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# Montessori Monitor



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Fall 2004 Issue

Grow Up at MMS

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## Reading

*By Elaine Manion, Reading Specialist*

I would like to take this opportunity to share some thoughts and concerns on the subject of beginning reading. My views and comments are the result of my training, my experience, and my observations.

**In order for a child to learn to read, the child must:**

1. Be aware that the text must be scanned from left to right
2. Be aware that each sound is represented by a letter or combination of letters, and be able to match the sound (not the letter name) to the correct symbol
3. Be able to blend these sounds into words, as well as
4. Be able to segment, or break words into individual sounds, and finally
5. Be able to manipulate (add, omit, replace) these sounds in words. This process of manipulating the sounds combines skills of segmenting and blending and is known as auditory processing.

All of these skills need to become automatic in order for reading to become automatic or a reflex action. What is the best way to accomplish this? Just like any other skill i.e. piano playing, sports, with lots and lots of practice of the elementary skills, first with three letter words, later four letter words, etc. This includes decoding and blending the sounds (reading) as well as the reverse process of encoding (writing). Both are equally important.

If a child is pushed into reading before the basic skills are established, a he/she will most likely learn to simply memorize whole words and will develop poor reading strategies. In this case, children with high verbal intelligence and good visual memory are put at a high risk for later reading problems. (Likewise, children with speech problems will likely have difficulty hearing the alphabetic code, and thus often experience reading difficulties and need extra help.)

How can you help as a parent? Encourage and praise your child's accomplishments in correct reading and letter formation. Create an atmosphere of "love and desire for learning." Encourage reading and re-reading of stories, as opposed to the "been there, done that" attitude. Large amounts of practice are necessary to perfect any new skill. Reading is no exception. Please do not pressure your child into reading (it's a sure way to kill the desire and fun of reading). Instead, capitalize on praising his/ her efforts. Model and promote a joy of reading. Read, read, read to them!

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## PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Ms. Jackie Johnson & Ms. Kathleen Bastiens 3.6-5 Year Old Class

*"...the first duty of an educator: to stir up life but leave it free to develop."*

Montessori, 1967, pp., 111.

Our class is off to a great start. We have 26 students with the majority new to Millhopper Montessori. Despite the newness of most of our students, the children have learned the routines and ground rules of the classroom quite well and are already showing strides in their physical, academic and social development.

# PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT, cont.:

## Ms. Jackie Johnson & Ms. Kathleen Bastiens 3.6-5 Year Old Class

### Morning Work Cycle

Our day begins with our morning work cycle. During the work cycle, children choose materials from the shelves to work on and are given lessons either singly or in groups. The materials placed on the shelves are designed to promote skills in the areas of practical life, sensorial, math, language, geography, cultural studies and science. Some materials stay on the shelves throughout the year, whereas others get exchanged out to renew and entice the children's interest.

#### Practical Life

In our classroom, considerable space is devoted to practical life materials. The practical life materials provide the opportunity for the child to build and perfect skills in a controlled incremental manner. This serves the child's biological interest in attaining life skills and builds the child's self-esteem through successful work and independence. In addition to these larger purposes, practical life is designed to promote the acquisition of more specific skills that will ultimately prepare the child for other areas of the curriculum. For example, children develop better hand-eye coordination, an improved pincer grip, and an increased ability to concentrate as a result of using practical life materials.

#### Sensorial

In our sensorial area, the materials are designed to satisfy the young child's desire to explore the objects in his or her environment, visually, orally, tactilely, stereognostically (a muscular sense) and sometimes through his or her sense of taste and smell. Work in the sensorial area refines a child's ability to observe, compare, discriminate, reason, problem solve, and appreciate our world. The materials are designed to encourage the refinement and discrimination of the senses using sorting, matching, or grading activities.

#### Math

The math area has the full spectrum of materials designed to develop the mathematical mind of the young child. Counting, observing one to one correspondence, and numeral recognition are the focus of early materials and lessons. The materials are designed to incrementally build upon themselves and allow a child to learn addition, multiplication, division and subtraction, using small numbers as well as numbers in the thousands. How far a child goes with math at this age depends entirely on the child's readiness and interest. Importantly, math at this level is performed using concrete materials. Memorization of math facts does not occur by rote memorization but rather occurs indirectly as a result of doing work with the materials over a lengthy period of time.

#### Language

Our language curriculum is designed to encourage both receptive (listening and reading) and expressive (speaking and writing) skills. The youngest students begin the language curriculum in areas designed to develop visual and auditory discrimination (and memory). To develop visual discrimination, children match cards and/or objects, they sort and classify, they sequence along physical or thematic dimensions, and they play games of concentration. To develop auditory discrimination, children match sound cylinders, shake objects in sound baskets, and match up musical instrument cards with corresponding music. They hear stories from the teacher, they retell stories, they hold conversations, sing songs, recite and make up poetry, play oral language games of all sorts, play "I Spy", and use vocabulary cards.

