



# MONTESSORI MATTERS



Community Montessori School

Week of December 18, 2009

## CMS Holiday Open House

Tomorrow: Friday

9:15 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

School is officially over at 11:00 a.m.

There is no AfterSchool Program!

Students must be accompanied by an adult.  
Parents, Grandparents, & Siblings are welcome.

Please bring a special family dish to share.  
*(Please remember to bring peanut/tree nut free items only)*

Visit classrooms & visit with friends.  
Short elementary student musical program in Jock's Gym at 10:30 a.m.

Parking is available in the Rector-Hayden Parking Lot behind CMS.

I look forward to seeing you tomorrow at the Holiday Party. Enjoy your holiday break. If you are traveling over the break, please drive safely and bring the children back to us safely!! We will see you back at CMS on Monday, January 4<sup>th</sup>!

Fondly,  
Mrs. Ashby

**Picture Reminder:** Please turn in all picture money and/or unwanted pictures ASAP. Our photographer, Nigel Sault, would like to complete our orders before the end of the year. THANKS!

## **WHAT'S WITH TABLE WASHING?**

**By Marnie Downs      Retired CMS Primary Montessori "Guide" (the real word for what a teacher is ☺).**

Recently I was visiting family and enjoying a lively conversation at the dinner table when I found myself explaining the "practical life" activities of a Montessori primary classroom. Having taught for twenty eight years (retired now for almost four), I find myself longing to talk about such things. It was my experience in the classroom and the fact that I witnessed the impact these particular materials had on the young child that enabled me to teach with such verve, enthusiasm, and joy. So I launched into a friendly lecture about a seemingly simplistic piece of material, Table Washing, so as to show just how multidimensional such a simple exercise actually is. Once finished with that conversation I knew I had to go home and write about it. I think many parents wonder what they are doing spending all that money so their 3 year old can go to school and wash tables! I hope this explanation helps to create a wider view of all of the materials in a Montessori classroom as they are each so much more than the eye can see at first glance.

Ah, Table Washing. First let's look at the materials and see how many things are in this work: a child size apron , bucket, pail, basin, soap dish with bar of soap, small scrub brush on top of the soap, matching dish with sponge(child size) , towel and drying cloth. The lesson has been given and the child is now free to choose this work on her own. Here is what happens: the child will begin by putting on the apron, by herself ( or trying to ),then taking all of the parts of the work off the shelf, and bringing them all to a chosen work space. She will choose a table to wash, one that is not in use!, and might ask another child to help her carry it to her work space ( she has seen this happen with other children ). She might drag that table and make a big racket while doing it and often when this happens an older child will scoot right over and help carry it. Notice the social interaction here, the lesson on kindness and helping others comes alive! Now she lays out the materials, big towel underneath the basin and pitcher, all materials have an actual ORDER in how they are set up (she may or may not remember much of this from the lesson ) but manages to get everything on the towel. Then she goes to the sink with the pitcher for water. There are some children standing in line waiting for the sink. She now has to choose how to behave, as in butt in line and insist she can't wait, wait her turn, throw a fit when others protest, etc. She has had many lessons on waiting in line at the sink and now is the moment of practice. She manages to set her pitcher down and wait, talking with the child ahead of her. Pitcher filled up to the line (marked with tape for reference) she now carries this (both hands) to her work, sloshing water on the floor all the way (maybe) and she will either notice it and clean up the spill or leave it as she is wanting to get into that water! Another child may come and mop it up or she may do it later. Right now, she is pouring that water (ever so slowly...note the self-restraint) into the basin which she has placed next to the table to be washed. Now the sponge goes into the water and she gets it full and squeezes it with both hands and then wipes the table with long smooth strokes until the table top is all wet. Sponge back in its dish, she now wets the brush, brushes it against the soap pushing away from her and maybe closing her eyes too. She knows from experience that soap in the eyes is no fun! Ah, now to scrub and scrub and scrub, dipping that brush back into the water and putting more soap on it and going at that table with gusto. She might choose to wash the table legs. She may become distracted by a passing friend and wander off, soap brush in hand, and will be gently helped back to the table to scrub some more. The next step is deciding the table is clean and needs rinsing. So the sponge is wetted, squeezed, and here she goes, getting that soap off the table, rinsing that sponge over and over as she then remembers the legs too. Whew. Next is to dry the table with that drying cloth, and maybe blotting up some water dripped on the floor during this work. She notices the soap dish is full of water and soap and proceeds to wash it in the basin with the sponge. Washes the sponge dish too. Rinses out the brush. Now here comes the pouring (out the corner) the water out of the basin into the pail. Might go well and might not. We'll say it does and now she carries that pail of water (both hands required as it is heavy!) to the sink for emptying, maybe having to wait there again. Back to the table and now she must dry everything with the drying cloth. Whew. Putting the soap back in its dish and the sponge and brush where they belong too. She is

