

# Montessori Pathways' News



## Notes from Ms. Alena (Head of School)

*Joy, feeling one's own value, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and capable of production are all factors of enormous value for the human soul.*

*~ Maria Montessori*

## Thank you!

Thank you, parents, for all your help and support in preparation of holiday snacks that concluded our Winter Holidays Celebration!

Thank you, parents and kids, for your thoughtful Christmas gifts to our Montessori Pathways Team and for the many beautiful Christmas cards with a lot of wonderful wishes and very warm words!

Your understanding, cooperation, help, support, and appreciation are priceless for us. We could not go through such an unprecedented time without you!



Our Montessori Classroom always reflects diversity and connection to the world through hands-on activities. The children receive an opportunity to learn cultural foundations of other peoples and nations, respect their traditions and appreciate cultural differences. Maria Montessori was a truly passionate advocate for peace in the world. Promoting diversity, understanding, and implementing value of different cultures teaches children to accept and respect people and their traditions from all over the world.

Visual prompts, displays of symbols that represent different countries, and practical activities allow children to open up their minds and hearts towards someone who may be a little different and appreciate them.

This year we were not able to gather and celebrate the Winter Holidays together. However, our teachers, with the support of our families, did their best to bring the holiday spirit to our school.

Thank you, Mr. Michael Poper, Hazel's grandpa, for making such a great Zoom presentation about Hannukah to our Elementary students. They loved learning more about this holiday and lighting a new candle every day was a great beginning of the school day for our students.

Undoubtably there was Christmas spirit present at school during the whole month of December. Listening to Christmas music, singing songs, decorating the school and classrooms, and working on Christmas gifts for parents were a major part of the learning process in December.

The favorites of the month were "Secret Santa" Day for Elementary students and "traveling around the world" for celebrating different winter holidays for primary students.

Every day during recess our kids were asking me: "Are we going to the "plane" again today?" "I think, you are", I was answering. "Cool, then we should start cleaning our playground so that we are not late for the "boarding", I heard from my friends.

Their daily expectations of "traveling to another country" for celebrating a new winter holiday were just priceless. The winter adventure was concluded with a Holiday Season Feast that was possible due to contributions from our families.

Thank you very much, parents and teachers, for making December happy and festive for our kids!

**I hope that everybody had a wonderful time during this holiday season. May everyone's New Year be filled with happiness, love, and prosperity!**





## Parents' Corner



### Teamwork in Montessori Classroom

Everyone agrees that the rate of change in our world is faster than it has ever been. We notice it in every aspect of our lives. Schools may feel it more than other places. As things are rapidly shifting, one of the things we hear more about is the importance of "soft skills." These are not quantifiable and typically not part of a school's evaluation system. However, they are important when setting the stage for a student's future.

One of those skills is teamwork. How effectively can a student work with one or more others to set a goal, do meaningful work and meet a deadline? We've all been in groups where some members participate more fully than others. We know the frustration in doing more than our fair share and we know the wonder when everything clicks and everyone is working together toward a shared goal.

Throughout my teaching career I have learned that I do my best work in collaboration with others. I yearn for the discussion, the give and take and the refinement of ideas that is the result of working with a team. When team members respect each other and have a common goal the end product is much better than it would have been if done in isolation.

Independence is a major tenet of the Montessori philosophy, and yet, this does not mean children work solely on their own. In fact, working with others promotes independence, within the classroom as well as outside of it.

Montessori classroom is incubator for teamwork, filled with students working together to support, encourage and question each other, learning much more than just the academics they are working on. They learn to have ideas accepted, improved upon and maybe even rejected. Each time they work together, they are learning the soft skills needed to succeed in school and in life.

The Montessori classroom itself is set up to promote small groups and pairs during their work cycles. Instead of rows of single desks with chairs, you will find an assortment of tables: some long enough to accommodate large groups, others for four, some smaller tables for two... and sometimes children squeeze as many journals as they can fit onto a table in order to be together!

While working together certainly has a social draw – children begin their day by socializing with their friends, and may choose to work next to those friends during a work cycle – there are many other benefits to working with another child.

Children learn from each other, accept leadership roles in those works in which they feel confident, or step aside to allow a different child to be the expert in a different work. This is a confidence boost, and also a lesson in respect and community. Some of us are quick with mathematics, while others are excelling in language; still others are the go-to artists or engineers of the classroom. This is particularly true of the Upper Elementary classroom, where the levels of independent work are higher,

with a greater ability to see a project or idea through from start to finish. These children can often be seen bouncing ideas off one another, and gently arguing about how to go about one thing or another in the most efficient way.

In the Children's House (primary age), children may choose to work on the same work next to one another, lending a helping hand to a friend who stumbles on a problem. Sometimes one child even helps redirect an off-task friend! And here, there is much pride in being able to work out a problem without having to go to an adult in the room to solve it for them. The more children can effectively work together, the more independent they become!

