

Dear Parents,

The month of September is always a fun one at Mountain Laurel. We bring many children together in one place, some for the first time away from home, and form a welcoming, buzzing community of friends and learners. In our class alone we learn that there are people who love us outside of our family, we learn graces and courtesies of being in a group (walking in the classroom, walking around friends' work, keeping our hands to ourselves, being silent and still in a group when a person is talking, lots of songs, what to do if one is in the bathroom and someone knocks, how to blow one's nose, how to get along with others and what to do if someone is touching your work/disturbing your work/doing something you don't like. And this is just for starters!! As we get to know the new students and settle in with the returning students, lesson after lesson is being presented. We have had several five-year-olds learn to tie, some four-year-olds learn about the decimal system: units, tens, hundreds and thousands, and some of the brand new three-year-olds already doing remarkable things like building big continent puzzles, manipulating the buttons, snaps and buckles of the dressing frames, and cutting with scissors! It's always a pleasure to see how much happens under the guidance of Ms. Irwin and myself AND how much happens simply because of the prepared environment of the classroom and the mixed-age grouping of the children. In October we will open up the class for you to observe. Please evaluate if your child is ready for you to come and watch, and then please schedule with Anna Burling in our front office. We'll be busy giving grace and courtesy lessons regarding observers in the class. Observers' work is to observe, so the children will be informed that they should allow the visitors to do their work of watching. You can help by saying a quick hello and then letting the children know you are here to watch and won't be able to converse with them. This way the visitors will see a more accurate picture of our class and it will not become an event each day that leads us away from our interests.

Did you know we celebrated eight (yes eight!) birthdays so far this school year? It has gotten to a point where we gather as a group and the children ask if we should turn out the lights! Each year the life of the classroom is different and this year is the year of the September (and October) birthdays. We have added in a fun new tradition: The Birthday Story. It has been a huge success. Some of you know I do a Montessori Teacher Training over the summer where I am fortunate to collect wonderful ideas from other trainers and teachers-in-training. The birthday story has been one of them. It's kind of like a mad lib that parents have been filling out for me to read as the birthday child circles the Sun (lighted candle) holding the Earth (painted globe) as many years as they have been alive. We also have all the planets of the Milky Way for children to assemble on a mat with the Sun being right in the center. Children have opportunity to learn the names of the planets, see their size to scale and their proximity to the Sun.

The Kindergarten students went on the traditional orchard trip this past Friday. It was so much fun! We have been learning about trees and the root systems, what the job of the roots is, how the apple tree blossoms, the parts of the flower, and have dissected an apple and counted the seeds within. The children ate so many apples at the orchard and then on the playground afterward that I had to tell them to wait to have another one until their parents said it was okay!

Thank you to the chaperones for assisting us and having fun with us. This upcoming week we will have a little fun making some sort of apple treat.

The Kindergarten students also experienced a little tree science when we returned. We have three plastic bags twist tied onto branches. Our hypothesis is that some water will escape from the leaves and be trapped inside the bag. We left them for the weekend and will observe the result when we return to school on Monday. We also had a fun little activity regarding the process of absorption called Blooming Flowers. The children were astonished to watch their paper flowers bloom before their eyes as the paper absorbed water. Who knew science could be so much fun?

I want to thank the many, many parents who have been behind the scenes painting, repairing, cutting, sewing, baking, and doing any other project that is needed. With your support we are able to do so much to make your children's days wonderful (and mine and Beth's much more manageable). Many thanks. Have a great weekend and see you next week.

P.S. Visitor's Day is Tuesday this upcoming week if you have any friends or acquaintances that would like to visit the school. We invite them to visit with us and then join us for lunch for a meet and greet with teachers.