



Introducing

# The Lampfighter

SPEMS Monthly Parent  
Newsletter



August 2013

Applying Montessori Principles

## Inside

### Thank You!

2

A short message from our new Head of School, Jennifer Davey...

### Meet Our Staff

3

Find out who will be guiding your child's learning this year...

### Parent Orientation set for Aug. 23

3

Come meet your child's teacher-guides on Friday, Aug. 23 at 6:30 p.m...

### After School Care

3

Learn about our after school programs... Sign up early!!!

### Fall Fete & Art Auction

4

Learn about our after school programs... Sign up early!!!

### Farewell Susan Duncan

4

Sad news for SPEMS is good news of Susan and her family...

## Raising Caring & Capable Children

Montessori education is founded on universal principles of human development and learning. The underlying principles and practices that help children become competent and capable learners can also be used at home.

- **Observation Brings Understanding.** Montessori teachers spend time every day observing children in order to understand their individual developmental needs. Montessori based much of her educational methods and materials on information gathered about children through extensive observation. Standing back and observing children at play by themselves, or with other children, provides us with valuable knowledge about their needs, their interests and talents, their emotional and social needs and what sparks their curiosity.

### ● Teach teaching, not correcting.

Human beings learn best when they are shown what to do, what's expected of them, what the positive choices are. Montessori teachers, known as "guides," tend not to criticize children for inappropriate behavior or failure to accomplish a learning task. Instead, they present and represent practical alternatives and possibilities. At home the concept of positive presentation can take the form, "Here's how I use the napkin to wipe my face." Or similarly, "When I want Mommy to give me a glass of milk, this is what I say."

### Don't forget to...

- Turn in your *Annual Student Information Form*.
- Turn in an updated *Student Immunization Record!*

Follow me to Page

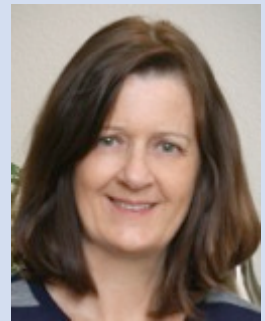
2

## Raising Caring and Capable Children continued from page 1

- **Modeling and Mentoring are the best ways to change behavior.** Montessori spoke about the absorbent mind of the very young child. Children soak up whatever they see, hear, feel and touch in their home and school environment. When children see adults communicating respectfully and kindly, they tend to do the same. When they see parents reading and discussing what they read instead of watching TV they tend to develop a love of language and literature. When they see everyone pitching in to help before or after dinner they want to be a part of the team. Parents, who make a conscious and planned effort to model specific attitudes and behaviors for their child at the time when the child demonstrates a need or desire to learn, find themselves role-playing more and lecturing less, with far better results.
- **Children pass through specific “sensitive periods” of learning during which they are highly motivated and receptive.** Montessori observed that children move through periods in which the windows of interest in a particular subject or motivation to learn specific skills are more wide open. She identified sensitive periods for language, math, and sensorial and moral development. By observing a child’s emotional, social, intellectual, and physical responses to specific situations, parents can get a sense of their child’s current needs, interests and issues. A three year old who tends to push or hit other children when frustrated is ready to receive role-playing lessons on how to use language to get what he wants. A four or five year old that monopolizes playground equipment may be ready for a lesson in sharing. Observing the child’s interests, issues and challenges invariably shows us where we need to focus our modeling and mentoring.
- **Control of error is built into the learning process.** Most Montessori learning activities have some type of control of error or self -correcting feature. Children learn more efficiently and with less frustration when the environment, not the authority figure, structures their choices- when they see a connection between their choice of behavior and the resulting consequences. Likewise parents do well to build components of natural or logical consequences into their disciplinary actions. ‘If you throw sand it might end up in someone’s eyes (a warning of natural consequences). If you leave your toys on the floor again. I will have to pick them up myself and you will not be able to play with them tomorrow” (logical consequence).
- **Isolation of stimulus or learning objectives.** Observe a Montessori learning activity and you will note that only one learning objective concept or skill is highlighted at a time. The color tablets, for example, are designed to help children identify and name common hues. These tablets present only a single variable (color); there is no change of texture, shape or size. We want to draw the child’s attention to only the color stimuli. In helping children improve their behavior, parents should select a single skill or issue to present and represent until mastered or at least improved. Beware of loading children with too many behavioral tasks to accomplish. Concentrating on one issue at a time will give the child a better chance of success. In a nutshell, we have identified six principles that Montessori teachers utilize to help children learn and grow. All of these can be translated and implemented by parents to support their children in the home.

## Thank you!

I want to thank everyone for the warm welcome I have received by everybody at SPEMS.



You have truly made feel at home.

My husband and I moved from Dallas to San Antonio in July, and we are slowly finding our way around the city. I have already worn a path to my daughter’s home to dote on my new granddaughter, Lucy Catherine. Lucy was born in June and will be a future SPEMS student!

When Father Ray told me I would be the person to lead SPEMS into its next phase of development, I did not imagine how much would happen on day one! But, I am ready for the challenges ahead.

