

October Newsletter

Dear Parents,

-September Highlights-

It was a pleasure for us to see all of you at the **Parents' Back-to-School Night** and share the Montessori Elementary curriculum overview for the year ahead. This curriculum which Dr. Montessori developed for us is truly a gift, and there is much to look forward to and enjoy in the weeks and months ahead.

The children have been settling nicely back into their daily school routine. September is a pretty intensive four weeks, but when October comes, we see what Maria Montessori called "the normalized child." So, we are now ready to have visitors. If any of you would like to **come to observe** for a day or any part of a day, please let us know (so that we don't have more than one visitor scheduled at a time). It is one thing to *hear* about the Montessori curriculum, but quite another to see it in action first hand. Observing the classroom and your child is also an excellent preparation for the upcoming parent conferences toward the end of the month.

In **Math**, the 2nd Years have been furthering their competence and eventual mastery of 4-place addition. After that will come the work of Subtraction, which is the focus of the 2nd Year's Math Program. The 3rds have been working through reviews of addition and are now mastering the last steps of subtraction, and a few have already launched into 4-place multiplication - their math work for the year. We must also thank you very much for the work you have been doing with your children at home on the math facts flash cards &/or timed test, as we suggested at our parent meeting. We are beginning to see improvements in a number of their times! This will help them greatly as they work towards mastery of the math procedures. Most importantly, they are also very excited about their improvements. It is astounding what *daily* practice can achieve!

Geometry lessons have also begun for both the 3rd years and the 2nds. As last year, the children will be given an assignment after the lesson (2 to 3 lessons per month) and have one week to complete it (in class). Then they will bring it home, so be on the look-out for it. Geometry is always one of the children's favorite subjects, and we're sure they will be anxious to share their projects and knowledge with you throughout the year. It is so beneficial to have your child explain his or her work to you, no matter what the subject.

In **Language** the 2nds are beginning the work on a true paragraph with topic sentence, supporting details, and ending sentence. Thirds are further refining that ability

with more descriptive language and multiple paragraphs. We will be sending your child's Journal home mid-month so that you may have a look at how the writing has been going and you will then have a better idea of his or her "starting point" for the year. It's always amazing to us to see the difference between September Journals of the 2nd Years and those of the 3^{rds}. So much development in 10 months, but only with lots of effort! After having read your child's Journal, if you have any writing questions please bring them to conference. Also in Language, the 3^{rds} have been working on singulars and the various plural spellings, and the 2^{nds} are deep into compound and root words - work which will further support writing skills.

Spelling Tests have begun for both grades now. Everything went fairly well with our first rounds of homework and tests (homework was a little rough...but again, it's our "starting point"). To summarize briefly again, the list is given on Monday and the homework (all words written 3 times each and for 2^{nds}, half of the words in sentences with articles, adjectives and nouns marked, and for 3^{rds}, 5 of the words in sentences but with the addition of marking verbs and prepositions in every sentence (everyone's homework on binder paper and with *colored pencils* please - not crayon) due on Friday. And we know it seems we're being extremely fussy about this, but it IS essential for them 2^{nds} to write *the symbols on 2 lines and the words on two lines, with none of it crossing into the other territory!* In this way we ensure that they understand the relative importance of each part of speech by its assigned size. That symbol line will only become more complicated as more types of grammar symbols are added, so we want to be sure we start out right. Thirds should also continue to use 2 lines for symbols even though they are writing the sentence on only one line.

We have started a number of **Cultural** projects during the past month. In **History** we learned how to make calendars. We discussed and read books about the California Gold Rush - and had a little celebration for Admission Day. Hopefully your child was busy for a number of days searching for California flags as you drove around town. We have also begun tracing the journey of Columbus across the Atlantic each day and reading his daily journal entries. In **Geography**, we have reviewed all the basic land and water forms and learned how to make a researched continent map using an atlas. We have also looked at an unusual view of the earth: the earth as it appeared 300 million years ago when all the continents were joined to form the supercontinent Pangaea. In **Zoology** we have looked at how to do research reports on the vertebrates and invertebrates. The "Who Am I?" stories, researching which animals are native to each continent, and sorting invertebrate phyla have been particularly popular. But by far, the biggest event has been **Botany** taking

center stage when we launched into our first big curriculum unit: **Fruits!** We have spent the past two+ weeks looking into how fruits are classified and why, (how many pistils the flower has, how the seeds are arranged, etc.). Besides being fascinating, it also involves lots of tasting! I was happy to see some reluctant fruit tasters venturing into new experiences when they saw classmates giving an enthusiastic "more please!" Our study will soon culminate with a Fruit Salad Party. There is also a big "book" project to accompany this study which many are well into. So, lots of various project activities going on, and quite a few of these already having made their way home, which I'm sure you enjoyed seeing. This group really seems to like making things!

