



THE *Montessori* Observer

Your monthly newsletter

March 2009

Arbor's new website is up and running! Take a look at www.arbormontessori.org!



Arbor Middle School Students in the News and awarded National Recognition!

It was an exciting day in February when we gathered around the radios here at Arbor to listen to WABE 90.1 FM's Steve Goss interview our some of our middle school students! These same students have now been recognized by Lexus and Scholastic as one of 16 winning teams in their nationwide Air and Climate Challenge and were chosen to participate in the Environmental Protection Agency's kick-off to Earth Day! "Stay tuned" to hear more about this great honor and accomplishment.

Below is a copy of the press release written and distributed by the middle schoolers to area papers. The release was picked up by National Public Radio and broadcasted on February 18, 2009.

To hear the interview, please [click here](#).

Press Release:

Middle School Students Inspire Environmental Change

"There was a great stir in the Oak Grove area as a group of middle school students from Arbor Montessori School moved about the local businesses asking if they wanted to participate in the Glow Challenge.

The Glow Challenge is a competition between companies in the Oak Grove area to see who can reduce their electricity bill from mid-January to mid-February by the highest percentage. The winner will receive a certificate of recognition for being the greenest company in the Oak Grove area. So far, the students have convinced The Beehive Hair Company, Hair Flair, and Limetree to participate. The students were inspired to act against global warming after a school field trip to a local coal-fired power plant where they saw the amount of toxins released into the air. They hope that their actions could be an inspiration to other children who want to make a difference. This attempt to reduce the amount of energy used in the Oak Grove area is appealing to many companies not only because it's beneficial to the environment, but because the companies save money on their energy bills and the winner gets the acknowledgment of being the greenest company in Oak Grove, thereby increasing customer attention."

Who Won?

The awards ceremony was held on March 11, 2009, right here at Arbor.

The winner of the Glow Challenge was Limetree Gifts, a retail establishment, who did a great job of reducing the store's energy consumption. Congratulations to our neighbors! And congratulations to the team of six Arbor students who have now been recognized by [Lexus](#) and [Scholastic](#) as one of

16 winning student teams in their nationwide Air and Climate Challenge:

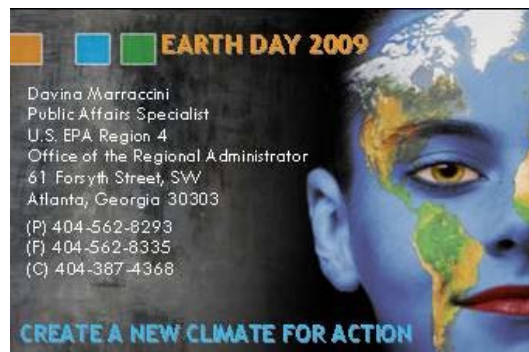
Hannah Brown, Paula Cheng, Cameron Futral, Devin Mashman, Aidan O'Reilly and Leigh Kathryn Vines.

The Glow Challenge Story Continues:

Davina Marraccini, Public Affairs Specialist from the Environmental Protection Agency, heard our students on the radio and has invited them to present at the EPA's kickoff to [Earth Day!](#)

The students will be introduced by Steve Goss, who interviewed the students on WABE 90.1 FM.

Look for more information about these enterprising and ecological kids!



Arbor Montessori School Mission Statement

Jan Deason, our Head of School, consulted the teachers, board of trustees, and the middle school students about rewriting our mission statement. She and middle school teacher Annie Frazer compiled the ideas and wrote a new mission statement. The board and AMI Team got a chance to look it over and now it is ready! Please read Arbor's new mission statement:

The mission of Arbor Montessori School is to develop the unique capabilities of each child, through supportive relationships, joyful learning and meaningful work in a Montessori environment. We seek to foster independence in each child, preparing him or her to contribute with integrity to the community of the larger world.



Cindy's students showing their work on Mesopotamia

Back to Basics

The Montessori Method in the Second Plane of Development

by Alison Sherrill, Elementary Coordinator

How does the microwave heat my food? Why do some birds fly in a V shape? How many pounds do all our bones weigh?

Heard these or similar questions in your home? Then you must be living with a second plane child.

Dr Maria Montessori categorized ages six to twelve as the second plane in her four planes of human development. Through careful observation, Dr Montessori identified common characteristics of each plane that transcend gender, national origin and even time periods in history.

The first plane child explores the world through his senses and absorbs the concrete lessons of the primary class through repetitive exploration. As the child matures he begins to enter a period of increased physical strength and stronger health. No more trips to the pediatrician for yet another ear infection diagnosis! This older child begins to develop his ability of abstract reasoning and has a pronounced need for greater social connections.

