



Community News

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

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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,

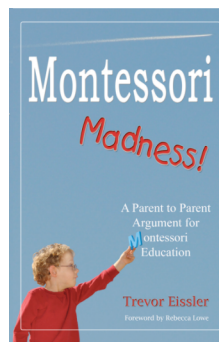
I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new elementary students, Sachy and Casey Booth Desnoyers and their family. Also we offer a warm welcome back to Sean Thrasher and his family. In Joey and Rose's class (CH 1), we welcome Kaidyn Moodie and his family. Patricia and Bonny's class (CH 2) welcomes Lilabel Kierstead, Nicolas' sister, and this week Maggie Hougan and her family will also be joining CH 2!

Todd Covert, Head of School

School News to Note

Trevor Eissler on March 22

The MSB Parent Group proudly presents, Trevor Eissler, author of *Montessori Madness...A Parent to Parent Argument for Montessori Education*. He is one of the most highly sought after speakers for Montessori conferences. Save the date! The event will be held at the Lenox Community Center on Monday, March 22, at 7:00 pm.



Also, the parent group will be selling his book for \$20 and \$10 of each purchase goes back to the Parent Group. Get yours before they are gone!

Toddler Information Workshop

On Saturday, January 23, at 1:00 pm the new MSB toddler teacher, Barbara

Pinkerton, will be in town to lead an information session on the school's new toddler program starting this coming fall. Please us know if you plan to attend!

Middle School Night

The Parent Education Night on Monday, February 1, at 7:30 pm, will focus on the structure and rationale of the Montessori middle school program. Our middle school teacher, Julie Haagenon, will present information about early adolescence and how the seventh and eighth grade program meets the emotional, social, and intellectual needs of our young adults. Come join us for this informative and inspirational evening!

What's Happening in the Classrooms?

Children's House

In **Children's House 2** the children have been very busy working on old familiar lessons as well as new ones they've been discovering. Through art they've been expressing lots of creativity, making stories, buildings, portraits of themselves or their friends.

They especially like the painting lessons, which sometimes they manage to paint themselves as well.

This year I've found that most of the children are especially interested in working with the sensorial lessons, these lessons helps them understand volume, size, shapes, weights, etc. while using their senses.

On the other hand math seems to be another favorite in the class, doing additions with the golden beads and they especially like the banking game.

During group we are continuing with some Spanish and we've been reading lots of books. The children have learned about our environment and how to help to keep our land and rivers clean. They are also learning about the different bodies of water and the different seas. We have also just started a book called *The Way We Work* by David Macaulay, which explains how the inside of the body works.

We have also started the Second Step program, which helps children learn how to handle different situations and emotions.

During the school year we've gotten a couple of new children, Louis and Lilabel. Louis has settle very nicely in his new environment and has been making lots of friends. Lilabel just started and has been learning to adjust in her new environment.



Grandparents; Night

Kindergarten Update

by Emmy Bowser-Dadak

During the afternoon kindergarten time, we start the week on Mondays with a circle time during which we have shares and a read-aloud book, which is currently *Stuart Little*. The children take turns being the "caller" during share time. They take a lot of pride in this responsibility and have shown a lot of consideration for the person they are calling on. This process is a little bit of an introduction into what we do in our Elementary community meetings as well.

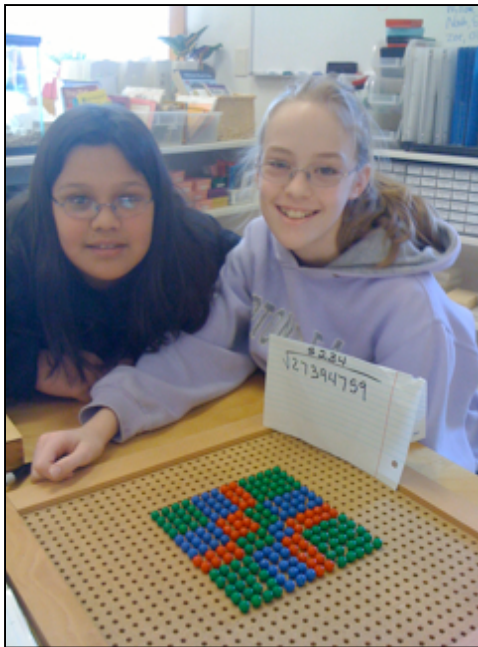
On Tuesdays and Wednesdays the circle time is followed by an activity. The activity for the first week of January was seeing how we could move a model car.

