

October 15, 2008

MSB Parent News

The Montessori School of the Berkshires, 55 Pittsfield Road, Lenox, MA 01240 (413) 637-3662

Be sure to check the back page for important reminders and upcoming events!

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Berkshire Montessori School, Inc. admits students of any race, color, national, or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at this school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Dear Families,

Last year the Parent Group organized a bulb fundraiser, as well as a Berkshire Grown fundraiser. The Berkshire Grown fundraiser will be initiated next month and consists of some fabulous locally made products. Last year the proceeds from the bulb fundraiser went toward the purchase of the geo-dome climber on the playground. The proceeds from the Berkshire Grown fundraiser were used to establish an environmental fund to help offset the costs of more expensive “green” products. We have found a no-VOC paint called *Fresh Aire*, and have used the paint on the new multi-purpose room shelves. The polyurethane used on the new tables is a low-odor, clean-air compliant, water-based urethane called *Zip Guard*. Both of these products carry the Greenguard seal. We look forward to continuing to “green” our practice as we create our new school campus. Please come join us for our first Community Meeting on Thursday, October 23, when we’ll share site and building plans, as well as discuss other aspects of our school community.

Todd Covert, Head of School

School News & Updates

First Community Meeting

As part of our Parent Education Series, we will be hosting our First Community Meeting on Thursday, October 23, from 6:30 to 7:30 pm. This hour-long session will include an update on the new site and building, a discussion of makes the school unique, an introduction of board members, and time for general questions about school procedures and policies. Please keep in mind that child-care will not be provided.

First Family Sharing

Our first Family Sharing Day will be on Friday, October 24. See page 4 for more details!

Half-Day on Friday, October 24

Immediately after Family Sharing, the school will close at noon for a staff professional development workshop from the school’s Health Care Consultant.

For Small Hands Group Order

The *For Small Hands* group order is due by Monday, October 20. If you place your order (from *For Small Hands* and/or *Montessori Services*) this way, you don’t have to pay shipping, and you help the school earn credits toward classroom materials! Checks for the group order should be made payable to Berkshire Montessori. Orders will arrive before the holidays.

Montessori Philosophy

Each newsletter we'll provide some background on aspects of Montessori philosophy. This piece focuses on the presentation of lessons to younger children.

In a Montessori elementary classroom, the arts are an intricate part of all learning, and multiple opportunities exist for children to engage in creative expression. Michael Olaf describes how creative expression actually deepens children's understanding: "When information is processed in some active, musical or artistic way—graphs, posters, drawings, creating maps, songs, plays, and so forth, the knowledge becomes permanent and it strengthens the creative part of the brain."

(<http://www.michaelolaf.net/1CW612arts.html>)

I remember writing and acting out performances during my many years as a Montessori student, as well as engaging in daily opportunities for expression. I became historical figures. I acted out verbs and adverbs. These experiences gave me insight into concepts that might otherwise have remained inaccessible. Olaf explains the importance of these types of activities: "When a child learns by combining academics and the arts, the whole understanding of life—and development of the brain—makes a giant leap. There are no limits to avenues of creativity."

These varied opportunities for creative expression are a key component of the Montessori environment. In *From Childhood to Adolescence*, Maria Montessori testifies that there should "be all kinds of artistic occupations open to free choice both as to the time and the nature of the work." Montessori recognized that art should not exist in isolation from learning and from life. Underscoring the importance of promoting artistic pursuits, Montessori wrote in *The Advanced Montessori Method II* that teachers "should be cultivators of

the fine arts. For in our method art is considered a *means to life*." Through movement, music, drawing, and acting, children begin to create their unique characters. "The field thus opened to the free activity of the child will enable him to exercise himself and to form himself as a man. It is not movement for its own sake that he will derive from these exercises, but a powerful coefficient in the complex formation of his personality." (*The Advanced Montessori Method I*) Through artistic pursuits, children learn about the world while also learning how their voices contribute to and shape the world.

