



Inside this issue:

Learning to Read — The Montessori Way	1
Healthy Snack Recipe	2
Montessori Concepts and Terminology	2
Primary News	3
Elementary News	3
Student Reporter	3
Follow the Child	4

Important Contacts

Liz Morgan—Admin Assistant
Liz@elanvitalmontessori.org

Laura Rempert Kraeuter—Director
Laura@elanvitalmontessori.org

Katie Guell—Primary
Katie-Lauren@elanvitalmontessori.org

Catherine Lawrence—Primary
Catherine@elanvitalmontessori.org

Ivy Lewis—Afternoon/Extended Care
Ivy@elanvitalmontessori.org

Mark Lawrence — Primary Assistant
Mark@elanvitalmontessori.org

Heather Niemic—Elementary
Heather@elanvitalmontessori.org

Learning to Read — The Montessori Way

Montessori learning is based on individual developmental characteristics and needs, not on chronological age. The Montessori way respects the child as a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth and concedes that each child carries his own internal, developmental alarm clock. Different levels of ability, development, and learning styles are expected, accepted, and used to design the curriculum.

Children in multi-age and multi-grade Montessori classrooms move at their own pace. It would be foolish to establish a set age or grade cut-off date for a child to ride a bike. Likewise, Montessori classrooms do not dictate that all children automatically learn how to read simply because they have made 6 orbits around the sun. Some read by age 7, others may need more exposure to Montessori literacy experiences to learn to read by age 8 or 9.

The Montessori reading curriculum has three essential components: A strong foundation in phonics, comprehension based on visualization, and whole language, or learning to read for meaning and using context clues.

Montessori reading is based on a strong foundation of phonics. This multi-sensory approach is unique in that it has children building words (encoding) before actually reading them (decoding). Developmentally appropriate

activities allow children to build their own understanding of how sounds are represented by symbols, and these symbols are joined together to form words.

In the Montessori classroom, by the age of 4, children are developmentally ready and eager to begin the preparation for reading. Along with learning the sounds and tracing their symbols with the sandpaper letters, students simultaneously learn to hold a pencil and control its use with the insets for design.

When children have learned the phonetic sounds, they are ready to begin word building with the moveable alphabet. They begin by building to two or three letter phonetic words (those in which all the letters make their most common sound, like dog, pig, ram, bat, etc.). In order to allow the children to work independently, they are given small phonetic objects that represent the words they are to build. Later, pictures of phonetic words can be introduced for variety and additional practice in word building.

After the child has mastered two and three letter word building, he or she can begin matching reading cards with the objects and later pictures, and begin working on building four or more letter phonetic words. After these are mastered, the child can match four or more letter words with corresponding objects and pictures, in a variety of formats. At this time, the child can begin to read phonetic phrases

and sentences, and match them with pictures. Specially prepared phonetic books are then introduced.

The key to comprehension is visualization, and in the Montessori approach to reading, children have lots of practice developing this skill. Visualization is an essential component of the grammar activities where an understanding of the function of words is developed through the use of manipulative activities. Working with these activities gives children further practice in reading and comprehension through visualization.

It is only after children have mastered the phonetic sounds of letters, that they are introduced to the phonograms, sounds represented by combinations of letters like "sh" and "ph", long vowel sounds, and other less common pronunciations of letters. Once the teacher has introduced a new sound, the children can work independently to master the sound in words.

After mastering the phonograms, children's interest will lead them to read any book they wish. We strive with young children to give them beautifully illustrated books about the real world. There are also many reading activities related to science, geography, history, and many other topics of special interest, as well as further experiential grammar activities, which the children greatly enjoy.



Mock Sushi



Healthy Snack Recipe for Kids

Mock Sushi

This version of a lunchtime sandwich is great for kids since they are more likely to eat something that seems novel to them. The "oohs" and "ahhs" the kids will get in the lunchroom at school, from other kids and teachers alike, makes these little bites even more fun.

Change up spreads and toppings to suit your own tastes. Each single slice of bread provides 3 or 4 rolls, making 6 to 8 rolls a full sandwich-worth. We use white whole wheat bread (the kids never know!) for added nutrition.

