
Philomath Montessori School

May 2009



For the Families and Friends of the Philomath Montessori School

Classroom News

The end of the school year is fast approaching. We've got a lot of learning to do! We all so enjoyed our unit on France. I hated to see it end. The music! The art! The beautiful language! Now we're learning about Mexico and guess what? They have wonderful art, music and language, too. We are so fortunate to have a Diego Rivera print on loan to us from Mel Norland, who has traveled extensively in Mexico. She has loaned us other artifacts as well, including terrific photos which she edited and placed safe and sound in an album so a child may look at it at his leisure without us worrying too much about the safety of those precious (pre-digital, perhaps) photos. I hope more artifacts are sent in.

We will also be learning about the art and life of Frida Kahlo. Leslie and her helpers have prepared some exciting art activities centered on Mexico. We have a bean and corn collage, "tin smithing" with aluminum foil, making God's eyes, a paper mache project, drawing Monarch butterflies, which we just learned a bit about today at group and so much more. We are learning some Spanish-language nursery rhymes, counting in Spanish, Spanish-language songs and

useful phrases and greetings. Of course, we are reading books and telling stories that give us insight into the culture of Mexico.



Frank and Hazel dance the tango.

We had a bird funeral today. A lovely hummingbird met a premature death at one of the church's windows. We benefited by having the chance to see a hummingbird close up and still. I asked the children if anyone had a nice piece of sewing work that we could wrap him up in before he was laid to rest. Reilly offered a beautiful burlap sewing square that she had oversewn three times, making it truly lovely. Leslie and one of the students had dug the grave early in the day so that was all ready as we trooped out, laid the fallen bird in his final

resting place and I filled in the grave as we sung "Blackbird" by the Beatles. I was truly choked up and unable to lead them in singing. Leslie, seeing my state, stepped up and led the chorus. Then we stood in our circle and asked the children if they had any words to say about the bird. Well,



Eliason working on a yarn card.

that was evidently too broad a topic as the children began to tell me everything they knew about every bird they had ever heard of. I asked if anyone had anything they wanted to thank this bird for. That brought them closer to the eulogizing I had in mind. "Thank you for making flowers grow." "Thank you for being so beautiful." "Thank you for letting us see you." I thought that these words were as nice as any I would want said at my own funeral.

The afternoon children had an opportunity to try some brainstorming the other day. I was inspired by the abundant ideas that were generated when parents met with our board of directors to problem-solve the current economic crisis and the impact it is having on our families and school. The children's problem, however, hit much closer to home. The distribution of wealth vis-à-vis the pinecones on the playground. It is a regular game for one group to gather pinecones and hoard them and another group to steal them. The children are usually playing the role of raptors and the pinecones represent eggs. However, not everyone

enjoys this dynamic. The children generated about twenty or so ideas, many of which so closely resembled each other. I was able to condense them to a list of twelve. We were all impressed with ourselves for having such fine problem-solving abilities. Every so often, this problem rears its ugly head and we pull out our list and try out one of our ideas. Some of them became much less popular after they were put into practice. Tomorrow we're going to divide all the pinecones into two piles. One group will play a game that involves larceny and the other group will use their pinecones in a more law-abiding fashion. We'll see how that goes.

We will be enjoying in the classroom some of the Exercises of Physical Science: Magnetism, Gravity, Light and Shadow, Light Refraction, Buoyancy, etc. Pauline did a number of scientific demonstrations for the afternoon children in conjunction with her telling the story of the birth of the universe and the formation of the earth. She showed them the three states of matter, how some particles are attracted to some and not others, the tendency of particles of a solid to maintain its shape, the fluid behavior of a liquid using ball bearings, and gravity.



Jack poses for the camera.

Meanwhile, we are doing quite a lot of botany work. Some of the children are learning the names of the 14 basic leaf shapes. Others

are dissecting flowers to find all the parts and learn their names. We also placed white mums in colored water to note how the stem draws water up to hydrate the bloom. It worked with blue-colored water, but virtually not at all with red. Riveting. It seems that science is alive and well in our classroom.