Working together solidifies connections. Two children share their interests by researching a topic together, sharing knowledge, and building on that knowledge. In Lower Elementary, children research and give reports together. This process can take weeks or months, based on how quickly or slowly all members in the group move forward.

The mixed-age groups in the Montessori classroom (found in three-year groupings) also allow for a type of mentorship. The younger students learn an immense amount from the older children, not just socially, but academically as well.

Working together on such reports often leads to opportunities for conflict resolution, peer mediation, and learning how to speak up in a small group. Fairness (of huge concern to the Second Plane child) comes into play during small group activities, as the focus of a moral sense of order is forefront on the mind of a child aged 6 – 12. This opportunity also presents itself during shared jobs and during recess time.

Children receive much help in the collaboration process from the experienced Guides in their classrooms; group dynamics are often aided by mediation and careful observation by the adults in the room. In this way, Montessori children are learning how to work with others on a daily basis, a sure way to prepare them for adult life, both in work and personal relationships.

<https://montessorimessage.net/tag/teamwork/>  
<http://www.montessori-blog.org/2018/01/25/working-together/>



**[Click here to see more teamwork at Montessori Pathways](#)**

## COMING SCHOOL'S EVENTS

### in January

♦ **January 4 (M) - School resumes**

♦ **January 15 (F) - ELEMENTARY Parent / Teacher Conference Day (Virtual)**

The link to sign up for Parent/Teacher Conference will be sent on Monday, January 4th.

No school for Elementary Students on Conference Day, January 15th.

♦ **January 18 (M) - No School (Martin Luther King JR. Day)**

♦ **January 25—29—Spirit Week**

Every day of this week will be special. Kids and teachers are welcome to dress up according to theme of the day.

- **Monday—Montessori Pathways Day** (kids and teachers are welcome to wear schools blue t-shirts on top of long sleeve shirt)
- **Tuesday—Pajamas Day**
- **Wednesday—Jersey Day** (kids and teachers are welcome to wear their favorite sport teams' jersey or t-shirt)
- **Thursday—Black and White Day** (wear only black and white clothes today)
- **Wacky Friday** (all kids and teachers are welcome to wear mix and match socks, mismatched clothes, and/or crazy hair)

♦ **January 15—31 - Returning Families Preferred Re-Enrollment Period**

*The new year arrives with new problems and questions for us. In the beginning of every year, the parents of 5-6-year-old kids have to make a very important decision – what is the next step for my child? Where should he/she continue his/her education?*

*There are two common things we hear every year from the parents.*

*The first one is a question “Will my child be prepared for public kindergarten or elementary?”*

*It is very important to understand that if we would prepare our students for traditional kindergarten, then we would not be Montessori, but the same conventional school where kids of the same age (but still developmentally very different) learn the same material at the same time based on the teacher's plan.*

*While offering a versatile learning opportunity to our students, the major goal of the Montessori schools is preparing our students not for public kindergarten or elementary level, but for real life, which more and more requires great thinking and organization skills, independence, initiative, creativity, ability to work as a team, and so on. We provide a child centered, multiage environment, where kids are learning at their own pace through a hands-on experience, exploring, discovering, making connections, and developing all necessary life skills .*

***It is important to understand that the Montessori Kindergarten Year is the final and very crucial year in the primary 3-year cycle of the Montessori environment.***

*The second thing that we hear every year from many parents is that “being in a Montessori environment during one or few years was enough for our child's development. It is time for him/her to move to a public school like most of his/her friends. He /She will be fine there.”*

***There is no “enough” in education and no bounds in a child's development. And being “just fine”- is this what we are looking for for our kids?***

*So, if you are still open to exploring all of the options and possibilities for your child's education, check your emails later for more information about what Montessori environment offers for the next level of your child's development.*





## NEWS FROM THE ELEMENTARY CLASS

Ms. Bridget



*"If we are among the men of good will who yearn for peace, we must lay the foundation for peace ourselves, by working for the social world of the child."*

~ Maria Montessori,  
International Montessori Congress, 1937

In an elementary Montessori classroom, the student changes from parallel play with others to playing in a collaborative way with others. Thus, they learn strategies to play well together: being a good listener, helping those who struggle, teaching others new skills, speaking words to express one's feelings and pushing through comfort zones to try new things. This allows them to explore avenues to reach a peaceful place in their lives and in turn will flow into our world.



Solstice. I also brought in a book about this longest night of the year. Finally, we talked together about Christmas. The students were able to share their home traditions and we talked about some of the history of the celebration.



This month, we also participated in a zoom presentation of author Patricia Toht. She spoke of her book "Pick a Pine Tree". This was another opportunity thanks to our Adopt-A-Farmer program.