Hands-On Time: 15 minutes
Ready In: 15 minutes
Yield: 1 serving

Ingredients

- 2 slices wheat bread - crusts removed

- Peanut butter, cream cheese or hummus
- Matchstick cuts of apple, pear, cheddar cheese, red pepper, carrots, or cucumber

Directions

1. Roll slices of bread flat and spread with peanut butter, cream cheese, or hummus.
2. Layer each slice of bread with desired topping -- one single layer is all that is needed -- more will make it difficult to roll. Layer refried beans and cheddar cheese. Layer peanut butter with apples and pears. Layer cream cheese or hummus with carrots, cucumbers, and red peppers.
3. Roll each slice of bread up so that the edges meet.

4. Press lightly to seal.
5. Cut each roll into 3 or 4 slices.
6. Keep covered until ready to serve.

Primary Snacks for the week of:

4/5 — No School
4/12 — Blake B.
4/19 — Sunny D.
4/26 — Luke F.
5/3 — Sasha G.



The Pink Tower and the Broad Stairs are shown here together in an extension activity. The child can make a variety of designs limited only by his or her imagination and the constraints of the material.

Montessori Concepts and Terminology

The Pink Tower

The pink tower work has 10 pink cubes. The smallest cube is 1 cubic centimeter and the largest cube is 10 cubic centimeters. The work is designed to provide the child with a concept of "big" and "small."

The child starts with the largest cube and puts the 2nd largest cube on top of it. The work continues until all 10 cubes are stacked on top of each other.

The control of error is visual. The child sees the cubes are in

the wrong order. If the cubes are stacked on the corner, the smallest cube may be used to place on each level. The ledge of each level will be 1cm wide and the child will be able to see if the small cube fits on each ledge.

The Broad Stair

The broad stair is designed to teach the concepts of "thick" and "thin." The broad stairs are 10 sets of wooden prisms with a natural or brown stain finish. Each stair is 20 cm in length and varies in thickness from 1 square cm to 10 square cm.

When the broad stairs are put together from thickest to thinnest, the material makes stairs going down. As an extension, the broad stairs are often used with the pink tower to allow the child to make many designs.



Primary News

Happy Spring everyone! The weather has finally been consistently beautiful and the Primary class has been enjoying it! We have been spending a lot more time outside in nature. Boxey has come out of hibernation in our garden and we are watering flowers and pulling weeds in all of our gardens. Our broccoli in the vegetable garden is doing very well, and we hope to plant tomatoes when we return from break. Peggy Russell had provided sunflower seeds that we will be planting tomorrow. How exciting! Thank you so much to everyone that worked so hard on beautification day! I cannot tell you how much that means to all of us. It sets such a wonderful example and creates a beautiful memory for the children to see us all come together to care for our surroundings. The school looks beautiful.

Grandparents' day was a hit. We loved seeing the different generations come together. The children loved showing their work, and we enjoyed meeting and speaking with all of the grandparents. Many were interested in finding out more about the Montessori curriculum and we had some wonderful conversations. Catherine

and I love the opportunity to speak to people about how and why we teach the children the way we do. We are very happy with the academic progress we have seen in our class this year. Our shelves are very full and the more simple works are no longer used, they are all engaging in challenging tasks. As we enter these final months of school, we are reflecting on the growth we see in all of our students. What wonderful children you all have! It is such a joy to teach them every day!

Some of the full day students have had a recent explosion into handwriting. Some of them now have binders where they are making daily entries. They are all pleased with this. If anyone would like to send a folder to keep your child's work organized in, you may. I know that they all come home with loose piles of work. If you wish, send a plain folder with your child's name on it, and we will help them organize their cubby.

Have your children come home talking about strangers lately? I know that Laura has already addressed this in email, but Catherine and I would like to stress how

important the health and safety of your child is to us. The incident that happened created an opportunity for a lesson, and we educated the whole class on what to do when meeting a stranger. We have also made some changes concerning entering and exiting the classroom. According to the law, we cannot lock the doors during the school day, but we may lock the gates. Please help us with enforcing these safety precautions.

Once the school day begins at 8:30, only enter the school through the office. Please lock the child locks on the gates when you enter and exit. I know they can be tricky but they serve a very important purpose. If you have any questions or concerns about this subject please feel free to talk with us. Thank you!

We have started planning our end of the year festivities and summer camp. I think we will have a wonderful closing of a wonderful school year. Please remember to reserve your spot for Summer!

