

Grace Notes



Grace Montessori School Newsletter • October 2008

Why Montessori?

By Yuli Vanegas

Why Montessori? I gave it a lot of thought on what really made me decide that Grace was the best choice for my son, Adrian.

One of Grace's parent when asked said, "My daughter attended a Montessori preschool prior to moving here. Her teachers in Honesdale called several schools in Allentown and, after talking with the people at Grace, they immediately recommended this as the best school for my kids. They sensed a true interest in making childhood education better for the Lehigh valley and they were touched by Grace's willingness to listen to my daughter's educational background and help her adapt her own educational path. Three and a half years later, I am thrilled to have had two children at Grace and thankful for this wonderful opportunity."

For me, it was the tour itself. Every child was fully concentrated on what they were doing; all twenty or so kids were working like little bees on their own little projects. The touching moment for me was when one of the little girls tripped and Ms. Karen rushed to help her and comfort her. At the end of the day, we as parents are looking for the academic growth but also for the inner growth that will help our kids become sensitive and



caring human beings.

Adrian wakes up every morning eager to go to school .. that in itself is priceless!

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Fall Inspiration

Coming of fall

*The sun is yellow,
The wind is mellow,
Fall is coming so let's get go-
ing,
Birds are singing, flowers are
weeping,
The whooshing sweet smell of
falls air will someday become
one of earth's parts.*

By August, age 8

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Administrator's Corner

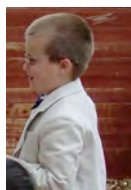
By: Monica Lewellis

I have been a member of the GMS administrative team for almost three years. I was once referred to as the Office Teacher by one of our students. I'm really the Bookkeeper, but like that other title. I like working in a place where there is such high energy and where I can learn something new from a child. I like being at Panera Bread for breakfast and one of our children comes up to me with a great big smile because she recognizes me from her school. I like learning more and more about the Montessori philosophy.

We are an Episcopal School owned and operated by Grace Episcopal Church of which I am a member. We believe that all children deserve a quality education. The best part of my job is being part of a team that helps parents who live in the city afford this amazing educational opportunity. It's the reason we exist in center city Allentown. I'm proud of our school's heritage and location and proud of the parents who bring their children to our school from surrounding communities and entrust them to our care. I'm proud of our faculty. I often say that I could never do what they do and do so well.

Our scholarship program is part of the bedrock of our foundation and is fully funded through grants and fundraisers. Our school exists for single moms or dads who are working or trying to better their lives by going back to school so that they can find full time jobs with benefits to better care for their families. Many of these parents receive childcare subsidy (Title XX) from the county to help in this endeavor. GMS accepts Title XX thereby allowing their children to receive excellent private education rather than just daycare. I like to imagine the difference that it is making in their lives. I like to imagine the difference having these children in our school is making in the lives of children who already have every opportunity. That is GMS.

"I am dressed like a fancy doctor today." Jackson, age 5



Board of Directors' Update

The Board of Directors of Grace Montessori School continued to meet monthly during the summer. Board members Jim Walton and Christine Spindler stepped down after serving for several years on the Board. We are very grateful for the wisdom and guidance that they provided us during their tenures. Matthew Tuerk was appointed to fill one of the vacancies on the Board as a parent representative.

Over the course of the summer, the Board spent a considerable amount of time evaluating the feasibility of expanding our facility to include the parking garage space located across the alley from the early childhood education program. The Board's vision is to completely renovate this space into modern classrooms for the lower elementary students and to expand our services to include Montessori instruction to students through 6th grade. We have received preliminary sketches of the proposed renovations, as well as an estimate of construction costs. Our next step is to review the estimate, and examine the feasibility of launching a capital campaign to fund the construction costs. We will continue to keep parents and staff updated on the progress of this exciting project.

Notable and Quotable

Isabella (age 5) and Miss Crystal talking about their dogs.

Isabella: "What's your dog's name?"

Miss Crystal: "Socrates."

Isabella: "Who named your dog?"

