



Jake & Hugo in the snow!

12/11/2013

Classroom News

December is a cozy time in our classroom. Most children spend more time indoors and everyone knows the basics of our routines and rhythms now, which adds to the sense of peace and calm. There are usually some traditional art activities (making a clove/orange pomander, stringing popcorn for the birds, making a holiday garland) available that lend themselves to conversation with a co-worker and give the hands something to do to express the anticipation of exciting holiday plans with one's family! Indeed, the air is abuzz with talk of Santa Claus and Christmas trees, lights and cookies.

This year, we are enjoying a study of Germany. As usual, we celebrate a holiday that is taking place in our country of geographical focus. This year, our official pick was Nicholaustag or St. Nicholas Day, which is December 6. We will share with the children the Nicholaustag I experienced when I was an exchange student in Bavaria, for one year, back in 1984/85. I was 18 and living with a wonderful family of teachers with a daughter my age, a son who was 12 and the littlest girl who was 6. I am still very close to this family almost 30 years later. We put our boots by the front door with a carrot inside, I think, for Nicholas' donkey/small white horse. In the morning, there were a few practical gifts left on the dining table for us children. Christmas was, in fact, a much bigger deal. I will be sharing



Annabel stringing popcorn and looking festive!



Ace & Anika making a booklet.

many of my magical Christmas memories, as well. I speak German, too, so our study of the language should be more thorough than most of our linguistic efforts. We have already begun to sing some Christmas songs "auf Deutsch" including "Still, Still, Still" and "O Tannenbaum." We will sing "Stille Nacht" and some German children's songs, too.

I have brought many photos which I am placing a few at a time, for a few days at a time, on a tray in the classroom with a magnifying glass and also some old German marks of various denominations. These photos were taken pre-digitally and cost my parents hundreds of dollars to process when I returned home! I shudder to think how many terrible and thoughtless pictures I took with no heed of the expense! At least, I am getting some good of them now! I have brought in some artifacts, my favorite being my "Kristkindlsengel" (Christ child angel) that my German parents bought for me from the world-renowned Kristkindlsmarkt in Nuremberg. This is an open-air Advent market in the shadow of an old castle in the city known as the "toy capital of the world" so it is like a fairy tale. It is presided over by an effigy of a golden-haired angel. A young girl of the city is also chosen as this year's Christ child Angel and she makes appearances in her golden gown and crown, carrying candles. In German tradition,



Balya sweeping snow from the deck.

it is the Christ child who brings gifts on Christmas Eve, but evidently it was too great a stretch of the imagination to see how a baby, even a holy baby, could manage such a task. Over the years, He was given a helper, an angel, to do the heavy lifting. My Kristkindlsengel has wax hands and face and she is placed atop the

Christmas tree, which is, to this day, lit with real, burning candles on Christmas morning.

In fact, on that long ago Christmas morning in Germany, I was very homesick for my own family and our Christmas traditions, which were legend. But I know that I am privileged to have spent the Christmas season in the culture which is responsible for so many of our American traditions (nutcrackers, Christmas cookies, gingerbread, Christmas trees, Christmas pyramids, Angel chimes, Christmas carols, the ideal of the white Christmas, toys and toy trains, even Santa Claus, formerly Father Christmas, formerly St Nick, formerly Norse God, Odin). And my memory of my day at the Markt, with my sister and her friends, trudging up the hill to the castle, with snow falling and piled up all around us, is a treasured one.

We will learn about some classical German composers and artists. We will read some of Grimm's fairy tales to the older children in the afternoon and we have been telling stories of castles, walled cities, gates and fortresses in the mornings.

Pauline told a wonderful story of Mad King Ludwig. She described madness as "making consistently odd choices" or something like that. Totally non-judgmental. So Pauline. She also showed us his picture and a picture of one of his passions, the castle Neuschwanstein, which is what Cinderella's castle in Disneyland is modeled after. Did you know he lived nocturnally and commanded grand theatrical performances in his home theatre at which he was the only audience member? His ascending the throne in adolescence combined with his good looks made him pathologically self-conscious and he avoided society. Rich people's problems, am I right?

We will learn a bit about the Alps and the wildlife there. I have some great memories of misty summer days in the Alps visiting my host-family's uncle at his dairy and guest house. I have been back to see my family twice since my exchange year and they and their kids have visited me multiple times. They are all world travelers, especially the mother, Inge. She has been everywhere! The last time they visited they told me that they were getting on in years and there were a few places they had not yet seen. If they travelled any more at all, it would not be to the Pacific NW yet again and therefore, this would be their last visit to my home. I responded, "Thank Goodness! I will never have to get my house this clean again!" (Everything you have heard about German fastidiousness is true! Although stereotypes are wrong, of course!)



Ren washing a table.



Sam getting ready to wash dishes.

