

CULTURAL NEWSLETTER
September 2018

Dear Parents,

Our cultural program engages our children in a variety of activities which bring to life three of Montessori's cultural learning areas: **Botany, Zoology and Geography**. Each topic is introduced with a "key experience" which engages your child in an activity guaranteed to motivate him/her to experience and learn more about the subject. We introduce the cultural subjects in several ways.

We began our studies by identifying the two major classifications of everything on earth: **Living and Nonliving**. We sorted items in our classroom into the categories of "Living" and "Nonliving." The children made "Living and Nonliving" posters which I hope you have enjoyed at home. During this exercise the children carefully observed each item that was sorted into the proper category. After some discussion, they realized that all living things:

- Breathe
- Move
- Eat
- Excrete
- Reproduce
- Grow
- Sense

This brief list forms the basis of our botany and zoology studies!

Each subject begins with a "Key Experience" which is designed to excite the child and to learn through all ... or at least *most* ... of the senses. With this as a foundation, the children transition to more abstract levels of learning by reading, researching, and recording what they learn. We also integrate art and literature into our lessons so the child's knowledge and appreciation of the subject will be enhanced from a variety of perspectives.

This week we will visit what is perhaps the most special plant at our school, *Our Class Tree*. It is the Sweet Gum tree which grows on the corner of the lawn as you enter the parking lot. I enjoy observing it every day when I arrive at school; I hope you and your child do too. *Granted, some changes are more obvious than others but I think that it is a lovely way to start the day!* Jo will be taking the children to observe and recreate the tree using tempera, cray pas, charcoal and watercolor. Jo has an engaging way of teaching art and botany, so I know your child will look forward to each visit. We will display these works of art throughout the seasons. In June Jo will help your child create a lovely book honoring our class tree. This will definitely be a keeper!

We are continuing our botany studies this month, learning about the basic parts of the plant and how they work together to keep the plant alive. We will also take an in depth look at the Mighty Food Factory (a.k.a. leaves). Additionally, we will learn about the four main parts of the plant:

- **THE ROOTS** have two important jobs. They **grab onto the soil** so the plant does not fall over. That being done, the **roots move water and minerals from the soil up to THE STEM**. This journey begins with the tiny root hairs and moves toward larger and larger roots until the water and minerals reach **THE STEM** which brings them to **THE BRANCHES** and onward to **THE LEAF**.

All parts of the plant are important to keep the plant alive but...

**THE REAL ACTION HAPPENS IN THE LEAF!
IT IS THE FOOD FACTORY!**

The water and minerals enter the leaf via the large main vein and gradually make their way to the tiny veinlets which are about the size of root hairs. There - in places too tiny for the eye to see - chlorophyll the (usually) green material in the leaf mixes with air and sunlight to make **FOOD!** Like all living things, the leaf does not use everything it takes in, so it excretes the waste. **Lucky for us, the leaves excrete oxygen for animals to breathe AND when we breathe, we exhale carbon dioxide for the plants to breathe.**

Handwriting is another important skill we develop during the afternoon program. In First Year the child transitions from printing to D'Nealian writing which is a style that prepares him/her to learn cursive writing.

... another word about **birthdays**... Our simple birthday ceremony takes place in the afternoon. I also want you to know that due to allergies we ask that you refrain from sending treats containing peanuts and tree nuts.

We have enjoyed a great start to our school year, and I am looking forward to working with your child as the year progresses. I will provide input for Jo's conference with you next month. However, if you would like to discuss more about what your child is doing in the afternoon, please send a note to school or send me an email tonitomacci@comcast.net

With Best Regards,

Toni Tomacci

"The secret of good teaching is to regard children's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim therefore is not merely to make children understand, and still less to force them to memorize, but so to touch their imaginations as to enthuse them to their inmost core."

~ Maria Montessori