Although there is yet one month of school left, this is our last newsletter. I am so pleased with how our first-year students have integrated into our life here. I feel confident that our graduates are taking with them much wisdom and many skills. I am grateful for the students returning for their third or fourth year. They are our oh-so-vital village elders. I wish you all an idyllic summer and as always, hope we all appreciate our many blessings. I wish a bright and happy future to the students and families who are leaving us this year and look forward to seeing the returnees in the fall. Now get out there and have a great summer!



Madison behind her Carnivale mask.

Thank You!

Thank You's - May 2009

Though things seemed to slow down for a bit after the auction, spring brought a new passel of projects and you never failed to help us out. For classroom activities, **Janel Lawrence** painstakingly prepared our "stained glass" art activity and **Alissa Moses** created a bullet train template and then cut out the shapes and the various pieces for the collage. She also donated a circle punch to save herself and future volunteers the tedious job of cutting so many small circles! **Lua Siegel** cut muslin squares for sewing and **Colleen Mincinski** prepared advanced sewing cards. Thank you all very much!!

The day of our open house, the church repainted the hallway and **John Miedema** very kindly remounted everything and **Allan** stabilized the wobbly railing for our backdoor steps. Many thanks for doing these big projects for us.

A big thank you to **Trina McGaughy**, **Heather Gerding**, **Gretchen Goode**, **Hong** and **Jon Moulton**, and **Michelle** and **Colleen Mincinski** for cleaning our classroom materials and shelves. It's a big job and time-consuming, but we hope very satisfying.

Thank you for all the donations to our classroom. The **Moultons** sent in a lovely French treat -- Pain au chocolat for the teachers, but we decided this was the perfect repast to share with the children during our focus on France - who wouldn't love a croissant filled with chocolate! **Hong** also answered my call for some science equipment and donated test tubes, a test tube stand, beakers, and BBs. **Simone** for her birthday gifted our classroom with cultural artifacts from China. Thank you to the **Moses**, **Wilson**, and **Hinds-Cook** families for donating National Geographic magazines -- the backbone of our

geography and biome folders. The **Alba family** recently donated the CD "Do As You Otter" by Peter Weiss which we plan to jump into soon! Thank you!!

A very special thank you to **Michelle Mincinski and Ric Vega** for taking care of all the auction thank you cards! In addition to this, they, along with **Colleen**, have been using part of their rented space at the Saturday Market to sponsor a booth for our school. They have had and will have help from **Mel Norland, Heather Gerding, and Janel Lawrence** handing out brochures and answering questions about our school. Around Philomath and Corvallis, **Dodie Wilson, Sherri Mortensen, Gretchen Goode, Karen Patrick, Hattie Muir, Mel Norland, Leslie Cohen, Kim Gratz and Alissa Moses** have been posting Enrolling Now fliers. Thank you all very, very much!!



Olivia and Ava on the tire tree.

Many thanks to **Lua Siegel, Dodie Wilson, Kim Gratz, and Michelle Mincinski** for coming together with our board for a special visioning session and also to **Mel Norland and Janel Lawrence** for sending in their ideas. One

of the ideas to emerge from the session was an ask letter to our alumni which **Kim Gratz** acted on right away and did a beautiful job writing. **Michelle Mincinski** printed all the address labels (typed in by hand!) and **Karen Patrick** stuffed and stamped the envelopes - **Hattie Muir** also volunteered to help, but didn't get a chance! **Kim Gratz** has also looked into different grant opportunities and is ready to meet with me to get started. **Lua Siegel** followed up with another idea with a couple of gatherings at her home. So far, **Mel Norland, Heather Gerding, and Gretchen Goode** have discussed the possibility of a child care cooperative. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact **Lua**. On another front, we will soon be putting a survey in your box to fill out. These are the ideas that came out of our visioning session and we would like your comments and feedback and where we should go from here. **Thank you for all your help and support!**

Newsline

Newsline - May 2009

- ✚ Please join us for our **End-of-Year Potluck** on Saturday, June 6 from 5:00 - 6:30 in our school backyard or in the classroom, if the weather is inclement. Hope you can make it!
- ✚ If you would like to keep your current **year-round job** for the 2009-10 school year, please let me know.
- ✚ The **last day of school** will be Thursday, June 11. There will be **no extended day**.

Please be sure to save Saturday, August 15 from 9:00 A.M. to noon. It's our big **Parent Work Day** to get the 09-10 year off to a great start. We'll have lots of projects so we'll need lots of help. Please come!