To be able to explore creative expression and cultivate their unique spirit, children need preparation in various skills. "There is a perfect parallel between the formation of the will and the co-ordination of movement of its physiological structure, the striated muscles," writes Montessori. "We know that we cannot learn to dance without preliminary exercises, that we cannot play the piano without practicing the movements of the hand" As children develop their fine and gross motor skills, their ability to perceive sensory details, and their capacity for multiple means of communication, limits to self-expression fall away. Montessori describes how preparation is necessary for artistic eloquence: "The ability *to see reality* in form, in color, in proportion, to be master of the movements of one's own hand – that is what is necessary. Inspiration is an individual thing, and when a child possesses these formative elements he can give expression to all that happens."

Active participation in learning artistic skills and applying them for self-expression and concept integration, allows children to flourish both in academic pursuits and self-construction.

Parents' Group Update

The following minutes are from the Parents' Group meeting on October 14.

In Attendance

Michael Lewis, Todd Covert, Jenn Salinetti, Marya LaRoche, Sarah Steven.

Fundraisers

There was discussion about the need to select the Berkshire Grown vendors to include in the November fundraiser. This year we need more people to help with the pick-up of products. Please let us know if you can help! We want to get order forms out by Thanksgiving and then back in time to distribute products for the holidays. Our goal is to have brochures go out by November 17, and order forms returned by December 1. Funds raised will go to general operating funds for the school, with 10% earmarked for student-directed projects.

We brainstormed about a spring fundraiser and want to continue soliciting ideas. We will try to generate responses from the listserv. Any and all ideas are welcome! Suggestions discussed at the meeting included a raffle or auction, Team Trivia Night, Wine Tasting, or another hosted event.

Family Potluck

The Family Potluck is slated for Friday, November 7, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm, at the Lenox Community Center. There will be a sign-up poster for foods to bring. This sign-up will be posted in the school entryway on October 26. Invitations will be distributed soon. We are considering having an activity for children, such as mural making.

Miscellaneous

We are looking for parents interested in being part of a "garden committee," especially with the prospect of having a garden at the new school

site. Primary jobs will be cleaning out the garden in the fall and replanting in the spring.

The elementary students are entering a tree for the Berkshire Museum's Festival of Trees. The theme is "Going Green."

Todd mentioned what the expected format for the Community Meeting Night would be. In Community Meetings Todd will present information for the school community and then have time for parents to ask questions about any topics. See page one for the October Meeting agenda items.

We had a brief discussion on how to generate more interest/involvement in this Parents Group! Jen Salinetti will facilitate the next meeting, on Monday, November 10, from 7:00 to 8:00 pm.

School Pictures

To order pictures, go to:

www.printroom.com/pro/lacombe

Click on the Schools/
Events/Groups
link on the left,
choose the school's
name, and enter
the password:



Montessori. Feel free to pass the link
along to friends and relatives so they
can order, too!

Family Sharing Day: Friday, October 24

This year's first Family Sharing Day is scheduled for Friday, October 24.

To provide more space in the classrooms, we will have two shifts of sharing time for both the Children's House and the Elementary. The first 30-minute block will be from 11:00 to 11:30 am, and the second 30-minute block will be from 11:30 am to noon. Families will be organized into two groups (see below).

At the end of Family Sharing, school will close for a half-day for a teacher professional development workshop.

We welcome parents and/or close family members to visit the classroom so that children can share their favorite activities. Due to space constraints, please limit the number of guests to two. Also we ask that any mobile siblings not attend. The focus of Family Sharing is for your child to connect one-on-one with you!

When you arrive in the entryway, please wait for your child to come invite you into the classroom.

We also ask that all visitors respect some of our basic classroom rules:

- Talk using a quiet voice. A good rule of thumb is that only the person next to you should be able to hear you.
- Sit in chairs (not on tables) or on the floor.
- Walk around lessons and rugs on the floor (rather than step over them).
- Only use materials that you have been invited to use.
- Carry one item at a time.
- Have food or drink at the snack table.
- Push in your chair.

