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# Philomath Montessori School

## September 2008



**For the Families and Friends of the Philomath Montessori School**

### Classroom News

And so begins another school year. It is always remarkable to note the difference between the end of one school year and the beginning of the next. Welcoming in a fresh group of "newbies" is often amusing and certainly never dull. It is amazing to think that this same group of amateurs will be our leaders in two short years. By the end of this school year, in fact, this group will be just as polished and professional as last year's class.

We sing a song with the children at this time each year called "At the Beginning." "At the beginning is a good place to be. What will each day bring for you and me? New life, new friends, new things to do. At the beginning is a good place to be." It truly is a new life for these students and for many of their families, too. There is a transition period which is always challenging in any system. It eventually gives way to a feeling of comfortable routine. We'll probably all be there by, oh, November at the latest.

We prepare the classroom for the beginning of each school year by paring down the offerings we had at the end of the previous year. Some materials are so gorgeous and tempting that we dare not display them until the children's understanding that we only take materials we have been presented is solidified. Some of you may have noticed that the bells are not out, the

bead cabinet is empty and the binomial and trinomial cubes are missing. There are many more materials stashed away for now, too. There are fewer sets of vocabulary cards, reading materials, maps, etc. Taking away some of the visual stimulus has a calming effect. (I suggest you try this at home, too.) Fewer choices for the returning students lead to longer periods of activity with one apparatus as well. We also return to basic, familiar materials to review and revive skills that were perhaps dormant during summer break. I personally enjoy seeing some empty space on the shelves. It seems less cluttered and better organized. When we bring out the hidden materials one at a time, throughout the year, they will be fresh, exciting and new.

This first week of school is an exercise in controlling chaos, at least for that first hour and fifteen minutes with the new little ones. There is a lot of standing around on the children's part because they have only been presented a few lessons. Then, too, they don't always remember what has been presented. There is the inevitable drama of separation and entering into a new unknown. There are many grace and courtesy lessons presented. This helps the children to have at least the beginning of a clue as to the expectations we have for their behavior. We have two older, returning students in class with the "frosh" group who serve as "model students." They are a tremendous help to us showing constantly how to comport oneself in group and at work. The abbreviated day has many benefits, but also its pitfalls. For instance, it's just not possible for everyone to have snack within 75

minutes! But we teachers are kept so busy during that time with the new guys that it is a relief to see them go. Then we all treat ourselves to a nice, deep breath!

We would like to extend a welcome to our new students and their families. This year ushers in a few brand new families. Welcome to **James Cunningham and his parents Melissa and Daniel, Joanna Catton and her parents, Kim and Brad, Anna Gratz and her parents Kim and Richard.** Many of our new students have older siblings who are graduates of our program and their families are perhaps already known to you. **Ian Alba, Madison Foley, Eliason Hinds-Cook, Emily Matsuba, Kaidyn Mincinski, Hayden Mortensen and Hazel Moses** are new students who saw their older brothers or sisters pass through our portals at some point. Please greet these families warmly and make them feel welcome. One of the aspects of our school that sets us apart is the community spirit that one feels here. I wish all of you a blessed school year and look forward to working with all of you.

## Back to School

*We thought we'd review some important guidelines that go a long way in helping us create a productive and pleasant atmosphere in our classroom.*

- Please be sure to call the school before 9:00am if your child will be **absent for any reason or arriving later than 9:10.**
- At school, your child will need to an extra set of clothes (even the older children!), outdoor boots (and please, no indoor boots, especially the cowboy variety!), and raincoat with hood or a rain hat. **Initials on each piece of clothing** will make us very happy.
- **Please remember our character-free, nature-based, noncommercial atmosphere** - no army fatigues, Barney, Barbie and the like on clothing, lunch boxes, shoes, etc.

- To help us maintain a good relationship with the pastor and church members AND to set the tone for the classroom, we request that **everyone walk and use quiet voices, especially in the hallways.** Hold your child by the hand until they are ready to these things on their own. It's important that **YOU** do this. We try not to say anything to the children once/while they are in your hands, because a) they usually won't listen to us while you're there and b) we don't want to embarrass them in front of everyone else.
- Please make sure that your child remembers to **bring a water bottle to school with fresh water each day.** In the beginning, it's nice for you to help them with remembering, but later, we encourage you to invite your child to get ready and gather his/her things for school. Having a checklist by the door to go over together before departing is very helpful. Later, when your child can read, this can be another step towards independence.
- **If your child is new to extended day,** please be sure to read the guidelines for lunch. We are planning a **picnic with our full-day children and parents** to share some ideas we have for making our lunches healthier and our school a greener place. We welcome your ideas, too!
- **Will someone else be dropping off or picking up your child? Please:**
  - Inform him/her of our arrival and departure procedures - use the hallway door to drop-off and pickup and remain in the hallway.
  - Be sure he/she brings a picture ID for verification (for picking up).
  - Let us know ahead of time by a note, call, or email.
  - Let your child know ahead of time, also.
- We would like to promote **the virtue of punctuality** - arriving and leaving on time.

