



WATERDOWN MONTESSORI SCHOOL

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www.waterdownmontessori.com

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2009

From the Principal's Desk

*This page comes courtesy of Mrs. Julie. I decided to share it with you. It is always worth taking a moment or two to consider the effects our actions have on our children. Please be sure to read it as a gentle reminder though, not a critique of your parenting skills; we **all** want to do our best as parents, but as the P.S. says, none of us is perfect!*

Memo from your child

Dear Mum and Dad,



Please help me to love myself. Don't spoil me. I know quite well that I shouldn't have all that I ask for. I'm only testing you - but please give me the discipline I need!

I need my sense of dignity, so please don't belittle me in front of people. I'll take more notice if you talk to me with as much respect as you give to your best grown up friends.

Don't ridicule me or imply that my inappropriate behaviour means that I am bad. It erodes my sense of worthiness.



Don't be too upset when sometimes I say "I hate you". It isn't you I hate but your power over me.

Please be patient with me, I may be a late bloomer.

When you have a bad day, please don't take your frustrations out on me.

Please don't shout or nag. If you do I shall have to protect myself by appearing to be deaf.

Please help me feel good about myself by telling me of the good things about myself more often than you tell me of the things you don't like.



Don't bribe me or make rash promises. Remember that I feel badly let down when promises are broken.

The more you give me the safety to expose my feelings, the more of my inner beauty I will risk showing.

Don't be inconsistent. That completely confuses me and makes me lose faith in you.



Don't tell me my fears are silly. They are terribly real and you can do much to reassure me if you try to understand.

Don't ever think that it is beneath your dignity to apologize to me. An honest apology makes me feel surprisingly warm towards you.

Please praise and acknowledge me for who I am and not for the things I do, for then I will grow up without the stress of comparing and competing.

Please keep reminding me that I am basically good and capable and worthwhile, so I can grow up loving and accepting myself. Don't forget that I can't thrive without a lot of love and understanding...but I don't need to tell you that, do I?



P.S. I love you, and I don't expect you to be perfect either!

Sue Reid-Kulpaka
Principal

Harvest Luncheon

Friday, October 9 is the date for this year's Children's Harvest Luncheon. *All children* are invited to stay for a special potluck lunch on that day. A sign-up sheet is posted on the community bulletin board, asking for volunteers to help set up and serve on that day, and for contributions of food. A copy is attached to this newsletter. Many thanks to all who contribute food and help out on the day.

Please note:

1. Food can be dropped off when you bring your child in the morning. If you plan to bring it later, please ensure it is here by 10:45 at the latest – we start serving early!
2. As is the case with hot lunches, there is no Extended Care charge for half day children who are picked up by 12:15 on that day.

OCTOBER FIELD TRIP REMINDER

On the morning of Thursday, October 8, the entire school will be off to Hamilton Place to see "Stellaluna". We will be traveling by bus. No parent volunteers are needed for this trip.

Remember that when parent volunteers *are* needed, a police check is required.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

Charlize will be 5 on October 6.
Jack will be 4 on October 7.
Ethan will be 7 on October 9.
Quinn will be 3 on October 15.
Eddie will be 4 on October 17.
Maddox will be 3 on October 20.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL OF YOU!

Macmillan's

Please remember that your Macmillan's orders are due

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13th.

Don't miss out!

Delivery is

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22nd.

Orders will be ready for pickup at 11:45. Please remember to make arrangements if you cannot pick up the order yourself. ***Products arrive frozen, and we are unable to store them at school.*** Ask a friend to pick them up for you, or bring a cooler and freezer packs in the morning.

QSP / Magazine orders are also due
on October 13th at the latest!



Hallowee'n Hints

Hallowee'n is fast approaching, and the children will soon be buzzing with news of costumes and plans for the big night.

On October 30th, children who wish to do so are invited to wear their costume to school. In the interest of comfort and safety, we have a few requests:

1. No masks or face paint, please.
2. No weapons, and a minimum of accessories (wands may get broken, crowns misplaced, vampire teeth may vanish...)
3. Please send a change of clothes so that your child is able to remove their costume if they wish.

Please understand that though of course we will be careful, accidents can happen. There is always a slight chance that your child's costume could be torn, or an item lost.

We will be visiting Notre Dame in the morning, to show off our costumes.

Parent Workshop Reminder

The parent workshop evening is scheduled for **Tuesday, October 13th**, from 6:30 – 7:30pm. This is a wonderful opportunity to learn a bit about the Montessori curriculum, and about some of the materials your children use each day. Please be punctual – we will start at 6:30 sharp. We would like everyone to attend!