Miss Crystal: "My husband."

Isabella: "Is he crazy?"

"Rainer said, "The screwdriver work always knocks my socks off!"

"Sharan, age 3: When learning about the five senses, he raised his hand to recite the list of senses. He said: "Sight, taste, touch, smell, **hearing!**"

“What Did You Do At School Today?”

By: Lisa Perfetti



“What did you do today?” “Nothing.” This is how conversations went with my daughter Lucia at pick-up time during the first few weeks of school. Gradually, I figured out

that Lucia was interested in sharing her day: she just had her own idea about how to do it.

Lucia started asking us to “play school” with her. Usually she would be a teacher, and she would ask us to be one of the kids. She would get out her stuffed animals, have them all “sit on the line,” and then start leading the class. This is how I found out that: everyone sings good-bye to each child as they leave the classroom for the day; children get a name tag before choosing their work; children have to have a lesson on a work before they can do it on their own. “Do you want to do sandpaper letters or pink tower?” Lucia would ask me. “Have you had a lesson on it?” It was especially helpful to have attended the curriculum nights at GMS in understanding this play, since I was able to understand what the pink tower is.

It is almost always through “playing school” that I find out what is going in Lucia’s classroom. It is often at the end of the night, snuggling under the covers, that Lucia shares anecdotes about her day. I also ask her if specific children were at school, the children she talks about the most. She often seems eager to talk first about her friends and what they have been doing: this then leads her to talk about her own work. Observing her in her classroom was also very helpful, especially early on when we wanted to make sure she was making the transition to her new school.

Priya Amin, GMS program director, also has some suggestions for getting our children to open up. When speaking to a child, it is important to get down to her level and look her in the eyes. This shows respect for her size and allows her to communicate more directly with us. Often using a quiet voice, even whispering, can engage the child.

If a teacher sends home work our child did or comments on her work, that is a good opportunity to start a conversation: “Miss Wendy told me you did your first Bob book!” Priya reminds us that it is important to ask not “What did you play with?” but “What did

you work with?” Finally, Priya encourages parents to come to curriculum nights to learn about the materials and classroom objects, which can then serve as prompts for conversation with our children.

Here’s to a year of terrific conversations with your children about what they’re learning at Grace!

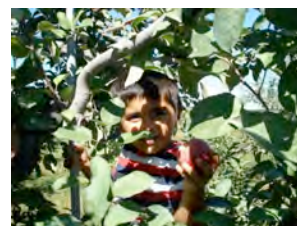
“Kids can Cook”

By: Rajika Reed

In the past month at Grace our children have been learning about Jonny Appleseed and his role in the history of apples in the United States. Everyone has heard, “an apple a day, keeps the doctor away”. Well, this month our recipe includes apples!

Tuna Apple Pita Pockets

1 small apple
1 small celery rib, sliced
1 tsp. lemon juice
1 small onion, chopped
1 (7-ounce) can tuna
1 Tbsp. fresh dill weed
(or 1 tsp. dried dill weed)
1/2 cup mayonnaise
4 small pita pockets
4 large lettuce leaves



Core and chop the apple into a medium-size bowl. Add celery and sprinkle with lemon juice. Add onion. Drain tuna and add to bowl with dill and mayonnaise. Mix well. Cut the top off each pita bread and place a lettuce leaf in each. Stuff with tuna mixture. Serve. Servings: 4. Prep time: 15 minutes.

St Francis Blessing of the Pets



The “Wind beneath the Wings” of GMS

When most of us think of GMS, a picture of happy children and friendly teachers comes to mind. This is an accurate portrait, but not a complete one. There are four behind-the-scenes women who are the wheels that make GMS run smoothly. It is time to get to know these women....



Diane Cimorelli joined GMS in January 2008 and serves as the Office Manager. Some of her duties include support for the executive director, program director and bookkeeper as needed, parent relations and communications, the newsletter, maintaining and supporting office computers, telephones, business machines and web site as well as assisting with school tours and much more. “I enjoy the opportunity to work with the staff, students and families and the diversity they bring to the school, and working in a dynamic environment,” Diane said.

