
Philomath Montessori School

May 2008



For the Families and Friends of the Philomath Montessori School

Classroom News

What a lucky occurrence we experienced yesterday. A random gentleman called our school thinking we were Philomath High School and got to chatting with Pauline. It seems he had found a western pond turtle and wanted to offer it to PHS for study. Pauline, in her sweet, persuasive way (did y'all know she was from the South?) convinced this fellow to loan us the turtle instead. She had hopes of then keeping the turtle herself, releasing him in her large pond. So we had the turtle for one day and he kept pretty much to himself, occasionally stretching out a flipper or tipping over his water dish, but mostly hiding in the mud and sod. At the end of the morning, though, when we were all gathered for group, Pauline picked him up and showed us how to tell a male turtle from a female. (It's not how you think. The plastron (belly) of the male is concave and the female's is flat.) As she carried the reptile around our circle, we expected he would pull his head in and do his best to continue to ignore us, but no. He stretched his reptilian neck out and looked us all over! A very charming turtle once we got to know him. He was then offered up to PHS for study and it was agreed that Mr. Turtle would be better off at the pond PHS manages, where there are 40 or more of his kind

and he would have a better chance of reproducing. As these turtles are a threatened species in Washington state and a "species of concern" here in Oregon, Pauline agreed to do the responsible thing and give up her dream of having a turtle in her pond...for now.



Sydney

We have also been visited by some lovely tadpoles that were brought in by Jacob Mathison. We get to keep them for a day or two at each stage of their metamorphosis for observation and then they go back home at the end of the day. We get to enjoy their development without actually having full responsibility for their well-being. Speaking of nature, can you all believe the nasty weather we have had this spring? April came in like a lion and is going out like a crankier lion! We have forgone many recesses due to the weather this month. We have done more Walking on the Line and indoor games when we've needed a break. It's been so hard to gauge the weather, too. One day, it looked bright and sunny so I had everyone pack up their work for the end of the day and by the time they all came to group it was

really pouring. So we played a Silence Game, an as-yet-untitled game in which we stand up or sit down if I refer to you, as in "If you like pizza, stand up... If your shoes have buckles, sit down...If you are a big brother, stand up." Then we mix it up and play for a while in which we don't need to be truthful. "If you have ever bathed a tiger, stand up...If you had ice cream for breakfast, sit down." Keep this game in mind and use it if you ever have need. The children might never have tired of it!

Our Plain Talk volunteers from CARDV came to speak to the extended day children about personal safety. Keeping a distance of two arms' length from strangers, practicing a safety yell "I need help!" or "Leave me alone!" were techniques we learned. We were taught to say "No!" to people who wanted to touch us or wanted us to touch them in any way that didn't feel right and to tell a trusted adult about it. We were instructed to keep telling grown-ups about this until someone said they believed us and would help us. We were also shown some strategies for defeating bullies, such as taking a friend with us to stand up to the bully and to tell our parents about it.



Amelia with the watercolors.

I had coached the children on their behavior before the Plain Talk people arrived. Several times, in fact, over the days leading up to the event. I stressed that they were coming to give us information and that we needed to listen

and not continually have our hands raised to have a turn to speak. Well, that was completely ineffectual.



Megan and Alan

The children were so thrilled to have some new people to jabber at that it's a wonder our guests were able to get a word in edgewise. Also, after the presentation, it is the Plain Talk practice to give children a chance to confide in them about any problems they may have had or "just to visit." I don't think we had one child who declined that invitation. Just ask the parents who were waiting out in the hall at the end of the day for their child. As I saw certain long-winded children sitting down for their one-on-one with these lovely young ladies, I thought, "We'll all need haircuts by the time this is over." I thank those parents for their patience. Next time we do this, we'll start earlier in the day and finish on time.

Our last unit of study this school year will be New Zealand. I have already learned a lot by reading the library books that Barbara Hinds-Cook brought in. Did you know that NZ has many flightless birds? Not just the kiwi, but the kakapo (a flightless parrot), the tataka and before being hunted and eaten to extinction by humans, the moa. Did you know that bungee jumping was invented in NZ? Well, it was! We will be learning some of the Maori language and customs such as pressing foreheads in a show of affection.

We are exploring some experiments in physical science right now and everybody loves those. The concepts we are conveying are that water seeks its own level, that the earth attracts objects and that heavier objects are pulled toward the center of the earth and lighter objects stay nearer the surface. We are learning that some objects are buoyant and some objects are magnetic and others are not. We are teaching that light refracts as it passes through a prism, too. I pass this along to give you an idea of what the children may be pondering right now.

At the last parent meeting, a parent expressed a desire for some guidance regarding how to keep the children learning during the summer. I will offer a few humble suggestions. One nice thing about summer vacation and not having to go to school, is that it gives families some extra time to pursue activities together. I recommend going to the library often, cooking together, gardening, visiting farmer's markets, being of service to one's neighbors, visiting the elderly in a nursing home (my personal favorite, imagine the joy the children will bring) and stargazing. Pickling and canning summer's bounty lends insight to the importance of food preservation to our pre-refrigeration ancestors. Kids love water activities on a hot day so let them wash your cars, bikes, wagons and patio furniture.