To prepare the child to read, the child learns an association between sound and symbol (i.e., letters). In contrast to traditional schooling, in a Montessori classroom children learn the sounds associated with letters before they learn the names. This is primarily accomplished through sand paper letter lessons and by sorting objects by their initial sounds. The children are subsequently taught to blend these sounds together to read. Our shelves are stocked with materials to allow readers to solidify and advance their reading and spelling skills. Writing and penmanship develop concurrently with reading. As described above, early writing actually begins with fine motor development, which begins in practical life and sensorial.

## PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT, cont.:

### Ms. Jackie Johnson & Ms. Kathleen Bastiens 3.6-5 Year Old Class

#### The Curriculum

In addition to the four main curriculum areas, we have shelves of materials devoted to science, geography, and art history. These materials get changed out a lot to match our current unit studies. Some of our larger unit studies for this year include amphibians, rocks and minerals, volcanoes, earth science, spiders, Native Americans, animal tracks, reptiles, the human body, nutrition, birds, the environment, flowers, and artists such as Van Gogh, Degas, Renoir, Kandinsky and others.

Grace and courtesy lessons are given to the children on how to care for themselves, their classroom, and their peers. We spend a considerable time discussing how to treat other people with respect and kindness. The children take full part in these discussions, and we see as the year goes on that the children become more aware of how their behavior affects others, and they become better friends and citizens as a result.

After our morning work cycle, our classroom has a 10:45 circle time during which we update our calendar and pick classroom helpers for the day. We have a half hour recess, and then we return to the classroom for circle time. During this second, longer circle time, I give classroom group lessons on geography, art, science, our unit studies, and/or on grace and courtesy. These lessons are often intermixed with language or math games, and music and movement.

#### Afternoon Projects

Our afternoons tend to be project oriented with groups of children doing different activities. Our activities on any given afternoon may be playing at the sand table, modeling at the play dough table, cooking, working on an art project, or working on a project related to a unit study. We are fortunate to have a committed group of parents with a number of regular weekly volunteers. Our classroom is the richer for their efforts and support. Ms. Kathleen and I are delighted with our students, and we are really excited about what the year holds for us.

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## LOWER ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

### Ms. Anita Bender & Ms. Lori Schieles 1st/2nd Grade

This year has been exciting, not only because we all survived the worst Hurricane Season in Gainesville's history but because our first and second graders have become an incredible team of Super Stars.

Maria Montessori said, "Follow the child and guide him into making the right choices within his environment." My goal for the first and second graders is to help them understand that in life there are boundaries and limitations. It takes cooperation with others, doing your personal best, and respect and love to be a good citizen of the world. Only with this comes true freedom.

We begin with order. The children work out of an organized binder system. There is a tab for each day of the week and behind each tab is the daily work plan. I have worksheets to supplement and reinforce the Montessori materials that we have covered. The children complete most of their work during the morning work cycle between group and individual lessons. In the afternoon they have the freedom to choose work from practical life. Some of these works include knitting, paper cutting and folding exercises, free reading and building a Roman Arch block structure.

In **HISTORY** we started learning about the Earth and it's beginnings. One of the most fascinating characteristics of Maria Montessori was her ability to connect life in the present with life in the distant past. She understood the growing imagination of the elementary aged child. Her goal for the elementary aged child is to have a holistic approach to the Universe. We started the year with the first of our Five Great Dramatic Lessons, "The Story of our Universe". The children enjoyed the eruption of our classroom model volcano. They shared their favorite part of the drama by drawing pictures of the most exciting moments of the presentation. We tied science and history together by performing basic science experiments such as "The Three States of Matter" and "The Laws of Attraction and Gravity".

Part of the Montessori experience is to place children in the context of their world based on their personal history. The children performed an exercise on the history of family birthdays and will continue to look at their personal and family timelines throughout the year. For a global perspective we studied different cultures that used different methods of tracking time. We read "*Thirteen Moons, on a Turtles Back*", and discussed how the Native Americans used a calendar based on thirteen moons in a lunar year

## LOWER ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT, cont.:

### Ms. Anita Bender & Ms. Lori Schieles 1st/2nd Grade

and that there are twenty-eight days from one month to the next. The turtle is a symbol found in nature that symbolizes the thirteen month lunar cycle because of the thirteen scales (plates) on the turtle's back (plasteron).

This story of time tied into our unit study on Native American culture. The children enjoyed making paper mache spirit masks in art class. We studied the philosophy of the Native American Spirit World. We talked about the role of the Shaman. After reading *"Brother Eagle, Sister Sky"* we discussed the respect the Native Americans have for the Earth. We had a follow-up activity on their codependency on the buffalo. The children matched parts of the buffalo to what the Native Americans used it for, such as rope out of the hair and bow strings out of the sinew in the neck. The children also enjoyed taking a seat around the drum circle with a visiting tribe during the Native American presentation in the big room.