We feel it is an important habit to nurture in our children. They know when they are arriving late and they especially know when you are picking them up late. Our morning gatherings have much more of a community feeling if everyone is present and can hear the news and changes that may be happening that day. We completely understand being late sometimes (this is something I STILL struggle with), but we'd like to focus on improving on this area.

- We'd like to resume the **before and after-school hand washing routine** that we initiated last year as a preventative measure against the many illnesses that can be passed from person to person. So before your child enters the classroom, please invite them to wash their hands in one of the bathrooms in the hallway. You can use the bathrooms in our hallway or the ones in the side hallway near the entrance.

**Thank you for reading through this list - your help is so valuable!!**

## Medication at School

A recent careful reading of the state regulations prompted us to update our medication dispensing requirements. If we dispense prescription medication at school, we need to have not only the Medication Permission Form filled out, but we also need the physician's signature. So if you take your child to the doctor, you might want to bring along our Medication Permission form with you in case there is a need to dispense medication to your child while she/he is in school. The form is available at the bottom of our home page: [www.philomathmontessori.org](http://www.philomathmontessori.org).

Remember we will need this form for any over-the-counter medication, even sunscreen. Please clearly label the sunscreen with your child's name.

## Parenting Article

*Here are some ideas garnered from an article by Priscilla Winning, a guide from the Franciscan Montessori Earth School in Portland, that will help make the transition from home to school go more smoothly for your child.*

- Establish a **consistent routine** with your child each morning. Regular routines give children a sense of security. By creating a calm and stable morning atmosphere in your home, you'll be greatly affecting your child's mood in a positive way. If your child regularly watches television in the morning, slowly wean him/her. **Television is not an appropriate activity before school**, nor a way to prepare the mind for learning.
- Set an appropriate bed time so that your child can get **plenty of sleep**. This will allow your child to feel rested and ready for a full day at school.
- **Let them know what will be happening that day**. If they are in a carpool it's important to let them know who is dropping them off and picking them up. Many children become upset if there are unexpected changes in their routine.
- **Prepare in the evening for the following day**. Children are usually pleased (and sometimes demand!) to be involved in choosing their clothing to be worn to school, preparing their lunch, planning breakfast, etc. Making these decisions and preparations the night before can help you and your child avoid the stress and pressure of rushing.
- Be prepared to **make a short and cheerful departure** with your child at the classroom door. It will make your child's entry into the classroom more comfortable and positive.

# Thank You!

Thanks to the efforts of the **Wilson**s, the **Lawrence-Foley** family, and the **Plaire-Siegal** family, our garden has an abundance of fruit - lots of berries and apples for us to savor this fall. Over the summer, they kept our gardens watered and weeded. A special thank you to **Lua Siegal** for overseeing our yard maintenance and the **Mathison** and **Goode-Amoth** families for mowing our lawn and trimming the borders.

Many of you already know that **Phyllis Pearson**, our Bookkeeper, is an incredible seamstress. Her quilts are just stunning and much sought-after items at our auctions. This summer during the month of June, she made 10 beautiful children's aprons and one for Doni and me - really beautiful. She designed the neck loop with elastic so that the bib part of the apron will sit on the child's chest instead of his/her waist. They are so perfectly sewn that the children can't tell the right side from the wrong side. Thank you so much, **Phyllis**!!

It was a hot, sunny day, but a crew of dedicated families came out for our parent work day and accomplished most of the work that we needed done to start the school year fresh. Many, many thanks to **Dave, Debbie, Caelin, and Meaghan Alba, Aaron Amoth, Kim and Brad Catton, Melissa and Daniel Cunningham, Janel Lawrence and Elliot Foley, Richard and Kim Gratz, Anna and Kevin Matsuba, Trina McGaughy, Sherri and Shaun Mortensen, Alissa Moses, and Lua Siegal**. Our classroom shelves, materials, tables, and chairs were cleaned, gardens weeded, trimmed, and pruned, the greenhouse washed and the plants inside cut back, and the fence inspected and repaired. **Brad Catton, Aaron Amoth, and Richard Gratz** took on the complex, hefty job of replacing the joists and damaged floor boards on the play structure and then **Brad, his father-in-law (Joanna's grandfather)** and **Aaron** came back to finish up the job. Thank you very much!

