

## Classroom Notes

January 8, 2021

Dear Families,

We made it through the first week of getting up early again (with a few sleepyheads here and there) and making work choices - generally getting back in the swing of our school routine. Students were happy to be back and SO glad to have each other's companionship again. We picked back up on making conscious decisions to live with each other lovingly and respectfully. A group of students suggested that we start our week off by each child writing a note of appreciation for another. They sweetly wrote each class member's name on a ticket in their most beautiful cursive writing, placed all the tickets in a basket from which each of us drew. Notes were privately written and delivered, giving a boost to all of us.

Having been away for so long, we needed a plethora of lessons. The young ones had our great lesson on "The Four Great Gifts that Make Us Human" : a mind that has the ability to wonder, a hand that can make things, the ability to be flexible in how we meet our needs, and a heart that loves. Older students were introduced to the genus Australopithecus, who lived almost 4 million years ago, walked somewhat upright, had a much smaller brain than us, but much larger teeth. We began our study of Henri Matisse, with some of the older students making cut-out designs in his style. Next week they will help other students explore this art form. Our focus on slavery in our country continued with the story of Sojourner Truth, who escaped from slavery and eventually became a spokesperson for women's rights and the abolition of slavery.

Math lessons ranged from the large bead frame, which helps the child to manipulate the hierarchy of numbers through the millions, stamp game subtraction and division, and all sorts of fraction and decimal lessons. The highlights of my week were observing a 4th grader teaching a 1st grader how to divide with the stamp game and two older students teaching a group of 1st and 2nd graders about the parts of an atom. (See the photo in the newsletter.)

I have asked all the elementary students to read at home each evening, including the weekend. The goal is for them to work up to 30 minutes, which many of them are already doing. For the very young budding readers, they may only read a few minutes. Just be sure to read to them; this really does help them to become readers.

Next week we are having a book sale. The cost is \$1 per book or 10 books for \$5. The proceeds will be used to purchase new novels for our library.

Sincerely,

Mona

January 24, 2021

Dear Parents,

Thank you to everyone for encouraging more reading at home. With your help and our new Reading Workshop time, many students are becoming more devoted readers. Several have mentioned being so involved in a book that they just don't want to stop, which is called being in the "reading zone." Once a reader has experienced this, they are readers for life. Not only does this enrich their lives on a personal level, but it also correlates to overall academic success. I will continue to bring in lovely books from the library for the children to immerse themselves in. Keep up the good work, and remember to read to even your solid readers. Read-aloud time can be a family tradition, with each family member reading to the others for the sheer fun of it.

Our young ones are stepping into abstraction with addition and subtraction with a little help from their older friends. I have recently enjoyed watching a 4th grader who sometimes struggles bringing a couple of first graders to complete understanding of addition and subtraction. Another day two children helped each other multiply by 3s, reminding each other when to carry over to the next category. Several students have worked together on squaring binomials on the pegboard, and many students have practiced simplifying fractions together. This is why Dr. Montessori was so right about auto-education, which might be more properly called community-education. Not only do the children help each other, but they share in each other's successes.

We have had some stimulating lessons in electricity, plant stems, time zones, slavery and abolition, the beginning of the Civil War, and the life of Martin Luther King Jr. The older students are working on research using an outline on topics such as time, rats, wolves, Rosa Parks, volcanoes, the potato, wetlands, the Bermuda Triangle, etc. The goal is for everyone to produce a report with drawings and give an oral presentation to be enjoyed by our whole class.

Sincerely,

Mona