

THE COMMUNICATOR

MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2017

A Note from the School Head:

Welcome back to school! We are off to a great start this year. There is much excitement on the children's part, only to be matched by the teachers' enthusiasm, as we interact daily with one another. We are truly looking forward to the 2017-2018 academic year with our children and families!

The Communicator, our school newspaper, will be put out once a month this year and each one will be filled with more photos - as requested by our parents. Every month will have a theme and the theme for our September Communicator is PEACE EDUCATION. You will find the teachers' comments contained herein relate to how peace is manifested in each of their classrooms.

As a school, we enter into an agreement with our families - through the Signature Sheet at the back of the Student/Parent Handbook which every parent signs and returns to the school. We are the examples for the children. Our parent/teacher relationships need to be one of mutual respect as manifested in the manner in which we speak and relate to one another. This is key in building a school community in which peace is truly at its core.

Important Dates:

October 5, 6-8:30p.m.
Positive Discipline begins
Child Care Provided

October 6
Staff In-Service Day: No School

October 9
Columbus Day: No School

October 14, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Greater Pittsburgh Montessori
Society Workshop
at MCC



Harvest Festival face painting



UE Car Wash fundraiser

MCC in the community

“What is the essence of
life? To serve others and
to do good.”
— Aristotle



All Day Montessori Community Time

All Day Montessori

As we begin a new school year with a new All Day Montessori community, the children have been excited to learn about each other, the environment, and lots of lessons. North America is the focus of our cultural studies this semester. We are featuring primary colors and the artist Piet Mondrian in the Art area. As always, peace education is woven through all areas of the Children's House curriculum throughout the school year. At the beginning of the year, though, we are busy establishing a culture of peace with many lessons in Grace and Courtesy.

Grace and Courtesy lessons teach skills like how to wait, persevere, take care of class pets and materials, interrupt, concentrate and recognize when someone else is concentrating. They teach children how to think critically, solve problems both independently and with peers, and how to self-regulate by making silence. Children practice kindness, empathy, love, and lots of conflict resolution. In a Montessori classroom, these lessons are just as important as mathematics and language lessons, as they promote executive functioning skills that are critical for higher learning, collaboration, friendship and global citizenship.

Peace truly begins in the homes and classrooms of our young children. Maria Montessori wrote, "establishing lasting peace is the work of education." The Montessori Method is one which gives children respect and trust. Our only classroom "rules," if you will, are to have respect for others, respect for the environment, and respect for the self. Children who internalize these limits and feel trusted and respected grow to be peace-seeking, peace-making adults.



Children pin-punch world maps

Half Day Children's House

Greetings! Beginnings are beautiful and busy and filled with so many new experiences. As our community comes together this year, we are building friendships, learning new things, and forming connections to the world around us. Much of the orientation period in Montessori is spent establishing the procedures that help us peacefully co-exist in the classroom.

The way we present the behavior we wish to see is through Grace and Courtesy Lessons. These lessons are the way we help children create a peaceful and productive community of learners. Grace and Courtesy presentations occur all through the year and provide a way for teachers and children to create a culture of harmony and tolerance. Teachers role-play lessons on how to say, "Excuse me." how to walk around a rug, how to apologize, how to offer help, and how to watch a lesson. Grace and Courtesy is often called the "Invisible Curriculum." There are no materials on the shelves and yet it is an integral part of what we do together every day. These lessons are our framework for modeling peace.



Children share snack and build friendships



Children are studying the continent of North America as part of the school wide cultural theme.



Children learn about the larger world around them and build concentration



Lower Elementary

In the second plane of development, children are becoming much more aware of what is fair, what is right, what our responsibility to our broader community and the world. They care deeply about the feelings of others and how we all are working together to get along.

In our Lower Elementary classroom, children work together to keep their environment organized, their relationships respectful, and their self-images positive. They are provided opportunities to work independently or collaboratively, to listen to concerns and/or ideas of others, and to try out new ways of solving problems or issues. Although many of these efforts are directed to our immediate surroundings, children also are looking out to the broader world and are becoming aware of their responsibility to make our world better for all people, creatures, and living things.



Two friends share a morning snack



Depending on the work, children can choose to work collaboratively or independently during work cycle.

