

Philomath Montessori School

December 2014

It's Four Days Into Winter Break....

By Doni Manning-Cyrus

and cabin fever has set in. The weather is so harsh that you feel you cannot send the kids out to play and they are running you ragged. What to do? Let's discuss!

I know you all have scads and scads of ideas as to how to manage/occupy your kids at home, but sometimes we forget what we know and we need some reminders or even fresh ideas. I hope you will find some inspiration in this article. It is the holiday season. Whatever you celebrate, be it Christmas, Solstice, Hannukah, Kwanzaa or other, the level of the children's excitement may be as high as the pressure you feel to create a beautiful holiday. First of all, let's think about involving the children in our preparations. Perhaps there are guests coming or perhaps you are preparing to celebrate "en famille," either way, there are chores to be done. Here's a quick list of ten things a child could do to help. I suggest that these should be offered as a "get to" rather than a "must do." When the child wishes to abandon the activity, he may put away his materials and move onto the next thing. I suspect that if a parent were to later begin that activity him or herself, it may renew the child's interest and he may join you. So, just off the top of my head.... She could dust the legs and spreaders of the tables and chairs. You don't want to be down there on the floor and kids don't mind it a bit. She can sprinkle baking soda and scour the sink with a scrubby sponge. He can wash the sliding glass door with a spray bottle of vinegar/water solution and yesterday's newspaper. He can empty the silverware basket from the dishwasher. She can sort the soiled laundry into

dark/light/yucky piles. Kids love sorting activities. He can match and bundle the socks in the laundry or fold the hand towels and washcloths. She can snap the celery sticks in half and pull off the resulting "strings." She can spread peanut butter on those celery sticks and dot them with raisins to make Ants on a Log. He can push the vacuum around. He can dust the tops of the baseboards. She can take a damp rag and that same vinegar/water solution and wipe all the sneakers sitting by the front door. There! That's more than 10 household activities that your child can do in order to be purposefully engaged, feel part of the preparations and learn about contributing. They may not be done perfectly and will take longer than if you just did it yourself, but you know that already, don't you?



Connor, Eric, Ren & Hugo taking a break from raking and shoveling

If you look around, you will think of other ways your child can contribute. When you are baking or cooking or cleaning, think of what little step your child can have the charge of. Think of what the two of you can do together side-by-side.

Here at school, I have kids help me clean up the snack area, dispose of leftovers and remove all the dishware. Today, two of them did it without me. I just spoke to a mom who sets quite a standard as far as having her kids participate in the smooth running of the household. The 2 ½ year old is required to bring her dishes from the table to the sink. Nothing happens (for this child) until this is done. Sometimes the child does not want to do it. This mom waits it out, realizing that she is preparing her child for the Real World, in which we have responsibilities that need to be fulfilled even when we don't feel like it. The little one eventually wants her life to progress and therefore performs her task. The oldest child now routinely does chores without complaint. There are "must do" chores which have no tangible (but so many intangible) rewards and "extra" chores for which the older child can earn a quarter. This mom and dad used various chore charts and reward systems for each child at each stage of development.



Kaden and Ilana enjoying the schoolyard

What else can the kids do? They can create festive decorations! Paper snowflakes, paper chains, Christmas trees or candles cut out of construction paper or drawn on the back of junk mail are old stand-bys. Your child can make place cards for all the guests you are expecting at your holiday gathering. Maybe your child is old enough to sew. Pin, then sew together two circles of fabric (or tree shapes or heart shapes, etc.) stuff with polyfill and stitch on a ribbon hanger. An ornament! Or maybe it will be a pillow for a doll! A more expert child

can do this quite independently. A less-advanced child may need Dad right there beside him to help. One of my favorite ways to decorate is with natural materials. I collect moss, which I scrape off the sidewalk with a spatula, pinecones, twigs and rocks and arrange them on a tray. I may add an ornament or two or some tea lights in little holders. I think a child would love that whole process. The materials can be rearranged over and over or one can forage for new treasures and begin again. A child could take a lump of clay and place it on a saucer or yogurt lid and stick short little evergreen branch ends into it to make tiny trees (or place soaked florist foam in a vessel and the arrangement will last a long time.) Clip longer branches and make a greenery arrangement in a vase. Talk to your child about how, from time immemorial, people have brought evergreens into their homes in the wintertime to cheer them and remind them that spring will come again, that the earth isn't dead, only sleeping. Cover your table with newspaper and find a wide, shallow vessel. Mix up a 50/50 glue/water mixture in this vessel. Dip the tissue into the glue, run your fingers down the tissue to scrape off the excess and apply it to the jar. When the jar is covered with layers of colorful tissue pieces, let it dry and you will have a pretty votive in which to place a tea light. Don't like any of these ideas? Look on Pinterest! Search "easy crafts for kids."

