



From the Head of School

As parents of young children and preschool teachers, we are all very aware of how closely social and cognitive development are intertwined. The children who attend our school are just beginning to discover the world around them and its amazing properties. Not only are they learning how red and yellow make orange or that “mouse” starts with “m,” but they are also learning that grabbing objects away from others can cause angry retributions or that food tastes better when you partake in communal eating.

Recently, I came across a shared article on Facebook speculating about new findings in human brain development. After studying human skulls from 30 million years ago, some scientists believe that humans developed kindness and compassion millions of years before they were able to speak or showed other forms of advanced intelligence. They speculate that empathy and socialization were evolutionary stepping stones for the development of human intellect.

One of the biggest benefits of preschool education is the social component. From the moment they start, our youngest community members learn that their actions create reactions in their peers. We adults are constantly stepping in to help them navigate communal expectations as we encourage them to use their words, remind them of social mores, and help them to interpret nonverbal cues. As they age and grow confident in their expressive abilities, the rules of social engagement get more difficult and they often require support to succeed in group play.

Recently, playground time for the Extended Primary was becoming a difficult time. This year, we have a large group of boys who enjoy playing sports together. Sports seem like a great way for children to socialize easily as the rules already exist and would not seem to need much adult interaction. However, the teachers began to notice several issues coming up repeatedly. The

MARCH 2015

Dates to Remember

3/13 NO SCHOOL
Teacher In-service

3/27 SPRING BREAK
BEGINS

4/6 Teachers Return

4/7 Students Return



Details for these events are included within the newsletter or on the school calendar.

children were arguing about who should be on whose team, about who was hogging the ball, and about what the score was. As feelings were hurt and frustrations reached a peak, tears flowed quickly and furiously. Seeing their need for adult support, we stepped in to help.

Aiding in group collaboration is always tricky. As an adult, it is important to be mindful of not usurping the children's desires with one's own opinions. The purpose of guided negotiations is to help children learn to get their own needs met without dictating or imposing adult rules. After receiving a box full of Flag Football gear, I choose this as an opportunity to sit down with the sports players to help them negotiate some new rules. The group was eager to play together and amenable to discussing rules in detail. As always, the process was not only helpful to the children, but enlightening to the adults. While I was quick to point out areas where the rules needed to change in order to be fair for all the players, the children were quick to point out their concerns. While I was bothered with equal playing time and safe play, they wanted equal numbered teams and negotiated complicated ways to make sure that happened. After a lengthy discussion, we agreed on rules that suited everyone's needs. The game setup process takes a long time. Nevertheless, I watch it with pleasure, knowing that the confidence gained by negotiating group play allows children to develop into the self-assured leaders of tomorrow.

Follow Us on facebook

If you would like to know more about what's going on at school, follow us on **facebook**. We frequently post photos of the school "in action" as well as links to articles the staff finds interesting and useful. You can also find the link to Angelina's studio blog on our page.

What exactly are "Teacher In-service" days?

A couple of times each year, we close school for students to hold Teacher In-Service days. The state requires that each teacher and director in a childcare facility have 15 hours of continuing education. Education credits come in a wide variety of forms: conferences, webinars, special speakers, etc. Although many times we attend such events outside of the work day, we like to have a couple of days where teachers can catch up without having to take time away from their families. We appreciate your support in allowing us to fulfill all our work obligations with these special teacher work days.

The Benefits of a Multi Age Classroom

Dr. Montessori believed that observation plus imitation equals learning. In a Montessori classroom, as children “move” through work they are exposed to older and younger peers - interacting, modeling, engaging, and working at an individual’s pace.

The elements of a multi age classroom exist inherently in the world beyond the classroom. We all learn from the experiences of others. We see it in the community, in home life with sibling interaction. At school it reflects “real life scenarios”. At the college/university level the environment can range from 18-45(and on). In a conversation about literature (for example) it is enlightening to hear from different perspectives from all ages.

When there is a well functioning multi age classroom it can adapt to the needs of each individual, providing and promoting academic and social enrichment. It “fills in the gaps” by nurturing strengths and challenges. Teachers and students work together throughout the year to build a community that can focus on each individual’s (younger and older) worth and natural strengths.

Our teachers at Children’s Garden are excited about the multiage classroom because they understand the intentionality of combining ages. There are multiple teachers in the classroom observing, instructing, and monitoring. Teachers collaborate to prepare the environment with materials from simple to complex. Teachers blend and weave materials and lessons (individual and whole group) for multiple ages.

As teachers present and model lessons/works, children watch and imitate. The children not only need their teachers, they need their peers. Children can “eavesdrop” on more advanced lessons being given by a teacher to another, possibly older, student. Children can then become interested in new concepts by watching, listening, and actively learning from others. “The child suddenly becomes aware of his or her companions, and is almost as deeply interested as we, (teachers/parents) are in the progress of their work.” -Maria Montessori

A younger child might have less understanding of expectations, process, and concepts. They begin the school year as an observer, following the older children’s lead. Mid year as they mature with their confidence and skills they can become a model, a leader. The benefits for older students are the reinforcement and sharpening of skills and understanding of content. “To know is to truly teach someone else”, essentially building leadership and confidence through peer

interaction. The self-regulating benefits older children when they model behavior and skills. In this multi age environment children engage in and initiate a range of work, which ultimately benefits each as an individual.