Due to the tricky weather, we played a nature/review of curriculum Bingo game. Ask them about it! They brought their boards home.

Finally, since we were studying the American Revolution, I had most students read a biography of a person who lived around the time of American Revolution. The students answered questions about the person and then created a movie poster for the person. When they are all finished, we will hang them in the hall and take a picture. The students will also present their biography to the class.

In the academic areas, we match this inclusion of others by exploring various holidays and cultural experiences, learning ways we are alike as well as ways that we are different. This month, there were quite a few celebrations that we experienced together. First, thanks to Hazel's Papa, we were able to learn a bit more about Hanukkah (via zoom presentation) and she even brought in her menorah to light for some of the 8 days.



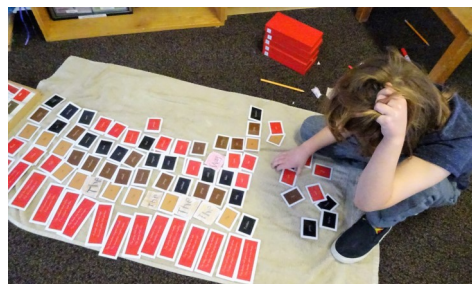
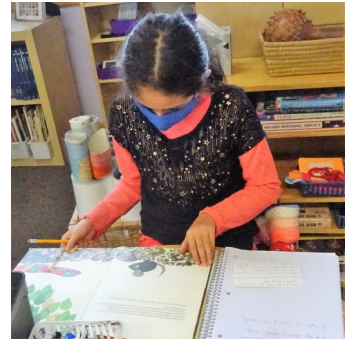
Next, I read them a book about Kwanzaa. They quickly saw that there were similarities between the 2: lighting of candles, love in the family, special foods. Next, I showed them some geography impressionistic charts to explain the Winter





# NOVEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## Elementary Class





## NEWS FROM PRE-K AND KINDERGARTEN EXTENDED DAY



Ms. Kathy, Ms. Joey

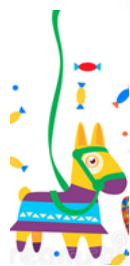
### Winter Holidays around the World

The afternoons were a buzz with world travels. The children each were given a passport and received a ticket to travel on our very own Holiday Airways. We set up our chairs on the carpet like an airplane, played take off noises, reviewed the safety features of our aircraft and took off to travel the world. The flight attendants Ms. Kathy and Ms. Joey read stories, gave climate and geographical information for each country we visited tracing the travel pattern each day from one country and continent to another. On our last flight back to Chicago, we had a "movie" covering the holiday highlights of each of the countries we visited. Here are some of our super fun destinations and crafts.



ITALY: We found Italy on the map in the continent of Europe. We read "The Legend of Old La Befana" by Tomie de Paulo

We made a craft of the old woman, traced Italy, and poked it out. We learned Bon Natale means Merry Christmas and we listened to Italian Christmas music. Then we ate Panettone and Italian cookies.



ISRAEL: We found Israel on the globe in Asia next to both Africa and Europe, then identified it on our map and colored it. We read many stories about Hanukkah. The children learned of the miracle of the oil and the festival of light. We also lit the Menorah for each of the eight days of the celebration of lights. We sang a little song, "Through my window". We played an I spy game, how many dreidels, made a menorah and played the dreidel game. For our treat we ate little donuts and received gelt.

GERMANY: We found Europe on our globe and found Germany on our map and traced Germany and poked it out. We read "The Gingerbread Baby" by Jan Brett and made a Gingerbread man of model magic and puffy paint. Of course, we ate Gingerbread from both Germany and Russia as well.

MEXICO: We found North America on our globe and then Mexico on the map and talked about the language and La Fiesta de La Posada. We read the story "The Miracle of the First Poinsettia" by Joanne Oppenheim and Fabian Nigrin. We made poinsettias of paper and of course ate chips and salsa.

AFRICA: The children learned that Kwanza is celebrated all over the world. The 7 candles are placed on a Kinara and each color has a meaning. The black candle stands for the darker skin of the people in the world, the red stands for the suffering (really blood) and green stands for the fertile and bountiful land of Africa. Kwanza is celebrated for 7 days. We wove placemats with the colors represented on each. We sang Shay Shay Koolay and ate dried fruits.



SWEDEN: We found Europe on our globe and Sweden on our map. We traveled to Sweden and learned of a little gnome called the Tomten. We read "The Tomten" as well as "The Tomten and the Fox" by Astrid Lindgren. We also learned of a festival called St. Lucia day. Where long ago a girl would carry food to neighbors with a wreath of candles on her head. We made candle and woven hearts to celebrate St. Lucia Day. Reindeer also live in Sweden. We listened to the story of "Lucia Morning in Sweden" by Ewa Rydaker. We ate the delicious thin cookies mentioned in the book called Pepparkakor the children realized why the cookies turned to crumbs, they are so thin.