Now, let's do something for someone else. Have your child help you sort through the pantry and select some canned goods for a food drive. Invite him to collect some of his toys to donate to Arc, Safehaven's Thrift and Gift, Heartland's Cat's Meow or another charity or toy drive. Maybe your family (including your child) can cull gently-used clothes that are no longer worn to donate, too. Do you have any old blankets? Safehaven Humane Society is currently in great need of these for dog bedding. If you bring them to me here at the school, I can deliver them or you may want to make the trip out to Tangent and take them yourself. You can see the beautiful new facility they have recently moved into and see some adorable cats and dogs. They are open from 12-5 each day and some days until 6. If

you wish, visit Safehaven's website and see other items on their Wish List. I know they need paper towels, tall kitchen trash bags, non-clumping cat litter, Kirkland (Costco) brand pet foods and grain-free pet foods. That's just off the top of my head! Visit a nursing home. Call one and see if anyone there would like to be visited by you and your kids. You can take some holiday cards or some satsumas and spread some cheer. The real gift would be seeing your beautiful children and meeting someone new. Things get pretty dull at some of these homes!



Mia sewing muslin

Now for some pure fun! Let's put paper plates on our feet and "skate" on a carpeted surface. You can pull up "Skater's Waltz" on Youtube and glide to that beautiful music. (I would move the coffee table.) Tape a string of yarn from one wall to the other and play balloon volleyball. Rub those balloons on your head to make them stick to a wall via static electricity. Make a fort out of the sofa cushions, dining room chairs and bedsheets. The kids may not come out all day! And what about Silly Putty and Slinkies? And a Barrel of Monkeys! Do they still make those? Those are good for all day fun! Go out for a walk after dark with your flashlights. Maybe wait until after 6pm to avoid the heaviest traffic. Play flashlight tag or I-spy in the yard. Bundle up and sip cocoa on the porch day or night. Let junior help make that cocoa. With you right there for safety, he or she can stir that pot. Don't wear anything too precious and have your

spill-towel at the ready, of course. I give you permission to put a little extra holiday cheer in your cup, Mom and Dad.



Lilian working at the sand table

One little note about our life in the classroom, tomorrow we will celebrate Martinmas, or the Feast of St Martin, which is celebrated in the Netherlands. The children carry various lighted lanterns and go door to door for treats, similar to our trick-or-treating. This is to commemorate St. Martin's giving to the poor. He was especially known for tearing his cloak in twain to give half of it to a beggar on a cold, cold day. Martin later dreamed that Jesus was wearing the half cloak. I will re-tell the story of St. Martin and show some pictures of Dutch lanterns and children celebrating the holiday. Some of our children have made paper lanterns. We will have a procession either up and down the interior hallway of the church, or around the block, weather permitting. When we return to the classroom, a feast of Dutch windmill cookies, provided by the Kenoyers, will await us! We will sing "Pusje Miaow" and enjoy our vegan treats together. The children will think that a very fine time indeed. It is good to remember that children do not need elaborate celebrations, just meaningful ones. I wish all of you a happy holiday season and a wonderful Winter Break.

Cheers!

Farewell to the Bausch Family

We can't let the Bausch family depart from our everyday lives without singing their praises a bit. Eddie Bausch transferred to our school in April 2013 and then he and his sister, Samantha (lovingly known to us as Sam) started coming together in Fall of 2013. Eddie constantly challenged the upper limits of our math curriculum always ready for something more and something new and then went on to pursue language activities with the same passion. Sam mesmerized us with her wide-eyed gaze and independence. We are very grateful to Shawnde and Paul for the many contributions they made to our school during their time with us. Before even enrolling Eddie, Shawnde brought pastries to feed our hungry work party one Saturday and continued to help us wherever she saw a way she could. Last year she took on the raffle putting a great package together and then managing the sales and tickets plus taking on many other tasks. Paul became our new webmaster and took on the big job

of redesigning and recreating our website. And even though they have moved Sam to another school, they both are continuing to help our school – Paul, with our website and Shawnde, as the public relations chair for this year's auction fundraiser. We are grateful to still have a connection to them and for their wonderful work. Thank you, Shawnde and Paul!



