

Sandpaper letters

HEADLINES:

Going with the Flow

Whether you are a new Montessori parent or a veteran, you probably know that a Montessori classroom offers **hands-on learning** with concrete materials in a **child-centered environment**. Children **work at their own pace** in a **multiage classroom** that encourages **independence** in the younger children and **confidence** in the older role models.



Rebecca Green

What many people don't realize is that this environment fosters one of the most important skills they will develop in their lifetime: **concentration**.

This is a wonderful time of year to visit the classrooms. The children are familiar with the routines and comfortable with each other. There is a productive buzz as they are absorbed in their work; a look of deep concentration is visible on many of the faces, even whole bodies! They are experiencing flow.

Flow (aka optimal experience theory) occurs when a person is completely absorbed in a task. Their interest is captured, they have the skills to achieve the task, and there is

enough challenge involved to maintain their interest. You've experienced it when skiing, playing a musical instrument, or reading a great book. You get going and before you know it, an hour as passed! Montessori had a name for this as well. She called it **normalization**. The word has unfortunate associations in English, but is fundamental to the success of the child in the classroom. Learning how to develop this state of deep concentration turns out to be crucial to human development too.

The concept of normalization has been compared to current research in psychology on **self-regulation**, a behavioral system that is a combination of nature and nurture that develops between the ages of 2 and 7. After this age, it stabilizes much in the same way that IQ remains relatively fixed over a lifetime. An important aspect of self-regulation is **effortful control** which refers to the ability to voluntarily control responses to stimuli and is closely linked to paying attention. According to a recent article, "*The ability to sustain and focus attention has a positive influence on children's developmental outcomes, serves as a protective factor against behavior disorders, and supports emotional and behavioral self-regulation across the*

lifespan." This research is leading psychologists to advocate that "a systematic training of attention might be an important addition to preschool education."

Montessori put it much more simply when she observed a hundred years ago that "**the first essential for the child's development is concentration. The child who concentrates is immensely happy.**" Whether children are actually learning to pour water, complete a multiplication problem, or label the parts of a butterfly, that ability to concentrate and bring a task to completion is one of the most important they will master at any point in their education.

The "flow" aspect of their classroom activity is one reason why we refer to it as work. Maybe "serious play" would be a better term. It requires effort, but it is joyful and purposeful. Whatever you call it, the joy that children take in their classroom activities shows that they need to go with the "flow." And they could teach the adults a thing or two about how to enjoy their work!

Article cited: Kathleen Lloyd, "The Power of Concentration" in *The NAMTA Journal*, Winter 2011 (available from our library)

DID YOU KNOW?...

Constructive Triangles

The constructive triangles are a series of 5 wooden boxes filled with various types and sizes of triangles. In every box, the triangles can be used to form several specific geometric shapes, such as a trapezoid, rhombus (not diamond!), hexagon, etc., thus enriching the child's vocabulary each time s/he works with the material. With the exception of one of the rectangular boxes, black guidelines are painted on the triangles in order to assist in constructing certain shapes, for the very youngest of children. This multi-dimensional material is then carried over into Elementary where more sophisticated exploration takes place with the study of geometry. The constructive triangles allow children to explore with the shapes and ultimately make the amazing discovery that most plane geometric figures are made out of triangles!





Happy Birthday KMS!

2011 marks the 35th anniversary of KMS, the oldest Montessori school in the state.

Here are some highlights:

1976

Founded by a group of parents in Fairfield

1988

Elementary classroom added

1995

Current facility opened on Sheridan Rd in Fairfield

2007

Accredited by American Montessori Society

2011

Still growing!

Upcoming Events:

In-Service Day, March 11
NO SCHOOL

Tuesday, March 15
Northern Stars
Planetarium visit at KMS

Open House, March 19

Primary Field Trip to
Wilson Family Maple Syrup
March 21—P1
March 22—P2
March 23—P3

Spring Concert, March 31

Parent-Teacher
Conferences, April 15
NO SCHOOL

School Vacation
April 18-22
NO SCHOOL

Spring Clean-Up Day
April 30

PRIMARY COLORS...

