

A LETTER FROM ANITA

Dear Parents,

The New Year has started out on a very positive note, in spite of the chilly weather. As you may have noticed, there are several new students in the Toddler, Primary and Elementary classrooms. We are catching up nicely from the slight drop in enrollment we have experienced for the past couple of years due to the economy.

I extend a very warm welcome to those of you who are new to our CMS family. I am pleased that you have chosen an authentic Montessori education for your children. I hope you will take the opportunity to attend some of the upcoming events at the school, and get to know more of the other families here at CMS.

I had a nice surprise to learn that Ms. Charley, our wonderful Toddler Community assistant, expressed interest in becoming an AMI trained infant/toddler teacher. The school is sponsoring her to spend the next two summers at The Montessori Institute of Denver. She will continue to work with Jana guiding your precious toddlers – her training will make her an even more valuable classroom assistant!

During the course of the spring semester, you will see the adolescent classroom begin to take shape. Plans are moving forward for the start of our first seventh grade class in September 2011. Ms. Jenna, who holds both an AMI elementary and adolescent diploma, will be making use of her training as she develops and integrates the curriculum for our school. This program will be an extraordinary and perfect opportunity for your adolescent students.

In early February we will be hosting an evening event on the subject of media in the home. I hope many of you will be able to attend. This is such an important topic as new media and technology has potentially altered the home environment in terms of access and activities available. Jennifer Bannister will address the ongoing challenges to assist you in finding a smart balance between new technologies and traditions of human interaction and play that are so important to human development.

I wish all of you a healthy, happy and safe new year.

Anita

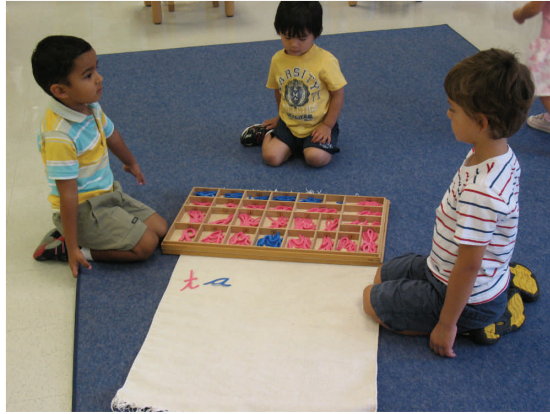
Jan	27	Introduction to Montessori Elementary 5:30—7 p.m.
Feb	1	Morning Coffee 8:30—9:30
	8	Media & Technology: The Effects of our Kids Today 5:30—7p.m.
	18	SCHOOL CLOSED
	21	President's Day SCHOOL CLOSED
Mar	1	Morning Coffee 8:30—9:30
	9	Open House 9-11 a.m.
	11	Parent-Teacher Conference Day—NO SCHOOL

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Back to School!
Ms. Jayanti

Thanks to all the parents for helping to organize our Holidays around the World, and for your contribution to our classroom gift. The children are enjoying resting in their chair and having fun taking care of Speckles, our classroom fish! Special thanks to all who brought wonderful things from different European countries, and for the amazing costumes. It was a wonderful learning experience for our children!

Now that the holiday excitement is over, the children are coming in eager to resume their normal routine. Younger children are showing independence and self-confidence in the classroom in choosing work and taking care of the classroom environment. They are moving into more complex lessons such as sand paper letters, moveable alphabet, number rods, decimal system work and counting chains. The older children are practicing their writing and reading skills and learning their math facts.



With the New Year we welcomed several new students to our classroom. It is delightful to watch the older children kindly taking the new children under their wings, acting as role models and mentors for the newcomers, and making them feel comfortable as part of our classroom community. This ensures the transition will be a positive experience for the new children. When a new child starts, other children in the classroom are eager to show them the preliminary lessons, such as how to walk around a rug, carry a chair, and use the materials with care and respect. This helps the new children adapt to the environment in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

Another opportunity for our children to reflect upon their accomplishments is Parent-Child Day. This is a unique event that provides a chance for our families to witness what their children have learned in the classroom. Join us to watch as each child walks with confidence and grace, from one work to another, showing their mastery of skills developed in all the lessons!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!
Ms. Laura

With the holidays behind us, the children are adjusting well to the daily routine once again. They were very eager to share their vacation experiences with me and their friends. We welcomed two new children to our classroom; they are adjusting very well with the love and guidance of their peers.