Like everyone, I was disappointed that the portable buildings were not yet on premises. However, the entire SPEMS staff has been very creative in accommodating the needs of our growing school within the existing space. (As I told them, we will all be very cozy for a while!)

The temporary class arrangement leaves the two elementary classes in their original rooms on the second floor. Primary 2 will relocate to the “cottage” room, which opens onto the courtyard. Music and some other after-school classes will be held in the parish hall.

Please feel free to stop by and visit me at my new office upstairs.

## Meet our classroom staff for the 2013-14 school year

In describing the ideal classroom, Maria Montessori talked about the “prepared environment”. The Montessori materials are arranged in an orderly fashion around the room, and maintained in pristine condition to appeal to the child’s sense of order and to provide continuity and security. However, central to this “prepared environment” is the *guide* (teacher) who must fully embrace the Montessori philosophy and allow the child to blossom and reach his or her full potential.

The school has been blessed with wonderful *guides* who clearly understand the importance of this “prepared environment.”

### Toddler 1 Classroom

**Reneé Mijangos** and **Crystal Usquiano** have moved to a new location in the new “larger” toddler room.

### Toddler 2 Classroom

**Sylvia Martinez** is the new toddler guide. She has AMI training and a long career in education, including Montessori teaching and consulting.

### Primary 1 Classroom

The new lead guide in Primary 1 is **Jessica Martin**. Jessica received her certification from *Southwestern Montessori Center* in 2004 and has taught for several years in between raising her family. Jessica moved to San Antonio in 2012. Her two children will be joining her at the school. Emma will be in primary and Nolan is a toddler. **Cecilia Cifuentes** is the assistant guide.

### Primary 2 Classroom

**Chelsey Webb** takes over the lead role in Primary 2. Chelsey is a graduate of the *University of the Incarnate Word* and took her Montessori training with *Montessori Institute of North Texas* (AMI) in 2010. She has worked in Montessori schools in Houston, Dallas and Pflugerville. She recently moved to San Antonio. Chelsey will be assisted by **Beatriz Steward**.

### Lower Elementary Classroom

**Blanca Bird** is entering her fifth year with the school. She has just completed her AMS training with *Shelton School* in Dallas. **John Lewis** joins her as the

assistant guide in the lower elementary class. John has a State Teaching Certificate from *UTSA* and Montessori certification from *St. Nicholas Training Center*, London. He has many years of teaching experience, both in Montessori and public schools at the elementary level.

### Upper Elementary Classroom

**Jane Laven** joined SPEMS in November as the primary guide. She now moves to the upper elementary program. Jane has a *Masters in Education* from *UTSA* and Montessori training from the *National Center for Montessori Education*. Jane has forty years experience of teaching at all age levels.

She will be joined by **Elaine Pruett**. Elaine has a *Masters Degree* from *Texas Tech* and training from the *Montessori Institute of America*. She has had a wide variety of opportunities to work with children of all ages in many bilingual settings over the last 15-20 years here in the United States as well as overseas.

## Plan to attend parent orientation on Aug. 23

Come and meet all the guides (teachers) at the *SPEMS Parent Orientation* on Friday, August 23 at 6:30 p.m. You will find out everything you need to know to make this a successful school year.

## After School Care

The school has put together an after-school care program with a variety of activities for students. These include the very popular *Gardening Class* with **Stacy Merkt**, *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* with **Lou Taylor**, *Creative Art* with **Leo Lee**, and *Music Class* with **Kathy Kelly**.

We also have *P.E.* with **Jason Azar** and *Art and Games* with **Emily New**.

Space is limited so make sure you sign up early!

# Annual Fall Fete and Art Auction

*September 28, 2013, at Pearl Studio*

An evening of jazz, art and fine dining will highlight SPEMS Annual Fall Fete and Art Auction on Saturday, September 28, 2013 from 7:00 – 10:00 pm at the Pearl Studio, 200 Grayson St.

San Antonio jazz legend George Prado and a quartet will entertain guests. Tickets are \$35.00 per person and may be purchased at the door.

Artists featured in this year's auction include *Waddy Armstrong, Andy Benavides, Jenny Cross, Diana Kersey, Scott Martin, Roberta Maxham, Susan Straus, Teri Wright*, and Maui artist *Bruce Turnbull*.

Nearly 50% of the school's students receive significant tuition assistance. Last year, St. Paul's provided more than \$100,000 in tuition assistance. Funds raised in the *Annual SPEMS Fall Fete and Auction* helps make a Montessori education truly accessible to an economically diverse group of students.



August 2013



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## Susan Duncan to leave SPEMS

I know that you will be saddened to learn that Susan Duncan has resigned her position at the school, effective September 6.

Susan started at SPEMS in October 2012 as a part-time administrator. Her job quickly grew into a full-time, demanding position. She played a vital role in the growth and development of the school this past year, particularly in helping arrange for remodeling of the existing building, as well as portable buildings.

Susan plans to spend more time with her husband and family. I have worked with Susan only a short while, but I have truly appreciated her energy and cheerful commitment to her work.

We have begun the search for a new office manager. In the meantime, please send all administrative communications to the school office, [school@stpaulsmontessori.org](mailto:school@stpaulsmontessori.org).