In **BIOLOGY** we are moving through the external parts of vertebrates. The presentations follow the order that the animals appear on the "Timeline of Life"; fish, amphibian, reptile, bird, mammal. Once each classification has been presented we will dive deeper into the "First Knowledge Facts" about these animals. The children have enjoyed having live representatives of each animal in the classroom. One of our class pets is Figuero the fish. Other visiting pets included Franklin the Tree Frog and Squirt the Turtle.

In **GEOGRAPHY**, we have explored the Montessori "Land and Water Forms". Brett Sidman took a trip to Norway and shared his travel journal with the class, including pictures of Glaciers and Fjords that he visited. We have covered the four cardinal points and the magnetic North Pole. With the exception of our minor detour to Europe we will continue to study North America until the end of the calendar year with our Geography and History lessons on Native Americans, Explorers, Colonial America and then the Revolution and Constitution. We will start Asia in the Spring.

Our study of **GEOMETRY** included a presentation on the difference between a straight line and a curved line. I showed a horizontal line by using a bowl of colored water and a drawing of the sun and its horizon. A vertical line was presented by using a plumb line. I introduced the concept of infinity, and we discussed the end point of a line, a ray and a line segment. Then with the Montessori "Box of Geometry Sticks" we reviewed horizontal, vertical and oblique Lines. Students were shown that by observing the same line from different points of view, the line's definition changes. The children have also studied the Montessori "Geometric Cabinet" and "Triangles". Often after a lesson on these materials our conversation leads into building and construction or we reference objects from around the room.

**MATHEMATICS** is practiced daily. The children sharpen their skills by using the materials Maria Montessori created, such as the "Multiplication Board," "Division Board," "Stamp Game," "Subtraction and Multiplication Strip Boards" and the "Golden Bead" material. The children use the Stamp Game and the Golden Beads to apply all four operations in Math. They are practicing exchange, otherwise known as borrowing or carrying. We call this Dynamic Math. The children use this material to do BIG math. They work with numbers in the thousands. This BIG math would not normally be done at this age in a traditional setting, but working with these materials allows children to see bigger concepts, enabling them to work at a higher level. Instead of working out dynamic addition and subtraction, multiplication and division in their heads or by rote memorization they use hands-on materials. At this stage in the child's development, the Montessori materials are designed to carry the child from gaining a full understanding through the use of the concrete materials (the works) into an understanding through abstraction (notation). In Mathematics, when a child works with the Stamp Game, he or she manipulates concrete math materials, performing exchanges in all four mathematical operations into the thousands.

Spelling and vocabulary development, when learned only by memorization, stunts the ability of gaining a deeper understanding. The Montessori **LANGUAGE** materials that are available in the classroom are designed to internalize the information that is being sent to the brain. In the classroom children will find a picture, match it to an object, spell it with the moveable alphabet and then record it in their Language Journal. They will even take it a step further by highlighting the vowels in red and the consonants in blue. Children also recognize the sound pictures at the beginning, middle and endings of words.

The children have been introduced to some of the Montessori "Grammar Parsing Symbols". Using this system, shapes are used to notate the parts of a sentence. The noun symbol is black, like coal, and its shape is the pyramid, something very important and very old. We talked about the "Noun Family": articles, adjectives and nouns. Also they have learned about the verb a red sphere, representing energy. By "parsing" a sentence the children learn how language works. For example, the children learned what makes up a prepositional phrase. The grammar symbol for a preposition is a little green bridge shape. When Dr. Montessori presented this to the children she would tell this story: "In Ireland, the soil contains many rocks. Farmers use the rocks for fences. Because it rains a lot, there are many small streams. When farmers want their cows to go over the stream, they make a little rock bridge. In time, due to the rain, the bridge becomes covered with moss and turns green. By crossing the bridge the cows can be in a new position or field". We present this symbol as a bridge shape and point out what position you take around, over, under, on, etc. the bridge. This is one of the many ways Grammar is presented.

## LOWER ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM IN THE SPOTLIGHT, cont.:

### Ms. Anita Bender & Ms. Lori Schieles 1st/2nd Grade

When we discussed the “Mechanics of a Sentence,” the children made “Word Wheels”. The children had a lot of fun making different sentences with one main subject, like “the bear” together with the many different things the bear can do. These sentences were transferred from the word wheel to paper, where they were parsed using our symbols for grammar. We will apply this general knowledge of Language as we continue to work on writing super sentences, parsing, and journaling in class. Then we will go into a deeper study of words and their functions.

