

Philomath Montessori School

May 2016



Finding Balance

Here we are with only 6 ½ weeks left in the school year as I write this. This is a natural time of assessment for me. I pay particular attention to the students with whose parents I will be conferencing. I scrutinize the students who are graduating and leaving for 1st grade. I take inventory of the children who will be moving into their 3rd year and will, therefore, join our full day class and take their places as classroom elders and leaders. Are these students ready for what comes next? If not, where are they lacking and how can I help them to prepare? I make lists of individual lessons to present and lists of Grace and Courtesy Lessons to demonstrate. I start telling the 2nd year students who are misbehaving, “You’re going to be one of the oldest kids next year. I expect you to have more control over your actions.” I tell the graduating students, “I want you to think of the kind of homework your older sister brings home. You need to be doing work of that nature.”

On the other hand, this may be the last few weeks of precious freedom and autonomy for many of these kids going into traditional classrooms. There will likely be no table washing, little sewing and no chance to explore the environment for all of the cylinders, rectangular prisms and tetrahedrons that can be found. In general, for most, there will be far fewer hours spent in free choice. I don’t wish to rob these kids of the opportunity for self-chosen work that makes Montessori so special. It is in the choosing and the complete devotion to the chosen task that gives Montessori its extraordinary outcomes. Through the scratching of their individual developmental itches, children come to a peaceful and joyful state that leaves them feeling kinder, more self-controlled and confident. They manifest a love of work that has shattered preconceptions and stereotypical views of childhood since Dr. Montessori first began inviting observers into her classroom to witness this revolutionary new view of the child. If I begin ordering the kids around, telling them what to work on every minute of the day, I will squelch that habit of choosing work on one’s own and all the benefits that are derived from the activity. In short, I need to chill.



I can afford to do so. In fact, every child in our admittedly small 2016 class of graduates is going to do just fine in their next setting, even if the school year ended tomorrow. Some will be

exceptional in math, or penmanship or reading. Some will not be at the top of their class in every subject area, nor will they be at the bottom. All know the names of the continents and where they are. They have good manners and social skills and confidence. We will be spending the last month working on mastering the print alphabet and they will love it. I am not worried about any one of them. They will all make masterful transitions to the next leg of their educational journey and will reflect well on the work we are doing here.



Jaxson labeling the North America map

So I just need to remember to sit on my chair, sit on my hands, silence my continual directions and observe sometimes. I need to enjoy these wonderful kids before they depart and I need to allow them to choose activities that may not help them to prepare specifically for 1st grade, but rather for a lifetime of choosing joy, listening to their own inner guide, collaborating with others and practicing self-discipline. It is true that, in waiting for a child to make their own choice, there may be a little additional chaos, but it usually subsides on its own and I can step in if it escalates. I can take a little chaos. I have a Chihuahua!

This newsletter article, as you can see, is really more for me than for the parents of PhMS. I can read this and remind myself that I am here, not to create a super-student for Mrs So-n-so's class, but to create and be part of an environment that is predictable and masterable and exudes peace. It is to connect children with work that is meaningful to them, whether it is reading words or washing dishes

so that they can become peaceful and go out into the larger world, sharing that peaceful state with others.



Jovi playing Bring Me with the Golden Beads

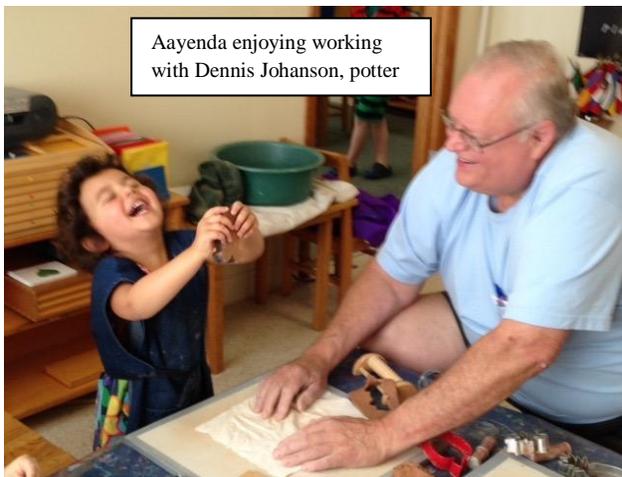
I wish our graduating students all the best in their continuing schooling and I wish their families great happiness and success. It has been an honor to serve and I look forward to another year with the kids and families that are remaining. I don't take any one of you for granted and I appreciate the sacrifices you make to give your children these three years of guidance and nurturance tailored to their developmental needs. I am grateful to have the opportunity to do this work with you. Wishing you all a delightful summer and much joy, I offer you my

Best Regards,

Doni

Friday Art Class

The children have been exploring the use of oil pastels as a resist with water colors and on mat board for connected 3-d art. As an expression of gratitude for Pauline, the children created fabric collage prayer flags, which hung at her retirement party and were given to her. We painted beach stones with dots. Kaden's grandfather, Dennis, who is a ceramic artist, has been coming in to do ceramics with the children. We have been presenting various techniques in clay, such as pinch pot, slab (pancake), coil (snake), and we will be discussing ways to connect clay parts by scoring and then finally glazing the pieces to be fired in a kiln. The ongoing circular weavings will be completed and made into pillows or pouch and their painted bags will be going home at the end of the year.



Aayenda enjoying working with Dennis Johanson, potter



Building bowls with our guest potter, Dennis Johanson



Newsline

Please join us for our **End-of-the-Year Potluck** on Saturday, June 4 from 5pm to 6:30pm in our school yard. If the weather is inclement, we will meet at Mary's River Park (just south of the Philomath Library on 11th). This year please be sure to be on hand for our third annual farewell and flyaway ritual! It will begin at 6:15.

If you would like to keep your **current year-round job** for the 2016-2017 school year, please let us know soon.

Our **last day of school** is Thursday, June 9. No full day or extended care.

Please be sure to mark Saturday, August 20 (9am – noon) on your calendar – our **Parent Work Day**.

We will definitely need you all!!

Thank You

Classroom Projects

- Select, cut, label & mount geography photos: **Skye Nielson**
- Prepared 1st level sewing cards: **Esme Weil**

Donations

- Shadow Puppets for display: **The Kenoyer Family**
- Mushrooms: **Karin Feldman**

Open House hosts:

- **Liesl Rolston-Tavano,**
- **Joy Ueng**
- **Amy Ward**

Friday Art Volunteer: Dennis Johanson

Classroom Cleaning: Asmatey-Stoll Family

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