Elementary Update

The elementary class has been humming with activity and this spring promises to be full of significant events! In early February the class can look forward to the first “Great Lesson.” Many Montessori elementary classes present a series of lessons, termed Great Lessons, to provide students with a cosmic context for their studies.

At MSB we will have a three-year cycle for the Great Lessons. The first Great Lesson will be the Story of the Universe. The second Great Lesson will be presented at the end of May and will be the Story of the Earth. During the 2010-2011 school year, elementary students will enjoy the Story of Life and the Story of Humans. The following year the Great Lessons will be the Story of Writing and the Story of Mathematics.

On Saturday, March 20, the upper elementary Berkshire Robotics Team will compete in the



Working on square roots.

Berkshire Robotics Challenge at Lenox Memorial High School. The Team has been programming and constructing a robot to complete a series of challenges, as well as figuring the best way to communicate and problem solve as a team.

In late March, students will begin their Great Brain Projects. For the Great Brain Project each student will choose a topic to research in depth. The main goals of this project are for students to learn how to be resourceful, become “experts,” and present what they’ve discovered.

The Great Brain Project calendar is tentatively scheduled as follows:

Topic Choice: March 29-April 2

Questions & Letter Writing: April 5-April 16

Investigations: April 19-April 30

Create Presentation: May 3-May 7

Share Presentations: May 10-May 21

Great Brain Fair: May 21

On Wednesday, April 28, the elementary class will be visiting the Williams College Museum of Art. The Upper Elementary will tour Landscapes of the Mind, which features the work of four contemporary artists who work in an exciting variety of media and who are all inspired by the inner workings of the mind. The Lower Elementary will participate in a sculpture tour which explores the basics of sculpture through a variety of works in the museum, including a 50 foot felted whale, and concludes with hands-on exploration as students create their own paper sculptures.

News from the Specialists

Drama by Dana

Elementary: During the first semester in drama we worked on anonymous questionnaires about experiences that brought up various emotions and brought these to life in class through group and individual work. We created drama lessons using their historical characters from the historical dinner event, including image journey's into their worlds, bringing the characters to life, and a quiz show about the characters. We also did a unit on performance work in groups of 4 bringing different intentions and consequences to simple scene scripts. I look forward to where the students' interests will take us in this New Year...

Music by Andrea

Children's House Music: Children love "action" songs, songs with motions that correspond to the words, especially when they feel it makes them look silly! We have been spending time with "Johnny works with one hammer"- patting one knee, the two hammers-patting both knees, three hammers-patting both knees and stomping one foot, then two feet etc, until five hammers have the head bobbing too until the kids pretend the fall asleep from exhaustion. It's lots of fun, but at the same time the kids are learning to keep a steady beat and sing in tune. This after all is the main goal, and all of these children can match pitch. They are of an age where a gentle "shove" in this direction helps them focus on doing so, a skill they will attain throughout life when mastered at such a young age.

Elementary Music: Lots and lots of songs, that's the focus this year! What a better way to go through life having your own personal "songbag."*Your a Grand Old Flag, Tideo, Lots of Worms (!), Dreams of Harmony, I Love the Mountains,* and more. The older children can sing them as rounds and in harmony too. They

have already begun the recorder for this year, and perhaps by the spring will achieve a recorder choir. Both younger and the older children continue to learn to recognize music notation through singing and motion, and new this year- the composer of the week- a brief look and listen to master composers whose music is played during lunch time. Although the correct pronunciation of the composer named Johannes Brahms may be a struggle (lending itself to a few giggles here and there), the children clearly "get" how his orchestra developed in the largest instrumental ensemble up to that time in music history.

Spanish by Patricia

Kindergarten Spanish: Through lots of repetition the children have been learning words and small command sentences, we've been doing games and songs.

Elementary Spanish: We have been moving along very nicely, the younger Elementary have been learning nouns, verbs, and putting small sentences together. I will also read books to them and see how many words they can identify. The older Elementary have been working hard on making sentences and trying to put them in the right tense. They have been translating sentences and stories into English and Spanish.

Yoga by Meagan

Children's House Yoga: The children have learned a lovely little Namaste song which reminds them to see the goodness in other people as other people see the goodness in them. Each week we also act out a variety of yoga poses using books or stories. Often during yoga children take turns sharing peaceful or happy moments that have happened in their lives. We always end yoga with savasana, a time to relax and find inner calm, during which children have the option of cuddling with beanie baby stuffed animals.

