

Mrs.DeMato's March Class Notes

Dear Families,

Concentration is the name of the game these days in the classroom! The children have been concentrating for longer and longer periods of time each day. Last week we talked a little bit about how the Montessori materials isolate a particular movement, such as twisting, squeezing, spooning, pouring, etc. Some of the longer lessons in the Toddler environment allow the children to take those skills that they have honed, and apply them to a series of steps. As children are able to work through longer lessons, they have the chance to develop the skill of concentration.

Two minutes of concentration is a long time when you are just starting! The materials in the classroom give children the chance to develop longer periods of concentration in Toddler (washing all the dishes), then longer in Primary (counting and labeling the Thousand Bead Chain), even longer in Elementary (researching and writing a presentation about arthropods) and finally in Middle School (setting up, conducting, and drawing conclusions from science experiments). In the traditional classroom setting, children are often just expected to concentrate or told to concentrate. Maria Montessori believed that children learn this skill on their own but must be given the proper environment to develop concentration. Here is an excerpt from her book, The Absorbent Mind, specifically about concentration:

"The first essential for the child's development is concentration. It lays the whole basis for his character and social behaviour. He must find out how to

concentrate, and for this he needs things to concentrate upon. This shows the importance of his surroundings, for no one acting on the child from outside can cause him to concentrate. Only he can organize his psychic (intellectual) life. None of us can do it for him. Indeed, it is just here that the importance of our school really lies. They are places in which the child can find the kind of work that permits him to do this (concentrate)."

In the pictures below, you will see some of the longer works in which children need to set up several pieces, make decisions (how much water? which flowers? what is wood vs. glass?), and clean up not only the work but their space (is the table dry? where can I get a new cloth or cotton ball? does this cloth go in the laundry basket or on the drying rack?). That is a lot of steps for little ones! You will see how some of these steps build upon each other and how children make various connections to the classroom as well as the world around them.

Sincerely,
Meg and Jamie

Dear Families,

Children at this age love to explore the world around them, not just with their eyes, but with all of their senses. This week we've had the chance to feel the soft, fluffy fur of giant rabbits. We used our ears to listen to various beats of the bodhran (Irish drum). I've noticed many children exploring the mud and soil, not only with their hands, but also lifting up shovels to smell the wet earth and every now and then sticking out their tongue to give a little taste! All of these actions are within the spirit of exploration. Your child is making neurological connections about the world around them.

The Toddler environment, both in the classroom and outside, is set up purposefully to give the child as many opportunities to explore as possible. Dr. Montessori wrote "First he (the child) takes in the world as a whole, then he analyses it." She believed that the child has an irresistible attraction to the environment. Remember when your baby put everything in his/her mouth? Exploration! We often hear a loud sound when we are playing outside, you will see the children become very still as they sort through their mind. You can almost see their little wheels turning asking "firetruck? helicopter? airplane?" Children are using their sense of hearing, when their sense of vision might not be useful at the moment, to make connections. Take some time at home to watch and see what your child is exploring and what sense he/she is using to try and make sense of the world.

As you set your clocks forward this morning, be sure to also mark on your calendar that Spring Break starts next week. March 21st - March 25th We do not have school that week, but many of the children in our class are signed up for Spring Break Camp. Mrs. Charles and I will be with the kiddos throughout camp in our classroom.

Dear Families,

Last week and during Spring Break camp the children got the chance to listen to some Irish folk songs. We also had some fun parades marching through our classroom with rhythm sticks to keep the beat. Sharing music with your little ones is a great way to pass along traditions in your family. Children at this age love learning rhythms and practicing with sticks, clapping or marching.

Even when you are driving in the car listening to your favorite tunes on the radio, you can often see your kiddo rocking out in

their car seat. I encourage you to sing with your children as much as possible, not just to develop their musical abilities, but also to further their language development. You can sing anything from "The Wheels on the Bus" to "We Will Rock You." It's a great way to bond and have fun together!

This upcoming week, I am away with my family. Ms. Charles is also starting an internship for her school counselor degree. Mrs. DiNinno and Ms. Patterson will be with the children until I return on April 1st. They have both been with our class already and know the children well. Please don't hesitate to send any questions my way. See you soon!

Sincerely,
Meg and Jamie