one tired girl by now and maybe she is longing for a snack. She takes off her apron and dries it off and folds it and puts it on the shelf, putting the basin on top, the pail and pitcher in their place, the soap dish and sponge dish in their place. Now she goes and sits on the snack bench but an older child comes over to tell her she has to put her table away. Thank goodness the older child helps her carry that table while she is reassured no one will take her place at the snack bench! This whole process has probably taken from 20 to 45 minutes and that is a very long time for a three year old. She will continue to do Table Washing for the entire time she is in primary level (three years), each time getting it more and more precise, and by the age of five actually washing a table to get it clean and have fun and not so much for the process itself, as it is for the three year old. Did I mention she also hung up the wet towel and cloth on the drying rack and then went to the cabinet for clean cloths putting them on the shelf for the next person? It's hard for me to remember all of this too!

So think about it. There is gross motor control and fine motor control at play here. There is social interaction and manners, as well as many opportunities for being helped, thus being shown how she is to be of help to others. There is perseverance. There is will and determination. There is precision in carrying and pouring, laying out the materials in a certain order (left to right as that is the way we read), handling spills, cleaning up after oneself, a bit of social consciousness as well, to making the work pretty and dry and clean for the next person. There is a whole lot of self control too! I have witnessed three year olds actually doing this crazy thing called Table Washing and their big breath at the end, knowing they have done BIG work. They choose it again and again for three years, always with gusto and great interest! Ah, there is decision making isn't there? And choice! There is more in this one exercise than I can probably remember. Hopefully now you can understand why you are paying (or once did pay), for your child to go to school and wash a table! Think about it. And that's only ONE "work". Imagine the complexity that is going on in a primary classroom. The materials are age and developmentally appropriate and each work is presented thoroughly BEFORE the child may do it alone. This gives the child the right parameters and some kind of a road map. Experience and repetition of all of the works leads the child to self mastery as well as to the joy of learning "all by myself" (which you can see includes a lot of instruction and help!). It has been such a pleasure to write about this as it has taken me back into the classroom, my place of wonder, gratitude, and joy.

## **DECEMBER & JANUARY CMS 2009-2010 SCHOOL CALENDAR**

### **December**

18	Friday	<b>Holiday Party 9:15 – 11:00 a.m.</b> <b>Students must be accompanied by an adult!</b>
21-31		No School—Holiday Break

### **January**

1	Friday	No School—Holiday Break
4	Monday	School Resumes
18	Monday	No School—Martin Luther King Day—No All Day/Drop-In Program
20	Wed.	Board of Directors' Meeting—7:30 p.m.
21	Thursday	Combined Study Group Primary, Lower, Upper, and Middle School

**PRIMARY LEVEL – Franklin, Hughes, Somsel:**

**Franklin & Hughes:** We have enjoyed welcoming the holidays and especially enjoyed our Irish holiday (part of our Europe study). Our Extended Day students have enjoyed trips to the Fire Station to learn about fire safety and to Jennifer’s mom’s house to observe a wonderful, animated Holiday Village and toy train exhibit.

**Somsel:** It is so wonderful that there are different ways to celebrate light in the darkness of December. We try to expose the children to as many holidays as possible. I also want to thank all the parents for their cleaning help, timely snack boxes, timely arrivals and dismissals, and letting us help you guide your children through life. Please come and observe next year as we guide them through.

**LOWER ELEMENTARY – Cencia & Gray:**

**Gray:** The play’s the thing!! Thanks to our parents who helped the students learn their lines and collect the parts of their costumes....the children enjoyed the experience and especially our wonderful audiences. Cookies, Cookies, Cookies!

**Cencia:** Channeling this week’s excitement into finishing up projects and reviewing basic skills, plus the joyful experience of seeing Mrs. G’s class play—Bravo! We loved it!

**UPPER ELEMENTARY - O’Loughlin & Simpson:**

We’ve been finishing up projects for this year, making holiday gifts, and practicing “the chant” for the holiday party.

**AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAM: Afterschool Phone Number is 333-0020**

**\*\*NO GYMNASTICS CLASS MONDAY JANUARY 4<sup>TH</sup>!!** It will start back up Mon. January 11<sup>th</sup>. All the other classes will be on their regular schedules when we return in January.



**“The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind.”  
Happy New Year—2010.**