**READING** Groups are underway with Ms. Elaine Manion. Ms. Elaine is our reading teacher and reading therapist. She has been teaching reading to First through Third Graders at MMS for 11 years. She teaches the children with the Phono-Graphix method. Ms. Elaine sends home weekly reading assignments. In addition to Ms. Elaine’s program the children are participating in “Book It”, Pizza Hut’s Reading Incentive Program. If each student reads 15 minutes every night at the end of the month they get a free Personal Pan Pizza.

The children love their special classes with the subject area teachers. On Tuesday and Thursday they have Spanish. Tuesday after Spanish the children go to Media. Wednesday afternoon is dedicated to Art and Music. Monday through Thursday the children enjoy P.E.

We also had a lot of fun during “**Spirit Week**”. Respect for one another, giving hearts, teamwork and parent participation has been the hallmark of making this year great from the start. The children really proved that they could accomplish anything. When I came to MMS I didn’t know how seriously “Spirit Week” was taken. Over many lunchroom conversations with the other teachers I knew the competition was tough. While listening to Ms. Tina and Mr. Richard talk over last year’s poster contest, I knew we had to get busy and fast. Ms. Lori and I worked with the children to make props and practice our cheer every day. Parents were in every day helping. We had face-painting, pom-pom and spirit shield making and necklaces strung. Each day the outfits were outstanding. Fifties day was quite a hit. The children never lost sight of the purpose. They even dug deep into their own piggy banks to help. All of the donations from the Elementary and Middle School classes were donated to Hurricane Victims and Gainesville’s Food Pantry to help those in need. In the end, all had fun. Ms. Anita’s class tied with Ms. Tina’s class for the win. Thank you to all of the families for your support, donations and stellar participation.

I am so proud of the children. I look forward to each day. I would like to thank Ms. Trish, Ashley’s mom, Ms. Jessica, Lily’s mom, and Ms. Jacqueline, Takoda’s mom for your presence in the classroom and Dr. Jennifer, Brett’s mom for cutting out the cardboard shields. Thank you to all who have made donations of time and materials to the classroom. The effort and support is valued. You make our classroom shine.

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# MMS Soccer

*by Coach Brian Baltunis*

There are eleven energetic soccer players this year on the Millhopper Montessori Kindergarten-1<sup>st</sup> Grade Soccer Team. Takoda Baltunis, Ashley Petty, and Matthew Valentine are the three 1<sup>st</sup> graders on the team. The eight kindergarteners are Alex Martignago, Madison Mazon, Tiffany Millian, Elizabeth Mills, Ben Morton, Marisa Palmer, Austin Petty, and Chase Trunnell. The team practices on Thursdays and plays their games on Saturdays at Oak Hall. We’ve played two games already this year and I am really proud of the effort all the players have shown. The team has two additional coaches: Trish Petty and Steve Palmer. I would like to thank all the soccer parents for providing snacks and drinks for the players this season. It is truly a team effort.

## Go Knights!

# MMS' 2004 Theater Production: THE HOBBIT

by Sue Hatch

The Performing Arts program for the Elementary-Middle School level is a very important at Millhopper Montessori School. Each year a play is carefully chosen and developed especially for MMS by the staff and volunteer parents. The students go through the actual process of a casting call for specific parts, learning and rehearsing songs and dialogue, preparing the sets and scenes, and helping with costumes. Dancing, songs, and speaking parts are carefully staged and practiced, resulting in a quality performance of which students, teachers and parents are very proud.

The play chosen for the 03-04 school year was *The Hobbit*, adapted from the book by J. R. R. Tolkein. The adventures of a Hobbit, Bilbo Baggins, took the audience on a trip throughout the fabled Middle Earth. Here in Middle Earth they encountered dwarves, trolls, goblins, spiders, a wizard, a dragon, elves and other mysterious creatures. The story revolved around Bilbo and his company of Dwarves as they set out on a quest to recover their lost treasure that had been stolen years ago by the dragon, Smaug.

Like a thread that winds through the curriculum, study and discussion of this tale wove its way through the children's classes. In literature, they reviewed the plot, analyzed characters and studied language use. In art, they submitted original drawings for stage scenes, sets, t-shirt designs, and playbill covers. In music, they practiced songs and created sounds which helped set the mood for the play. In physical education, they learned how actors use their bodies to convey a message. Naturally, work on the play was just a part of the curriculum in each of these classes, but we are sure it was a part your children will enjoy and cherish.

Every child age six through fourteen played a part in creating *The Hobbit*. It is an experience that promotes teamwork and draws us closer as a school.

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## The M<sup>3</sup>S Line

### **Hurray for the Olympics!**

The middle school students began the year with a unit on the ancient and modern Olympics. We studied the origins of the Olympics, the site of the games in Olympia, the daily life of an athlete, the various games of the ancient Olympics, the ceremonies commemorating the victors, and the disgraces felt by the losers. This unit fit nicely with Spirit Week and Olympics Day. Some of the students wore "togas" and every student had a wreath and red head tie, the ancient symbol of victory.