Peace

Katie and Catherine

Elementary News

The primary and elementary have had lots of dusty fun lately building volcanoes during recess. They were so excited by their creations that we just had to make them erupt! There was much talk about how volcanoes are formed and the difference between magma and lava but they were in awe over the fact that volcanoes can be underwater.

What do we use in our daily lives which helps make our work easier? Simple machines, of course. The students examined the schoolyard for examples of these six machines. If we could not find one in action, we made one such as an inclined plane for Boxey or a lever to lift each other off the ground.

One of our recent science experiments was about the pH of substances around us. We used red cabbage juice to determine which of our three solutions was an acid, base, or neutral substance. It was exciting to watch how red the vinegar turned since it was an acid and how the baking soda and water solution turned green due to its alkalinity. Now the class is on a mission to test everything!

It has been a fascinating discovery to learn how houses around the world can be so different from the ones we live in here in the United States. While studying about the needs of people, we are exploring shelters in many countries. Each house has been so unique based on its surround-

ings and the needs of the people who live in it. The students were speechless when they learned that some houses are movable and look like a tent, others are made of mud and grass, and still others housed the farm animals in the family living quarters. They could not believe that not all people have electricity in their houses for lights, microwaves, or video games.

We have been discovering so many great things and cannot wait to learn about all the signs of spring during the coming month!

Heather

Student Reporter

Each Month we will be featuring a different student reporter to give us a child's perspective of Élan Vital.

This month, due to the advent of Spring Break, there was a mild case of Spring Fever and none of the students were interested in being interviewed.

This feature will resume next month!!



Follow the Child

It is challenging to provide sufficient levels of parent education that make a real impact. Moreover, many parents are either too busy or are otherwise unable to attend parent education events when they are offered. Emily Geizer, a Montessori preschool teacher, often found herself confronted with this parent education conundrum. She proceeded to develop a practical, crash course in Mindful Parenting, which aligns seamlessly with the Montessori philosophy.

Over the next several months, I will dedicate this column to sharing her lessons with you. Last month's newsletter contained her first lesson, "Zebras Are Black and White, Parenting is Not". This month's topic is, "The Family Envelope". I hope these lessons will provide you with a comprehensive "follow the child" angle to some of the difficult parenting choices that we all have to make.

- Laura

#2 — The Family Envelope

Parenting is a necessary hierarchy. Children crave this division, to an extent. Children want to feel consistently embraced, secure, and guided. Child-rearing expert and author, Dr. Ron Taffell, calls this a "family envelope". Kids are yearning for us to create this safe envelope. When we do so in ways that are appropriate, their better selves emerge.

Yet, this hierarchy has a delicate balance that can easily tip more toward overbearing, micro-managing, or heavy-handed parenting.

The parenting hierarchy has changed over the years. It used to be about tough love and rule enforcement. Parenting was top down, like a tower. Today it's closer to a level-playing field (more like an envelope). Many parents see themselves as part of a

team with their kids. This is in line with societal changes.

As parents, we must navigate this hierarchy mindfully. In fact, without adequate training, this parenting approach can ping-pong between overindulging the kids and dominating them.

Effective hierarchy is not just about the rules, but also about parents understanding their children. It's about being flexible and responsive in your parenting approach.

Once you understand your own parenting style and your child's unique preferences and temperament, your life will be instantly easier! The inner experience of parents meets the inner experience of

kids. This intersection begs for mindfulness.

You will be able to get what you want! And, by building up your child, he can get what he wants too. You will be able to support him in all situations with much greater success.

Before we delve into this crash course in mindful parenting, you should learn a little bit about yourself. In the next lesson, we will look at the different parenting styles and how each can be improved upon for much happier parenting!

Cheers,

Emily
Real Parenting Solutions

Upcoming Events:

Lion Witch and Wardrobe – April 15 (Liz has the carpool list)

Earth Day – April 22 – (non parent event)

Parent Ed Night – April 28 @ 6:00 — *please RSVP if you will require childcare*

Mothers Day Tea – May 7 (Elementary only)

Parent Teacher Conferences – May 21 and 28

EVM Yard Sale – May 22

Last Day of School and Candlelight Ceremony – June 4



élan vital

MONTESSORI SCHOOL Inc.
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

5228 Perkins Road ~ Baton Rouge, LA 70808 ~ 225-767-6620 ~ www.elanvitalmontessori.org