Dr Montessori saw the elementary child as entering the most intellectual time in his life. The children yearn to complete big, challenging work with a group of peers. A child of the second plane wants to tackle "the biggest multiplication problem ever" or write a research paper "that takes up an entire legal pad of paper." When you observe in an elementary class you will find children gathered together in groups exploring materials,

poring over encyclopedias and conducting investigative research. The elementary trained teacher guides the child through the vast Montessori curriculum while allowing for freedom of choice. A delicate balance!

Dr Montessori was very clear that the elementary child needs greater freedom within the class and school. Children must be given the opportunity to choose work free of adult mandates. Dr Montessori was equally as clear about the responsibility the child must exhibit in order to gain these freedoms. As teachers we present the curriculum through materials and stories. The child is then challenged to master the lessons while seeking his own path of interests.

The children work throughout their six years in elementary to explore outside our school. The six year old might make a trip to the grocery store where he spends time learning how to interact with sales people and other adults. The nine year old will travel out to interview experts and visit places that involve their research projects. The eleven year old becomes responsible for packing his gear, groceries, and outdoor equipment for a week-long camping trip to Cumberland Island. Not only does this oldest elementary child pack for himself, he also becomes responsible for cooking the food and cleaning up after the meals. Did I mention that the cooking is over the fire that the students gathered wood for and built themselves?

The elementary class children are carefully guided to a place of increased responsibility for themselves and the world. They must also master a challenging curriculum that was specifically designed for them and is presented by carefully trained adults. The emergence of an adolescent at the end of the second plane is one that is ready to take on the world academically, socially, and with a strong sense of responsibility.



The middle school's production of Peter Pan



Arbor Auction 2009

Auction 2009: There's No Place Like Home
Saturday, March 21, 2009
6-11pm
Emory University's Cox Hall

Here are some auction items donated by Arbor faculty and staff :

Trips for children to...

The Atlanta Zoo: Becca



The High Museum: Jane

Lunch for four during school: Jan

The Atlanta Botanical Gardens: Marian and Asya



ATLANTA BOTANICAL GARDEN

plus...Framed artwork by Patty O'Keefe-Hutton

The Lake Chatuge mountain home of Deedee and Pat Murphy

A Basket of Art Supplies: Becky

An Embellished Journal: Shiela

Dorothy and Toto "Barbies" from Kathy O'Connell and friends

...and many more--don't miss it!

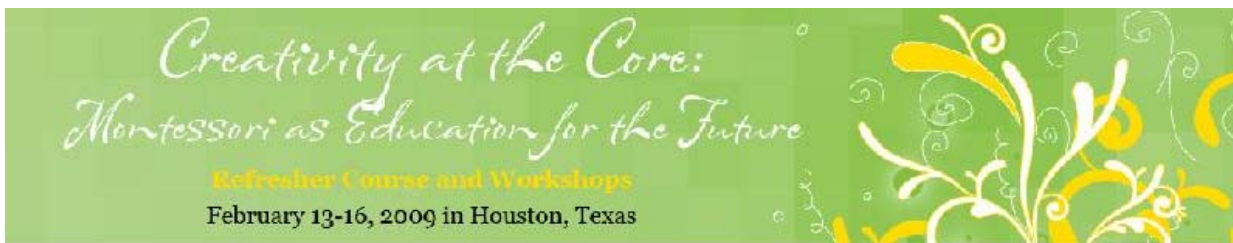
classroom news highlight

~Emilie's Class



Lora Hall, Emilie's assistant, took small groups of eager students who were researching ancient Egypt to the Civic Center's King Tut exhibit.

Emilie says that on one of those trips, "the group was approached by a security guard who asked, "What school are you from?" He said our kids were the most well-behaved group he's ever seen!"



Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but to so touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.

~Dr. Maria Montessori

The 2009 AMI Refresher Course



~By Jan Deason, Head of School

During President's Day weekend over 750 Montessori teachers, classroom assistants, administrators and parents gathered in Houston, Texas for the Association Montessori Internationale's annual refresher course.

The theme for this year's event was Creativity at the Core and each speaker found a unique way to share the topic with the participants. Five members of the Arbor staff traveled to Houston:

Kate Ramsey attended the elementary workshop, Myesha Green attended the primary, and Anu, Alison and I attended the administrator's portion. Each of us came back renewed, refreshed and a bit exhausted - our brains full of all the thoughtful and exciting information that was shared over the 4 days.