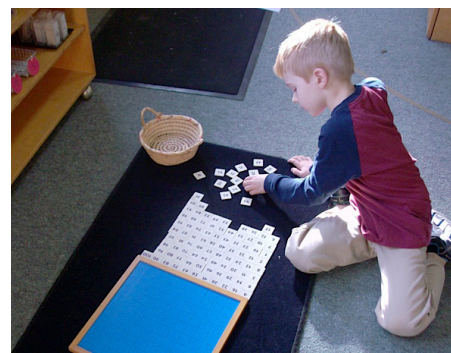
No doubt other Teutonic tangents will be followed. I have researched Germanic history from pre-history (many hugely important archaeological finds in Germany) to the present, but that is largely what we have planned for our study on Germany (or Bavaria, really!). Whatever you celebrate at home this year, whether it is Solstice or Christmas, the New Year or Kwanzaa, I hope you pursue those traditions which are the most meaningful to you and those that bring the most joy. I hope you and your children make happy memories that they will one day look back on and reminisce about. My older cousin, Cathy, of LaPorte, IN, just wrote a Christmas memoir in her blog that mentioned my dear dad's famous homemade eggnog with islands of meringue



Theo working with the Pink Tower.



Harper working with the Brown Stair.



Eddie doing the 100 Board.

floating about, freshly grated nutmeg and served in a Santa mug, which I had just spoken about to a group of friends at a party! You never know which details of your holiday will provide a touchstone for a child's whole life. We at the Philomath Montessori School wish you all a happy holiday season and many joys in the New Year! 📖

Best regards,
Doni

Newsline

- There will be art class on Friday, December 20. **Winterbreak begins Monday, December 23 . School resumes on Monday, January 6.**
- Please join us for our next **parent meeting on Thursday, January 16 at 6:00.** This is an important meeting – just 3 weeks before our big fundraiser! AND we need your help in complying with the Quality Rating and Improvement System by filling out a short survey that we will explain at the meeting. Free child care will be provided.
- There will be **no school on Monday, January 20.** We will be celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- Our big fundraiser of the year – The **Love of Learning Auction, Raffle and Family Fun** will be on **Saturday, February 8 from 4pm to 7pm** at the Philomath Elementary School.
- There will be **no school on Monday, February 17,** President's Day.
- We are having an **Open House** for prospective parents on **Saturday, March 1 from 10am to 1pm.** Please “bring a buddy” to the Open House and spread the word!
- **Language Workshop, Parent Ed Night, rescheduled for Thursday, March 13 at 6pm.** 📖



Jovi at the top of the tire tree.



Outside group picture!



Hugo & Connor practicing writing numbers on a chalkboard.



Art Class

To go along with the study of Germany, the children recently worked on collages of castles using the water color papers they had made earlier in the fall. Prior to this project they made sewn and beaded leather pouches with some of the leather that Jasmin donated to the arts program. All the children made a nature collage creating both mandalas and interesting patterns with an assortment of nuts, pods, and plants. Around Halloween, they made painted and collaged masks as well as leaf paintings in which they studied a leaf, did a resist with crayons and then painted with water colors.

For the ongoing side project, many of the children have been working on straw weavings with yarn, making headbands, belts and scarves. Each week they have a different assignment also in their journals as well as a free drawing page. They have traced and then decorated their hand and foot, done rubbings, drawn and also done leaf rubbings, looked closely and then drawn something in the classroom, sat across from another and drawn that person's face, drawn a mask, studied a work of art in the art cards and attempted to replicate the painting, and other ideas. They are now coming up with suggestions for these assignments which is great. 📖

Jennifer Smith



Thank You

Classroom Projects

- Draw and cut pretzel shapes for drawing: **Meagan Johanson**
- Prepare "cutting corners" activity: **Kim Catton**
- Cut shapes leaf shapes for collage: **Meagan Johanson**
- Trace & cut leaf shapes for painting: **Kim Catton**
- Trace & cut squash shapes for painting: **Meagan Johanson**
- Cut sea turtle and manatee shapes: **Meagan Johanson & Kim Catton**
- Sew ice pack covers: **Jasmin Woodside**

Outside & Maintenance

- Picked up and delivered new picnic tables: **Lanny McGaughy**
- Picked up, delivered, and positioned new shed: **Lanny McGaughy & Allan Rack**
- Recycled large amount of fluorescent light bulbs: **Shawnde Bausch**
- Changed several classroom fluorescent light bulbs: **Lanny McGaughy**

- Shovel, rake, & level rock in new strip: **Ryan Johanson**
- Sand & refinish art drying rack: **The Woodside family**
- Refinish classroom tables: **Shannon Bedford**
- Repair shed roof: **The Woodside family**
- Hang bulletin board in office: **The Woodside family**
- Install soap dispenser & faucet: **The Woodside Family**

Donations

- Raffle ticket printing: **Phoenix Media**
- Several books & rainbow nesting bowls: **Shannon Bedford**
- Emergency flashlight: **Williams family**
- Extra kid's cloths: **Heather Gerding**
- Pillow stuffing for art class: **Lua Siegel**

Classroom Cleaning

- **Bausch & Kenoyer Families**

Parent Ed

- Special thanks to **Lua Siegel and Rory Plaire** for letting us use their projector!

Our sincere and humble thanks for the many things you do for us and give to us!! We are so fortunate. 📖