Monica Lewellis has been with GMS since January 2006. She is the Bookkeeper, although she shares, “I much prefer the title that one of the children gave me some months ago: Office Teacher.” Monica is also a member of Grace Church, which owns the school. “I have a special affection for this place and a desire to see it grow and prosper,” she said. One of her favorite things is when the children recognize her in the hallway with a smile and wave. Also, very important to her is that MSG serves inner-city children that without GMS, would not have high quality preschool

education. It is her dream that one day all public schools will be Montessori schools.

Priya Amin started at GMS in August 2006 and she serves as the Program Director. She may look young, but has a wealth of experience, both as a teacher in the Montessori classroom and on the administrative side, that she draws on to oversee the faculty, GMS’s Primary and LE programs, and physical classrooms. She also provides many in depth tours for prospective families as well as assisting with the intakes of prospective children. There are three things that really make GMS special for Priya, the social mission of GMS, cohesive and supportive parent community and multi-talented faculty and staff. “A child’s smile when they’ve done something on their own is priceless to me,” Priya revealed. “Montessori is a way of life!”

Elizabeth House is the Executive Director, although she has previously held other offices at GMS including Development Director and serving on the board as a representative for Grace Episcopal Church. Her job is to carry out the vision of the Board of Directors, to establish and uphold policies and procedures, implement good financial practices, responsible for development, fundraising, publicity, and marketing efforts, to administer the scholarship program, and to hire and supervise the administrative staff. “It is a privilege and an honor to serve the school in this capacity. I work with a great team, and I look forward to an exciting and dynamic future for the school,” she stated. With such talent behind the scenes as well in the classrooms, and a growing student body of amazing children, there is no doubt that the future of GMS will be great.

Foreign Language Corner

Gracias por su interés en la educación de su hijo. En la escuela de Grace Montessori creemos firmemente que todos los niños pueden aprender y que la educación es el camino más seguro hacia la realización de su sueño. Bienvenidos al año Nuevo en Grace Montessori. ¡Buen comienzo, buen futuro!

1. Escuche con atención a los niños cuando se comunican con usted.

2. Léales a los niños en voz alta todos los días, aún cuando ellos parecen ocupados.

3. Juegue con ellos y cánteles con frecuencia.

4. Imponga límites a su conducta.

Mantenga idioma de origen en la casa y practique escribiendo, hablando, y leyendo en los dos idiomas. ¡Espero que todos disfruten este año escolar!

Classroom Updates



Rainer Scrubbing a pumpkin

Classroom One: Ms. Farzana, Mr. Jamie, Ms. Leah

Autumn has come and we had lots of fun in the classroom. We talked about fall, Columbus Day and Halloween. The children enjoyed doing activities related to our themes. The class discussed leaves changing color and liked scrubbing, carving and toasting the seeds of our pumpkin. What a treat! We took a nature walk through Allentown to collect leaves and visited the farm with our families.



Rohit: practical life work

Classroom Two: Ms. Nicole, Mrs. Magee, Ms. Wendy

In October we focused on autumn traditions and nutrition. The children enjoyed a variety of hands-on activities to celebrate fall, such as leaf rubbing, apple tasting and creating a graph based on their favorites, pumpkin scrubbing and decorating. The children are also learning about food groups and making healthy choices. A favorite science experiment this month consisted of placing burning paper in a bottle to create a "partial vacuum" and pull a hard boiled egg into the bottle.



Maya: pouring exercise

Classroom Three: Ms. Kelly, Mr. Allen, Ms. Karen

The children celebrated fall with all their senses, starting with an introduction to different kinds of apples, ending with the always popular taste test. They chose their favorite after tasting four different kinds of apples. They also enjoyed the feel of different gourds and pumpkins, smooth and knobby. A highlight was scooping the pumpkin insides and carving a face. The children were given small pumpkins to scrub and paint. We enjoyed our trip to Unangst Tree Farm.