Good news!
Childcare will be available.
- courtesy of
Mrs. Julie and her daughter Lucy.

School Closures

On occasion, schools are closed due to a heavy snowfall. In anticipation of that possibility, Ann prepares a “phone tree”. It falls to the Principal to decide whether or not the school should be closed. She then calls the staff members to let them know, and the Hamilton radio station CHML (FM 900). The Principal then phones the seven parents who have agreed to be at the “top” of the phone tree. Each one of them calls the six or seven families on their list. In this way, we are able to reach everyone in good time.

We do our best to make the decision very early; there is usually some warning of a possible storm. As parents, you can tune into CHML (900FM) on these occasions. They will include us in their list of closures once a call has been made to the station. There *should* also be a message left on the school phone. Rest assured, though, that you will be contacted personally.

This same phone tree would also be used in the event of a school closure for some other reason. If ever the school had to close part way through the school day, it becomes more of a challenge to reach parents. The seven people heading the lists have an extensive list of alternate phone numbers for this reason.

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU INFORM THE OFFICE OF ANY CHANGES IN PHONE NUMBERS!

Pancake Breakfasts



With Hallowe'en falling on a Saturday this year, the opportunity was too perfect to miss!

On *Saturday, October 31* we will be holding a **Halloween Pancake Breakfast**. Mrs. Barbara and Ms. Wyn's class will host it together.

There will be a planning meeting next **Tuesday, October 6 at 2:30**, in the French room. Come with your ideas! Sign up sheets will be posted afterwards, and copies will be sent home to the two classes involved. If you have any ideas, please speak to Sue Reid-Kulpaka.

The second breakfast, a **Pancake Breakfast with Santa**, will take place on Saturday December 5, and will be hosted by Mrs. Phyllis and Mrs. Judy's class with Mrs. Barbara's class helping too.

Fire Drills

We conduct three fire drills each fall. The first is carefully staged, and a hand bell is used. The second time, some children may be in French or Music classes, but the staff are prepared. The third time no one is warned, and we use the real alarm. You should be very proud of your children. They were able to stay calm, and to follow directions. Everyone exits the school and lines up against the fence on the far side of the playground. There is a quick roll call before re-entering the school.

Scholastic Book Orders

It has come to our attention that some parents are unaware of how the monthly Scholastic Book Orders benefit the school, and this letter serves as an explanation.

Every month the school receives a bonus coupon for a percentage of the total order, plus an extra amount to choose free books. We can spend the percentage immediately, or “bank it” for future use. The greater the order, the greater the percentage awarded. For example, if the total amount one month is between \$60 and \$129, the school receives 25% of the amount in bonus coupons, plus \$6.99 in “free picks”. Our average monthly order last year was in the \$130 - \$199 category, resulting in a bonus coupon worth 30%, and \$9.99 in free picks. (Percentages range from 20% to 40% of the total order.)

These coupons add up quickly! Staff are able to use them toward the purchase of a wide variety of Scholastic products. There are special offers for teachers each month, and we have taken advantage of this programme to purchase both fiction and non-fiction books for the classrooms, some French books, and a variety of teacher resources.

We have had great success with this programme in the past. We hope to continue to build up our library this year, in particular in the area of resource materials, for example an updated atlas series.

In addition, there are often very good prices in the flyers, so everyone benefits! There is, of course, no obligation to participate. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to speak to either Mrs. Barbara or myself.

Sue Reid-Kulpaka

Scholastic Book Fair

Our fall book fair will be held from **October 7th – 16th** this year. This is a great chance to pick up some birthday or Christmas gifts for friends and family. The school also benefits, as a portion of the profit is returned to us in the form of books. Please come and browse.

We need parents to help out at this event. Please check the community bulletin board for the sign up sheet. A short orientation session will be arranged for volunteers. More information will follow.

Whose Umbrella is This?

When you are labeling your children’s belongings, please remember items that are not brought to school regularly. On rainy days, for example, we often have five or six identical ladybug or monster umbrellas arrive at school. In the past, we have had umbrellas go home with the wrong child.

PLEASE label EVERYTHING your child brings to school. It will take you a few moments, but will make your life (and ours!) much easier in the long run. Thank you.

REMEMBER TO LABEL SNACK CONTAINERS TOO!

And lastly...if you are missing something, remember to check the lost and found bin in the hallway by the back door.

Casa French

It is so nice to see the children settling in and enjoying French class. By being exposed to a second language, children learn to appreciate other cultures and gain a greater awareness of the world around them.