Sam washing an art underlay

Friday Art Class



On the Art Fridays, we have been focusing on the seasonal changes of fall into winter by making nature collages and collages of trees from painted papers. The class painted mat board frames for their art work and we will be making luminaries with dried leaves and tissue paper over balloons. The two weeks before Christmas break, we will be working on fabric collage for the auction project.



Newsline

- ✿ There *will* be art class on Friday, December 19. **Winter Break begins Monday, December 22.** School resumes on Monday, January 5.
- ✿ Please join us for our next **parent meeting on Thursday, January 15 at 6:00.** This is an important meeting – just 3 weeks before our big fundraiser!
- ✿ There will be **no school on Monday, January 19.** We will be celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.
- ✿ There are two basket parties coming up in January. One will be hosted by Maya (Lili's mom) on Saturday, January 24 and the other one will be hosted by Sarah (Annabel's mom) on Saturday, January 31.
- ✿ Our big fundraiser of the year – **The Love of Learning Auction, Raffle and Family Fun Night** will be on **Saturday, February 7** from 4pm to 7pm at the Philomath High School. Please bring your families, friends, acquaintances and complete strangers! Many exciting offerings and treats!

Thank You

Classroom Projects

- ✿ Prepared clock papers: **Kim Catton**
- ✿ Prepared animal paper chains: **Julie Wiethorn**
- ✿ Prepared 2nd level sewing cards: **Kim Catton**
- ✿ Cut short bead stair paper: **Amy Ward**
- ✿ Sewed loops on cloths: **Jasmin Woodside**
- ✿ Sewed new polishing cloths for waxing: **Jasmin Woodside**
- ✿ Cut math grid papers: **Amber Kenoyer**
- ✿ Sorted subtraction chart papers: **Lua Siegel**
- ✿ Prepared 1st level sewing cards: **Lua Siegel**
- ✿ Prepared cloth for muslin sewing: **Meagan Johanson**
- ✿ Trace & cut cultural shapes for drawing: **Kim Catton**
- ✿ Trace & cut drawing shapes: **Meagan Johanson**
- ✿ Cut out traditional children's clothing for collage: **Meagan Johanson**
- ✿ Prepared continent burlap sewing: **Lua Siegel**

Maintenance/Repair/Tech

- ✿ Repaired computer monitor: **Rory Plaire**
- ✿ Tech support for emergency text messages: **Rory Plaire**

Created PHMS Phone Tree

- ✿ **Amber Kenoyer**

Donations

- ✿ Yarn, fabric & doilies: **Sue – Kaden's Grandma**
- ✿ Bird feeder & seed: **Wild Birds Unlimited**
- ✿ Oranges for juicing: **Runciman/Brinker family**
- ✿ Tulip bulbs: **Ed Durrenberger**
- ✿ Flowers for the classroom: **Jovi Tavano**

- ❁ Argentina artifacts for display: **Jasmin Woodside**
- ❁ Windmill cookies for Netherland's celebration: **Amber Kenoyer**

Classroom Cleaning

- ❁ **MacClary & Hahn Families**

Gift Books

- ❁ Seed by Seed: **Ilana Catton**
- ❁ Are You a Butterfly: **Samantha Bausch**
- ❁ Aboyomi: **Jai Braxton**

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



Here's wishing all our wonderful families and friends, a joyous, relaxing winter break. Be sure to factor in some quiet time for you and the kids during this season of celebrations. And above all, safe travels wherever you go. Big hugs from all of us!

HEIRLOOM HANDMADE DOLLS BY ELKEMI
STUFFED WITH ORGANIC COTTON, MERINO WOOL HAIR,
AND FULLY ADORNED WITH CLOTHING AND JEWELRY.
CAN BE CRAFTED IN ANY STYLE, HERITAGE, FANTASY ETC.
SPECIAL PRICE OF \$110 FOR MONTESSORI PARENTS



LOVINGLY HANDCRAFTED
I ALSO MAKE JEWELRY
AND OTHER CREATIONS.
elke.wiethorn@gmail.com