### **We the People.....**

The class has just finished a unit on the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and the United States Constitution. The focus of study was the progression of these three documents in forming a government that allowed for individual rights, equilibrium of power between the states and national government, and checks and balances among the three branches of government. The unit culminated with a scavenger hunt activity using the U.S. Constitution.

Tying into the study of important historical documents in American History, the students have read the *Declaration of Independence* and the List of Grievances against King George III of England

# The M<sup>3</sup>S Line, cont.

and Parliament. We discussed the similarities of some of the grievances and their inclusion in the U.S. Constitution. We also read about the Continental Convention of May, 1787 specifically, the role James Madison played in the formulation of the U.S. Constitution.

## **“Are you a Survivor?”**

Before the hit television show, “Survivor”, there was the 1954 novel Lord of the Flies by William Golding. Lord of the Flies is a story about a group of school boys stranded on a deserted island without any adults. The novel chronicles the struggles the group faces trying to live and work together without the restraints of societal laws.

As an introduction to the novel, the class completed an activity entitled, “Marooned on a Deserted Island”. Students broke into groups of three to answer such questions as “Who would be the leader?” “Would there be any rules?” “How would rescue be attempted?”. The groups’ answers were interesting and garnered much discussion among the students.

## **General Information**

### **Make Time for Studying**

Studying doesn’t have to be a chore. If you are organized, you’ll get more done in less time and earn better grades.

Use time each day to review your notes, complete assignments, and prepare for the next day. You will remember more and avoid having to cram for tests. List all of your assignments in a planner and check them off when they are completed.

If an assignment will take several days, like writing a paper, completing a project, or studying for a test, break the project into smaller, more manageable parts. By breaking up the assignment, you will accomplish more without feeling overwhelmed.

### **When to Study**

You will remember more if you study during the daytime. Use your individual worktime. Plan a block of time each evening at home to complete your assignments and review the day’s notes. Schedule 30 minutes on the weekend to review the notes from the week.

Study the hardest subjects first, since they will require the most time. Use your individual worktime for your hardest subjects. That way your teachers can help you if you need it.

Try the 50/10 Plan. Study for 50 minutes with no interruptions! Then break for 10 minutes.

Allow more study time for subjects in which you need to improve.

During your study time avoid distractions that will interrupt your studying, such as: TV, radio, phone calls, CD player, etc.

# Middle School R.O.P.E.S. Trip

by Sherilyn Farris

During the month of October, the students of Millhopper Montessori Middle School spend three exciting days at Camp McConnell taking part in ROPES training. ROPES training presents students with situations that require them to share their knowledge and experiences creatively with each other while solving problems and overcoming obstacles.

Although ROPES training is a lot of fun, it isn't just playing games. It's learning that one can do what one previously couldn't. It is learning that problems are there to be met and solved. Not necessarily by oneself, but often with the help and cooperation of others. It is learning to find strength in others as well as in oneself. It is also learning to assess and understand risks, both physical and emotional, and being able to make decisions with the support, but not the pressure, of the group. The ROPES course is divided into two groups of activities: low elements and high elements. The goal of these first elements is for the entire group to participate and succeed. To accomplish this, they must cultivate a sense of trust and respect for each other. The high elements are individual challenges that are made much easier by the feeling of solidarity that is developed by completing the low elements.

The low elements start with simple activities, such as cooperative games, that require all the members of the group to participate if they are to succeed. This portion climaxes with the Team Wall. Elements such as the trust lean, trust fall, and the commitment bridge help nurture the sense of unity that will be essential in completing the more difficult tasks ahead of them. Facing these challenges, a student is asked to make decisions as to what will not

only best serve themselves, but what will also help the whole group succeed.

The motto of the high elements is "challenge by choice". When students are asked whether they want to climb the thirty foot Cargo Net or to leap off the twenty-five foot Pamper Pole, they are expected to appraise the risk. The intention is to move the students out of their "comfort zone" in a manner that is healthy and safe. The group support system that had its beginning with the low elements is now strong enough to support not only those who are willing to attempt the climbs, but also those that decide they do not want to participate.

## Student Quotes

"I made new friends, found out some things I thought I would never like, and made some new memories."

Johnny Horter

"I had fun being with the group for three days. I learned new things about them such as what they like to do."

Johnny Horter

"I really like ROPES a lot. It was really a challenge to see how far I could push myself and change my life forever."

Kelly Wright

"I overcame my fear of heights and now I know that I can push myself beyond my limits with help from good friends."

Kelly Wright

"I was surprised that it didn't feel weird to be with my classmates but not at school."

Elizabeth Kessler

"The Pamper Pole is so scary. It is so high. So, when I accomplished it, I felt really, really proud."