Over the course of three years, the primary classes will focus on each of the seven continents for an extended period of



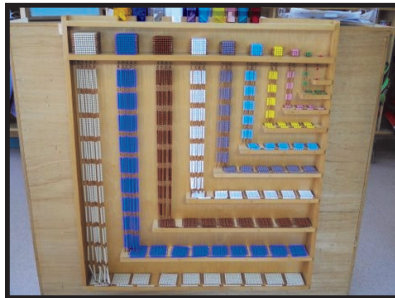
time. Information is shared about animals, flags, customs, music, famous landmarks, etc. Artifacts are shared when available, and parents sometimes act as guest speakers. You may have seen some of the written work the children may choose to do, such as making a "nomenclature book" about the parts of an elephant while we were studying Africa, or coloring a map. Tracing and coloring the maps is one of the most popular activities in the classroom, especially for the older children. In

the beginning, some finish a map and forget the name of the continent, but they love the process. Over time, they become increasingly familiar with the countries within each continent, which Montessori might refer to as "mastery through repetition." Most importantly, by developing an interest in and enthusiasm for this work, they grow as citizens of our world.



Elementary, my dear....

A major goal of the Montessori curriculum is to expose students to large numbers at an early age, capitalizing on young children's interest in everything BIG! The cubing chains are one way to do just that. Through this material, students see large numbers, patterns (skip counting), squared numbers, cubed numbers; and they can actually feel the weight and size of 1, 2, 3 . . . all the way to 1,000. Imagine! These children are building the foundation for math studies that will carry them beyond high school with the aid of a set of tiny, beautiful glass beads, whose possible uses and paths to understanding are endless.



Through the guidance of the

Fish Friends program the students are watching the development of 200 Atlantic salmon eggs. The tank and chiller, recently purchased, sit just inside the door and provide a first-hand view of a threatened Maine fish. This program incorporates science as well as art and language, as the children document their observations. We are also hoping to build concerned Maine citizens, by bringing awareness of the fragile nature of our world's treasures and our responsibility to them. In May, the children will release the surviving "fry" into the wild.



DEAR PARENTS: Who is Gus Anyway?

Reading with our kids is a wonderful opportunity to see our children flourish at school. The 30 minutes to an hour I spend a week listening to the extended day children read is wonderfully rewarding. How else could I have learned that "Gus is a bug. Gus has fuzz."?

What our kids achieve in a few moments and a few pages is transformative. However, so many children are now reading in our class that we do not have enough parents to listen to our readers. If you can find some time to take part in the classroom reading I know the children will improve even more. Significantly the teachers are flexible about the time you spend listening to our readers. Stop in to talk with your child's teacher about giving a few minutes and see a little reader grow. You'll enjoy it and so will your child.



Sincerely, Claire Adams

We thought you should know....how the funds raised at our Annual Auction are supporting our classrooms and operations:

Fish Friends Salmon Project

This exciting project to observe the hatching and development of 200 salmon eggs is now underway in the Elementary classroom. Extended Day children will be receiving “fish friends” passes to share in this exciting project. We invite all of you to come and observe the excitement too as our salmon eggs hatch into “fryers”. When you visit, please observe the directions above the tank. The temperature is crucial, so make sure there is a “green light” message above the tank.

A New Set of Cubing Chains

After 15 years, the cubing chains in the Elementary classroom were literally crumbling under the pressure of curious fingers, eager to explore BIG numbers! This set of tiny, beautiful, but expensive glass beads is building a foundation for math that will carry them beyond high school and offering a hands-on way to explore.



Double the Music!

We have been able to bring Danielle Gorman, our music instructor who is based in Westbrook, to KMS twice as often this semester. Danielle specializes in early childhood music education, and incorporates music and movement in her classes, based on the Musikgarten curriculum. The children love to sing and move with her. You'll be able to hear for yourself at our Spring concert on March 31—mark your calendar!

Coming in Spring....New Playground Equipment

The Auction also allowed us to keep tuition increases at a minimum.

**Thank you for supporting our Annual Auction.
It helps make the difference between a good school and a great one!**