

THE *Montessori* Observer

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The Montessori Observer is a new online publication that features articles about Montessori principles and the Arbor community.

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Back to Basics

The Montessori Method in the First Plane of Development

by Anu Chandra, Primary Coordinator



"As I have so often said, it is true we cannot make a genius. We can only give to each individual the chance to fulfill his or her unique potential" ~Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*

We, as parents, want our children to discover and fulfill that potential. We, as parents, want our children to develop a love for learning that will enrich their lives. We, as parents, want our children to become contributing members of society and take leadership roles with honor and dignity.

All this seems daunting in today's fast paced culture and the "innovative educational approaches" out there. The Montessori philosophy and approach is very basic and focuses on the child's innate desire to self construct. Dr. Montessori, a hundred years ago, observed that children from birth to age six have the necessary inborn qualities that help them to construct themselves and realize their full potential. She called this phase of their lives the "First Plane of Development."

The natural tendencies of children during this time are to explore, to orient, to order, to be exact, to communicate, to work, to control error and to repeat. Children in the First Plane of Development also have two characteristics that are unique to this age, an Absorbent Mind and Sensitive Periods.

Dr. Montessori compared the Absorbent Mind to a camera. No matter how much or how little there is in a picture, a simple click is enough. No matter how much information or how little we place before the child, everything is absorbed in its totality. Sensitive Periods are those periods when a child is irresistibly drawn to certain activities and can grasp those concepts more easily than at other times. For instance, the Sensitive Period for language is from three months to six years. But the focus shifts within this period. A two year old cannot stop talking because of the Sensitive Period for spoken language. This is followed by the passion for writing around four and a half and reading follows.

The carefully Prepared Environment of the Primary classroom provides the materials, freedom and appropriate adult guidance for children to use their natural tendencies, the power of the Absorbent Mind and the Sensitive Periods, for optimum development.

The multi-age setting is ideal for refining social and communication skills. The Sensorial, Language, Cultural and Math areas offer multiple opportunities for repetition and exploration. The lessons of Practical Life connect children to their home and help orient them to the world outside the classroom. The uninterrupted three hour work period allows children to work at their own pace, observe and absorb what their friends are doing, and maybe just a little quiet, alone time. Freedom and responsibility are learned at an early age and the result is self discipline. The concrete materials, manipulated by their hands, feed their intellect.

As Dr. Montessori said,

The hands are the instruments of human intelligence....All people resemble one another in the way they use their feet. But no one can tell what any one person will do with his hands..... If early humans had used only speech to communicate their thoughts....no traces would remain of past generations. It is thanks to the hand, the companion of the mind, that civilization has been preserved."

We, as parents, want our children to be happy.
And they will be if their inner needs and developmental urges are met.
They certainly are in a Montessori classroom.



Arbor Auction 2009

There's no place like Home!



Saturday, March 21
6pm-11pm
Emory's Cox Hall

Staff Spotlight



Dianne Sherrill, our Business Administrator, has been with Arbor since 1978. Her daughter Alison taught lower elementary here before becoming the Elementary Coordinator. Dianne's granddaughters, Carter and Reagan, are now in Deedee's and Cindy's class respectively, and Alison's step-son Joe is in the middle school. Dianne says she enjoys reading, taking walks, and playing "the Wii."

The auction supports our Financial Aid, Faculty Education, and Athletic Programs.

Come join us as part of this great "fun-raising" evening--our only adults only event all year!

iHablamos Espanol!

Spanish teacher Elisabeth Harris writes about what her students have been learning



Overheard in Class

Emilie and Lora heard this the other day from a third year student in the throes of cooking:

"We need a turkey blaster [baster]!"



Chinese New Year celebration in Deedee's Class

In Spanish we have been working on animals and continents. Here is a song that the children have learned in circle:

*América del Norte, América del Sur,
África, Europa y Asia.
No se olvide Australia.
No se olvide Antártica.
América del Norte, América del Sur,
África, Europa y Asia.*

And here are just a few of the animals they have learned:
Pingüino, Oso Panda, Jirafa, Cocodrilo, Tortuga, Tigre
Elefante, Bisonte, Hipopótamo, Delfín, Canguro, León

About Our School

Ever wonder what to say when people ask about your child's school? Here are some ideas:

- Arbor was founded in 1970.
- We are one of the largest Montessori Schools in the southeast.
- Our graduates attend some of the finest institutions in the country.
- Arbor maintains its dedication to the principles of Montessori pedagogy as outlined by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). That is why our faculty is referred to as "The AMI Team."
- We are members of AAAIS (Atlanta Association of Independent Schools), NAMTA (North American



Peace-loving kids in Cindy's Class

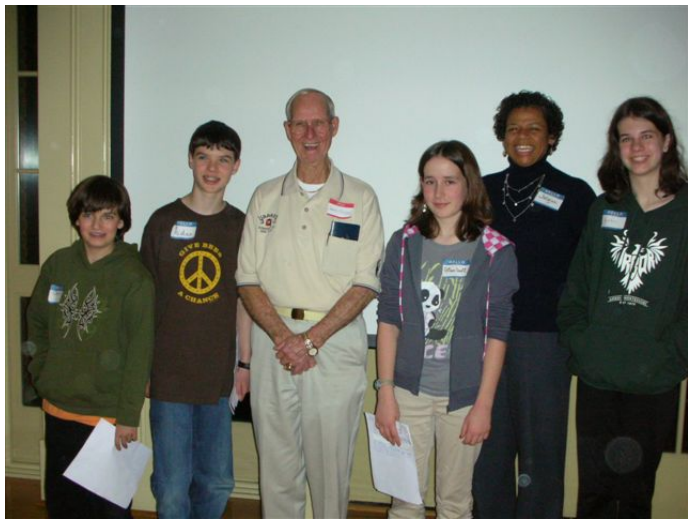
Montessori Teachers Association), and SAIS (Southern Association of Independent Schools).

- Montessori is child-centered learning and the teacher is referred to as a "guide."

Middle School is represented at the Atlanta Beekeepers Association meeting in January

"Devin Mashman, Alison Setili, Aidan O'Reilly and Sammi Doneff presented. They were great. The gentleman in the picture is Connie Fletcher, our contact person at the Masonic Lodge. Someone told him we'd be presenting, so he came to the meeting! Two people there asked when our next coffeehouse will be and someone bought one of the candles off of us that we took as a "show and tell!"

~Jacqui Miller, Middle School Program Director



Arbor's Annual Fund

Each gift to the Annual Fund makes a difference and brings us closer to our 100% participation goal and an additional \$21,500 for financial assistance and faculty education. Fundraising is more important than ever in these uncertain economic times so that we can have funds to help support current families who may have unexpected financial needs.

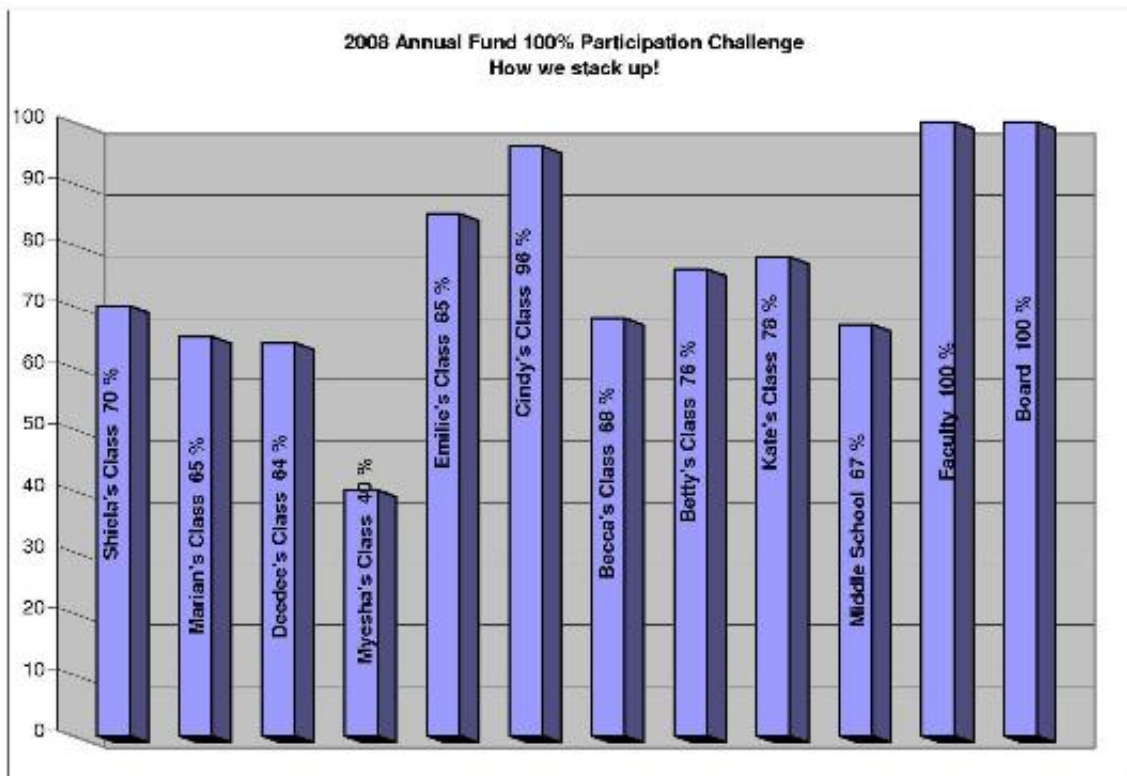
From Marian Cooper:

