



The Lamplighter

SPEMS Monthly Parent Newsletter



December 2013

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Education in the Age of Globalization

I recently attended the SAES (Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools) conference in San Antonio, where Dr. Yong Zhao was one of the keynote speakers.



Mr. Zhao was selected as "One of the 10 most influential people in educational technology" by *Tech & Learn* magazine in 2012. And for the past several years, he has traveled the world urging educators to "cultivate global competence" and "develop innovative and interactive education models for students of all ages." His recent book, *Catching Up or Leading the Way: American Education in the Age of Globalization*, has revolutionized instructional strategies within many schools committed to preparing children for the careers of the future. So not surprisingly, his keynote speech was much anticipated by all the conference attendees.

"We are currently preparing students for jobs that don't exist and to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet," Zhao pointed out in his opening remarks. "To help children be successful in the 21st century, they need to be able to remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create, communicate, and collaborate on projects everyday."

He encouraged parents to ask leaders in education, "Is this happening in my child's school?" He was critical of the government's *No*

Child Left Behind (NCLB) and *Race to the Top* initiatives.

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Education in the Age of Globalization *(continued from page 1)*

“Judging from the accomplishments of *No Child Left Behind* and *Race to the Top*,” Zhao said. “I would say that five years from now, American education will still be said to be broken and obsolete. We will find out that the Common Core Standards, after billions of dollars, millions of hours of teacher time, and numerous Professional Development sessions and alignment task forces, is not the cure to American’s education ill.

“Worse yet,” he continued, “we will likely have most of nation’s schools teaching to the common tests aligned with the Common Core. As a result, we will see a further narrowing of the curriculum and educational experiences. Whatever innovative teaching has not been completely lost in our schools may finally be gone. And then we will have a nation of students, teachers, and schools who are compliant with the Common Core Standards, but we may not have much else left.”

One hundred years since the days when primers, drills and hickory sticks were the norm; there are still many classrooms where students are taught to memorize answers without understanding, rather than to think. Too often teachers teach not what is current or vibrant, or of compelling interest to their students, but what is mandated by the state curriculum and what will be measured on tests required by their schools.

Sadly while this may or may not prepare students for the next test, we are doing a bad job of preparing them for life.

The evidence is all around us: Public school teachers have long complained that the emphasis on high-stakes testing and common core standards has narrowed curriculums and stifled the innovative teaching that helps students learn and develop problem-solving skills.

And sadly, many of the public schools that have tried *Project Based Learning* approaches are finding that the additional time and challenge it provides students leaves little time to prepare them for state-mandated subject tests. And since state and federal funding depends on student test scores, many public schools are curbing *PBL* approaches or abandoning them altogether.

The Montessori Alternative

So what is the alternative? *You have already chosen it for your child. And it works!* It has a 106-year track record in tens and thousands of schools around the world. *It is consistent with recent brain research and a century of pioneering in psychology and mental health. We call it Montessori education.*

It is an education that offers a pluralistic perspective that includes people of a variety of backgrounds, as well as the real-life drama of the animals and plants on the Earth we share.

The curriculum offers a systematic approach to learning, where every facet of learning -- environmental education—is not merely an “add on,” but is an integral part of the curriculum.

Montessori ensures that school is a place of *exploration*, not a place for common core *inculcation*.

Montessori ensures that school is a place to *share feelings and ideas*, not a place to *merely regurgitate learned facts and figures*.

It is an education that ensures that school is an *exciting community* of educators, students and parents working together to ensure that each child is recognized and valued, not a mere *meeting place* where *only those who meet standards – teachers and children alike – are valued*.

Above all, Montessori allows young people to form visions of what can be, and to naturally acquire the understanding and skills to make these visions come true.

The Montessori Method is the education that will help your child lead the way into the age of globalization. **–Jennifer Davey, Head of School**

Holiday Food Drive

Help teach our children about sharing and caring by donating canned or dry boxed goods to the food pantry collection this month. Collection boxes are located in each classroom.



Students to sing carols for residents

Upper elementary students will sing for residents of the nearby Meridian Care Senior Nursing Home on December 17.





Keep an eye on the weather this month

This is the time of year when temperatures can increase or decrease twenty or more degrees within hours. Please check the weather each day to make sure your child is appropriately dressed.

We will continue to take recess as long as temperatures stay above freezing. Please label all hats scarves, jackets and mittens.

Book fair sales top \$2,000



Our November Scholastic

Book Fair sales topped more than \$2,000.

The school receives 60% of sales in *scholastic dollars* to fund classroom book purchases.

Also, a *special thank you* to all the families who donated books to the classrooms.

Scholastic Literacy Caravan to visit SPEMS Dec. 11-12

All children will visit the caravan for story time and all will leave with a donated book.



A good nutritious snack time is an important part of a toddler's day

Snack time is an important part of the daily events in the Toddler community.

Preparing and eating food together provides opportunities to work on practical life and social skills. The children set their place at the table with cloth placemats, napkins, plate and water cup. They practice good table manners as they share in the meal. Afterwards they help to clear the table.

We need to remember that the young child's brain and body at this stage of development (like an adolescent) is growing at a rapid rate. It needs plenty of nourishment and it needs it often.

Our parents have been very attentive to our requests to provide a complete, nutritious and varied snack for the children. Again, we ask for a protein, a fruit or vegetable, and a carbohydrate.

One of the children's recent favorite snacks was a miniature Quinoa quiche. This "mini" powerhouse snack was a definite hit with all the toddlers! [Our thanks to Oliver's mom, Julia Rainey Rodriguez, for the recipe.]

Parents are always welcome to join us for snack time.

Ms. Sylvia

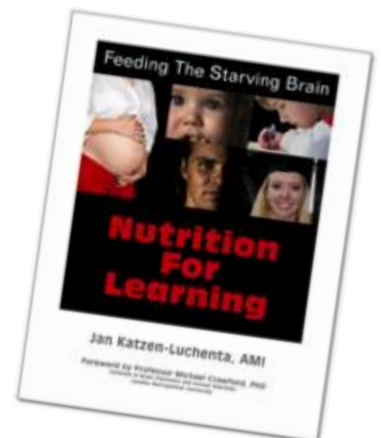
Recommended Reading:

Nutrition For Learning

by Jan Katzen-Luchenta, AMI, CFP-
Author, Children's Nutritionist

Jan is an experienced Montessori teacher whose observations of children's behavior problems in her own classroom sparked the beginnings of research into nutrition and development that have yielded this wonderful book.

With over 200 pages of material, the content of the book ranges from insightful explanations of early childhood development and the critical role that nutrition plays to practical grocery list suggestions and recipes.



Elementary students to perform Dec. 8



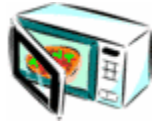
Elementary students will perform with the St. Pauls' Church choir at the *Festival of Lessons and*

Carols on December 8 at 4:00 p.m. in the church.

Start your Christmas season with this wonderful musical offering. The performance will be followed by a potluck supper in the parish hall...Bring your favorite dish to share.

Classroom Wish List

New or gently used items needed for our new classrooms:



- Microwave ovens
- Small refrigerators
- Computers (desktop or laptop)
- Printers

Thanks to our Volunteers



A big thank you to parents Dana Spottswood and Dan Gonzalez and teacher Stacey Merkt and all their helpers for beautifying our campus.

Dana and Stacey worked with students and put many hours of hard work into creating flowerbeds around the portable buildings. Dan built the raised vegetable bed in between the portable buildings.

Thank you!

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Scenes from Grandparents Day

-Photos by Kate Terrell

