



April Newsletter 2017

From the Director

Spring has sprung at SJCMS!

The children along with Ms Jeannette and Ms. Samantha have planted a garden. It began in classroom with the children planting and watering assorted seeds in little pots. Once the seedlings started to sprout they were planted in our garden box. Now every time they go out on the playground they get to see how much the plants have grown.

Diane Doyle, our Parish Catechetical Leader, came in and led a music class. She read the book "Meet the Orchestra," by Ann Hayes, and brought out fun instruments for everyone to play. Diane also showed us how to make music shakers with plastic eggs and cereal.

SJCMS would like to welcome two new students, siblings Henry and Evelyn.

Sandra Pellissier
Director

We've continued the article on the theory of Montessori and its benefits from the North American Montessori Center (NAMC). It is located on the last page of the newsletter.

"Our care of the children should be governed not by the desire to 'make them learn things,' but by the endeavor to always keep burning within them the light which is called intelligence."

Dr. Maria Montessori

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1-5 – Teacher Appreciation Week

May 4 – Spring Tea

May 19 – Picnic

May 24 – Last day of school

FUNDRAISING MADE EASY

Please help the school by shopping with PUBLIX. Pick up your Publix card – no sign up necessary. Give them to family and friends! Publix honors multiple cards from different schools and they can be used in their other locations.

April Activities



Circle of Inclusion: An Emphasis on Repetition

<http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2017/02/circle-of-inclusion-emphasis-on.html>

In a previous blog, we discussed the value of inclusion and how Montessori's tenet of following the individual needs of the child makes it inherently inclusive. The Circle of Inclusion Project (University of Kansas) and Raintree Montessori (Lawrence, Kansas) listed 11 specific ways in which Montessori education addresses the needs of all children, including those with disabilities. Included in this list is "An emphasis on repetition" [editor's note: and in the second article included in this list is "The development of organized work patterns in children."] In [these two blogs], Michelle kindly shares her classroom experiences to provide real-life examples of how Montessori meets that specific goal.

Michelle Irinyi — NAMC Tutor & Graduate

"Repetition is the secret of perfection...." —Maria Montessori
The Montessori Method, p. 171.

Practice makes perfect. Ask any musician and they will tell you that they put in hours and hours of practice to perfect their craft. Being able to play an instrument, sing, or dance, requires hours of hard work, dedication, and repetition until those skills and abilities become part of you.

Impressionist artist Claude Monet painted more than 30 canvases depicting the Rouen Cathedral. While the subject never changed, the conditions did, allowing the artist to depict the same scene in a variety of weather and lighting. Monet showed us that even stationary subjects are fluid and dynamic over time.

Circle of Inclusion: An Emphasis on Repetition

Practice is not just for the arts. Einstein took ten years of repetitive thought and practice to formulate his $E=MC^2$ theory of relativity. And it took another 20 years of experimenting and practice to validate his theory.

So, if we do not expect artists and scientists to get it right the first time, why do we have such high expectations for children? When I taught in the public school system, one of my biggest frustrations was the fact that we were expected to spend only one day on a concept, whether the students understood it or not. Children who needed extra time to practice and really understand were quickly left behind, and they struggled the rest of the year to keep up.

When I entered the Montessori environment, one of the things that struck me most was how repetition is an inherent aspect of the Montessori classroom. The materials are intended to be used over and over again by the child to solidify the concepts she is learning. Repetition helps refine the child's ability until the child, not the adult, decides it is time to leave that material or concept behind and move on to something new.

So central is the idea of repetition to the Montessori methodology that each material found in the environment builds directly upon that which came before. Examples of this reinforcement of repetition can be seen in the Cylinder Blocks and the Sentence Analysis material.

Cylinder Blocks

The primary objective of the Montessori Cylinder Blocks is to develop and refine visual acuity. Simplistic in design, the Cylinder Blocks isolate the concepts of diameter and height. There are four blocks, each the same size and color; the only difference being the diameter and/or height of the cylinders. The physical repetitiveness of the material allows the child to recognize how the each block is similar and he is not overwhelmed by the incremental changes.

Because the child works with each of the four blocks in the same manner, the process and the order of each activity provides repetition as well. The repetitive left-to-right movement that is required throughout the Cylinder Blocks activity is already familiar to the child. Most Montessori activities, starting with the practical life presentations, incorporate left-to-right movement in some way. This repetition of directional movement reinforces hand-eye coordination and prepares the child for writing and reading.

While the cylinders in each of the blocks vary in diameter and/or height, the child uses the same repetitive movement with each of the blocks. The child is welcome to use and reuse the materials as often as necessary to fulfill his need for discovery.