Also keep in mind that children have different ways of approaching this sharing time. Some children may want to stay within their comfort zone and show lessons that feel very comfortable and familiar. Other children may want to show lessons that present a particular challenge. It is, however, important to respect your child's choice. We also ask that you be okay with any mistakes your child may make. Come as a joyful observer and witness to what your child wants to share!

Children's House Group 1 (11:00 - 11:30 am)

A. Burns
A. Tassinari
D. Salinetti
F. Mathews
F. Pajak
J. Steven
J. Beadell
K. Leach
M. Clatworthy
N. Fou
N. Kierstead
R. Chernila
T. Goodman
R. Lewis
P. Orloff

Children's House Group 2 (11:30 - 12:00 pm)

O. Maldonado
A. Berg
C. Kittross
N. Salinetti
F. LaRoche
G. Akroyd
J. Harwood
M. Leach
M. Alsdorf
M. Gangisetty
N. Kisiel
O. Baran
S. Rhind
T. Maurino
T. Nadig

Elementary Group 1 (11:00 - 11:30 am)

A. Maldonado
J. Berg
L. Kisiel
J. Baran
Z. Baran
J. Rhind
C. Maurino
Z. Nadig
M. Simms
W. Covendecker
L. Maxwell

Elementary Group 2 (11:30 - 12:00 pm)

B. Mathews
S. Chernila
C. Nelson
C. Young
J. Fanto
Z. McCain
S. Lewis
P. Bell-Devaney
O. Doerr
N. Meyerowitz
M. Paladino
M. Beckwith

Halloween, Holidays, & For Small Hands

By Meagan Ledendecker

Although Halloween has yet to arrive, stores are already preparing for the winter holiday season. As I recently walked through the evergreen decorations and stocking stuffers in Michael's Arts & Crafts (I was stocking up on more yarn for our budding knitters in the elementary classroom!), I realized that the weeks were flying by and that soon we would be consumed by both the joy and busyness of the holiday season.

At school we try to keep holidays as low-key as possible so that children experience a place of calm, normalcy, and routine in the midst of all the excitement and upheaval that holidays bring into our lives. For that reason, children do not come to school in costumes for Halloween. When appropriate we discuss the cultural factors or history of a holiday, but we respect that there are varied celebrations that happen within each family's setting and according to each family's preferences. With that in mind, we ask that this diversity among families be respected by the whole community.

We also want to remind everyone the school has a giving policy that relieves anyone of the responsibility to give individuals gifts. Instead, we provide the wish list slips for items that would be useful in the classrooms. There are no expectations or obligations. Rather the slips provide the opportunity – for those who desire or who are able – to give useful and relevant items that will help the school better serve the children. The collection of items – from small to large – can be included in the *For Small Hands* group order that is due by Monday, October 20. Remember this group order has no shipping charges!

Also keep in mind that you can include items from the larger catalog, *Montessori Services*. There are copies of this catalog on the table in the entryway. Please feel free to take a copy to browse and then return. We also have a few additional copies of the *For Small Hands* catalog. These are great to share with grandparents or other relatives who

wonder about appropriate gifts! If you or others happen to order from either of these catalogs after the group order is placed on October 20, please use our school code (#148597) so we can receive credits toward purchasing materials for the school.

Finally, before the holiday season fully descends upon us, I wanted to offer short version of Bill Corbett's "Eight Tips for Happier Holiday Season."

1: Good Behavior in Someone Else's Home

At some point prior to arriving at someone else's home for a holiday party, get to your child's eye level and go over the rules for being at the party. Acknowledge them every time you witness the behavior you want.