Many parents who came to the work party also took jobs home: **Lua Siegal** cut paper strips for a cutting activity and rectangles for collage, **Janel Lawrence** drew lines for cutting and

prepared 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> level sewing cards, **Sherri Mortensen** folded paper and drew shapes for an advanced cutting activity, **Alissa Moses** cut several types of math papers, as well as flag, spelling, metal inset, and booklet paper, **Kim Gratz** prepared cloth for sewing, and **Melissa Cunningham** cut tissue paper for an art activity. And then when everyone came back last week more jobs were swept up: **Kim Catton** will be cutting more rectangular shapes, **Monica Skinner** will prepare burlap sewing, **Kim Gratz** will be sewing across an underlay for one of our math activities, **Barbara Hinds-Cook** will be cutting out continent shapes for new geography envelopes, and **Sherri Mortensen** will be cutting, laminating, and trimming geography cards for Europe, Oceania, North America and Antarctica. Outdoors, **Hattie Muir** will be tracing and cutting out large shapes for drawing and painting, **Dodie Wilson** will be staking up our perennial sunflowers and she and **Monica Skinner** will be raking the gravel area. **Caelin Alba** did a gallant job of raking during our Parent Work day, but it's too big a job for one person. Thank you, **Caelin**!

**John Miedema** signed up (and we signed him up, too!) for a big list of jobs: Stabilizing the legs and sanding and refinishing the workbench, sanding and refinishing our three picnic tables, removing the debris and the old tree stump, replacing the post for the stair and refinishing the rails, sinking the header on the gravel walkway from the front gate, repairing the gate on the south side and moving the bird feeder. Our undying gratitude, **John**!!

We have our team of year-round parent volunteers already assembled. **Barbara Hinds-Cook** will again be our Library Parent, **Sherri Mortensen** will be our Marketing Parent, **Janel Lawrence and Alissa Moses** will be our Art Parents, **Richard Gratz** will be our Outdoor Maintenance Parent, **Janel Lawrence** will be doing double-duty as she will also be our Classroom Gift Parent again, **Trina McGaughy** will be our Volunteer Coordinator, **Dodie Willson** will be our School Chronicler, **Melissa Cunningham** will be our meeting Secretary and **Karen Patrick** will be our Newsletter Editor and Publisher for her 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row. Thank you all for stepping up to take on these important roles!

## Newsline

- Our **class list** was put into family boxes last week. Please let us know ASAP if there are any mistakes or typos. We will issue a revision if needed by the end of the month.
- If your child is a **returning student**, your child's current forms are or will soon be in your box for you to review and update. It is very important for us to have current information on the emergency form, immunization records, medical school form and your registration form. **Please update information, sign again and date.**  
Thanks.

*Sadly we will be without the Donaldson family this fall. Due to a serious family illness, they will be in Utah for the next four months. We all send our best wishes, healing energy, and prayers. If you would like to be a part of their support group, email Julie at [julie.smolarek@gmail.com](mailto:julie.smolarek@gmail.com). She will connect you to the Lots of Helping Hands website.*

*We have decided not to take another child this fall to fill Jack's spot. Instead, we will focus on our current students and families.*

- During the year, we will be posting **flyers and brochures** on the bulletin board from various individuals and groups offering services that may be appropriate for your families. However, **it should not be taken as a recommendation** as we cannot investigate every source for quality.
- Our **Beginning-of-the-Year potluck** will be this coming Saturday, September 6 from 5:00 - 6:30 in our school yard. Please bring a blanket to sit on, your own plates, utensils, and cups. See you there!
- Thursday, September 18 is our **first parent meeting**. It will be from 6:00 - 7:30. We will provide free child care for children 2 ½ and older.
- We will have a **parent workshop** on Montessori on Thursday, October 9 from 6:00 - 7:30. We will provide free child care.
- Our **Birthday Celebration handout, Medication Permission form, and our 2008-2009 Calendar** are available as PDF files at the bottom of the home page of our web site: [www.philomathmontessori.org](http://www.philomathmontessori.org)

### 2008-2009 Cultural Curriculum

<i>Country</i>	<i>Celebration</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Biome/Other Focus</i>
<i>Sudan</i>	<i>Harvest Festival</i>	<i>Oct 6 – Nov 25</i>	<i>Deserts</i>
<i>Israel</i>	<i>Hanukkah</i>	<i>Dec 1 – Jan 22</i>	<i>Mediterranean Sea</i>
<i>Argentina</i>	<i>Carnival (Feb 24)</i>	<i>Jan 26 – Mar 5</i>	<i>Grasslands</i>
<i>France</i>	<i>Paris in Spring</i>	<i>Mar 9 – Apr 30</i>	<i>Art/Paris</i>
<i>Mexico</i>	<i>Cinco de Mayo (May 5)</i>	<i>May 1 – June 10</i>	<i>Land and Water forms Volcanoes/Mountains</i>