Our afternoon "read-aloud" book was the hilarious *George's Marvelous Medicine* by **Raold Dahl** which everyone enjoyed very much. I find this book a natural for getting children's attention in a large group. This helps greatly in getting those who are rather reluctant in this area to have more of an experience of what "giving your full attention at circle time" is all about... ;)

-Upcoming Events-

Tuesday, Oct. 17th will be our annual field trip to **Joan's Farm and Pumpkin Patch in Livermore**. It's always such a wonderful fall outing. Besides getting a pumpkin, the children will be able to feed some farm animals, see some crops and old farm machinery, and even try out the corn maze! Afterwards the children will keep their pumpkins at school for a while - they give the room such a festive autumn look. (NOTE: there is no extra fee for your child's pumpkin, as this is covered by your annual materials fee.)

Speaking of **Field Trips**, almost all the reservations have now been finalized and tickets purchased. We're waiting for only 2 more confirmations of our requested November and December dates. When you receive the schedule for the year and there is a specific trip(s) you want to drive for, please let us know right away, even if it's months away. That way, we will hold the tickets for you. When a trip involves a specific number of tickets purchased, we give them out on a first-come, first-served basis. After they are all claimed, we are not able to take any more parents with us.

On **Wednesday October 18th** we will be celebrating **Diwali**, the 5-day Hindu Festival of Lights. Any child who has Indian clothes may wear them on that day.

Parent Conferences will be held on **Thursday and Friday, October 19th and 20th**. We will be sending home a sign-up sheet next week. Conferences are 20 minutes each. It is

a time set aside to discuss with you how your child is adjusting to his or her new grade level. We will also be showing you some of your child's work.

For **read-aloud books** this month we will change to a very different genre: "scary stories." At this age they now feel quite ready for and enjoy the fun of them (i.e. *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*). We will also be doing our first **poetry memorization**, from *Witches' Chant* by William Shakespeare, with its bubbling cauldron to put us in the mood for Halloween!

In **Geography** we will look at two more interesting views of the Earth: Asia and North America connected by a Land Bridge; and the world seen in vegetation areas (arctic tundra, grasslands, rainforest, etc.) In **History** we will begin talking about Early People, the Cave Dwellers and the Neanderthals, and we will be following those nomadic people out of Africa and across Asia where they will eventually cross that Land Bridge into North America and later become agrarian people by developing the skill to plant seeds. We will also be doing some further research about Columbus, and the 3rds will have the opportunity to make a "painting" of him using not paint, but the very spices he was seeking to bring back from India!

Last but certainly not least...at least in the eyes of 7 and 8 year olds...is Halloween! It will be time for our annual Montessori Elementary Historical **Halloween Parade**. This event is a wonderful experience for the children, as they become someone whose life was or is an inspiration to all. It is an event the children long remember. They started talking about who they would be only a few weeks into our new school year. Third Years will also be writing a short report on their historical character. After the parade, we will have some treats in the classroom. More details about this event will be coming home soon.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne and Toni

P.S. If ever during a month you find you've misplaced your newsletter and you want to know the date/time/info about a particular upcoming event, our newsletters are always posted on our website in the PARENTS tab. The Calendar for all school events for the month is on the homepage.

Calendar:

Friday, October 6th - Sharing Day - "a favorite book"; Book Orders due

Tuesday, October 17th - field trip to Joan's Farm and Pumpkin Patch

Wednesday, October 18th - Diwali celebration - children who have Indian clothes may wear them

Thursday & Friday, Oct. 19th and 20th - Parent Conferences; daycare but no regular classes

**Wednesday, Oct. 25th - ALL SCHOOL FUNDRAISER - DINNER AT PANERA'S,
Dine In or Take Out, 4-8 p.m. (at Southland Mall)**

Tuesday, October 31st - Historical Halloween Parade - 1:30 in the courtyard; party following