2: Reduce the Toys and Gifts

A few weeks before the holiday season arrives, allow your child to lead an activity to thin out the usable toys and clothes they already have and then donate them to a local charity. Let your child have as much participation in the process, especially the delivery to the donation center.

3: Take Care of Yourself

When you become stressed over the holidays, your appearance of being frantic and frazzled will be felt by the children. You need extra rest, exercise, and healthy eating, ingredients for greater self-control and patience.

4: Teach Children Gratitude

Make it a priority to get your family involved in a giving exercise this holiday season. This act of compassion will remain with your children for a very long time.

5: Don't Over Schedule

Consider your plans for this year and commit to simplifying the family calendar or take a vacation away from home.

6: Set Realistic Expectations for the Kids

Clarify your boundaries and rules and be patient when their excitement gets in the way. Remind yourself about the true meaning of the holidays.

7: Create the Reverence of New Traditions

Be willing to create new traditions for your immediate family that will leave lasting impressions, regardless of how simple they might be.

8: Be the Person You Want Your Children to Be

The most powerful training your children will ever have is the observations they make of your behavior on a daily basis. Ask yourself if what you're about to say or do will bring your family closer together.

Teaching Children about Money

by *Bill Corbett*

Our children today have little concept of money. They see us pull out “the card” for most of our purchases or drive up to the automated teller machine and press a few buttons to access what they think is an endless supply of cash. And when they see us purchasing luxuries such as a 42” plasma screen, the latest fancy cell phone, or a GPS for the car, they don’t understand why we won’t buy them the latest toy they want.

For a moment, imagine this scene. An adult and child are in a store and the adult tells the child “no” to a purchase he wants. The child then throws himself on the floor in a fit because mom won’t buy him the toy. Mom then becomes upset because she begins to feel resentful that her child doesn’t seem to appreciate all that she’s done for him or purchased for him up to this point. In the back of her mind she is thinking about all she’s purchased in spite of the fact that she struggles to get by with the little money she brings in each month on her own. Her feeling of resentment then turns into anger and she yells at him that he doesn’t appreciate the toys that he just received for his birthday a few weeks ago. The fit then turns into a tantrum and before you know it, she’s scolding him or even spanking him to stop his tantrum. She can’t handle the scene any longer and either drags him off to the parking lot or gives in and buys him the toy. Within a few days or weeks, she calls my office to find out when my next parenting class is because she’s tired of these episodes and doesn’t know what else to do.

Children can’t possibly know what our financial burdens and obligations are. We should not expect them to and we certainly shouldn’t be using guilt to make them feel bad for not appreciating what we buy them. Instead, we should avoid buying our children (and ourselves) too much in order to teach them about living within our means. We should

also institute and maintain a plan in the family to teach our children how to handle money appropriately. Here is one possible strategy, that I used with my children, which can help begin this process.

SETTING UP A TOOL

Obtain yellow mailing envelopes that measure approximately 6” x 9” and place them in a two- or three-ring binder. The exact size doesn’t really matter, as long as they are big and strong enough to contain dollars and coins. Place four envelopes in each child’s binder and allow them to personalize their binder with special drawings about money. Avoid telling them how to decorate the binders and allow them to create what comes to mind for them naturally about money. Each envelope will have a percentage and a title.

THE ENVELOPES

The first envelope should be titled DONATIONS and should have 10% on it. Making this envelope first will teach your child that giving money away to others in need comes before satisfying personal desires. The money in this envelope could be used to give to any charity. The second envelope should be titled SPENDING and have 20% on it. Money in this envelope could be designated for anytime the child wants to spend money, such as on shopping trips with an adult or when the ice cream truck is in the neighborhood. The third envelope should be titled SHORT TERM SAVINGS and have 30% on it. Money saved in this envelope will be for saving for something the child may wish for and purchase within a year or two, such as a new toy, game cartridge, or spending money for a school trip. Allow the child to draw or cut out a picture of something they would like to spend this money on and paste it onto the envelope. You may even want to put the price of this item on the envelope as a

continued on next page . . .

