

Élan Vital Newsletter

Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence.

-Maria Montessori



Élan Vital Montessori School

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Élan Vital Parents Honored in 40 Under 40 List

Since 1994, *Business Report* has showcased men and women under the age of 40 who are influencing decisions, capturing the entrepreneurial spirit and balancing bottom-line results with involvement in community and charitable activities. Who are these rising business stars?

To be sure, they are an eclectic group. They are architects and artists, ac-

countants and attorneys, doctors and dentists, principals and presidents, reporters and photographers.

And they have one thing in common. In recognition of their personal and professional accomplishments, they are 2009 recipients of *Business Report's* Forty Under 40 award.

More than 225 people were nominated this year, and two of the recipients are Élan Vital

parents! Please join me in acknowledging Tefvik Kosar and Carmen Lavergne.

For the full story, click below:

<http://www.businessreport.com/news/2009/nov/13/2009-forty-under-40-gnit1/>



Élan Vital Toddler Co-op

Our parent run Toddler Co-operative is an opportunity for your child to interact with peers and loving adults in a safe, Montessori-based environment for a few hours, twice a week.

We are NOT a daycare, preschool, or mothers-day-out. Parents take turns serving as the care-providers; this allows them to get to know other parents and their child's new friends, as well as, observe their own child in this educational and fun setting. We have one person on staff -- an experienced, Montessori-trained teacher, to serve as "director" and lead teacher.

During the 2010 spring session, we plan to meet from

about 9am-noon Mondays and Wednesdays.

We are finalizing the terms of our relationship with our host site, St. James Place, on Lee Drive. We are thrilled with the space they have to offer, as well as, the potential for intergenerational activities and relationships.

Children who will be 18 months to 3 years of age on December 31, 2009 are welcome. Parents are required to work their scheduled duty days; babysitters and family relatives are not suitable substitutes for parents. Please note that duty days will only fall once every 4-6 weeks, so with some flexibility, 2-income

families should still be able to participate. The group needs to consist of 8-12 families to run efficiently and safely as a cooperative.

Tuition is \$110/month. There may also be an initial fee for or donation of supplies. Spots will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Applications may be picked up from London, in Élan Vital's office, or by contacting Carissa Graves, 202.491.6221 (cell), or email carissa_joy@hotmail.com.



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Healthy Snack Recipe—Macaroni and Cheese Cupcakes



Macaroni and
Cheese Cupcakes



Whether you serve them as children's finger food or cocktail-party nibbles, these miniature mac-and-cheese cupcakes are downright adorable. They're so easy to fix the kids can help you with most of the work, too.

Ingredients

- 8 ounces [elbow macaroni](#)
- 2 cups shredded [cheddar cheese](#)
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup [milk](#) (any type)
- 2 large [eggs](#)

Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

- Cook pasta according to package directions.

Meanwhile, prepare pans:

- Either line a muffin tin with 12 paper or foil cupcake liners, or grease mini muffin pans (enough for 24 mini cupcakes) with butter and sprinkle with panko crumbs, dumping out excess crumbs.

- When pasta is done, drain and return to pot.

- Stir in shredded cheese until melted.
- Season with salt and pep-

per.

- Beat eggs and milk together in a medium bowl; stir into pasta.
- Spoon mixture into prepared muffin cups.

Bake 20 minutes for full-size cupcakes; 15 minutes for mini cupcakes.

Primary Snacks for the week of:

11/30—Camille L.
12/07—Hayes L.
12/14—Conrad M.

Montessori Concepts and Terminology

The Montessori Materials

In the Montessori classroom, learning materials are arranged invitingly on low, open shelves. Children may choose whatever materials they would like to use and may work for as long as the material holds their interest. When they are finished with each material, they return it to the shelf from which it came.

The materials themselves invite activity. There are bright arrays of solid geometric forms, knobbed puzzle maps, colored beads, and various specialized rods and blocks. Each material in a Montessori classroom isolates one quality. In this way, the concept that the child is to discover is isolated. For example, the material known as the pink

tower is made up of ten pink cubes of varying sizes. The preschool-aged child constructs a tower with the largest cube on the bottom and the smallest on top. This material isolates the concept of size. The cubes are all the same color and texture; the only difference is their size. Other materials isolate different concepts: color tablets for color, geometry materials for form, and so on.

Moreover, the materials are self-correcting. When a piece does not fit or is left over, the child easily perceives the error. There is no need for adult "correction." The child is able to solve problems independently, building self-confidence, analytical thinking, and the satisfaction that comes from accomplishment.

As the child's exploration continues, the materials interrelate and build upon each other. For example, various relationships can be explored between the pink tower and the broad stair, which are based on matching precise dimensions. Later, in the elementary years, new aspects of some of the materials unfold. When studying volume, for instance, the child may return to the pink tower and discover that its cubes progress incrementally from one cubic centimeter to one cubic decimeter.



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Primary News

We hope everyone had a very Happy Thanksgiving! Our Thanksgiving celebration was a huge hit! Thank you to everyone that contributed ingredients for cooking, and to everyone that helped set up and clean up. Also a very special thank you to Montgomery Hunter and his band, that was such a special treat for our Thanksgiving celebration. It was truly a beautiful and special day!

Inside the classroom, our shelves continue to fill up with new works! In Practical Life we have added tonging, hand washing, and bubble making. Many of our children have been practicing hand writing and reading BOB books. We are so happy with the academic growth that we are seeing in our class. They all strive to challenge themselves and are so proud when they complete these new tasks.

Our full day children enjoyed Tai Chi this month during our physical education time. It proved to be very challenging and requires a lot of concentration and balance. Thank you to Janet Sullivan for sharing your Tai Chi knowledge with us!

In our Art curriculum, we have been focusing on many different painting techniques. The children have been learning the color wheel and mixing colors. They have painted with spoons, brushes and string. They are all so creative.

In French we learned our first song *Jean Petit qui danse*. We have also introduced a new Music curriculum. Our listening corner is available for private listening time to a record that changes every day. They have listened to everything from classical guitar to the Mary Poppins sound track.

In Science we have been studying solids, liquids, and gases. In Geography we have learned about Earth, land, and water formations and will soon be studying continents. We had many celebrations of life this month. Thank you for all of the books presented to our classroom!

Catherine and I would like to say a special thank you to all of you for your constant support offered to our classroom. Each day we try to come up with new and creative ways in which to nurture and educate your children. Having the trust and support of the parents is vital to this process. So thank you! Here is to a delightful Holiday Season!

Peace

Catherine and Katie-lauren

Elementary News

November was a busy month for the elementary class. Our weekly field trip to the swimming pool is now accompanied by a stop at the parish library. The boys have enjoyed the opportunity to pick out their own reading books for the next week, so we always leave with an armful.

After months of seeing Ms. Heather's kayak on her Jeep, the class was able to try out paddling for the first time. Each of the boys took turns being the captain of the

canoe during an afternoon at the LSU lakes.

In preparation of our upcoming camping trip, we have been learning about our sky. Once we learned about the different types of stars and their life cycles, we discovered how they were used for navigation and read the myths behind the constellations.

Finally the night of our much anticipated camping trip had arrived. Since it was the night before our Thanksgiving Feast there was still

much cooking to be done. The turkey was injected with seasonings and cookies and pies were baked before we took a night hike through the woods and finally ended the evening with s'mores around a campfire. The class even announced during their community meeting this morning that "the next camp-out" needs to be at a lake!

Heather

Student Reporter

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

Katie: Hi Hayes. How are you today?

Hayes: Goodie

K: Have you been having fun at school?

H: Yes. My friend Michael

Salmon has been playing with me. He's been winning a lot; lost a few. I have no idea when football season is over.

K: What did you think of our Thanksgiving Feast?

H: Pretty good.

K: What are you working on at school?

H: Well, lately I've been snipping and doing metal inset drawings. And helping Nilufer and Azra with the 45 layout.

Its not good to do it with one person. It's good to do it with three.

K: Have you been a good boy this year?

H: Yeah.

K: What's Santa going to bring you for Christmas?

H: More Transformers and I've been seeing some things in magazines



This month's student reporter is **Hayes Lavergne** in the Primary class.

Listening and Following the Adult



Children naturally want to connect to the adults in their lives. Obedience to these adults is a sign of natural and normal development in a child. Obedience, though, does not refer to an automatic and unthinking response to an order. Obedience comes from the Latin, *oboediere*, meaning, "to listen to."

When the relationship is built on trust, our children with on-track development should listen to us and choose to follow our requests. For the child who is "misbehaving," or not behaving in accordance to adult wishes, we need to recognize that we have a situation where a child has lost a vital link of trust with an adult in his or her world.

An obedient child listens for directions from a trusted adult and then chooses to follow that direction with trust based on previous positive experiences. If our child is ignoring direction, he or she has veered off the path of normal development, and we must figure out what has caused this detour.

Carol, mother to three-year-old Matt, would tell Matt that it was time to go and then would con-

tinue talking for another 10 to 20 minutes. Carol thought nothing of it since she was from a family where it took that long to say good-bye. What Matt learned, though, was that when his mother said it was time to go, it really didn't mean anything in his immediate world. Carol had created a situation where Matt didn't believe what she was telling him.

Carol would say it was time for lunch, the cell phone would ring and lunch would be delayed for 10 to 20 minutes--an eternity to a three-year-old. Again, this was another learning experience that taught Matt not to pay attention to his mother's words.

At bedtime, Matt's father Jim would tell Matt to get ready for bed and continue to watch his television show. Day after day, inconsistencies between words and actions taught Matt that listening to his parents and following their leads were not coherent events.

Are we surprised when Matt begins to ignore his parents' direction and requests? Should we be surprised if Matt throws a temper tantrum when he's been

told it is lunchtime and then has to wait for an undetermined amount of time? Should we be shocked if Matt, after being told for the fifth time that it's time to leave grandma and grandpa's but no one makes an effort to move to the door, cries when he is picked up and scolded because he didn't "listen?"

As parents and teachers, if we ask our children to do something, we must realize the power we hold--the power to create a trusting relationship, or one of rebellion. Our children are born to connect positively to our adult words and actions. To create authentic relationships with our children, we must have integrity in our words and actions.

Our words and actions must guide our children to listen and choose to follow us based on the confidence of our leadership. *That* is true obedience, not blindly following an order.

Kids Talk™ is a column dealing with early childhood development issues written by Maren Stark Schmidt. Mrs. Schmidt founded a Montessori school and holds a Masters of Education from Loyola College in Maryland.

Don't Forget!

The **Nutcracker** performance is on Dec. 17 and our **Winter Celebration** is Dec. 18.

Children will be dismissed for Winter Break at noon following their presentation.

"Preventing conflicts is the work of politicians; establishing peace is the work of education." - Maria Montessori



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