The older children have done a lot of review while the younger ones are hard at work learning songs, vowel sounds and simple words. Some circle activities are on going such as calendar, weather and days of the week; all age groups take part in these exercises. Familiar phrases such as: “Allons-y” (let’s go), “Viens avec moi” (come with me), “Ferme la porte” (close the door), are becoming familiar to the older children. They are also focusing on alphabet games, number activities, picture books and many other resources that keep them interested in learning a new language.

The French program for September / October is posted in the classroom. Feel free to take a copy.

Madame Grace

Elementary French

What a pleasure it is to work with such an eager group of students!

With the first year students, calendar work and phrases introduced in casa are reinforced and expanded, and of course new learning is also begun. The second year students are thrilled to finally receive a binder to hold their work.

All three groups have worked with a simple story called “Allez-y les animaux, allez-y!” (Go, animals, go!)...which has been fun. Every student is able to make statements about how an animal is traveling; the third years were able to create their own combinations, both orally and in written form.

We have now moved on to a simple version of the “Chicken Little” fable.

The third year students are also working with a textbook, “Promenades I” and are making excellent progress with this new challenge.

Madame Sue



“Le chien voyage en train.”



“L’oiseau voyage en auto.”

Ms. Wyn and Mrs. Julie's Class

As I write this month's newsletter, it amazes me how quickly time flies. We're already starting our second month of school and the children are adjusting well to the new environment and routines. Tears are fewer and smiles are more forthcoming.

You can pat yourselves on the back, Mom and Dad, for doing such a great job helping your child with this transition.

Just the other day a boy, who had been having some difficulty settling in, came up to us and said, 'I no cry...I do job!' with a proud smile on his face. It is so rewarding to see a child get over a hurdle and gain confidence in himself and his environment.

Ms. Wyn

A "Montessori Moment"

A girl who'd been looking out the window came up to me and said, 'Ms. Wyn, why are the lemon trees outside? 'Pardon me?' I asked.

"Look, the lemon trees." she said, pointing out the window. I looked out, smiled and said, "The *elementaries* are having gym."

Mrs. Phyllis and Mrs. Judy's Class

Thanks to all the parents who attended the September Information Evening. I think we had some interesting discussions. Thanks also for the very positive feedback. It makes a big difference when these meetings are well attended. Somehow it creates a healthy bond with mutual understanding between home and school.

You are making a great effort to carry out some of the suggestions presented that evening. It certainly has made things flow a lot more easily in the class.

I am especially pleased to see many students using the drop off and coming in happier. Already they are becoming so independent and confident. Usually they enter the class, shake hands, collect their thoughts and methodically begin the routine of hanging up jackets and backpacks and then sitting for a casual chat with friends as they change shoes – all unhurried and unrushed.

I can't help comparing these students with my own children. Mine are now in their late teens and early twenties, and I often think where did the time go? Remember – they will grow up, and this time will go quickly.

So when we feel urged to rush, we need to remember to slow down and tell ourselves "not so fast."

Mrs. Phyllis

Thanks to Mrs. Barbara for providing us with the following interesting, thought provoking article.

It's Not What We Teach; It's What They Learn

By Alfie Kohn

I never understood all the fuss about that old riddle – “If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear, does it still make a sound?” Isn't it just a question of how we choose to define the word *sound*? If we mean “vibrations of a certain frequency transmitted through the air,” then the answer is yes. If we mean “vibrations that stimulate an organism's auditory system,” then the answer is no.

More challenging, perhaps, is the following conundrum sometimes attributed to defiant educators: “I taught a good lesson even though the students didn't learn it.” Again, everything turns on definition. If teaching is conceived as an interactive activity, a process of facilitating learning, then the sentence is incoherent. It makes no more sense than “I had a big dinner even though I didn't eat anything.” But what if teaching is defined solely in terms of what the teacher says and does? In that case, the statement isn't oxymoronic – it's just moronic. Wouldn't an unsuccessful lesson lead whoever taught it to ask, “So what could I have done that might have been more successful?”

That question would indeed occur to educators who regard learning – as opposed to just teaching -- as the point of what they do for a living. More generally, they're apt to realize that *what we do doesn't matter nearly as much as how kids experience what we do*.

Consider what happens between children and parents. When each is asked to describe some aspect of their life together, the responses are strikingly divergent. For example, a large Michigan study that focused on the extent to which children were included in family decision making turned up different results depending on whether the parents or the children were asked. (Interestingly, three other studies found that when there is some objective way to get at the truth, children's perceptions of their parents' behaviors are no less accurate than the parents' reports of their own behaviors.)