Thomas w/ small number cards

Classroom Four: Ms. Crystal, Mrs. Attia

The students have been learning so much! We have learned about our organs and bones, and how to stay healthy by eating the proper foods and keeping busy. We even learned how to prepare healthy snacks without the help of an adult! Currently, we are learning about dinosaurs. Each day we focus on a particular dinosaur and study their eating habits and interactions with other dinosaurs. We will even make



Lower Elementary: Ms. Lynne, Ms. Radhika

The Special Enrichment program began in October. The class experienced some very exciting afternoons. Lessons included timeline of life on earth, the first timeline and second timeline of human beings, and the story of language. The children are busy working with plants as botany lessons continue. They were also introduced to zoology this month. Friday's cooking class is getting remarkable inputs from the children. This month we tried some recipes prepared by our very own chefs: poached pears and hummus.

'Healthy Lifestyles'

By: Kristin Flora

Living a healthy lifestyle helps to keep you well. As a nurse and a mom of two kids I read a lot about this topic. Here are some ideas I use in teaching patient families and with my own family.

Think about your own school days and going to the school nurse. What was the first thing she asked? "Did you eat breakfast today?" This meal is so important. It gives kids the energy they need for learning. A traditional breakfast of cereal and milk is fine, but remember that a breakfast milkshake or leftover whole wheat spaghetti are great options as well.

You can make healthy choices when traveling too. Children should ride in a forward facing car seat until they outgrow it, usually around 4 years and 40 lbs. Read the guide for your seat, since they vary from brand to brand. A booster seat is needed until an adult belt fits correctly, usually between 8 to 12 years of age and 4 feet 9 inches in height.

Pennsylvania law states all children under 13 years wear a helmet when riding a bike. Look for the Consumer Product Safety Commission label to make sure it meets guidelines. Also, follow instructions for a snug and proper fit. Set a good example by wearing a helmet when you ride too!

Exercise is essential to grow strong. At this young age it is important to keep exercise fun, age appropriate, and safe. If you're choosing a sport for a pre-school child, look for classes that emphasize fun and not competition.

Another way to increase exercise is to limit "screen time" (computer, TV, video games). The Academy of Pediatrics* recommends limiting screen time to 1 to 2 hours a day.

Lastly, don't forget the value of sleep! Kids age 3 to 5 years typically need 11 to 13 hours of sleep a day. Kids age 5 to 12 years typically need 10 to 11 hours of sleep. Maintaining a regular sleep schedule with a relaxing bedtime routine helps kids to start healthy habits. The National Sleep Foundation recommends a "child should sleep in the same sleeping environment every night, in a room that is cool, quiet and dark – and without a TV".

*Information from www.aap.org "parenting corner" and National Sleep Foundation.

Upcoming Events

Heritage Day – Saturday, November 8th, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. The main goal for this event is to represent and celebrate each child's heritage. We are planning to have a day full of learning experiences, fun, food, games, and more.

Lower Elementary Parent Conferences – Friday, November 14th. Noon Dismissal for Lower Elementary students. No childcare will be available for Lower Elementary Students.

Primary Parent Conferences – Friday, November 21st. Noon Dismissal for Primary students. Childcare will only be available to GMS students during your scheduled conference.

Book Fair – Usborne specializes in educational, fun books for children. Please plan to visit the Book Fair during your Parent Conference.

Thanksgiving Holiday – No School November 27th & 28th.

Nutcracker Ballet – Friday, December 12th. There will be a field trip to see the Nutcracker performed by the Pennsylvania Youth Ballet.

Production Thanks

Thanks to everyone who helped with this issue:

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Ms. Farzana	Ms. Nicole
Ms. Kelly	Ms. Crystal
Ms. Radhika	Diane Cimorelli.

Box Top Fundraising

Thank you to Susan Mathieu for her effort to support the school through Box Tops for Education. Last spring Grace Montessori earned \$142.20 from collecting Box Tops for Education coupons. Susan has continued to collect Box Tops this fall.