Elizabeth Kessler

"When you support someone it will give them courage to go a little farther on an element than they had thought, and it will make the trip a bit more fun."

Anna Long

# Middle School R.O.P.E.S. Trip, cont.

"We changed into our bathing suits and went swimming. The pool felt really good after a long, hot day."  
Molly Cellon

"All I know right now is that I will remember ROPES until that moment when I go skydiving."  
CJ Francis

"[The giants ladder] took us a while to get to the top but we made it. Next year I hope to do it a lot faster. I was so happy I accomplished this high element."  
Cullen Schiele

"I've learned to be myself."  
Cody Sledge

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## Thank You Volunteers!!!

MMS would like to thank the parents who volunteer at the school - we appreciate your time!!!!!!!

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## Millhopper Montessori School Helping Others *by Richard Aslanian*

The families of Millhopper Montessori School students in 1st through 8th grades commemorated School Spirit Week September 20-24. The goals of this week were not only to celebrate the school itself, but also to cooperate in a fundraiser to help benefit the community. Throughout the week, students participated in theme days, such as Hawaiian Day, Patriotic Day and 50's Day, made posters representing their classes and the school, created an original cheer and collected canned goods and money to benefit members of the

Gainesville community affected by the recent hurricanes. Our plan was simple: to extend a hand and help others in need. Our lessons were to foster the philosophy of fellowship and caring for a greater good. The response was tremendous! Over the 5-day event, MMS families contributed over \$1,300 and donated more than 600 cans of food. On Thursday evening of that week, the families came together for a potluck dinner and were treated to the class presentations of the cheers. They also learned the results of the best dressed students for each theme day, top class poster and family Jamboree Night participation. The class with the overall highest point total was awarded the annual MMS Spirit Stick. There was a tie. The Spirit Stick will reside in the 1-2 grade class for the first half of the year and then in the 4-6 grade class until Spirit Week next year.

# Reading at MMS

## **Reading in Preschool/Kindergarten**

The Montessori approach to reading is phonetic in nature. The children learn the individual sounds that accompany each letter in the alphabet in an integrated visual, auditory, and kinesthetic presentation. The three-period lesson is used in the review and the introduction of new material. In phonetic letter recognition, the three-period lesson consists of a teacher presenting a letter by tracing the symbol on textured cut out letters and saying the sound the letter represents. The child traces the shape and repeat the sound. The first period presents, "This is." The second period asks, "Show me the..." and requires memory recall. The third period asks, "What is this?" and is more abstract. The three-period lesson is used to introduce nomenclature in all areas of the early childhood and Jr Elementary curriculum.

As soon as a child knows some of the consonants and vowels, simple three-letter words can be formed by encoding (building a word by selecting each sound). Decoding (reading a word that is printed by naming each sound) follows. The encoding process is a fundamental step in the Montessori reading program and can be accomplished by children as young as three years of age. There are students who are four and five whose developmental ability is still at the encoding stage. The curriculum is laid out in a complete scope and sequence, but each child moves along the sequence at his or her own pace. By kindergarten, the children that have been in our program for a year or more are often reading simple books.

## **Reading/Literature - Elementary**

Because Montessori originated in the Italian language, there is much supplementation and many teacher-made materials in the classroom. We use the Phono-Graphix program, which provides subtle differences from the Montessori training. For example, the identification of the "silent e" is identified as "vowel-plus-e" and the concept of a "rule" such as, "When two vowels go a walking the first one does the talking" is only true 40% of the time. Phono-Graphix calls this a tendency and not a rule. We are in the process of integrating the Phono-Graphix in the early childhood reading program in a more comprehensive way for greater curriculum continuity.

## **First-Third grade Phono-Graphix**

Along with the reading activities provided in class, the students benefit from extra time with a reading teacher. In first through third grade, the students have formal reading group time daily, or several times a week depending on their level and needs, with our reading therapist, Elaine Manion. The program we use is called Phono-Graphix. Phono-Graphix, a reading method developed by Read America, and researched by the University of South Florida is based on rigorous research in the field of reading. Phono-Graphix addresses auditory processing, code knowledge, and cognitive strategy in the curriculum. The Phono-Graphix program in MMS's lower elementary provides students with a decoding method that presents the units of sounds (sound pictures) that are contained in words. A sound picture is a letter or group of letters representing a single sound. Unlike phonics which teaches letter sounds in isolation, Phono-Graphix always teaches them in words so there is meaning. Phono-Graphix also sets the stage for spelling skill proficiency.

The Junior Great Books program begins in the second grade and continues through the sixth grade. The second grade Great Books program is an introduction to some forms of literature and specifically Newberry Award books. Depending on the material, stories are read to the class or a chapter is read from a novel. Reviewing vocabulary, idioms, and events that are happening takes place at pauses during the reading.

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# Reading at MMS, cont.

