



Park Forest Montessori School
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Volume 1, Issue 1
September 2003

MONTESSORI *Kids!*

Dear Parents,
Welcome to our first Newsletter!
We hope you will find this a
useful tool to keep informed.

In This Issue:

Thoughts on Separation—
these first days of school can
be a very emotional time for
parents, children, and teachers.

In Every Issue:

- Montessori Basics
- Those Mysterious Montessori Materials
- Schedule of Important Dates
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Parents' Meeting

September 29

7:30 – 9 p.m.

We will have a Parents' Meeting on Monday, September 29 from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. It will be a time to meet other parents. We will be available to answer questions. Please feel free at any time to call the teachers. The school phone forwards to our houses after school. We have an Open Visitation policy. You may arrange to visit us at any time.

We have scheduled Curriculum Days and Conference Days. The Curriculum Days will be used for the teachers to prepare for future lessons, to make classroom materials, and to plan for various outside activities such as observations of other schools and participation in workshops. If at any time you feel that you would like a personal conference to talk to the teachers about your child, please ask the teachers to schedule it. There will be two regularly scheduled conferences—one in October and one in April. On Curriculum Days and Conference Days the children will not attend school.

Our full schedule will start on September 29, including:

MONDAYS: KinderMusik with Fen-Fen Lin

TUESDAYS: Art

WEDNESDAYS: French with Susan Lacy (a.k.a., "Madame")

THURSDAYS: Science

FRIDAYS: Sharing

September 29th will also mark the start of our "Letter of the Week." You will receive a plan of the themes and letters for the year. On Fridays, your child may bring a toy or object to "share" or your child may use their turn to talk about something. Please give us advanced notice on things that are "alive." This activity is designed to make your child comfortable speaking in front of a group.

SCHEDULE

OCTOBER—Working and Playing Together

WEEK OF SEPT. 29

Theme: Our Classroom Community

Letter of the Week: **s**

WEEK OF OCT. 6

Theme: Come Learn With Me

Letter of the Week: **m**

WEEK OF OCT. 13

Theme: Animals That Work Together

Letter of the Week: **a**

WEEK OF OCT. 20

Theme: Weather Song Book

Letter of the Week: **t**

NOTE TO PARENTS:
Talk with your child about the letter of the week. Play a game with them: each of you name as many words as you can that begin with the Letter of the Week!

Thank you for your cooperation and help! We welcome you and hope to become your partner in your child's education.

Some Thoughts About Separation

During the first month of school, many parents worry about their child's ability to separate from them. These first days of school can be a very emotional time for parents, children, and teachers. Both parents and teachers want the child to make a smooth and easy transition into their new environment. Sometimes it does not happen as easily as we think it will.

Children may feel strange in a new group that is unlike the familiar family group in which they have a special status. Children worry about who will take care of them and who will pick them up after school. Parents also have fears about whether or not the teacher is capable of taking care of their child or if they have chosen the right environment for their child. Teachers are concerned about helping the child make the best transition possible.

The word that best describes an answer to all these concerns is **trust**. Parents must trust that they have made the right decision in selecting the school. In making your decision to send your child to Park Forest Montessori School, think of all the information you have gathered.



Trust that your decision is the best one for your child. Once parents feel confident, trust can be developed between the child and the teacher. Developing this trust can take time but it will happen if everyone involved is patient. Mrs. Ertekin and Mrs. Park are very good in facilitating that transfer of trust. We are here to nurture and teach your child. When your child sees that you have trust and confidence in the teachers, they will feel the same way soon.

Tell your child, "If you need anything I want you to ask Mrs. Ertekin or Mrs. Park." Make your good-bye routine short and sweet and trust that the teachers will nurture your child. If you wish, you can stay out of sight for a few minutes and listen until you know your child is feeling good about being here.

So relax and enjoy the first days of school! Remember, we have experienced this process of separating hundreds of times. In a short time, you will hear happy good-byes and the pleasant hum of happy children working in their classroom.

