

October 2014

From the Head of School The Importance of Hello

Bekke Howell

Because I could not decide what to do after college, I joined the Peace Corps. After three months of training, I was stationed alone in a small village located in francophone Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa. I distinctly remember my first evening in the village. After being dropped off by my supervisor, I locked up my house and took a walk around the village. Every step of the way, I was followed by curious children and greeted by enthusiastic villagers. Barely able to communicate in French, I had absolutely no understanding of the local language. I would smile and nod in response, much to the disappointment of each person I encountered. Occasionally, helpful residents would quietly prompt me in French, "Nouvelle?"

Being new and embarrassingly bad at French, I assumed they were calling me "the new girl," so I responded with a quick "yes" and nod of the head. By the evening, a sympathetic group of high school students took me aside and explained my

error. It turned out that everyone was asking me "The News." "The News" was a greeting that varied only by who was being greeted, what time of day it was, and the circumstances of the encounter. Traditional greetings were essential to life in the village. Each greeting was carefully scripted, and required before any other communication. If you wanted to borrow some sugar, you needed to greet your neighbors properly before asking. If you wanted to arrange a meeting to discuss hygienic practices, you needed to greet each invite respectfully before addressing your concerns. Whenever you arrived anywhere, you needed to follow proper greeter protocol, especially if you wanted to have any hope of accomplishing anything.

For a long time, I thought that this drawn out greeting was a tradition particular to Ivorian culture. When the pace of the day is slow, taking extra time to make connections can be the only real entertainment in the day. In the fast pace of life in the Unit-

ed States, we scarcely have time to say "hello" before launching into a stream of orders or even requests. We don't have time to pause and

Dates to Remember

OCTOBER 2014

- 10/1 Childcare Provider Visiting Day
10:00 am & 1:30pm
- 10/10 NO SCHOOL
Staff Retreat
- 10/13 NO SCHOOL
Staff Retreat
- 10/15 Open House for Prospective Parents
6:00—7:00 pm
- 10/16 Mindful Dialog
5:30—7:00 pm
- 10/24 ANNUAL AUCTION
6:30—10:00 pm
- 10/31 NO SCHOOL
Teacher Work Day



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

share "the News." Or do we?

This year, I have had the pleasure of starting my morning by checking in with the classrooms. I have become aware that teachers respond more positively when I take the time to inquire about their weekends or even mornings. Parents brighten when asked about their latest adventures. Children delight in sharing tidbits from their before school rituals. Most days, I step onto the Toddler playground and am quickly surrounded by toddlers, joyfully sharing their "News." One holds up her newest stuffed toy, remarking "kitty--meow, meow." Another announces that his shoes light up when he jumps, "Watch!" Each child approaches in turn, sharing tidbits from home and offering hugs of greeting.

As parents, we often worry that our children will not properly greet adults if we don't constantly coach them. We order them to look people in the eye and tell them, "Good Morning." The more we prompt, the more they resist, looking down and mumbling the greeting into their shoes. Left to their own devices, they respond respectfully, sharing the "News" in their own individual ways, mimicking greeting rituals they have seen modeled for them in the past. Parents need not worry. Children do watch and quietly play out what they see us doing every day. No need to coax, just model greeting the adults and children around you in the way you would like to see your children do.

It is funny how every year teaches us new lessons. Only now have I begun to realize that sharing the "News" is an important part of all cultures. Connections can only be made when we each slow down and take our time to touch base, to listen and to share with each other. We take pride in touting Children's Garden as a Montessori school with Reggio influences. While the two philosophies have their share of conflicts, one thing they both embrace is a desire to form connections. Each of us does this when we take a second to breathe, to pause and truly greet each other, even if it is just for a moment.

So on that note, I bid you all "Hello!" As I might say in the tradition of the Ivoirians, I have come and am here, to bid you "Good Day." I hope that you are well, and look forward to hearing your news as well.

"Touching Base" Phone Calls

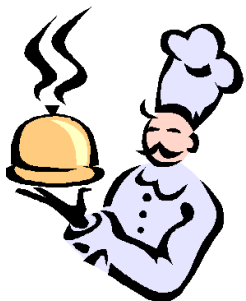
We want Children's Garden to run a bit like a well-oiled machine. We want to welcome your lovely children into a new school year gracefully and quietly, not letting them or you really see how hard we are working! We hope by this time in the year, the children are happy at school and beginning to know the routines and expectations, feel they have a friend or two or three, and a teacher who is always available.



