaves and share with others in our school community.

In our Primary 3 classroom we have incorporated a baking and cooking section. Each child has the opportunity to be a part of these activities. By baking the children are exercising their fine motor skills, working on eye-hand coordination and problem solving, and learning to follow directions, all great skills. It gives them a sense of being a part of a community, with each child having a job that varies from measuring and mixing ingredients, wrapping the baked goods, serving to others and sharing with friends and family. Each Friday the school kitchen smells delicious and our children feel very proud of their baking skills.

We have found that the children love to be involved in science experiments and projects. Each week a new experiment or project is presented to them. They love to guess before the experiment, and they share their conclusions with their peers once the experiments have ended. Activities like these nurture the child's intellect and their natural curiosity, help them expand their vocabulary, help them acquire new ways to ask questions and encourage them to not be afraid to make mistakes.

Each morning in our classroom the children participate in a reading section, according to their individual levels, with all joining the reading group. This is where we can observe one aspect of the Montessori Method taking place. The oldest students learn how to be patient with the younger children as they learn new sounds and new words without telling them the answer, and the younger students learn how to be quiet as the older students concentrate to read. On occasion, the older students read and write their sentences, creating a small booklet and that they then politely offer to read to a younger friend.

We are happy to welcome our new students in Primary 3, Sophia and Stone.

Wishing you a Happy Thanksgiving,

Betty

Ian and working
with a sewing
activity.



Christos
working with
parts of the
flower.



Lily is using
the push pin
activity.



Aurora is
working
using the
ten board.



Elementary 1

**Teachers: Ms. Rachel, Ms. Juana,
Ms. Janice**

Assistants: Ms. Yenis, Ms. Melanie

We value partnering with you in your child's education at Center Montessori School. Our goal is to help facilitate the development of your child's emotional, social, and academic capabilities. As we pause to reflect upon the end of the calendar year, there are so many about which we are excited and for which we are grateful.

First, we are thankful to spend our days with your children in a Montessori classroom. As parents, you have taken care to choose a special and unique educational methodology for your children. Current brain research supports so much about the benefits of how we educate children with the Montessori Method, the multi-age level classrooms, teachers acting as guides in the prepared environment who spend a 3-year cycle with the child, the cosmic curriculum, cooperative learning, and a scientific methodology that supports intrinsic motivation, as well as the development of the whole child.

As teachers, we will spend much our fall and winter breaks reflecting upon the successes of the children during the first half school year. We will also use this time to enact plans to support your children with lagging skills or assist in areas that may be challenging. We will prepare ourselves to greet the children in the New Year and second semester with open arms, minds, and hearts. However, we do believe it "takes a village." The family role in the development of the child also plays critical importance. Yes, of course, we are all doing the best we can in raising our children. But what if this challenging and all-consuming job of parenting these little human beings could in fact be very simple?

So what can you do with your children over the upcoming breaks so that they stay engaged, connected, and eager learners? Research shows that there are three very basic things that we can do right now as parents (and educators) to help children succeed socially, emotionally, and academically.

1. Eat with your children. Current research shows that children who eat with their parents as a family at least four times each week eat more nutritiously, are less stressed, have a significantly larger vocabulary, have better listening skills, are able to express themselves more clearly, and are less likely to fulfill their needs with inappropriate and dangerous choices such as sex, drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Children who eat with their parents are healthier and will make better choices for themselves.
2. Play with your children. Dr. Maria Montessori once said, "Play is the work of the child." It is what the child must do in order to learn how to grow up. Play gives children wonderful opportunities to learn important social and emotional skills such as working in groups, sharing, negotiating, resolving conflict, self-advocacy skills, creativity, role playing, and working out new ideas and various emotions. Play should be voluntary, spontaneous, enjoyable, and fun. In fact, play is so vital to the development of the child that the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights granted that "play" is a human right that should be given to every child.
3. Read with your children. Studies have shown that children need to hear over 1,000 stories read aloud to them in order to become readers (yes, it can be the same few stories over and over again). When we spend even as little as 10 "happy" minutes a day reading to our children, we help them to create a memory that associates reading with positive feelings such as happiness, safety, closeness, and love. Our children will carry this connection with them throughout their lifetime and their development will be enhanced because of it.

