

October 2020 Newsletter  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Years

Dear Parents,

We have come to October, and to what is now our 4<sup>th</sup> week of school-at-home. I certainly have never written a newsletter that began like that. But although everything in and around is significantly different, we still have our school, our staff, and most importantly you, our families and students who give life to all that we are about, even if a significant part of it currently is being done without even being in each other's presence other than on a screen. Easy, it is not. But doable, it is. We value communication between us, especially now. In that spirit, we do want to continue having contact, emails, and newsletters between us. They may not be like you have been used to, but we will bring them to you.

For our almost 4 weeks of school now, we have found that things have been progressing right along. We're getting more adjusted to Zoom, learning more about and with Google Classroom, being increasingly immersed in academic work and assignments, and I think feeling more comfortable in a unique routine. It goes at a fairly slow pace, compared to what we normally would do. But when it is still young children who are the focus of this, a routine is of utmost importance for security and a lessening of anxiety. We also have been moving along, though again at a relatively slow pace, with the amount of assignments given and the expectations we hold. Becoming confident in their work, no matter what it is, is of great importance in how we go about each day. Over the past 10 days or so, things have started to pick up. Both Amira and I have been and will continue to add new assignments. Also, assignments they have become accustomed to will become more complex and they will be asked to do more with them. We talk a lot about "moving to the next level." With their familiarity with video games, this phrase has a real ring to it for them. And it is exactly what we always do in Montessori. Children are evaluated individually on their progress, and when one, or a few, are ready to move up, they are excited and looking forward to it, having a strong sense of their own personal accomplishment.

As an example of this, I will use their math work. Starting from the first days with the very simple Daily Math Sheet where they can calculate the answers with the Montessori colored bead bars, one of the main goals I was reaching for was to first write the date correctly with a capital, comma, and proper spelling in the

correct location (mastering that was a Big Event!). We then moved on, spread out over the next several weeks, to remembering to do DMS every day without reminders, keeping a record of your DMS papers, learning how to organize them chronologically at the end of the week, expanding those few simple math problems to now include writing 24 of the math facts in a composition book, and then a few days ago seeing how many answers you can write out of 48 and how *fast* you can write them...all leading to the future goal of memorizing all the addition and subtraction math facts. With these previous weeks of very concrete, basic math work, we are ready to begin working on Math Operations - addition, or subtraction, of 4-digit numbers, focusing on place value and the necessity of exchanging ("regrouping" or "carrying", as it is known outside the Montessori world), using varying levels of Montessori math materials. Step by step, we continue.

Language and writing have been progressing in the same way. We began only a couple days into our year with each one getting his or her own Journal - a composition book with only lines - because in a discussion, they came to realize that they have enough command of verbal and written language that there is no need to use pictures to, at least partially, express their thoughts as they did in kindergarten and 1st. Their words alone are now powerful enough. Again we began with very small steps...learning how to write on the lines, then how to put a date in a Journal entry in its proper location, how to indent a paragraph, and use a (given) topic sentence to begin. Those steps took a good 2+ weeks of daily practice. But, bit by bit, with daily practice and topic prompts, the words have become short paragraphs, and much longer ones for the 3rds. Once the proper format for a paragraph was mastered, that child has been able to move on (with prompts) to write an increasing number of sentences. Up to this point for 2nds, most any spelling has been acceptable as long as most all the sounds have been represented. I have only just begun to mark their journal writing for the "run-on" sentence, that is, more than one sentence being connected to several other sentences with no break in the punctuation. We've had a seemingly good response to looking out for run-on sentences, and then if they are there, showing the ability to correct them once pointed out. Now each will be moving on when ready to correcting punctuation, spelling, understanding how paragraphs are developed, and being more fully able to express his or her own thoughts ever more successfully. This will be supported not only in the work done with Amira in Reading Group, but also in the Language work

they have begun with me, understanding where words come from and how they are built which the 2<sup>nd</sup> Years are in the midst of with Roots and Compounds work. Third Years are learning advanced punctuation with apostrophes and commas. Learning the parts of speech - articles, adjectives, nouns, verbs, and beyond brings them to a deeper understanding of how words work together and support each other. As with everything else in Montessori, we move each child forward when that child is ready, showing mastery of what has preceded.

In regards to this aspect of development, we have a request to ask of all of you, especially as your child is working at home rather than in the classroom. When seeing what your child has written in Journal, Reading Group work, or anywhere else that is an assignment, we would ask you to please not point out to them what is incorrect in their writing and how it should be written/spelled. We do appreciate your willingness to help your child improve, but what happens then is that we cannot see what that child knows and does not know, and from that, where and how we should help them so that they can "move up to the next level." When we know what their weaknesses and strengths are, we can then move them in the best direction. So, please enjoy what they write, talk to them about the subject matter if you wish, but allow us to take on the job of correcting. We do appreciate that and thank you.

Something else that would be very helpful to us is if you would please see that your child reads the directions of the daily assignments that are on the Stream and also the Morning Circle. It may be that some children might have difficulty reading all that is written. And even if they are able to read it, please make sure that they do! It will get them in the habit of reading necessary information and directions - an extremely important skill we want them to develop. Thank you.

This is a picture, as it were, of what has gone on so far, and what a good portion of the road ahead holds. We are happy to see promise, and hope you will feel the same. Thank you so much for all the support you give your son or daughter, and all the support you give to us at Montessori Children's House. It is truly appreciated!

Best Regards,  
Mary Anne and Amira