Hopefully we have accomplished our goals, and to check on that, each of the teachers will be touching base with you via phone to share a bit with you about your children, and hear how you feel they are doing at school. These phone calls have been called "Six-Week Phone Calls" for years, but it can take a good two weeks for a teacher to get through her list, so we ask for your patience. They are not meant to be a full parent-teacher conference, but instead, simply a time for us to tell you briefly how your child is doing at school, and answer any questions you might have.

If you are unavailable at the time of the call, please let the teacher know if you would like them to call back and the best time to do so.

The Children's Garden Auction and largest fundraiser and social event of the year, is quickly approaching! We hope you will plan to join us for this fun-filled evening at the Rudisill residence in Cherry Creek, on **Friday, October 24th, from 6:30-10 p.m.**



Don't miss out on your opportunity to go home with some of these great items and much more: trips to Punta de Mita, Mexico, Devil's Thumb Ranch, Turks and Caicos, and St. Regis Monarch Beach; a variety of parent/child socials including the Broncos Bus Pub Crawl and a Superhero Party; dinner parties by Margs Taco Bistro, TAG Restaurant and Gourmet Fine Catering; a handful of "priceless" items created by our children, AND a phenomenal surprise Broncos experience!

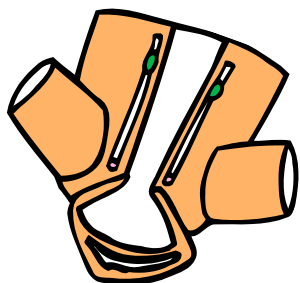


Caregiver's Visiting Day

Wednesday, October 1st

10:00 am and 1:30 pm

Care providers are an important part of the children's lives. Children's Garden would like to welcome all care providers and give them an insight to what we do here at school. When we work consistently together, the children benefit. This is a great time to learn more about the Montessori philosophy and hear the reasons why the children come home with their shoes on the "opposite" feet or their coats on upside down.



If you have a care provider, please invite them to come to school on the 1st of October and learn about our program. After the brief discussion, the care providers are invited to visit the classrooms.

Dressing for the Weather

Just a reminder from the handbook: We go outside in all types of weather. Please send your child in the appropriate attire, i.e. rain coats, rain boots, winter coats, gloves or mittens, snow boots, sun hats, sunglasses, etc. *There is no such thing as bad weather - just bad clothing!*

We realize these cool fall mornings and warm summer-like afternoons can be challenging. **LAYER!** Remember to **label your child's clothing** and we will do our best to make sure your child, with frequent reminders, returns with what he or she came with.

It's also a good time to swap out your child's extra change of clothes from the summer attire from the beginning of school to warmer options.



THANKS

We would like to thank Miguel and Giada E. for the cookies and peaches for the teachers; Patrick J. and Sarah S. for the beautiful art books for the school; Julie and Iliana D. for the cupcakes for the staff; all of the wonderful volunteers who helped create portfolios for the children's art; Jaala S. for the delicious caprese salad and drink for Zach's Place (studio) Back to School Night; to all of the parents who are helping out with XP lunch; and to all of you who contributed to the potluck for your child's Class Back to School Night as well as to all who attended. We are fortunate to have such involved, thoughtful families.

Holidays at Children's Garden

Witches may remain in the wardrobe, lions in their dens, and superheroes may take the day off. **You won't see Halloween costumes at school** and you won't have to worry about bringing mass quantities of Valentines for all the children.



Large group "holiday projects", directed by an adult, may overlook or overwhelm the individual child. At school we prefer to observe holidays in a "low key" manner. We try to incorporate conversations about how holidays are observed by different families and cultures. Individual art work, stories, songs and cooking projects also reflect the holiday in the class. With so much activity outside of school revolving around various holidays, we try to maintain an environment in which the exploration of activities, in a calm atmosphere, is provided for the children.



We have scheduled **OPEN HOUSE** dates for prospective families on **Wednesday, October 15th at 6:00 pm**, and **Saturday, November 15th at 10:00 and 11:30 am**. Please remind your friends and family who are interested in applying to Children's Garden to schedule to attend. We will be accepting applications from November to February 15 for enrollment in August 2015.

Visit the School

The first 6 weeks of school have almost passed and the time when you can visit your child's class begins October 6th. They love to share their environment, routine, and interests with you. You are welcome to stay for the entire class time, but if you are unable to do that, we suggest you arrange to come after the class is in session and stay until dismissal. Please call or email Catherine Ramey at 303.322.0972 or cramey@cgmontessori.com to schedule your visit.