Teaching about Money . . . (continued)

target savings amount. The fourth and last envelope should be titled LONG TERM SAVINGS and have 40% written on it. Money saved in this envelope should be removed and banked on a monthly or quarterly basis. I suggest there be no target for this except to save and record the deposits as they are made. You may even want to make a rule that this money can only be withdrawn with your permission.

IMPLEMENTING THE PRACTICE

Every time the child receives money as a gift or a monetary reward for service, it should be broken down by the percentages on the envelopes and deposited into them. Parents may want to build a cash box and store it away, ready for making change for the child. Implementing this practice with your child, even if they are too young for math, will begin to teach her about percentages and will help establish a foundation for savings and spending.

CHORES AND ALLOWANCE

I do not support children getting allowances. I believe that parents will be more successful at raising cooperative kids if everything the children does to help out is NOT rewarded with money. I recommend that parents identify basic chores that every child must do without reward. These should be done for the simple fact of cooperating and contributing to the home and the family. Children can however, be rewarded financially when completing assignments that go above and beyond basic helping chores, such as working in the yard, helping to clean or organize the basement, or helping a parent with an office or paper-based task like filing papers.

World renown inspirational speaker and best selling author Dr. Wayne Dyer has a wonderful book for parents to read to their children about money. The book, *It's Not What You've Got! Lessons for Kids on Money and Abundance* from Hay House

Publishing, expands on ten valuable lessons we can teach our children about money.

Bill Corbett is the author of the book "Love, Limits, and Lessons," and the executive director of Cooperative Kids. He has three grown children, two grandchildren, and lives with his wife Elizabeth near Hartford, CT. You can visit his Web site www.CooperativeKids.com for further information and parenting advice.

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Moneyboxes at:
www.moonjar.com*



Tips & Tricks

When your child is expressing a feeling or strong emotion, try encouraging him or her to share more about that feeling. Since feelings are not right or wrong, we can help children learn to better understand and accept their feelings. Rather than subtly causing a child to curb these feelings, we can use encouraging statements to elicit more information.

When your child comes to you with a strong feeling (or even a not so strong feeling!) try getting to his or her eye-level and using some of these encouraging responses:

“Really?”	“Tell me more.”
“Then what happened?”	“Oh no!”
“What will you do now?”	“Wow!”
“How did that make you feel?”	

In Appreciation . . .

We extend our deep thanks to Tonya Doerr for volunteering her time to help prepare classroom materials, cut paper, and collate book orders.

A belated thank you goes out to Phillip Clatworthy for providing the lovely fish and fish tank in the Children's House, and for setting it up!

We continue to be thankful to all the families who take home laundry on the weekends. This is a great practical life experience for children, since they can be part of the laundry process!

If anyone would like to help organize cooking activities for the classrooms, please let us know. We have wonderful recipe cards for the classrooms and could just use a little assistance in getting the cooking projects up and running. (e.g. preparing a schedule and ingredient lists).

Check out our Wish List in the "How You Can Help" section of BerkshireMontessori.org!

The Montessori School
of the Berkshires

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Remember to visit the
Montessori Blog for updates
about what is happening on
a daily basis!

www.BerkshireMontessori.org

Upcoming Events & Reminders

Thursday, October 23, 6:30-7:30 pm
Community meeting. Parents only.

Friday, October 24, 11:00am-12:00pm
Family sharing day. Detailed schedule on page 4.

Friday, October 24
Half-day. Dismissal at noon.

Friday, November 7, 5:30-7:30 pm
Family Potluck at Lenox Community Center.

Tuesday, November 25, 11:00am-12:00pm
Family sharing day. Detailed schedule will be provided.

Tuesday, November 25
Half-day. Dismissal at noon.

November 26-28
School closed for Thanksgiving Break.

Friday, December 5
School closed for Parent-Teacher Conferences.