Sounds simple, right? All we have to do is eat, play, and read with our kids in order for them to be happy, healthy, safe, loved, and able to achieve their full potential. Perhaps you are already naturally doing these things with your children. - Great! If not, you can start today!

The late Dr. Maya Angelou said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better." With thankful hearts and best wishes for a Happy New Year, we invite you to enjoy eating, playing, and reading with your children.



Elementary 2

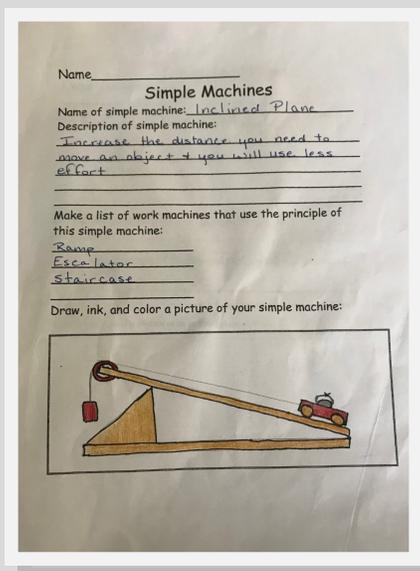
Teachers: Ms. Jayne and Ms. Susan

Maria Montessori stated, "Through machinery, man can exert tremendous powers almost as fantastic as if he were the hero of a fairy tale. Through machinery, man can travel with an ever-increasing velocity; he can fly through the air and go beneath the surface of the ocean." This semester, the Elementary 2 class has been studying simple machines. These include the inclined plane, lever, gear, wheel and axle, wedge, pulley, and inclined plane. These machines all provide the user with an advantage over force, making the work easier.

Our work with the simple machines has incorporated two important aspects of the Montessori curriculum, experiential learning and teaching diverse skills in connection with one theme. The students have been introduced to each simple machine through a lesson where they explored and experimented with a model of that particular simple machine. To put our knowledge of simple machines to practical use, we fashioned a pulley system to make the work of taking our recess balls to the playground much easier. The students have been very excited to try to figure out real life work machines that use the principles of simple machines. To realize that a doorknob is an example of a wheel and axle was surprising to some. Hands on manipulative experiential learning such as this has been found to better engage both sides of the brain and increase activity in sensory and motor related areas of the brain. This results in improved retention of the information.

In connection with our study of simple machines, we watched a video lesson. We used this as an opportunity to work on building our note taking skills. We started and stopped the video to give students the chance to take notes and then discussed what information they thought was important enough to include in their notes. We also followed up our work on this material by giving students information to read and asking them to answer questions in full sentence form, giving us practice on our writing skills and reading comprehension. Luckily with a theme like simple machines, the work can also be fun.

Another focus for us this semester has been history and again, in a Montessori environment, this subject is made even more interesting for the students because we explore it from a larger perspective. History education is much like The Big History Project, started by Bill Gates and David Christian to enable the global teaching of the subject. Big History is described as "the attempt to understand, in a unified way, the history of the Cosmos, Earth, Life and Humanity." The course starts with the Big Bang and goes through to the present day, making connections and drawing relationships to many different branches of knowledge. Currently in E2, we are at the point in history where we are studying ancient civilizations like those in the Indus Valley, ancient Egyptians, Persians, Myceneans, and the ancient Greeks. Students reflect on the way in which these ancient cultures have an effect on our lives today. For example, we learned that the concept of democracy was an idea that was manifest in the lives of the ancient Greeks. In this way we hope to foster a great love for history and life-long learning in our students.