Thanks to all of you, we have a new adjustable calendar, an ant farm, and a skeleton x-ray puzzle for the children to enjoy. The x-ray puzzle has sparked wonderful study of the human body and the functions of the organs. This has led to conversations about how to take care of your body with good nutrition, exercise and proper rest.



In light of the recent holiday celebrating The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we should contemplate and give thanks also to Dr. Maria Montessori for having the vision to create an educational philosophy which fosters peace and compassion. Chesterfield Montessori School is a community pulsating with positive energy and love. The children create relationships based on forgiveness, generosity, and intelligent problem-solving, which serves as inspiration for all of us.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the Parent-Child Day this Saturday.

Holidays around the World and Global Connection in a Montessori Class Room

Ms. Jaya

My sincere thanks to all the parents who helped celebrate "Holidays around the World." The event was meaningful, colorful, and educational, and brought the whole school community together. I am very pleased that parents took time off to be part of this special day.

The children are so enriched and inspired by the cultural study; the older children are busy all day labeling the maps of the continents. They



talk among themselves about the landmarks of different countries, the way of life, mode of transportation, etc. In fact, two young children who went to India recently shared with the class beautiful pictures of unique architecture, gardens, and the busy streets of a city in India. Looking at the three-

wheelers, some of the children commented, "This is called 'cyclo' in Vietnam, and 'auto rikshaw' in India." Talk about global connection! The prepared environment in a Montessori class room provides the opportunity for the children to learn geography, history, and culture of the world in a natural way.

I greatly appreciate the generous gifts given by all the parents. The children are enjoying some peaceful, private time relaxing on their 'new child size chair'.

The aquarium purchased for the class room is beautiful. Madame Beth has been very busy and enthusiastic about setting up the aquarium, and she is educating the children about the process of getting the fish tank ready before putting the fish in it. She is telling the

children how to get the water balanced, how the air filter and pump work, and how to incorporate live plants in the tank. She is also impressing upon the children that it is a great responsibility to take care of a pet. We will have fish in the tank soon.

Welcome to the new children who joined us in January. They have already acclimated to the class room and have become part of the community. The younger children look up to the older children as role models, and the older children have happily taken on the task of mentoring the new children, demonstrating lessons such as sand paper letters and vocabulary enrichment cards. This helps develop self-confidence and a sense of belonging. It is gratifying to watch children interact with each other with respect, compassion, and care.

I look forward to seeing you all at our Parent-Child Day on January 22nd.

Snow

By Ms. Rebecca's class

A blinding whiteness,
An instant playground
that falls from a sky
of white powder.

Slipping slopes that sparkle
like glitter, a sea of sugar
blanketing the earth.
A fairyland of white.



by Tibka Carr
Drawing by Tibka Carr

Imagine That Ms. Rachel

As many of you know, I recently returned from maternity leave after having my son, William. I feel extremely fortunate to be able to come back to such a warm and welcoming environment. One of the gifts that came out of my time away has been the ability to see the growth in the children since I've been gone. Being away from the classroom has given me a different perspective; it is almost as if I am seeing the students for the first time. One of the things I have noticed is the blossoming of a new and further developed level of curiosity and imagination in the students.

Children in the second plane of development (ages six through twelve) go through many changes, both physically and psychologically. The experiences and objects that enthralled them in the past may no longer suffice. Now they have logical minds that want to know the reasons for things. Our job is to provide them with opportunities where they can exercise those minds, especially in group settings. Imaginative use of ideas and information is characteristic of this age as they explore the logic of ideas and experiment with questions such as "What if?" and "Just suppose?" as well as "Has it always been?" and "What is right and wrong?"

