

The Lamplighter

SPEMS Monthly Parent Newsletter

August 2014



The Montessori Way:

Inside

Potluck Picnics

Don't miss your child's classroom Potluck Picnic—a great way to meet teachers and fellow parents

2

The Survey Sez...

A summary of results from our recent parent survey...

3

New Faces at SPEMS

Read about our talented new SPEMS classroom teachers...

3

Journey & Discovery

Sign up now for this special Montessori parent seminar...

4

Photo gallery

Scenes from our Spring Carnival held on the last day of school...

4

The Normalized Child

Maria Montessori began to develop her “new education” as she worked with sixty children entrusted to her because the landlord in the tenements where they lived wanted to keep them busy to prevent them from vandalizing the property. From her observation of the children she prepared materials that suited their needs and gave them freedom to do the work they desired.

What emerged in that first Children’s House in 1907 was a group of children who displayed truly “normal characteristics of childhood.”

Montessori teaching trusts that the child will become “normalized” within an environment committed to the three Montessori principles of observation, individual liberty and preparation of the environment. The Montessori teacher must “...have the faith in the child who will reveal himself through work.” Normalization can only come about with the cooperation of school and home and a true understanding of how to meet the child’s needs. Perhaps you already have a normalized child! If so you will recognize these characteristics.

Observe a Montessori classroom and you will see a child’s **love of order**: See how he carefully rolls out a mat and strategically places material on it. See how she cleans up spills, cleans her table after lunch, or reorders a shelf when materials have been misplaced. The love of order is a genuine respect for the materials with which he or she works, and a consideration for other members of the class.

The child displays a **love of work**. He is capable of choosing his own task and working at it for long periods. When a child is concentrating on a task we are not to interrupt, either to correct or praise. This might disrupt the powers of concentration that are so important for a child’s development. The normalized child also shows a **love of silence** and **working alone**.

Follow me to page

2

The normalized child (continued from page 1)

In the classroom a time of silence can be a time of peace and introspection. Children interact freely in the classroom, but the right of the child to work alone is respected. In the classroom, you will see **mutual aid and cooperation**. The mixed age groupings and the absence of rewards, takes away the competition that can sow seeds of failure, or arrogance and pride. The children are encouraged to help each other. The older children can teach the younger ones and thus strengthen their qualities of leadership and competence. In turn, the younger children respect and trust their older friends.

In time, each child in a Montessori environment should develop a **profound spontaneous concentration**. This is a result of long inner growth and can be developed by the exercises of practical life, which help to focus the child's attention on real things and provide an opportunity for a lengthened cycle of work.

A normalized child should have reached a level of obedience where he obeys with astonishing readiness and seems anxious to do so. The realization that one can take directions brings with it a joyful responsiveness. The Montessori environment fosters the development of **initiative and independence** by not interfering with children when they have chosen work, unless they are obviously misusing it or disturbing someone else. The equipment itself fosters this independence by having within it a control of error, which frees children from needless help of the adult.

The discipline revealed in the Montessori classroom develops from within and is in Montessori's words "*the end of a long process of maturation.*" For this to develop, the purpose of the Montessori education must be fully embraced in the child's home, just as in school. If a home environment is overly indulgent and permissive, or if it is stultifying and rigid, it will *not* be possible to change a child's outlook in the short period of time he or she is in the school.

Montessori believed that children under six should have attachment to reality. They should be able to discern what is true and what is untrue. For this reason, she felt stories of fable and fantasy should be reserved for later. For this attachment to really to fully develop, Montessori parents are cautioned to limit the time a child spends on TV, videos and computer games. The idealized, surreal and fantastical worlds depicted in these mediums can confuse the child before he can really distinguish truth from fiction.

In the classroom, normalized children learn to share: If something they would like to work with is in use, they learn to wait patiently until it is free. The **possessive instinct is sublimated**.

Finally a normalized shows child **joy** in learning—he is enthusiastic about school. You, the parents are joined with us in this "normalizing work" on behalf of your child. We ask that you consider the insights of Dr. Montessori—not only her discoveries of the child's cognitive process, but her formula for the ideal environment in which a child can grow—and apply Montessori principals at home. Our efforts here will not be fruitful unless you—whose impact on the child is greatest—fully understand and approve our purposes.