It was an exciting and learning packed few weeks. Ask your children about their favorite countries and holidays. All the stories we read are available on YouTube. Wishing everyone a Happy New Year.

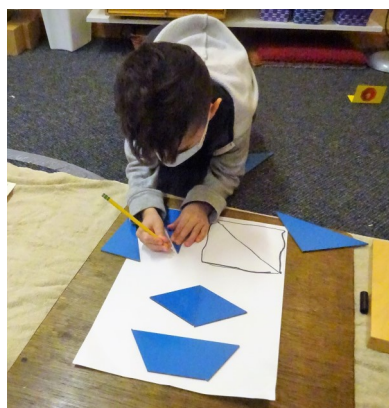
[Click here to see the kids' "journey around the world"](#)





# DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## Pre-K and Kindergarten Extended Day Group





## NEWS FROM THE SOUTH ROOM

**Ms. Kathy, Ms. Urana**



December was a truly short month, packed with lot of fun projects for the holidays. I want to give a huge thank you to Ms. Urana for putting together our Holiday parent gift. She orchestrated every step of the project. She not only made it happen; she drove the gifts to a few of the children who were absent our last week of school.



We played the dreidel game and did some snowflake and Christmas tree counting.

Other holiday related activities were set out in Practical Life, matching ornaments to the outline, spooning holiday gems, tweezing and stamping.

Now that is the spirit of the holidays. You all know what the gift was by now. How about all the fine motor skills put into each gift. We were not sure the younger children could handle tiny painting between the leaves of the pinecone and tiny lights. I think they turned out beautiful I hope you do also. The attention to detail is what makes this possible. Never pick-up glitter with a 3-year-old! They always see one more piece, it never ends! We adults know we will see glitter for another 6 months minimum.



Math held more of the same snowflake counting and number writing. Language and Science held parts of the reindeer and gingerbread man. We read the story of the "Baby Gingerbread man" by Jan Brett and some children made their own model magic gingerbreads. We hope you have enjoyed seeing some of these projects coming home.

All areas of the classroom added a holiday touch or two. The month was all special projects and stories about different traditions and holidays around the world. Parts of a Reindeer and Parts of a Gingerbread Man were also added to our shelves this month.



We celebrated Ms. Alena's birthday together as a school on the playground. The children were unbelievably cute giving her fist bumps with gloves on.

Have a Wonderful New Year!



# DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## South Room





## NEWS FROM THE EAST ROOM

Ms. Joey, Ms. Carole



The end of the calendar year brings with it a wonderful variety of holidays. We explored some of the traditions and customs from around the world, and the children have discovered that there is a unique beauty in all cultures, and although there are differences there are many similarities. These traditions all share a common theme, being thankful, caring for others, giving gifts, lighting candles, sharing meals and spending time with family and friends.



As you can imagine the children truly enjoyed sampling all the foods from each country. They tasted foods from Italy, France, Germany, Sweden, Israel, Africa, India and Mexico.

A huge thank you to all our families who generously provided wonderful treats from around the world for our celebration, and who also shared their own traditions celebrated at home! All unique celebrations and traditions that have become an important part of our lives.



Please be sure to read through the Pre-K/K Extended Day newsletter, with Miss Kathy as our flight attendant and passports in hand, we traveled around the world!

In the morning the children were engaged in new practical life works. One work is using tongs to transfer objects, by constant repetition of motions they are strengthening muscles and perfecting coordination, gaining confidence in that particular skill.



In the science area the children were introduced to parts of the poinsettia and reindeer, by using three part cards, or sometimes called nomenclature cards. The word nomenclature comes from the Latin word which means "assigning names". This is exactly what the cards do-they teach the children the names of things. The cards grow children's vocabulary, enrich their language, teach them to identify things, build connections between the sound and the written forms of the words, train memory and attention and teach independence.



Our older children have been working on letter formation. To be able to write, a child must develop a to two-fold skill. They must commit to memory, the shape of the letters and their corresponding sounds, and they must develop the muscular skill necessary for using the pencil with control. When this happens, writing is fun! Because they have already learned control, the repetition necessary for developing neatness and style does not tire them.



The children have also enjoyed introduction to grammar which shows them that nouns are the names of things, adjectives describe nouns and verbs are action words.

Wishing you Peace during this holiday season and a wonderful New Year!





# DECEMBER PHOTO GALLERY

## East Room





## MORE WONDERFUL MOMENTS AT MONTESSORI PATHWAYS



*"The satisfaction which they find in their work has given them a grace and ease like that which comes from music."*

—M. Montessori,  
*The Discovery of the Child.*