The keynote address entitled, **Cultivating Creativity, Energy and Curiosity**, was given by Sir Ken Robinson, author and creativity expert. He had a delightful sense of humor and shared a profound message. He believes that each child comes with the possibility of being extraordinary and that our task as educators and parents is to help them see what it is that is extraordinary. Sir Ken cited research on divergent thinking - the ability to see multiple possibilities. Of 1500 people, those who scored at the genius level for divergent thinking were reported as follows: 3-5 year olds-98%, 8-10 year olds-32%, 13-15 year olds-10%, and adults (aged 25 and older)-2%. This is the result of an industrialized model of education in which people are being educated to become good workers rather than creative

thinkers. Sir Ken, like Dr. Montessori, believes that schools must be rethought to cultivate creativity and acknowledge multiple types of intelligences. It was an inspiring message that wholeheartedly supported the Montessori philosophy of education.

The Administrator's Workshop

The Administrator's workshop focused on the "arts" needed in our work. Director of Training for the elementary program in Washington, DC, Kay Baker, took on the topic of "The Art of Effective Management Support to Teachers". She addressed in detail the question of what new teachers should know and how to get them to know the things they don't. Another whole day was spent working with Dr. Marc Brackett of Yale University in his workshop entitled, The Scientific Art of Emotional Literacy for Administrators. It was a fast moving tour of both the theoretical and practical from the study of momentary "micro-expressions" to the importance of teaching emotional vocabulary to children so that they can properly assess their own emotional states. The weekend ended with presentations from various heads of AMI schools around the country that explored special interest topics involving creative work with staff, parents and community.

Kate and Myesha share their thoughts from the elementary and primary workshops:

The Art of Inspiring Art - The Elementary Level

~by Kate Ramsey

Presenter Phyllis Pottish-Lewis began by emphasizing the importance of art for everyone, not just for those with particular artistic talent. Practicing art develops perceptual skills, and putting verbal and visual skills together enhances understanding in many areas of the curriculum. People have expressed themselves through art for millennia. When students work with the materials themselves, they can more easily appreciate what others have done. At the conference I was given clear models to follow in teaching art to elementary students. Seven elements of art were delineated -- line, shape, form, space, value, color, texture - as well as various principles such as balance and contrast. In a lesson, the teacher defines a term and then lets the students experience it in nature, in architecture, and in the works of famous artists. Phyllis's beautiful art slides were a highlight and certainly added to my understanding of the concepts. Then the child needs to have time to experiment and express him/herself with the new ideas. For each lesson, we were given suggestions for follow-up activities. It was fun to pull out my own ruler and colored pencils and try my hand at shading a sphere, perspective drawing, and so on. Talking with Patty last week, I found that what I learned will very nicely dovetail with her lessons with the students. I look forward to trying out some new artwork in the class.

The Art of Normalization-The Most Important Single Benefit of Our Whole Work - The Primary Level

~by Myesha Green

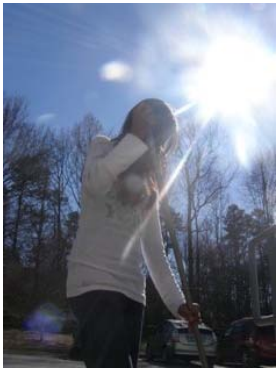
The 2009 AMI Refresher course was an absolute privilege to attend. The primary segment entitled "The Art of Normalization" was lead by Ginni Sackett, a primary trainer in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Sackett began her lectures by defining Normalization in a Montessori setting. Maria Montessori observed that when children engaged in purposeful work in her prepared environment, they were capable of intense concentration, self discipline, empathy for others, social cohesion, and strong academic ability. Montessori described this point of arrival as, "the most important single result of our whole work."

The conference lectures helped to sharpen the tools teachers already possess to help normalize the conditions in a classroom so that children can engage in discovery and self mastery. A child's passage to normalization in our environment almost always happens through a piece of work, done by the hands with real things and accompanied by mental concentration. As we build relationships with the children and serve as their guide through the classroom materials, our goal is to not fill a vessel with knowledge, but rather cultivate an environment of calm, patience, humility and love so that the children can feel free to absorb knowledge from their surroundings. Parents, teachers, and administrators alike were reminded to have faith that each child will find something in the classroom that focuses his attention and will spark that natural love for learning during his tenure in the Montessori environment. Teachers must offer motivations that engage the child in activities that prepare his mind and body for social, emotional, and academic development. We were also reminded that our classrooms are home to many children, and should allow for a great deal of fun!

Garden Update

by Steve Thorpe

Arbor Montessori middle school students are working hard in preparation of hosting Georgia Organics Farm to School tour on March 20th. Over the last two weeks we have prepared six garden beds and have begun putting in our spring crops. Lettuce, spinach, parsley, beets, and onions are already in the ground and will be among the first delicious vegetables available at the middle school market.



Students recycled newspapers and cardboard in the process of making weed resistant garden paths. We are collecting newspaper, grass clippings, and leaves for the massive compost pile that is developing next to the garden.

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