Montessori Basics

Practical Life—A Point of Origin and a Point of Departure

Excerpts from an article in
"The National Montessori Reporter"

The **Practical Life** area in the Montessori classroom offers exercises in daily living. The child is usually first introduced to this area because of the simple and precise tasks that "imitate" activities that he has already observed at home. Here the child becomes an active participant in the environment, gaining skills, knowledge, and finding his own place.

Exercises in Practical Life usually fall within the following four areas: care of self; care of the environment; grace and courtesy; and control of movement. These areas prepare the child to enter the "real" world and function as a positive social being.

The activities in the Practical Life area aim to build the child's senses of internal and external order, coordination, concentration, and independent self. Through repetition and concentration these exercises help the child adapt himself to his environment. These experiences prepare the child for future work in other areas of the classroom and help him create the foundation upon which he will build his life. The child learns to begin and complete a cycle of activity, which develops his inner discipline,

SCHOLASTIC

SeeSaw Book Club

Participation in our See-Saw Book Club is voluntary. Your child will receive an order form in his or her drawer once a month. If you wish to participate, send in the order with cash or a check to "See-Saw Book Club."

For every five books ordered, our school gets one book free!

self-esteem, and self-awareness. As he masters each exercise he becomes confident in accepting new challenges, and moves on to more difficult levels.

The Practical Life area is the point of origin for many children entering the Montessori classroom for the first time, and the point of departure into new worlds of other areas in the classroom. As the child moves on to language, mathematics, science, geography, and the sensorial area, he takes with him the physical skills and mental abilities that he has acquired through the exercises in daily living. The experiences he receives in practical life follow him through his time in the classroom, and then throughout his life.



If you shop at Target, don't forget to designate our school for their "Take Charge of Education" program!

For every purchase you make with a Target Guest card or Target Visa, Target will donate 1% of purchases to our school.

**Our School ID # is
23094**

Sign up at our local Target store, or go to www.target.com, click on **Community Giving** at the bottom of the page, and then click on the **Take Charge of Education** link. You can click the **DESIGNATE** button and enter in: **Park Forest Montessori School.**

Thank you for your support!

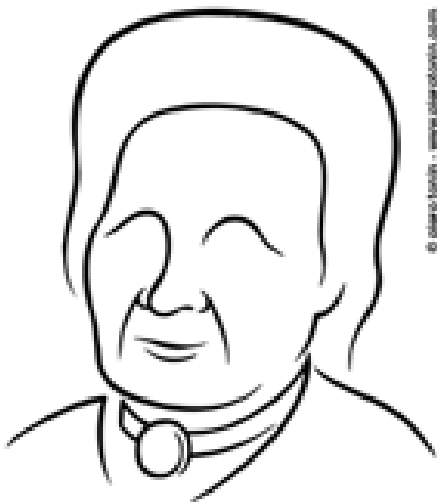
Watch here for other ideas on how to help the school.

READING READINESS

A child's success in learning to read is tied to how much she's already learned about reading at home.

Prepare your child to read with pre-reading activities like these:

- **Point out letters and sounds.** "That's a mouse. It starts with *M*. It sounds like *mmm*." Don't try to do the whole alphabet right away—choose a couple of letters each week and review. You can use this to reinforce the letter of the week! We ask each child to say a word that begins with the letter of the week before they get up from group time.
- **Have your child use his body, clay, or blocks to make the shapes of letters.**
- **Use lowercase letters.** Even when spelling her name, its best to use lowercase letters. Most reading does not use CAPITAL letters, and it is hard enough for a preschool-aged child to learn one alphabet. Finding toys that use lowercase letters is not easy. I grab them when I can!
- **Let your child fill a container with items that start with the sound of a certain letter:** Buttons for B, leaves for L, etc.



Dr. Maria Montessori



Those Mysterious Montessori Materials



Practical Life: Pouring



Even though the practical-life activities are fairly simple housekeeping tasks that may not seem to be of great importance to the child's development, they are an essential element in the process that will allow your child to develop both competence and independence; furthermore, it is through these activities that children begin to develop concentration. And it is the emergence of concentration, through their work upon the environment, which establishes the foundations for all the wonderful growth and development in the lives of the children who participate in Montessori programs.