This is also a great time for children to forge a bond with nature and a connection to their particular place in the world. Left to their own devices in the back yard, a camp site or park allows children to wonder, reflect, imagine and create. Dr. Montessori said "The materials of nature are a child's favorite playthings." When away from one's own property, I think it best to take only pictures and leave only footprints, but at home, one can revel in picking dandelions and harvesting fruit and piling up rocks without impacting the well-being of places shared. I recommend allowing your child to get good and bored. Sure, you could alleviate that vacancy for them quite handily, but that would deprive them of the opportunity to exercise their own resources. They will come up with something. And when you see your child wandering the

backyard or sitting under a tree, scraping dirt with a rock, looking peaceful, or determined or puzzled, you will be tempted to interact with them. People who are truly focused on what they are doing are always attractive to others. You may, however, choose to observe them instead. It is a discipline that is rich with reward. I wish you all a comfortable and pleasant summer break and I look forward to completing this school year with verve and enthusiasm.



Anya and Reilly explore the world.

Sustainability for Our School

One of our school goals this year was to take a look at what we could do to move closer to sustainability in the way we carry out our day-to-day school activities. With Carol Hulstrunk's help, I decided to check out their web site first and found that I didn't need to go any further than their Eco-Tips. The really good news is that we are already doing many things that are recommended, but there is a lot that we can do to build on that wonderful foundation. Here's our plan for next year:

- ❖ Plan a picnic for the first day of school for full day students and parents so that we can talk about some everyday practices that can help all of us become more earth-friendly, such as:

- Bringing our food in reusable containers instead of purchasing prepackaged, one-time use food items.
- Using containers with lids to avoid plastic wrap and foil.
- Packing utensils and a cloth napkin from home.
- Paying attention to the environmental impacts of plastics.
- ❖ Look into using linen towel dispenser instead of paper towels for handwashing.
- ❖ Examine our classroom activities for what disposables can be replaced with reusable items or reused items.
- ❖ Use only eco-friendly cleaners.
- ❖ Minimize the purchase and use of plastic bags – especially garbage bags.



Jacob creating a sculpture.

- ❖ Continue to minimize paper and ink consumption by emailing documents, newsletters, meeting minutes, etc.
- ❖ Turn off all machines when not in use.
- ❖ Buy recycled products whenever possible.

- ❖ Encourage everyone to bring their own beverage cups or water bottles to meetings.
- ❖ Improve lighting efficiency.
- ❖ Reduce junk mail.



Anna with a 'p'.

Thank You's May '08

Right through this great school year, all of you have been giving generously of your time, energy, and talents. Our classroom has had helping hands from many parents: **Gretchen and Aaron** have been preparing our popular tasting bottles every week, **Michelle** sewed journals for our budding writers, **Hattie, Hong, Trina** (twice!), **Christi, Aaron, and Jessica** blew out dozens of eggs for a couple of different art projects, **Carol** mended an apron, **Sherri** cut paper for negative drawing, and cut paper sheep for painting and drawing, **Janel** prepared muslin sewing, **Julie** cut out canoe-shaped paper, **Lua** cut felt for button sewing, and **Hong** cut out fish-shaped paper, Thank you for the many hours of work!

Outdoors, **John Miedema** tried to fix one of our picnic tables but, it was too far gone. He also tried to buy manual push mower for us, but it was already taken. Thanks for the valiant tries and

your time, John. Thanks also to **Lanny** for coming to mow and trim our edges. He didn't have time to do the whole job at once, so came back a second time to trim the edges. Thank you for squeezing us into your busy schedule, Lanny.

Many thanks to the volunteers who came out to help us with the Bank Stabilization project at our future site. **Dave Alba**, of Planting Seeds, headed up the project creating the landscape design and organizing and leading the work parties. His hard-working crew included **Jonathan Jensen (twice!)**, **Shawn Foley**, **Johnny Mathison**, **Keith Moses**, **Jessica Neebe**, **Allan Rack (twice!)**, **Sha Sifford**, and **Dodie Wilson**.

For the celebration of birthdays more lovely gifts have been added to our classroom library – not only books, but music as well. **Amelia** gifted our class with the beautiful, mysterious book The Scarab's Secret, **Taylor** gave us what has become one of my favorite books -- Zen Shorts, and **Ava** has bestowed The Cloudmakers – a story of how papermaking made its way around the world. While on her trip to Washington D.C. with Patricia Parker (Kids for Kids) and Cassidy, **Kathy Donaldson** met a Montessori teacher there through Patricia. She had written a children's book entitled Peace Begins with Me which Kathy thoughtfully purchased and brought back for our class. Thank you, Everyone, for your incredible generosity.



Anya and Sara.

Newsline – May '08

- ❖ Please gather with us for our **End-of-Year Potluck** on Saturday, June 7 from 5:00 - 6:30 in our school backyard or at Mary's River Park, if the weather is inclement. Hope you can make it!
- ❖ If you would like to keep you current **year-round job** for the 2008-09 school year, please let us know.
- ❖ The **last day of school** will be Thursday, June 12. There will be **no extended day**.
- ❖ Please be sure to save Saturday, August 16 from 9:00 to noon. It's our big **Parent Work Day** to get the 08-09 year off to a great start. We'll have lots of projects so we'll need lots of help. Hope you can make it!

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!