Claire Jackson

Studio Night

Mark your calendars and save the date! On **Thursday, March 12th from 5:00-7:00 PM**, the studio will be hosting its annual **Studio Night and Potluck**. Parent night in the studio is an exciting opportunity for parents to socialize in a creative atmosphere, while exploring and experimenting with a variety of media in a method consistent with your child's experience. ***This is an adult's only event.*** During a typical day in the studio, the children communicate, express and experiment, each one unraveling his/her own great mysteries. As the studio teacher, I spend much of my day watching the children, listening to them and supporting their creative expression. Our work is an ongoing dialog. We respond to the movements, insights and discoveries of one another. Parent Night is your invitation to join in the conversation and add your voice to our dialog of expression. *If you read this and say, "I'm not an artist", then COME! You might just change your definition of an "artist".* This evening is for our entire parent community! We will be creating things to share with the children. It really is my favorite evening in the school year (besides the annual art show!).

There will be more information to follow, including a potluck sign-up sheet and an rsvp request. I hope you all will consider joining us for an evening of creating, celebrating and FUN!

Biome Festival

On **Friday March 20th**, we will have a Biome Festival in the morning and afternoon. The children will be exploring the Polar, Forest, Grassland, Ocean and Desert regions of North America. There will be activities, food tastings, and other experiences unique to each biome. If you have something you would like to share with us about a region please let us know. We also need volunteers to help the teachers at the stations and in the classroom. Please send an email to xp@cqmontessori.com if you are interested.

Reminder

When there is a change in your routine carpool plans, we need it in writing. If someone is picking up who is not on your authorized list, please include their name and phone number and advise them to have their identification with them. If your child is riding home with another CGMS family, please send a note. If plans change during the school day, an email to us works also. Not only is it hard for the teachers to remember all of the verbal communication at the gate, it is required by the State Regulators. Thanks for your cooperation.

Winter Gear Needed

Catherine Ramey's daughter, Allie, works at Columbine Elementary, a DPS elementary school in North City Park. Most of the students there are a part of Denver's underserved population. Many of them do not have appropriate winter gear - snow pants, hats, gloves - so are not able to have outdoor recess on snowy days. They recently received a donation of coats. If you have any gently used items - to fit Kindergarten through 2nd graders- that you are willing to donate, it would be greatly appreciated. .

Thanks to the Gaddis family for providing a yummy lunch from So Perfect Eats for the staff. Also, thanks to the Bacons for the heavenly chocolate treat. We are so spoiled!

Unbirthday

The annual Unbirthday celebration is scheduled for Sunday, April 4th from 11—1 at Dardano's Gymnastics Studio. More info will be available soon.

Summer Camp

This year's camp - **Let's Get Physical** - will be held **June 22nd through July 7th**. Brochures will be emailed soon and are also available in the Lobby. There will be a program for Toddlers and Primary.

There are two pet rats (and all the necessary gear) available for adoption. If you, or someone you know are interested, please contact Angelina. You can come into the studio to meet the little guys if you would like!

Survey Monkey Results

As many of you are probably aware, we sent out a Survey Monkey earlier in the month to find out more about our community's interest in Parent Education and Communication. This year, we have struggled a bit with getting people in for Parent Education events. Hoping to get some perspective on why, we sent out the survey. Below are the results from this survey. Please feel welcome to email me any additional thoughts you might have on this matter. We would love to host some events and are looking for ways that will bring more attendees.

32% of the people who received the survey responded.

Of those who responded, 90% said that they would like to attend Parent Education events. Tuesdays and Wednesdays work best for events. Responders said that they would prefer to either meet during school hours or after dinner (around 7 PM). Many of them also said that they would attend events that were held in the early evening (around 5:30 PM)

The top 4 picks for Parent Education Topics were as follows:

Helping Young Children to Navigate Friendships and Social Pressure

Positive Ways to Discipline

Helping Our Children to Preserve Their Childhood

Raising Healthy Children: How to get Children to Make Healthy Choices

Responders were equally interested in presentations by staff members or by outside experts

As for communication, 81% felt the level of communication between the school and the community was good for the most part. They all preferred email as the best form of communication, while 37% also enjoyed reading the monthly Newsletter. Some suggestions of ways that we could improve included paper copies of news, more consistent email updates, more information on children shared between conference dates, making a master calendar available, and updating our website

Thank you very much to all who responded! We are taking your feedback seriously and hope to implement some changes in the near future. Again, feel free to share any additional opinions with me either via email bhowell@cqmontessori.com, phone, or written letter.

Sincerely,

Bekke Howell

Head of School

Planning for Next Year is underway. Re-enrollment is in and it looks like we will have another full and lively house next year. Thank you to our families for honoring us with the task of providing your children with a nurturing and dynamic foundation. As Montessori early childhood educators it means so much to us that we can give children continuity in environments carefully planned and arranged for their young bodies and minds, active learning and growth.

In keeping with our value of learning through interactions in enriched environments, we limit the number of children in the classrooms to create a comfortable fit and community. Program, times and class assignments of the children are carefully thought through to make this happen. As the final numbers become clear, I will **notify each family** of the status of placements for their children.

Tuition **deposits** for current families for the 2015/16 school year of \$1000 per student are due March 13, 2015.

The **lottery** for new families starts this week. We are excited about a generous new **scholarship opportunity** available for a new student who would not be able to attend without this financial sponsorship. If you know of a deserving family, please send them our way!