The children discuss characters, plot, dilemma and theme. The Great Books program in the second grade is a strong base for the long in-depth analysis that is the hallmark for the third grade program. Through the third grade, Junior Great Books is facilitated by the classroom teachers. The fourth, fifth and sixth grade students take part in a combination of Junior Great Books and novels with our upper level reading teacher and librarian/media specialist, Martha Horter. Literature class follows a Socratic discussion format. Responses are read and discussed in order to fully process and understand the author's ideas and intent. Vocabulary is built into this curriculum as well.

Additional reading occurs through the Reading Counts program in which all the elementary students participate. In the upper elementary grades, reading takes a shift from learning how to read, to learning to enjoy and analyze literature.

## Reading/Literature - Middle School

Vocabulary is presented across the curriculum and is formally approached by learning the word elements and the Sadlier-Oxford Vocabulary Workshop. Literature is taught in small ability-level groups and includes the study of literary elements and the reading of various genres of literatures including poetry, short stories, novels, autobiographies, newspaper and periodical articles, etc.

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# MMS Graduations

Congratulations to the 2004 Eighth Grade  
and Kindergarten Graduates!!!!

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## ***The Little Red Learning Barn***

The *Little Red Learning Barn* is a traveling exhibit that is used to tell the story about **agriculture**. This portable structure is used as a lending library which travels to schools on a rotational basis. It is filled with teaching items to enhance the learning of young children (grades Pre-K - 5). These materials includes: videos, books, activity books, posters, puppets, puzzles and toys. Also in the barn are **Florida Ag in the Classroom** materials and the **Project Food, Land and People** and **Keeping Florida Green** curricula. All lessons in these curricula have been correlated to the Sunshine State Standards. Teachers may check out materials from the barn to use in their classroom while the barn is at their school.

**The Millhopper Montessori School would like to thank Wendy Wilber for bringing the Little Red Barn to our school!**

# Native American Presentation

Tony “Little Feather” White Cherokee/Blackshear Creek visited the school along with three others. This group of mixed blood Native Americans are striving to learn more about the culture and history of our ancestors. Their organization is open to all tribal affiliations or people with interests in Native American cultures and values. They spent a few moments talking about their cultural diversity, and then they sang some audience participation drum songs, taught the children a few simple ‘basic words’ in Cherokee, and ended with a group “friendship dance”, (a variation of our “stomp dance”), the presenters were in regalia, (the traditional dress of our ancestors). It was explained that their dress was not a costume, but was a ‘sacred’ part of their cultural heritage.

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## Florida Council of Independent Schools 2004 Convention

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Christina Miller and Amilda Clark attended the Florida Council of Independent School’s annual conference in Orlando. Millhopper Montessori School is fully accredited through FCIS and enjoys the continued professional growth process that this organization offers. Check it out at [www.fcis.org](http://www.fcis.org)

### ***Christina Miller attended the following workshops:***

**Your Mission Statement Writ Large: Your School’s Visual Brand**

**Helping Parents with Common Questions and Answers** (practical suggestions for today’s families and questions frequently asked)

**Debunking Montessori Myths** (open panel discussion on age-old myths surrounding this unique style of learning)

**Your Government at Work** (implications of the recent election and state and national legislative initiatives and hot regulations)

**Annual FCIS Business meeting**

### ***Amilda Clark attended the following workshops:***

**Your Mission Statement Writ Large: Your School’s Visual Brand**

**Critiquing Your School’s Marketing Materials** (practical review of attendees’ communication materials and how these support their mission statements)

**Debunking Montessori Myths** (open panel discussion on age-old myths surrounding this unique style of learning)

**Essential Interview Questions in the Admission Office** (a panel of experienced admission interviewers will present procedures and an opportunity for discussion)

**Annual FCIS Business meeting**

# Gift Giving to 3-6 Year Olds

by Jacqueline S. Johnson

The holidays are just around the corner. Around this time of year, parents sometimes ask for gift ideas for their children. As a teacher, developmental psychologist, and a mother, I have developed a few opinions when it comes to gift giving, and I have decided to share them with a larger audience. My suggestions listed below are informal and unordered...happy holidays and happy shopping!

## Suggestion #1

Consider giving less. It is fun to buy gifts for children at this age, and it is therefore easy to overbuy. Children can become overwhelmed with too many toys (not just during the unwrapping, but also later in their own bedrooms). Having fewer toys provides a more calming atmosphere in a child's bedroom, and often leads to more creative play (e.g., a child who doesn't have a car for her Barbie, may decide to make one out of a shoebox and construction paper). It is amazing how creative children can be when they have less.

## Suggestion #2

While some children may have too many toys, few children have too many books (is there such a thing?). There are a lot of studies that show correlations between the number of books in a household and a number of positive developmental outcomes (such as literacy, IQ, and school success etc.). Any book that appeals to your child will make a great gift. Fiction is always terrific; however you may also want to consider nonfiction. High quality, attractive, nonfiction books are now written to be accessible to our youngest learners.