Level 3 - 6th Grade

Ms. Deana

The 6th grade classroom has recently completed its first full work cycle. Our work cycles are six weeks long and divided into two-week work plans. Our work in science began with researching animal species that are invasive to Florida. Students made "Wanted" posters with facts about the how the animals are destructive to our natural ecosystem. We then moved on to Earth Science and learned about our atmosphere. We learned about the different layers of the atmosphere and the characteristics of each layer, such as temperature. They read about atmospheric pressure and winds, heating of the atmosphere, humidity, and the water cycle.

Students jumped right into their math lessons. They first took a placement test to determine the textbook they would use in our classroom. We have whole group math lessons, small group lessons, and individual lessons. One of our group math lessons during this work cycle included learning some rules (hints) for divisibility. Students learned about converting numbers in base 10, 2, and 3. Our geometry lessons were a review of polygons and quadrilaterals, and learning about point, line and plane. Our Language Art lessons started with the students continuing with the Albanesi cards that they worked on in E2. They also had a review lesson on editing. They correct MUG Shots (Mechanics Usage and Grammar) on their own or with a partner and then we go over it as a class using the overhead projector. Each student works independently on reading comprehension. They are matched into a book based on their reading level. These assignments cover vocabulary, author's purpose and point of view, main idea, scanning and note-taking, and inferences. Students read in class each day for 30 minutes. Each work cycle they read a novel, and the book this time was *Loser*, by Jerry Spinelli. They also are assigned a book report. The students have writing work each week. They have creative writing prompts and writing lessons that go over proper writing structures.

The students form a strong background of Greek history while in E2, and we continue by learning about ancient river civilizations and moving into Ancient Roman history. Students choose topics to research and create presentations to share with their classmates.

Our students have band class three times each week with Ms. Alicia. They are improving their Spanish with class four times each week, and P.E. is twice a week with Coach Taylor.

The sixth-grade students are responsible for the school snack business by helping with inventory and working weekly in the store.

The students are working hard and it has been a great first work cycle.



Level 3 -7th and 8th Grade

The Power of Community Service

By Robin Edidin

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

We all want to be useful, to be of service, to make a positive difference. This desire is often especially strong in young adolescents, who are trying to figure out their place in our world. As it turns out, engaging in community service as a young adolescent has real benefits for the adolescent as well as the community. Various studies on young adolescents and community service have found that adolescent volunteers develop a greater connection to their community, and show a greater concern for the welfare of others. They are less likely to develop behavioral issues in their later teen years. Service work also has a positive effect on young teens’ work ethic.

In our middle school, we strive to develop the *whole* person, and community service is an important element of that. Our sixth grade has been doing service work at F.E.L.T. (Feeding Empty Little Tummies) for six years now, and this year the seventh and eighth grade students are doing their service work at this organization as well.

At F.E.L.T., volunteers fill bags of food to give to students in Manatee County who otherwise might have **no food** to eat over the weekend. This past Friday, our students helped fill over 750 weekend food bags, which would be given to needy elementary and middle school students later that day. The contents of the bags are modest but adequate: a pack of tortillas, a small can of macaroni and beef, a package of ramen noodles, powdered milk, a single serving of a dried cereal, a juice box, a can of tuna, a single serving packet of instant oatmeal, a single portion of apple sauce, a single portion of pudding, a single portion of canned fruit, and a small bag of chips. The food will be placed discreetly in simple, plain backpacks to preserve the dignity of those receiving it

After our service work this past week, we took a little time to reflect on what we had packed for the students, and thought about how much, as well as what types of food **we** would each eat this weekend: probably home-cooked meals made with fresh ingredients. We’d have nice, big portions. We would probably have choices about our lunch and breakfast. The recipients of the food bags would have neither. But they would have **food**, something our students had helped make happen. The recipients wouldn’t know who we were, but they would know that someone, somewhere, cares about them.

F.E.L.T., like many other charitable organizations, runs on a shoestring budget. It receives a small stipend from the county, and also relies on donations from individuals in the community. We are grateful for the chance to support this organization.



Waiting to begin work



Zoran receives a pack

Sixth graders, busily filling bags of tortillas for his bag



Finished bags