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Elementary Yoga: The lower elementary group has enjoyed a combination of story yoga, vinyasa yoga to music, and most recently the Yoga Garden cooperative board game. In addition to story yoga and vinyasa yoga, the upper elementary students have been practicing advanced yoga poses and have been putting together their own series of yoga poses.

Library with Debby

This fall in the Children's House we have shared these books together:

A Good Day by Caldecott medalist Kevin Henkes - This gentle story affords an opportunity to introduce the very young to ways of dealing with life's small disappointments. Each of four animals is having a bad day. "But then..." each creature's turnaround unfolds in reverse order, small shifts in behavior and attitude making the change. With a remarkable economy of words, Henkes creates a deeply satisfying story. His illustrations speak volumes through simple details.

A Story for Bear by Dennis Haseley - When a young bear finds a letter in the fallen leaves, he is fascinated by the mysterious marks on the paper. One afternoon he discovers a cabin in a clearing where a woman is absorbed in a square object. He returns daily, and she coaxes him to come close and reads to him. Though the bear doesn't understand the words, he responds to her intonations. At summer's end when the woman goes away, she leaves her books for the bear. One by one, he carries them back to his cave, where he sleeps through the winter hearing her voice telling tales. This gentle message about the power of words is a tender, wistful celebration of the pleasures of reading.

Just before winter break, the children took turns decorating a flannel snowman while I read the ***The First Day of Winter*** by Denise Fleming. In this counting book that is told in a rhythm reminiscent of "The Twelve Days of Christmas," a snowman is decked out with mittens, birdseed pockets, big black buttons and even 10 salty

peanuts for his wintry toes. A squirrel, mouse, bird, cat, rabbit and deer appearing on each spread seem to gaze at readers. Fleming's work celebrates the season and all of winter's creatures with her characteristic mixed-media illustrations that are filled with energy and movement.

When they returned from break, we enjoyed ***Keep Looking!*** by Millicent Selsam and Joyce Hunt - After inviting readers into a realistic snowy country landscape, the authors explore the common and often overlooked animal life abundant there. Children are encouraged to look for signs of wild creatures, including deer, bats, raccoons, reptiles, rodents, the cocoon of next spring's moth, the eggs of next year's spiders, and a variety of birds. Children will very likely look at the winter landscape in a different way after spending time with this treasure.

Two future reads that celebrate all creatures great and small are ***When Stella was Very, Very Small*** by Marie-Louise Gay and ***The Lion & the Mouse*** by Jerry Pinkney. I'm guessing that Mr. Pinkney will be the 2009 Caldecott winner (announced on January 18) for this wordless retelling of the Aesop fable in which an adventuresome mouse proves that even small creatures are capable of great deeds when she rescues the King of the Jungle. Pinkney's artist's note explains that he set the book in Africa's Serengeti, "with its wide horizon and abundant wildlife so awesome yet fragile—not unlike the two sides of each of the heroes." Additional African species also grace his splendid panoramas. Pinkney has no need for words; his art speaks eloquently for itself. And there's always finger rhyme fun. Ask your children if they'd like to try to teach you this popcorn jingle:

"You put the oil in the pan and you let it get hot.
You put the popcorn in and you start to grin.
Sizzle, sizzle, sizzle, sizzle...POP!"

News from the MSB Parent Group

Yum! During our January Parent Group meeting we enjoyed quite a spread of food and beverages from attending parents.

Besides the food we are happy to report the we raised over \$1,500 from the Berkshire Grown Fundraiser. Eighteen families participated this year. The high sellers were the Young family (Colin & Chloe) with almost \$600 in orders! And Declan Travis' family did a great job promoting new online option to the tune of nearly \$300 in orders via the internet. Special thanks to: Nancy Ringer, Paula Subklew, Kehr Davis, Marya LaRoche Jen Salinetti for picking up products from the vendors. And to Bob & Tess Fedell, Todd Covert, Margaret Keller, Julie DiGrigoli, and Jennifer Young who joined the others in packaging family orders. And to the elementary students who helped sell every last item!

We discussed adding products and creating our own group of local vendors to do a fundraising event with next year. If anyone has any thoughts or comments to share about this year's BG fundraiser, please contact Marya or Jen.