## Suggestion #3

Pass on the computer games and videos. As with TV, children this age do not need this type of electronic entertainment. It tends to be artificial and flashy while encouraging the child to be passive. There are some who believe that we as a nation are creating a new type of attention deficit disorder caused entirely by the household environment. More research is needed on this issue, nonetheless, aside from the questionable values that much of this entertainment provides, when passive entertainment of this sort is withheld, children are given the opportunity to learn to entertain and enjoy themselves. It is wonderful to watch the creative potential that is unleashed in a TV-free household. Now that is a gift to give to your children!

## Suggestion #4

Buy games, and play with your child. Playing games is a great way for children to learn how to follow rules, learn their colors, learn mathematic and problem solving skills, and learn good sportsmanship (though they won't learn good sportsmanship if you always let them win). It is especially a good way to enjoy time together. Okay, so Chutes and Ladders can be mind-numbing for an adult, but by playing childhood games early on, your child will learn basic gaming skills which will prepare him/her for more advanced games (and therefore more fun games) in the near future. A few suggestions for games are as follows:

Candy Land (still a perfect beginning game).

Chutes and Ladders

Monopoly Junior

Trouble

The Cat in the Hat

Sum Swamp by Learning Resources (*this is a great game if your child has already been introduced to addition*)

Imagine That (a game of concentration)

Card games such as Go Fish or War are great for young gamers (you could rename the latter game if you wish; it is still a good game). With a little more experience they will then be ready for UNO.

Games to avoid: Hungry Hippo, Quacking ducks, Farm Families or other really noisy games (it will drive you crazy), and the frenetic nature of these games will not dispose your child to good sportsmanship. While superficially attractive, I personally have also found Hi Ho Cherry-O to be irritating to both children and adults.

# Gift Giving to 3-6 Year Olds, cont.

## **Suggestion #5**

Children have a strong urge to create. Give any materials that allow the child to use his/her hands: a roll of poster paper (can buy at office supply stores) to make BIG art, a new box of crayons, markers, or colored pencils, playdough with tools, etc. For the young writer or artist in your family, there is a product called *Illustory* which allows your child to write and illustrate his or her own hardcover book.

## **Suggestion #6**

Buy your child puzzles. As with books, it is difficult to have too many puzzles. In addition to age appropriate puzzles, consider getting a slightly more advanced puzzle for your child and make it an activity for the both of you. On a cold, rainy day, my youngest son and I enjoy sitting down to a good puzzle with a cup of hot chocolate.

## **Suggestion #7**

Building materials. Blocks, legos, marble runs, tinker toys, junior erector set, anything that allows a child to build. Buy them for your daughters too!

## **Suggestion #8**

Buy or make dress-up clothes. Fantasy play is important for a child's development and emotional health. And it's fun! Dress up is not just for Halloween nor is it just for girls. I have two boys, and we have a large box of costumes. More often than not, the boys mix parts from different costumes to make new ones. Indeed, although I leave costume sewing to my sons' grandmothers, I have added strips of fabric (which I have hemmed) to their costume box. From those simple strips of cloth, they make sashes, head bands, neck scarves and accessories for which I have no names.

## **Suggestion #9**

Purchase child-sized household or garden tools-not pretend, but real working tools. Children love to participate in the daily chores of everyday living. They particularly enjoy it when their work produces real results.

## **Suggestion #10**

Anything that facilitates large motor skill development and encourages him or her to get outside and play (bicycle, basketball hoop, child skates, etc.). Children need to move. It is not only important for their physical health and coordination, but as with adults, it also helps them with stress management. Put your own skates on and skate alongside them. With Florida's mild climate there is no excuse not to get out and play.

## Upcoming Events

### DECEMBER 2004

**Friday, December 17th**  
Winter Shows  
**Monday, December 20th -**  
**Friday, December 31st**  
Winter Holidays

### JANUARY 2005

**Monday, January 3rd**  
Classes Resume  
**Friday, January 14th**  
Hurricane Make Up Day - School Ends at 3:00, No  
After School Program Available  
**Monday, January 17th**  
HOLIDAY - Martin Luther King's Birthday  
**Monday, January 24th**  
Second Quarter Report Cards Elementary/Middle  
School

### FEBRUARY 2005

**Monday, February 21st**  
HOLIDAY - President's Day  
**Tuesday, February 22nd**  
Elementary/Middle School Interim Reports Mailed  
Home

### MARCH 2005

**Friday, March 25th**  
Student Holiday/Teacher Work Day  
**Monday, March 28th**  
Third Quarter Report Cards Elementary/Middle  
School  
**March 28th, 29th & 30th**  
Elementary/Middle School Science Fair

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**Thank you for participating!**