One of the early practical-life exercises your child will master is "dry pouring." We adults usually think of "pouring" as an activity that we carry out with liquids; however, when we invite small children to begin to pour, we offer them dry materials which are fairly large in size, like the garbanzo bean, and then gradually reduce the size of the product in order to increase the difficulty and the challenge of the exercise.

Children typically begin with two identical, lightweight, open-mouthed, transparent plastic pitchers on a tray. One of the pitchers will be half filled with large beans. We use plastic pitchers rather than glass or ceramic pitchers for the first exercises because these beans make a lot more noise when they are poured into plastic than into glass. And the noise they make as they pour from one pitcher into the other, or as they bounce out onto the plastic tray, is an important point of interest in this exercise.

Montessori discovered that action and interest are the two essential elements which every presentation must have if it is to capture the child's attention to lead to the emergence and development of concentration. Thus, it is the noise of beans striking plastic that makes it so attractive to the small child. It is this point of interest, together with the child's inner need to spontaneously repeat each new activity, that motivates the child to take this material from the shelf time after time until he or she has mastered it.

The simple act of pouring becomes an important building block in the long sequence of activities through which the child will construct himself, day after day, into the happy, independent, and competent person that will one day become a successful adult. That is why Montessori called these exercises an "aid of LIFE."

Excerpts from article by Feland L. Meadows, PhD.



Maria Montessori: An Abbreviated Biography

Maria Montessori was, in many ways, ahead of her time. Born in the town of Chiaravalle, in the province of Ancona, Italy, in 1870, she became the first female physician in Italy upon her graduation from medical school in 1896. Shortly afterwards, she was chosen to represent Italy at two different women's conferences, in Berlin in 1896 and in London in 1900. In her medical practice, her clinical observations led her to analyze how children learn, and she concluded that they build themselves from what they find in their environment. Shifting her focus from the

body to the mind, she returned to the university in 1901, this time to study psychology and philosophy. In 1904, she was made a professor of anthropology at the University of Rome. Her desire to help children was so strong, however, that in 1906 she gave up both her university chair and her medical practice to work with a group of sixty young children of working parents in the San Lorenzo district of Rome. It was there that she founded the first "Children's House." What ultimately became the Montessori method of education developed there, based upon Montessori's scientific observations of these children's almost effortless ability to absorb knowledge from their surroundings, as well as their tireless interest in manipulating materials. Every piece of equipment, every exercise, every method Montessori developed was based on what she observed children to do "naturally," by themselves, unassisted by adults.

Children teach themselves. This simple but profound truth inspired her lifelong pursuit of educational reform, methodology, psychology, teaching, and teacher training—all based on her dedication to furthering the self-creating process of the child.

Maria Montessori made her first visit to the United States in 1913, the same year that Alexander Graham Bell and his wife Mabel founded the Montessori Educational Association. Among her other strong American supporters were Thomas Edison and Helen Keller. She was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times—in 1949, 1950, and 1951. Maria Montessori died in Noordwijk, Holland, in 1952.

Q&A Ask a Teacher

Q *My son was so excited about his new school and sailed in on the first few mornings with a cheerful wave. Now it's Monday and he refuses point blank to go. He says he's "just tired of it."*

A Perhaps he is not so much tired of it as much as just plain tired. However much a child is prepared for what goes on at his new school, the actual experience can come as a surprise. New routines can be exhausting. He may also be missing some of the cozier aspects of life at home, so try to make time in the morning for a cuddle in bed with a story and a leisurely breakfast. Don't bombard your child with questions about school when he comes home. Let him sleep or just flop around and relax for a bit, and keep extras like swimming and dancing lessons to a minimum in these early days. If Monday mornings are a hurdle, spend time on Sunday sorting out something to take to school—a flower from the garden, a postcard from Grandma, a story he would like to share with his new friends.

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