Sentence Analysis

As the child moves into the Montessori elementary environment, work becomes more abstract with less reliance on materials. At this point, repetition is found within the language of discovery, as is shown with the Sentence Analysis materials. Starting in the early childhood environment, when the child works with the Grammar Symbols, she adds a unique symbol to every word in the sentence to show its function. But when she works with the Sentence Analysis material, the work is more abstract with the child working with distinct parts of the sentence, which can consist of single words or longer phrases.

In this material, repetition can be found in the consistency in which the questions are asked to find the function of the parts of the sentence. We always begin with the same two questions:

1. What is the action?
2. Who or what did the action?

Finding the action, or predicate, first, immediately establishes the purpose of the sentence. The predicate is the easiest part of the sentence to identify because it is the movement (action). It then becomes easier to determine who did the action, or the subject.

The order of the activity continues by asking the child to find the direct and indirect objects in the sentence:

3. Who or what (did the subject do)?
4. To whom or to what (was the action done to)?

Asked in this order every time, the student knows she can analyze the beginning of even the most complex questions. Even if there is no indirect object or if there is an implied subject, asking these questions repetitively offers stability to an otherwise abstract thought process.

This is foundational material that provides children with repeated opportunities to practice and thoroughly understand the concepts, guiding them to discover the answers themselves. Children learn to rely on their own knowledge because they feel confident that they know the order in which to solve these abstract problems.

Whether repetition comes from the materials, the language, or the child's need to repeat an activity, we should allow the child to explore and work on concepts as often and for as long as they need to.

We need to trust the child to know what he needs and that he will move on to the next task once he is secure in his understanding.

Circle of Inclusion: The Development of Organized Work Patterns in Children

<http://montessoritraining.blogspot.com/2017/03/circle-inclusion-developing-organized-work-montessori.html>

Carrie entered my Montessori upper elementary classroom as a sixth-year student. Brand new to Montessori and unsure of what to expect, Carrie was quiet and, as one might expect, spent a great deal of time observing her new surroundings and friends. It did not take long for Carrie to settle in to her new environment, making friends and learning the routines of the classroom. She appeared to be quite busy, but closer observations soon led me to realize she wasn't doing very much.

I invited Carrie to show me her daily journal. As I suspected, it was full of work she wanted to do, but nothing was getting done. It was clear that Carrie was not sure where to start.

Montessori and the Circle of Inclusion: The Development of Organized Work Patterns in Children

The Montessori environment is designed to allow students to develop concentrated and focused work patterns that allow them to study concepts in depth. **The uninterrupted three-hour work period encourages free exploration without disruption.**

Starting in the early childhood environment and continuing right through upper elementary, all work has a clear beginning (set up), middle (the work itself), and end (clean up). A new material is not retrieved from the shelves until the first has been properly put away.

Students are responsible for planning their own daily work cycle.

In my Montessori elementary classroom, I encouraged the students to use a journal to record the lessons and work they wished to accomplish during the day. I found that the students who worked well independently only needed to check-in with me once or twice a week to review their plans in their journals. If students needed additional help becoming independent, I usually asked them to check-in with me daily. Some students required even more guidance, and so I encouraged them to see me several times a day until they established a more focused work period.

Carrie clearly demonstrated the need for more guidance to help her plan her daily work. For two weeks, we met every morning to set her goals for the day. We discussed her plans and then broke them down into small, manageable tasks. At first, I asked her to predict how much time she thought a task would take and to check-in with me when she finished. This way, we could monitor and adjust her plan as needed throughout the day. As she became more adept at setting her goals and managing her time, I moved our meeting time to later in the day to review what she had accomplished during the morning work cycle and decide if there was time to continue working in the afternoon or if she should work on it the next day. After a few weeks, Carrie was able to plan her daily and weekly work independently, and was happy to meet with me on Friday afternoons when I held my weekly review meetings with students.

When I met with Carrie's parents during our parent-teacher conference, they were thrilled. They told me then, that Carrie had been diagnosed with ADHD. They had not told the school previously because they did not want Carrie to be labeled or treated differently. They wanted to know if the Montessori method would make a difference. They told me they had seen a huge improvement in her work habits at school as well as in her home life. She was able to start and finish tasks with fewer distractions and she has a more positive attitude.

Showing Carrie how to record her daily goals and work plan empowered her; it gave her the ability to choose her own work and made her responsible for her learning.

Recording her goals also gave Carrie a reference that she could use when she wondered what to do next. And breaking down her work into smaller chunks of time made the three-hour work period feel more manageable. Ultimately, becoming more organized gave Carrie more control over her own learning.