This is the first year that the Parent Group has designated funds to host school events. And we're excited to announce the first event! **We'll be hosting Montessori parent and author of Montessori Madness, Trevor Eissler, on Monday, March 22!** He will be in the northeast to speak at the National American Montessori

Society Conference in Boston and has happily accepted our invitation to speak here in Lenox. This is a rare opportunity to see one of the most sought after Montessori speakers. It's not to be missed! In addition, the Parent Group will be selling Trevor's book and half of the cost of the book will be returned to the school from the author. This event will be at the Lenox Community Center on Monday, March 22, at 7pm. It is open to the public so spread the word!

Speaking of spreading the word, in discussing ways the parent group can help the school we determined that it would be beneficial to help promote the school by distributing flyers and rack cards. So, we're asking families who frequent places that post flyers or have space for rack cards/holders to take a few materials with them. You can pick them up in the office any time.



The 2 ¢ents Event Dessert Potluck will be held on January 29, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Lenox Community Center. This gathering will be an opportunity to sign-up for all of our 2 ¢ents Events (scheduled from February through June), while enjoying each others' fine desserts and good company. More details to come!



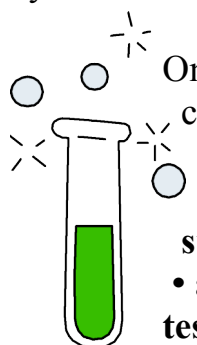
We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. —Maria Montessori

Classroom Wish Lists . . .

In the Children's Houses and Elementary, we've had a rash of interest in the balance scale in our classroom. Students have wanted to go beyond balancing marbles or other objects or comparing weights, and are interested in determining the actual weights of objects. So we are putting the call out for an actual **beam balance scale** that uses calibrated weights (or something to that effect). If you have a beam balance scale lying around your attic or basement, please let us know! We would love to put it to good use.



While you are looking around for that old balance scale, let us know if you find an **old electric drill** to use for some art projects. Thanks!



On the off chance that someone knows of someone wanting to get rid of various chemistry materials, here are a few things we're seeking in order to conduct more advanced chemistry experiments: • **methyl orange powder** • **tartaric acid** • **sodium carbonate** • **litmus powder** • **copper sulphate** • **magnesium sulphate** • **sodium thiosulphate** • **cobalt chloride** • **iron sulphate** • **ammonium chloride** • **calcium carbonate** • **copper oxide** • **test tubes** • **test tube rack** • **test tube holder** • **glass stirring rod** • **chemistry scoop** • **goggles**.

❧ *In Gratitude* ❧

We offer heartfelt thanks to Marya LaRoche for her hard work organizing the Berkshire Grown fundraiser and to all the families who participated to make it the most successful year yet!

Ongoing thanks goes out to the Class Liaisons – Sarah Steven for CH2, Marc & Julie DiGrigoli for CH2, and Colette Baran & Mark Losardo for Elementary – for keeping up with the laundry & snack sign-ups.

We also really appreciate how Newell Young, Nancy Ringer, Rachel Beckwith, Judy Sprague, Cinthia Dominguez, Ramesh Gangisetty, Sara Steven, and others have helped distribute flyers around the area.

Upcoming Events & Community Reminders

Saturday, January 23. Toddler Information Session (1:00 pm).

Friday, January 29. 2 cents Events Dessert Kick-Off. Lenox Community Ctr (7:00-9:00 pm).

Monday, February 1. Parent Education Night on the Middle School Program (7:30 pm).

Monday, February 8. Parent Group Meeting (7:00 pm).

Friday, February 12. Family Sharing. Children's House (all): 11:00-11:45 am.
Elementary Group 1: 10:30-11:15 am. Elementary Group 2: 11:15-12:00 pm.

Friday, February 12. School closes at noon.

Monday, February 15 – Friday, February 19. School closed for Winter Break.

Tuesday, February 23. Parent Social. Details TBA.

Monday, March 1. Parent Education Night. Topic TBA.

Friday, March 12. Grandparents/Grandfriends Night (5:30-6:30 pm).

Saturday, March 20. Elementary Berkshire Robotics Team Challenge Event. Lenox Memorial High School (8:00am-3:00pm).

The Montessori School of the Berkshires

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Remember to visit the Montessori Blog for insight into the classroom!

www.BerkshireMontessori.org/classroomblog

And the Taking Root blog for updates about the new campus!

www.BerkshireMontessori.org/trblog-home/