The role of imagination recently became clearer to me in a geography lesson where we discussed the movement of the plates of the earth and the science of Plate Tectonics. I have given lessons on this subject many times in the past, but this time I was made acutely aware of how much imagination is necessary in order to discuss this topic. The children in the lesson displayed never-ending curiosity about the past, present, and future of our planet. As in many lessons, their questions were contagious and soon other students were asking me for the same work. The fact that the earth was

once a super-continent really got their brains going.

Through this lesson and the discussions that followed, I was reminded that the role of the imagination in elementary education is to allow the children to travel through time and space in order to visualize things not present. We learned in our geography work that we can look at the earth as being broken into puzzle pieces. By doing this we are able to see both the pieces of the whole and the whole itself. Imagination allows children to grasp that entire view of the universe, the earth, life on earth, and the development of human beings, while also examining the details of all of those things, and then fitting those details into their proper relationship in the whole.



The Prepared Environment

Ms. Tina

An essential component of the Montessori pedagogy is the prepared environment.

“Montessori classrooms provide a prepared environment where children are free to respond to their natural tendency to work. The prepared environment offers the essential elements for optimal development. The key components comprise the children, teacher and physical surroundings including the specifically designed Montessori educational material” (Montessori-AMI.org).

The flora and fauna within the prepared environment can inspire much great work – observations, research, science experiments, surveys, measuring, diagrams, art projects, word problems, short stories, plays, etc.

Our prepared environment has had many exciting additions in the last few months due to the generous donations of our CMS parents. As many of you know, our classroom is fortunate to have (or will have) an animal from each class of vertebrates: reptile (a Bearded Dragon - named Big Dipper), fish (a Beta Fish named Little Dipper), amphibian (two African Dwarf Frogs named Ceres and Eris after the dwarf planets), bird (the lower elementary will be hatching chicks this spring), and mammal (a Chinchilla named Dusty after the frequent dust baths he enjoys). We are also lucky to have two invertebrates within our prepared environment (two snails within the frogs' habitat -named Saturn and Neptune, after their rings).

Over the last few months, I have seen the children greatly benefit from the new animals in our prepared environment. There have been many natural opportu-

nities to discuss numerous aspects of biology. For example, Big Dipper is currently in brumation, which is the reptile version of hibernation among mammals. This answers why he has been so lethargic and has not been eating as much lately. We have also been studying ecosystems (habitats and food chains), identifying the body functions (circulatory, digestive, reproductive, respiratory, skeletal, and integumentary) of the five classes of vertebrates, and learning about animals' sleeping habits. Bearded Dragons, like human beings, are diurnal (they are awake during the day and they sleep at night). Chinchillas are crepuscular (they are awake during the twilight hours and they sleep during the brightest parts of the day and the darkest parts of the night). None of our pets are nocturnal (awake during the night and asleep during the day), but we have discussed a few that are, such as crickets, raccoons, and owls.

Not only have there been numerous educational opportunities due to the animals in our prepared environment, but the children have also been developing a wonderful sense of responsibility. Every week, the classroom job of “zoologist” is changed. The weekly zoologist is responsible for preparing the meals and ensuring that each animal has a clean, safe, and comfortable environment. This includes, but is not limited to, chopping vegetables for Big Dipper, sweeping up shavings that have fallen out of Dusty's cage, and helping to change Big Dipper's water periodically.



The children could not be more pleased with their prepared environment. If you have not yet come to visit or observe our classroom, please do! We would love to give you the grand tour, and show you all of the exciting things we have been learning and doing.

Responsibility & Discipline

Ms. Rebecca

Happy 2011! As we enter our new semester, I am struck by how responsible and disciplined our children are. As a key attribute of the Montessori curriculum, responsibility stems from the child's development of discipline within their work, within the care of the environment, within their social actions, and within their control of inner self--their impulses. As elementary teachers, we provide children with ample opportunities to develop their inner-discipline, gaining a sense of responsibility, and ultimately, a deep sense of satisfaction within themselves and with life.

