

## 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. There were two items we forgot to mention that evening though. The first is that, unlike the "Mail Folders" used in kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> Year classes, any kind of communications/newsletters/etc. from us will be either handed directly to you at 2:45 cars pick-up, or you will find them in your child's Daycare sign-out pocket (please check the pocket *daily*). Secondly, we have a short book called *Montessori Elementary*. If anyone is interested in borrowing it to have more of a look into what the program is all about, please don't hesitate to ask.

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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Year's Math Program. The 3<sup>rd</sup>s have been working through reviews of addition, and most are now either mastering the last steps of subtraction or 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! We cannot recommend it highly enough.

**Geometry** lessons have begun for 3<sup>rd</sup> Years, and soon will be for 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 of 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'll 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 2<sup>nd</sup> Years and those of the 3rds. 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 3rds have been working on singulars and the various plural spellings, and the 2nds are deep into compound and root words - work which will further support writing skills.

**Spelling Tests** have now begun for both grades. Everything went fairly well these past two weeks 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 2nds, half of the words in sentences with articles, adjectives and nouns marked, and for 3rds, 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 or markers) due on Friday. And we know it seems we're being extremely fussy about this, but it IS essential for the 2nds 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.

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 each day tracing the journey of Columbus across the Atlantic and reading his daily journal entries. These last weeks we have focused on learning about the cave dwelling Early People and their nomadic life. We have moved from their origins in Africa and later

to Europe and Asia, to eventually crossing a land bridge which brought them to North America, and then later becoming agrarian people by developing the skill to plant seeds. 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. A number of those maps are in the making right now. The children have also been enjoying making a detailed map of our classroom which certainly must boost their map reading skills in the process. 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. In **Botany**, the children were introduced to how Botany research reports are done at this level. We also had an "apple tasting" of a number of varieties of apples in conjunction with learning about Johnny Appleseed and celebrating his birthday on the 26<sup>th</sup>. There have been lots of various project activities going on, and quite a few of these projects have already gone home, which I'm sure you enjoyed seeing. This group really seems to like making things!

Our "read-aloud" book was *The Family Under the Bridge*, a touching story about a homeless man and another young family who have lost their home and now find each other "under a bridge" in Paris. The story offers much opportunity to reflect upon those who have little and how the caring relationships they form with each other lift them, bringing to them and to us a new understanding of "family," and how compassion and caring can touch all.

#### -Upcoming Events-

**Tuesday, Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>** 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**, with all the reservations finalized and tickets purchased, if you told us at Back to School Night that you wanted to be a driver for a specific trip(s), would you **please send us another note reconfirming** that, since some of the dates/times may have changed since then. As we said when the finalized flyer went home to you several weeks ago, the tickets are given on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Parent Conferences** will be held on **Thursday and Friday, October 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>**. 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 have already started our first **poetry memorization**, *Precious Stones*, by Christina Rossetti.

In **Geography** we will look at two more interesting views of the Earth. After having seen that Asia and North America were once connected by the Land Bridge, we will now look at the world as seen in vegetation areas (arctic tundra, grasslands, rainforest, etc.) More new and unusual ways of looking at our Earth! In **History** we will complete our study of the Early People. Having had them cross into North America, we will begin our study of the first dwellers on our continent, the Native Americans. 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! In **Botany**, getting ready for Autumn days, we will look closely into leaves, and learn about veins, margins, and leaf types as we do "Leaf Identification." We'll also explore some of the wonderful variety in leaves' colors, smells, and even tastes.

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.

One last note: It will soon be **our annual Dinner at Panera Fundraiser**. It's a great opportunity to share some time with each other, enjoy some wonderful food (mid-week with no cooking to do!), and at the same time, raise some funds for our school and your children. Flyers with the details will be in your hands very soon. We hope to see as many of you there as possible. And an early, much appreciated thanks to you for supporting this event!

Sincerely,  
Mary Anne & 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 is on the Homepage.

**Calendar:**

Friday, October 5<sup>th</sup> - Sharing Day - "a favorite book"; Book Orders due

Tuesday, October 16<sup>th</sup> - field trip to Joan's Farm and Pumpkin Patch

**Wednesday, Oct. 17<sup>th</sup> - ALL SCHOOL FUNDRAISER - DINNER AT PANERA'S,  
Dine In or Take Out, 4-8 p.m. (at Southland Mall)**

Thursday & Friday, Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> - Parent Conferences; daycare but no regular classes

Wednesday, October 31<sup>st</sup> - Historical Halloween Parade - 1:30 in the courtyard