

The Children's Place

Montessori Newsletter

January, 2020

We're Going Back To School



Back to School Nights for our Primary (3-6 y/o) class

Montessori is such a wonderful approach for children. Sometimes it's a difficult thing for adults to fully appreciate though because in keeping with the way young children truly learn, there is very little paperwork that goes home. You want to know what your child is doing in class and we really want you to see it! Therefore, in addition to children occasionally "saving" work on their rugs to show you we also have our mid-year "Back to School" or demonstration nights.

During this evening your child will get a chance to be the 'teacher' and demonstrate one of his/her favorite classroom activities to the entire group. It's our Take Your Parents to School event! Keep an eye out in your parent folders for a sign-up paper. We want to give you a choice of dates while keeping the count to about 8 children or so to each event, given our parking limitations.



Montessori Moments in our Daily Lives

A few days back I was stopped at a traffic light and happened to see a middle-aged man and a boy of about 2 or 3 walking along the sidewalk together. The child was going

slowly and deliberately as he was balancing on a little wall about 6" high along a planted area. The man, it could have been an older father or a young grandpa, walked alongside him calmly and patiently while the child found his balance and took his steps. He neither rushed the child, nor helped the child unnecessarily. I found myself so happy to realize what a lucky boy this was to have such a wise adult in his life. The child was practicing important skills: decision making and judgement, balance, coordination and persistence. **The adult knew that the most helpful thing he could do was to stay close enough to stop any serious fall without interfering to impede the important learning that takes place during smaller stumbles.**

It takes patience and empathy to find that balance in our interactions with children. As Montessori parents and teachers it is so important that we look at the world through a child's eyes and respect the many things they have to learn in the world. A child needs adults to set clear, loving limits. A child also needs adults to allow exploration and imperfection. When a child is learning they must make mistakes; these are the most important opportunities for learning. The boy on the wall offers an excellent example of this. As he is balancing and slips a bit he has had an important experience that will help him judge his body in space better the next time. If the adult immediately whisk the child off the wall with scoldings that he will hurt himself, that child has instead learned that he is not capable and further will not have a chance to try a better way of balancing to improve his coordination. By the same token, if the adult is hovering and worrying, even holding the child so that no mistake can be made, the child not only learns that he is incapable, but also misses even the opportunity feel his body stumble and thus adjust his stance for a future attempt.

As adults, it's our job to reasonably assess the risk involved. Clearly it would not have been such a lovely scene if the dad or grandpa was allowing a young child to balance alone atop a 10-foot rise. We need to realize that there is an important balance however. I once knew a father who literally walked behind his toddler son and kept his hands on either side of him everywhere they went so he would never feel himself bump into anything. He loved his son and couldn't bear the thought of him having an unpleasant sensation. The child ended up running into things all the time once he started moving about rooms by himself. He had never learned any awareness of objects around him. Rather than the gentle bumps of a crawling child he had to learn via the significantly harder bumps of an active high-energy toddler. We must keep in mind that our task is not only to protect children from the 'bumps' of life while they are small and we are present but to prepare them to handle the 'bumps' of life as they become more independent.

Don't fear mistakes and don't encourage your child to be ashamed to make a mistake. Help your child to look at mistakes as learning opportunities.

- ❖ Did you fall? Hmm, first are you alright? (use your calm voice Mom and Dad) Good, now what happened? How can you prevent that from happening again?
 - are shoelaces untied?
 - was it too fast?
 - is there sand on the pavement? Shall we sweep it up together? etc, etc.
- ❖ You are mad at a friend? Yes, I can see how upset you are; what happened? Did you treat your friend fairly? What could you do differently next time?
 - play with a different friend?
 - ask for help from adult to work things out?
 - choose a game that isn't so competitive?
 - be more friendly yourself?

(hint, it's almost never as one-sided as the child's first story might imply)
- ❖ You spilled some juice? What should we do to solve the problem of the spill first? Next I can

show you a safer way to pour so you won't have this problem next time.

- ❖ Your math problem didn't come out right? Let's go back and take it step by step. You explain it to me as you go.
- ❖ You're missing a shoe? Let's think first about where it could be. Next we'll come up with a place to put them every time so we don't lose them again.

In Montessori training we avoid the use of the term "teacher" because it too often implies that our job is to pour information into children who are otherwise empty vessels. **Dr. Montessori wisely saw that children are inquisitive scientists constantly learning about the world.** We therefore think of ourselves as "Directresses/Directors" or "Guides" to the children. This is actually a far more complex role but ultimately helps children to be active participants in constructing a true understanding of their world and their own capabilities.

As parents we support this process by looking for opportunities to build learning, and yes opportunities for mistakes, into our time with children. Sometimes we simply can't balance on the wall because we're late to the dentist's office. Real life with children involves times we can slow down and times when it's just not practical. Parenting is never about perfection. Actively look for those moments however; try to create them when you can. You'll find that the more often you look through your child's eyes and offer opportunities for genuine growth, your child will be more content and feel more understood. This can create a positive upward spiral of good ; feelings and more opportunities to slow down together.

Elementary Summer Solstice Pajama Party



On December 20, our Elementary class held its annual Summer Solstice Pajamas Optional Day. Since our last day of the calendar year often falls on

or near the longest night and shortest day of the year (the Winter Solstice). Some of us wore our P.J.s for the day. We also made a hot cocoa and fruit grvinces for a fun snack.

Layers for Winter

Please don't forget that weather during this time of year can be quite chilly in the morning and some evenings but mild during mid-day. We recommend layers for children so they can be comfortable in the breeze of morning as well as the warmer sun after lunch. Always keep in mind your child's skills with clothing. Teachers will help when needed but always encourage clothing a child can be successful with as independently as possible. Elastic, velcro, easy armholes are all things to look for in clothing to help your child's growing pride in their independence.

Happy Travels to Mr. Gabriel

Throughout the month of January Mr. Gabriel will be taking a planned and long anticipated trip to visit family in Africa. He will be returning to campus in February and will be missed while he's gone. We know his family will be overjoyed to spend time with him while he is there. Our summer substitute Ms. Leonor is not available

during school year months but we have been very fortunate to meet a very talented teacher who is available to substitute teach for us during this time. While Mr. Gabriel is out of the country Ms. Tanya will be joining us. She has 15 years of teaching experience and we are looking forward to having her with us as a part of The Children's Place community.

Tax time is here

Tax ID Reminder

Tax time is here again – the Tax I.D. number for The Children's Place, should you need it for your returns is:

Tax ID #20-2909624

Dates to Remember



School is closed Monday, January 20 for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

The Wisdom of Charles Schultz

The following is drawn from the philosophy of Charles Schultz, the creator of the "Peanuts" comic strip. You don't have to actually answer the questions. Just read them straight through and you'll get the point.

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer Prize.
5. Name the last six Academy Award winner for the best actor and actress.
6. Name the last ten World Series and Super Bowl winners.

The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. There are no second-rate achievers in the answers to the above. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Now here's another quiz. See how you do on this one:

1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.
6. Name half a dozen heroes whose stories have inspired you.

Easier - you bet.