Toward the end of the work cycle on the first day of school, I was approached by Charlie and Carson. "Ms. Rebecca, did you know you forgot something?" I replied that I was unaware of this. "Well, you see, it is no longer 2010, it is now 2011, and we need a new calendar." I asked them what they thought we should do about it. They replied, "we could go buy a new calendar." They immediately set off, arranging a trip to Borders, researching the history of our calendars, and drawing a picture of Pope Gregory VIII (he is responsible for our current calendar). Then on their going out, they had to think of the whole class's preferences versus their own.

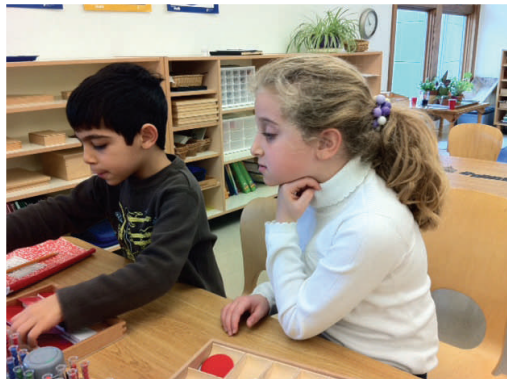
They settled on a calendar of tropical islands. While I could have purchased a calendar over break, I had intentionally left 2010 on the wall, knowing that someone would feel compelled to take responsibility for the care of the classroom on their own will.

This semester we have gained a new classmate, an outgoing Russian Desert Tortoise named Molasses. Children are quite taken with him and immediately requested that we set up guidelines for interacting with the turtle. I simply acted as a mediator: "only four people can observe him at a time," "use low voices so you don't startle him," "only feed him if you are the classroom biologist," "wash your hands before and after you pet him." Joshua and Tegan quickly set up a going out to buy him more lettuce and mustard greens.



I am also impressed by children's sense of discipline and responsibility when it comes to doing their work. Children by nature want to do a good job. They are aware of the pacing of the day and complete tasks

quickly when its time to clean up, just as Bridget does when she puts her work away and says "time to clean up?" and then to her friends, "time to clean up!" Also, children will set their own work schedules, as Lea did when she planned out her Roman research writing, "one topic per day for four days."



Also, I am impressed by how children will ask for more challenging problems, like Erin did when doing a 6-digit long multiplication problem with Montessori materials, or how children will fill one page with problems,

and then turn over the page and fill the backside too. Ingrid and Naveed were quite pleased with themselves after doing addition of fractions for two pages.

Children relish an opportunity to make their work larger, bigger, and more in-depth. Cuinn and Taayan were thrilled

to elaborate on their turtle research by a making a clay model of the carapace and attached vertebrae. They was thrilled to make a model of the god Janus after writing a passage on the religion of the ancient Romans.

Children are also quick to practice their skills to become proficient in a subject, as Tibka carefully repeats her homophones study with great focus. Recently, before a presentation Matthew confided in me, "I really want to do a good job on my presentation and feel a little nervous, so I'm going to practice it until I get it just right." He did exactly as he said he would, reading his papers again and again, until he presented his work and did a great job! Children also show a sense of discipline in their execution of work, as Neema painstakingly ordered the beads of the decanomial formation and then proceeded to carefully search for numerical squares within the bead layout.

Each of these acts, no matter how simple, is a direct reflection of the children's ability to draw upon their sense of responsibility, to achieve success and inner discipline, to control their mind and body to do so. And...these acts happen every day without fail, giving the room a level of achievement, activity, and contentment that is otherwise unheard of in elementary education.

"This is a period in which discipline becomes established: a form of active peace, of obedience and love, when work is perfected and multiplied, just as when the flowers in spring get their colors and prepare a distant harvest of sweet and nourishing fruit." (The Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori)