



elan vital MONTESSORI SCHOOL Inc.
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

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Élan Vital Newsletter

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Learning the Language of Life — Edward Fidellow

Montessori Children Handle Big Words and Big Ideas

As a parent I was surprised about the words my children knew and used correctly (no, not the bad ones.) We've experienced them going from crying to making sounds, from sounds to their first words (mama, dada), from words to phrases (me go) to sentences – "I want candy." It seems like a long (and sometimes frustrating) process for both children and adults to begin to communicate. We can't wait for them to start talking and then ironically, we spend a lot of time telling them to be quiet.

The beginning formation of their language skills is "ice bergian." Ninety percent of what they know supports the ten percent that is audible. The structure of their language has been constructed by and large with little direct input. They have been sorting out the complexity of words and phrases. They don't yet possess all the building tools to communicate to the world they inhabit. That is why at an early age two phrases dominate their conversation – "Why?" and "What's that?" They are continually constructing and they need solid linguistic materials to build with.

Baby talk is sweet but does not contribute to linguistic development or communica-

tions. At an early age, at least by three if not sooner, children are ready (and capable) of big words and big ideas. A Montessori education builds on this sensitive period for language and learning by introducing advanced concepts. Parents are often amazed that their child can say "equilateral triangle" let alone know what it means. But is equilateral triangle any more complex linguistically than Elizabeth Washington?

A Montessori classroom is constantly introducing new concepts and constructs and a major part of this introduction is linguistic. It does little good to point out squares or circles unless you can call them by name, define them and find them again. Montessori education is noted for its "Three Period Lesson." First, you present the article. "This is red." "This is blue." Second, you ask, "Can you touch the red?" "Can you touch the blue?" (You see if they have understood the vocabulary.) Third, you ask, "What is this?" They answer "red." "What is this?" They answer "blue." (You see if they have mastered the vocabulary and the concept.)

Language starts with the concrete – mama, doggie, cat and proceeds to action – "me go, I jump." And then it begins to add the color of adjectives – tall, short, biggest, smallest (all demonstrated in the classroom) until language blooms

into conversation, discussion (and debate.)

When our son started Montessori at 17 months we wanted to be good Montessori parents by offering him choices he could make. Everyday for breakfast we held up two boxes of cereal and asked, "Do you want this or that?" Cereal, thereafter, became known as "dis and dat." (In hindsight, we should have been correct and named the cereals for him – but it would have ruined a good story!)

It is important that we correctly name the words and actions of their lives. A Montessori classroom is constantly adding vocabulary to a child's linguistic development. Studies have indicated that extensive vocabularies are a hallmark of successful adults. This process and habit of vocabulary acquisition is a foundational concept of your child's Montessori experience.

While we do use body language and facial gestures, oral language is the predominant means of communication. Helping your child communicate clearly their needs, desires, frustrations, etc helps them to move on to the more complex use of language and culture – the ability to define (and embrace) intangible concepts like love, hope and faith. Ironically, (and I don't know how it for-

Learning the Language of Life — cont'd.

give me." It will not destroy your authority or their respect for you. It will teach them one of the great lessons of life – when you fail, whether it's in a relationship, school, career or life – own the failure and start over again – to succeed another day.

Becoming a Montessori parent is to become the best parent you can be.

—Edward Fidellow



Student Reporter

Each Month we will be featuring a different student reporter to give us a child's perspective of Élan Vital. This month, London Fabre (Elementary) interviewed Riley Gray (Primary).

Riley Gray's is four.
 Riley Gray's her favorite thing at school is to play outside reading. Riley Gray's her favorite girl Elizabeth. Riley Gray's her favorite teacher is Miss Catherine and Miss Molly Riley Gray's her favorite boy is Sean Thomas.

Toddler News

The Toddler Program is off and running, just like the students themselves! With 5 students between the ages of 18-36 months, we meet on Mondays and Wednesday, 9-11:30. What used to be solely the napping room has transformed into a wonderful little classroom for our toddlers, with access to the outdoor patio just steps away. We are enjoying getting to know our new friends' names, drumming and dancing, and regular visits with Penelope, the pig, as well as bouncing (sometimes literally) from one work to another. Our sweet toddlers rarely sit still!

Welcome to our founding Toddler families, and thank you to the Primary and Elementary students and staff, for making room for us!

With Thanksgiving,
 Carissa

Primary News

Greetings Primary Families!

So much has happened in our class since we last had a newsletter! The weather is beautiful and we have enjoyed observing the changes of the Fall season with the children. The cooler weather provides for more learning opportunities outside. We have a new courtyard on the side of the building that is enjoyed by the Toddler's and nappers. They are able to eat there and have some extra play time after nap. We are so thankful to have it!

Our schedule has changed a little bit. When the children arrive in the morning they go straight to group time. Ms. Molly sings songs with them, reads a story and we make announcements. We have found this helps the children settle into their day more. Please everyone try to be here by 8:30! We added fifteen minutes to arrival for this purpose! The children do not like to miss any of the morning meeting.

Elementary News

Elementary Parents,

It's been a busy few months in elementary! The students seem to be adjusting well to the workload and are eager to learn more. I want to thank everyone for attending the conferences. It's so wonderful to see the children excited and proud of the work they have completed!

Here's what we've been working on in class:

In language, we're finishing up the study of the noun and starting our unit on articles. In addition, we've been learning about suffixes and periods.

The children have now been introduced to the three sections of science

Our Teacher trainer and Consultant from Houston Montessori Center visited us last month. She was here to observe Ms. Jenn for her internship and give suggestions to all of us pertaining to our classroom. She had some wonderful observations and suggestions. We are so thankful to have the chance to continue our own education as teachers! We look forward to her next visit.

Our full day students have been growing by leaps and bounds. We have moved on from poetry and have started reading *Charlotte's Web*. We are so excited to be reading a chapter book with the children. We have been impressed with their interest and ability to sit and listen. There are not many pictures! We have begun more reading comprehension questions with them to assure that they understand what is happening in the story. We also do the 'Pit and Peak' of their day. This is where they reflect and identify with what was the worst and best part of their day.

that we'll be studying this year: botany, zoology, and the human body.

Botany the past few weeks has consisted of experiments to see how plants function. Soon we'll be starting our study of roots.

In zoology, we'll be spending the next few weeks learning about the phylum porifera before moving on to the phylum cnidaria.

The study of the human body began with an overview of the systems of the body and now we will start looking at each system individually. The children all seem very excited about the sciences!

In geography, the children have been enjoying doing research about the Incas

We talk about any problems and how they can be rectified in the future.

We have also baked Pumpkin bread, had a pajama party, Fall Fest and welcomed observers into our classroom. All of these things have made us feel closer as a community.

Thank you to all of our wonderful parents for your contributions and support of our classroom!

Peace!

Katie and Catherine

as well as learning the countries and capitals of South America.

The focus in history right now is time and clock work.

While math is very individualized, everyone has been enjoying the new money and measurement materials in the classroom!

I would like to remind everyone of the importance of your child's sharing day! Sharing is not only a way for the children to learn more about a certain topic, it also teaches them valuable public speaking skills. Please remember your child's sharing day!

Thanks!
Erin Rice

Less is More— Kids Talk™ by Maren Schmidt

Wandering around the airport bookstore looking for reading material because, alas, I had gulped through all my books on an eight-hour flight, I lit on a bright green book by Marc Lesser, with an intriguing premise, *Less: Accomplishing More by Doing Less*.

Lesser, an entrepreneur and Zen teacher, asks us to examine five self-defeating habits and see how engaging less in these behaviors allows us more time and energy to engage in activities that can enrich our lives.

Fear. Fear can be a help to us by keeping us safe and out of danger. Fear can also paralyze us or divert our actions from positive outcomes. We need to conquer our main fears of losing our state of mind, humiliation, losing our reputation, losing our livelihood, and death. Lesser offers strategies to lessen fear in order to free our energies to achieve our goals.

Assumptions. The human brain fills in the gaps in our reality. As we cross over a bridge, we assume that the bridge continues to the other side. As we walk down stairs, we assume the next step will be there. When our assumptions and reality are not aligned we start working from false assumptions and create a tangle of misdirected efforts. Practicing self-awareness and communicating with others, among

other activities, aid us in creating a clearer and more easy to traverse picture of reality.

Distractions. Beep. Ding. Ring. The distractions and interruptions of everyday life rob us of the attention and focus we need for productive and satisfying lives. Lesser shows us methods to gain and retain focus and use our energy to meet our objectives.

Resistance. Change is part of life, and we can spend too much time being upset by the change instead of embracing it. When we are open to change, life seems to flow in a way that aids our focus, self-awareness and fearlessness.

Busyness. Sometimes we try too hard, allowing fear, assumptions, distractions and resistance to sabotage our efforts. Lesser asks us to connect with the "one who is not busy." Once we familiarize ourselves with that state of mind we can tap into it at will and be more effective. Ever notice how a walk, a hot bath, or other favorite activity summons this state of mind? Our "eureka" moments come from that alignment of body and mind. Insights from "the one who is not busy" help us define our objectives and find inspiration.

As we work on engaging less in these five self-defeating habits, we will also model for our children a different way of thinking, do-

ing and being. As we give up these five habits perhaps we will see that we are perfect just the way we are, and with renewed focus and awareness we can accomplish more by doing less.

Maren Schmidt



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