Due to your generous giving, Asya and I both attended the NAMTA conference on serving children with special needs within the Montessori classroom. We learned from professionals both within the Montessori profession and others who serve and support us. We return with ideas, plans and optimism for our classes. Again, thank you for your support which allows us to better serve your children.

I want to assure you that the board, faculty and staff of Arbor are committed to our vision to educate children in the Montessori method now and in the future.

If you haven't already done so, please add your support to the Annual Fund and bring us closer to 100% participation - to those of you who have already given, our heartfelt thanks for supporting this community.

~Jan Deason,
Head of School



Alumni News

Where are they now?

Former Arbor student **Maria Baetti** is spending 9 months in Vienna on a Fulbright Scholarship for International Studies.

She writes, "The people I have met here are from all over the world (my 5 closest friends come from Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, Austria and Iraq). Academically, it is an extremely strenuous program. I study languages for 9 hours a week (French and German) and then a variety of other courses including international law, EU law, environmental law, political science (taught in French), economics, international relations and European history. Exam week for the first trimester (in December) was quite possibly the most I have ever studied in my life! Six exams in six days. Luckily I was given time to recover over the holiday break which I spent in Spain visiting family in Castellon near Valencia. Since the new year started, I have been enjoying the Viennese ball season. These extravagant events are a perfect excuse to dress up and do some very interesting people watching. Austrian culture is an interesting thing!"



Julian Bridges (*Arbor '07*), a Lakeside High School sophomore, will travel to New York City to perform at Carnegie Hall. Julian is active as a percussionist in Lakeside's band program and was selected to join the Metropolitan Atlanta Youth Wind Ensemble (MAYWE) this season. He will perform with the ensemble as part of Carnegie's Excellence in Education Series in May, 2009.

Lauren Deibel graduated in May from UNCW with a degree in psychology. She moved back to Atlanta and is now in Emory University's nursing program.

Deanna Deibel writes, "I am currently a sophomore at UNCW and I am double majoring in Spanish and Communications Studies and I am headed for a semester of school in Valencia, Spain in January '09."

Connor Wakamo (*Arbor '05*) is a National Merit Semi-Finalist, an AP Scholar with Honor, and a Rensselaer Medal winner (Math and Science).

Aleja Parsons (*Arbor '02*), currently a Howard University junior, spent last semester studying abroad in Granada, Spain. She says that it was an amazing experience and she encourages anyone that ever has the opportunity to study abroad to take it. Aleja writes, "...Living in a new country, learning a new language, meeting new friends and learning about myself--I'm so in love with this experience and all that it encompasses!.... What a treasure the world has waiting to be explored. I'll keep discovering---I'll keep uncovering the treasure, for with it comes treasures in myself."

Kimberly Roberts (*Arbor '05*) is a national merit semi-finalist at St. PiusX.

11 Arbor alums made Honor Roll at St. Pius with an average of 90 or better. "It was the excellent foundation they received at your school that has allowed them to achieve such distinction here at St. Pius. Congratulations."

Steve Spellman, Principal, St. Pius X

Science Fair Winners

Congratulations to the Arbor grads who participated in the Lakeside Science Fair!

Medicine and Health: 1st*: **Michael Fodrie**

Microbiology: 1st*: **Mallory Ellingson**

Computer Science: 2nd: **Aidan Bevacqua**



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