Upper Elementary

Dr. Montessori recognized that the second plane of child development, the elementary years, was a time for moral development. Children ask, “Is that fair?” “Is that right?” In our Upper Elementary classroom, we spend a lot of time on these questions, both formally and informally. We have started our school year by preparing a class mission statement that addresses three questions: Why are we here at MCC? How can I achieve my goals? How can I help others achieve their goals? We have talked about what it sounds and feels like to be “builders,” supportive people who build others up, rather than “shredders,” who cut others down. We have set up student partnerships with complementary strengths and challenges so that the students have a formal support system for navigating the routines of the classroom. And we are going on a field trip to Lutherlyn for community building activities in a beautiful natural setting. As the children have written in their mission statement, we know that we are better TOGETHER.



Knitting keeps hands occupied and minds focused during community meetings



Middle School students investigate local flora and fauna while on a creek walk during their trip to Lutherlyn.

Middle School

“[Education] must aim at improving the individual in order to improve society.”

-Maria Montessori in From Childhood to Adolescence

The Sewickley Montessori Middle School (SMMS) students begin their year by writing a Code of Ethics that describes their expectations for their community in terms of how each individual moves within the community, speaks to other members of the community, and respects the physical environment of the community. The work the students complete during the writing of the Code of Ethics is reinforced and solidified by our community building trip.

This year the students and guides stayed at Lutherlyn for three days and two nights. While there the students engaged in activities that encouraged teamwork, fostered communication skills, increased confidence in their own abilities, and offered examples of the ways in which humans can repair damage to the environment. As each individual acquires the skills necessary to communicate and work successfully as a team, the community is strengthened. SMMS graduates take these skills out into the world where they are the pebbles dropped in the water that radiate ripples of peace.

What can you tell me about Peace Talks?

“A Peace Talk is when you talk about what your feelings are. It’s so that we can talk things out if you need”

- Mia, Lower El

“Well, there’s 2 people and sometimes a teacher.

The person who has something in their hand gets to talk. It can be a peace leaf, a peace rock, it can be really anything”

- Riva, Lower El

“A Peace Talk is to express feelings to another person if you’re upset”

- Meriwether, Lower El

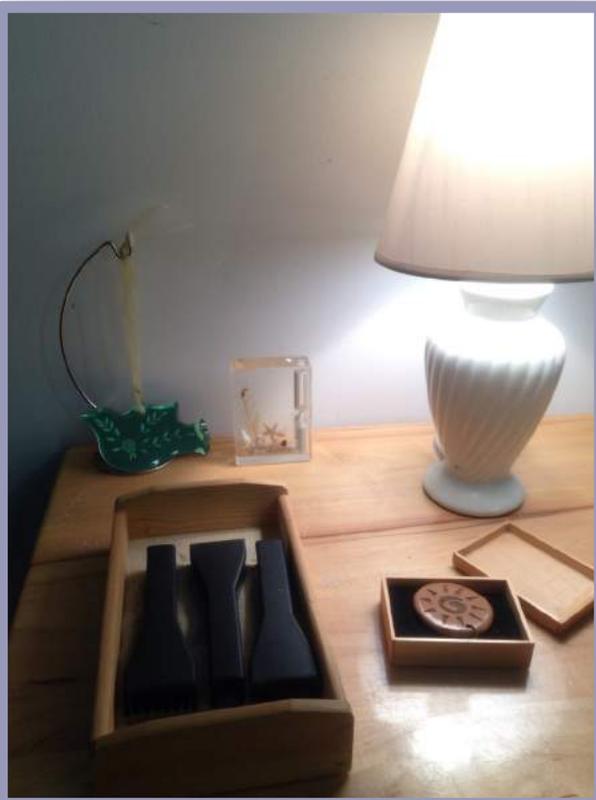
“In Upper El, we use the talking stick in community meetings so the person holding it can share their opinions.” -Ethan

“If you’re holding it, no one else can say anything unless you ask them a question.” -Keira

“We don’t have them.” - Anna

“There’s no need for them in Middle School.” - Leah

“If we have any issues, we figure them out during community meetings.” - Flayre



The Lower El has a special space where children can talk about their feelings and resolve conflicts with the help of a teacher, if needed.