News from Zach's Place

The Reggio-Emilia Philosophies Revisited

Since first hearing about the educational philosophies of Reggio-Emilia fifteen years ago, I have been trying to comprehend their approach and philosophy to early childhood education. In March of this year, as part of my master's degree in Educational Psychology, I took a trip to Italy, which proved pivotal to my understanding. The hours of lectures and tours contributed to an internal catharsis. Everyone involved, from teachers to pedagogistas, from cooks to atelierista, (like me) were informed and answered questions with thoughtful, intelligent and reflective patience. No one seemed hurried or irritated; rather all questions and conversations were invited in a mutual exchange of valued learning. Every word spoken reflected the Reggio values of collaboration, reflection, inquiry and respect. As I sat in the lecture halls, listening to Carlina Rinaldi, Paola Strozzi, Ameila Gambetti, Jvanka Rivi and many others I felt the stirrings of real understanding.

As the days unfolded I began to comprehend the power of a value-based education. *Values*, in this context, refer to the regard that something is held to deserve; its importance, worth, or usefulness. In this case: children, childhood, education and learning. Reggio schools provide an example of how values, when fully embodied and strongly upheld, become practice. At the center of this practice is the view of the child. The view of the child informs educational, social and political values. Not in an intellectual or philosophical way, but as a deeply meaningful and embodied experience. The child is seen as capable through a complex lens that resonates within the current culture. In Reggio they don't merely believe in these values, they speak and live them. In this light, children are born with innate citizenship and abilities. The child is considered competent, relational, playful, inquisitive and creative, not as a miniature adult needing to mature, but as an incredible unique expression of human being with as much to offer to the world as their adult counterparts.

This insight into value-based learning formed the nexus of my long sought search to understand the essential nature of the Reggio approach. From this nucleus, the pedagogical practice came into clearer view.

When we allow this view of the child to permeate and transform our thinking and actions we revolutionize our approach to children and childhood. Our view of the child thus informs our view of the teacher, our view of education, our view of society and our view of the world. Everything is connected.

According to the Reggio approach, when we think about children we aren't only thinking about what kind of education we can offer them. We are thinking of OUR IMAGE OF HUMANKIND and what kind of image/future we want to create. From this central view of childhood emerges a powerful view of the teacher: as a researcher, as a philosopher, as capable, as sensitive to the process of a child's work offering rich learning contexts and many languages of expression, as capable of deep reflection, self-evaluation and adaptation, as collaborators, as people who are empathetic, respectful and who trust children. From the image of the child and teacher emerges a meaningful, culturally responsive approach to learning which challenges everyone toward a stronger and better view of human-

kind. Through creative languages this education engages in the power of *art* to seek and express meaning, to create new pathways of understanding and potentially transform the thinking of others.

As you encounter the children's research, work, art and questions throughout our time together perhaps this view of the child will offer you some additional context for understanding, as it has for me. I am so grateful for this opportunity to work and learn alongside your children. Thank you beyond words.

Your Studio Teacher,
Angelina

Parent/Infant Classes at CGMS

By Belle Berry—Toddler Teacher

In June of 2013, Rose and I took a three day course at Montessori Education Center of the Rockies on starting a Parent/Infant class that was run by Susan Tracey, M.Ed.. Susan is the Director of Learning Together, an organization she founded that runs parent workshops and educates teachers across the United States and in Europe. Being that the class was the day after school ended, you can imagine how tired we were, but in the spirit of being true blue Montessorians, we trucked it up to Boulder for the weekend. As soon as I met Susan I was hooked. I forgot about how exhausted I was and began understanding the importance and need for Parent/Infant classes in our area. As someone who does not have a child myself, but is surrounded by friends and loved ones who do, I began to notice what a huge desire there was for such a thing. Sure, there are a lot of play groups out there, but not necessarily educational groups where the parents and children could come together and learn together about Montessori philosophy and child development.



Throughout most of last year, Rose and I played around with the idea starting our own class held our very first session at the end of June that ran for 6 consecutive weeks. It was glorious. We met once a week with moms and dads for an hour in the evening to discuss and explore a different topic each week. We would discuss toileting, home environment, sleep, language, discipline, social and emotional behavior, and other topics the parents wanted to discuss. It was always interesting to hear everyone's perspectives. It was also a good opportunity for the parents to bounce ideas and experiences off one another. They seemed to soak up the information like sponges. We would also meet once a week in the morning with the moms and their child. They would come to the classroom that Rose and I prepared for this specific age group and would watch their children in action. They learned the power of observation and couldn't believe how capable their young babies were.

Once the 6 weeks were over, the parents where more than ready to continue. We encouraged them to stay in touch with one another and with us. We then realized that the need for this was so great, and we enjoyed it so much, we decided to have another round starting on October 6 for 7 weeks after school. All of the families are returning and we have added two more to our class. We couldn't be more thrilled with the turnout from this summer and are looking forward to doing it all again.