But the important question isn't who's right; it's whose perspective predicts various outcomes. It doesn't matter what lesson a parent intended to teach by, say, giving a child a “time out” (or some other punishment). If the child experiences this as a form of love withdrawal, then that's what will determine the effect. Similarly, parents may offer praise in the hope of providing encouragement, but children may resent the judgment implicit in being informed they did a “good job,” or they may grow increasingly dependent on pleasing the people in positions of authority.

From both punishments and rewards, moreover, kids may derive a lesson of conditionality: I'm loved – and lovable – only when I do what I'm told. Of course, most parents would insist that they love their children no matter what. But, as one group of researchers put it in a book about controlling styles of parenting, “It is the child's own experience of this behavior that is likely to have the greatest impact on the child's subsequent development.” It's the message that's received, not the one that the adults think they're sending, that counts.

Exactly the same point applies in a school setting since educators, too, may use carrots and sticks on students. We may think we're emphasizing the importance of punctuality by issuing a detention for being late, or that we're making a statement about the need to be respectful when we suspend a student for yelling an obscenity, or that we're supporting the value of certain behaviors when we offer a reward for engaging in them.

But what if the student who's being punished or rewarded doesn't see it that way? What if his or her response is, “That's not fair!” or “Next time I won't get caught” or “I guess when you have more power you can make other people suffer if they don't do what you want” or “If they have to reward me for x , then x must be something I wouldn't want to do.”

We protest that the student has it all wrong, that the intervention really is fair, the consequence is justified, the reward system makes perfect sense. But if the student doesn't share our view, then what we did cannot possibly have the intended effect. Results don't follow from behaviors but from the meaning attached to behaviors.

The same is true of teachers who are stringent graders. Their intent – to “uphold high standards” or “motivate students to do their best” – is completely irrelevant if a low grade is perceived differently by the student who receives it, which it almost always is. Likewise, if students view homework as something they can’t wait to be done with, it doesn’t matter how well-designed or valuable *we* think those assignments are. The likelihood that they will help students to learn more effectively, let alone become excited about the topic, is exceedingly low.

If teachers just do their thing and leave it up to each student to make sense of it -- “so that the child comes to feel, as he is intended to, that when he doesn’t understand it is his fault” (to borrow John Holt’s words) – then meaningful learning is likely to be in awfully short supply in those classrooms.

But let’s face it: It’s easier to concern yourself with teaching than with learning, just as it’s more convenient to say the fault lies with people other than you when things go wrong. It’s tempting, when students are given some kind of assessment, to assume the results primarily reveal how much progress each kid is, or isn’t, making – rather than noticing that the quality of the teaching is also being assessed.

“I taught a good lesson . . . “ probably suggests that learning is viewed as a process of absorbing information, which in turn means that teaching consists of delivering that information. (Many years ago, the writer George Leonard described lecturing as the “best way to get information from teacher’s notebook to student’s notebook without touching the student’s mind.”) This approach is particularly common among high school and college teachers, who have been encouraged to think of themselves as experts in their content areas (literature, science, history) rather than in pedagogy. The *reductio ad absurdum* would be those who “took their content so very seriously that they forgot their students,” as Linda McNeil put it in her devastating portrait of high school.

The trouble may start in schools of education, where preservice teachers in many states spend very little time learning about learning, relative to the time devoted to subject-matter content. Worse, when teachers these days *are* told to think about learning, it may be construed in behaviorist terms, with an emphasis on discrete, measurable skills. The point isn’t to deepen understanding (and enthusiasm) but merely to elevate test scores.

The fact is that real learning often can’t be quantified, and a corporate-style preoccupation with “data” turns schooling into something shallow and lifeless. Ideally, attention to learning signifies an effort to capture how each student makes sense of the world so we can meet them where they are. “Teaching,” as Deborah Meier reminded us, “is mostly listening.” (It’s the learners, she added, who should be doing most of the “telling,” based on how they grapple with an engaging curriculum.) Imagine how American classrooms would be turned inside out if we ever really put that wisdom into action.

And it’s not just listening in the literal sense that’s needed but the willingness to imagine the student’s point of view. How does it feel to be sitting there with your shaky efforts to write an essay or solve a problem subjected to continuous evaluation? (Many teachers who expect their students to bear up under, and even benefit from, a constant barrage of criticism are themselves often extremely sensitive to any suggestion that their craft could be improved.) Indeed, educators ought to make a point of trying something new in their own lives, something they must struggle to master, in order to appreciate what their students put up with every day.

Finally, as teachers are to students, so administrators are to teachers. Successful school leadership doesn’t depend on what principals and superintendents do, but on how their actions are regarded by *their* audience – notably, classroom teachers. Those on the receiving end may be older, but the moral is the same: It’s best to see what we do through the eyes of those to whom it’s done.