Join us for class potluck picnics

Get to know the families in your class by joining us for the class potluck picnics. The schedule is as follows:

Weds, Sept 3 – Toddlers
Ms. Renee & Ms. Alissa, Ms. Sylvia

Thurs, Sept 4 – Primary 2
Ms. Norma & Ms. Bea

Tues, Sept 9 – Primary 1 & 3
Ms. Kristen, Ms. Ceci & Ms. Jenny

Wed, 9/11 – Lower Elementary
Ms. Blanca & Ms. Marsha

Thurs, 9/12 – Upper Elementary
Ms. Jane & Ms. Lemira

- **Bring your favorite dish to share.**
- **All potluck dinners will be held from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.**



Survey Results

What brought you here, keeps you here!

Most Important Factors that lead you to SPEMS:

- School's ability to meet the needs of the child
- The quality of the teachers
- The environment/atmosphere of the school
- The opportunity for self - directed learning

Satisfaction with SPEMS:

- The opportunity for self - directed learning
- The environment/atmosphere of the school
- The school's ability to meet the needs of the child
- The opportunity for children to learn from each other

Thank you to all the parents who took time to complete the survey. You have provided vital information that the school board and staff can use as they plan for the coming school year and for the future school years.*

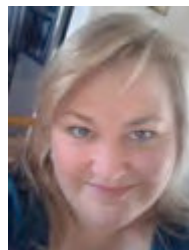
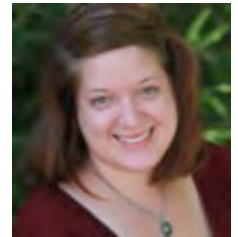
* You can access and read the SPEMS Strategic Plan on our school website by clicking [here](#).

Welcome our new teachers



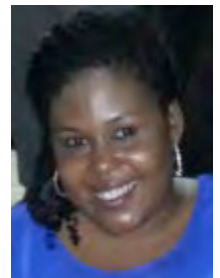
Kristen Garcia (Primary 1) has a Bachelor of Science in Lifespan Human Development from Kansas State University. She received her Montessori certification with Montessori Education Programs International in 2009. She has been teaching at the Clay Platte Montessori School in Kansas for the past eight years. She moved to San Antonio with her husband and middle school daughter during the summer.

Sarah Jane (Jenny) deBruyn will lead our new **Primary 3** classroom. Jenny is a native of San Antonio and attended the former Judson Montessori School. She has a bachelor's degree in International Relations from Mills College in Oakland. She has passed all the Texas state teaching exams and training and holds a certificate from the American Montessori Society. She has been a teacher at Parkside Community School in Austin for the past three years. She has returned to San Antonio with her husband, who is studying law at St. Mary's University.



Lemira Vela will join Ms. Jane as the Upper Elementary Assistant Teacher. She has worked in Special Education in NISD for the past nine years and has worked with children ranging from ages three years to fifth grade. She is currently a senior at UTSA in the field of education, specializing in science.

Marsha Morrison joins Ms. Blanca as the Lower Elementary Assistant Teacher. Marsha was a certified teacher in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago for seven years prior to moving to the United States in the year 2000. She has since pursued an Associate in Arts and a Bachelor's degree in Social Science while raising two children, and working in different school districts on her husband's respective military assignments. She worked in school districts in California, North Carolina and Texas.



Alissa Smith is a yoga teacher and certified birth doula. She is a parent of two children at the school and was a frequent substitute teacher in the toddler program last year. She is eager to learn more about being a toddler teacher under the guidance of Ms. Renee.

Parent Orientation

A parent orientation meeting will be held Friday, August 22 @ 6:00 p.m. in the Parish Hall. Come and meet our new teachers and get caught up on school news!

Want to better understand Montessori? Sign up for our Journey & Discovery event

SEPT.
13

For most of us, the Montessori classroom is very different from our own educational experience and naturally prompts lots of questions. Our *Journey & Discovery* event on Saturday, Sept. 13, 9:00 a.m. to noon is your opportunity to get answers.

This half-day seminar offers a comprehensive look at Montessori education theory and practice from toddlers to elementary. The day starts with a journey through classrooms spanning the entire Montessori curriculum from Toddlers to 12 years. Parents will then split into the group of their choice to fully discover the curriculum for Toddlers through 6th grade. This second half will include hands-on learning and an opportunity to talk with teachers, at all levels, about what happens in the classroom each day.

Journey & Discovery is a comprehensive parent-focused event. Our goal is to help you understand Montessori education the best way possible—*by immersing yourself in it for a morning*. Childcare will be provided, but space is limited so make sure to sign up early.



Above: Students using the new drinking fountain at the pavilion. The fountain was purchased with funds raised at our Annual Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser.

The Lamplighter

August 2014



Pictures taken at the Carnival held on the last day of school.