



Montessori Messenger

A Message From the Director: Tina Schneider

November/December 2011 Issue

Language

While other living creatures may have the ability to communicate to various extents, the development of language in order to communicate needs, emotions, history and so forth is uniquely human. Montessori recognized the sensitive period for acquiring language as an essential component to developing the prepared environments for infants and young children. The social needs of children in the second plane require a continued focus on language development in order to express needs and form relationships. As individuals reach the third plane or adolescence, their language becomes further refined as they explore their place in the greater community. Language is what allows us to live and work within our society. As we work in community within our prepared environments students are given opportunities to acquire, explore, practice and refine their language skills. In this issue of the Montessori Messenger, the teaching staff of MSHR provides insight into the development of language across the continuum from infancy through adolescence. Parents and teachers alike play a valuable role in the development of language.

In addition to the articles in this issue of the Montessori Messenger, parents are encouraged to read other information in regard to the language development. One article that I found to be very insightful is by Wendy Calise, a Montessori teacher and consultant, titled, "The Great Input Deficit – How the Communication Revolution is Teaching our Children to Remain Silent." In this article she describes the disservice that we provide our children through over use of technology and insufficient exposure to personal – face to face – interactions. This article can be found at the following link, <http://mtips.org/docs/TheGreatInputDeficit.pdf> and copies of the article will be in the communication center as well.

The recent Parent Conferences are a time to communicate with your child's teacher and gain valuable information about your child's experience at school. Continue to take advantage of opportunities to

Mark Your Calendars:

NOVEMBER

**Wednesday - Friday,
 November 2 - 4**
 Terra Nova Testing

Saturday, November 5
 Open House
 2:00 - 4:00pm

**Tuesday & Friday,
 November 8 & 11**
 Primary Conferences
 8:00am - 4:00pm
 10:00am - 6:00pm

Wednesday, November 9
 Parent Coffee
 8:30 - 9:30am

**Thursday - Friday
 November 17 - 18**
 Book Fair

Friday, November 18
 Grandparent/Special
 Person Day

Tuesday, November 22
 Thanksgiving Lunch

**Wednesday - Friday,
 November 23 - 25**
 Thanksgiving Break

dialog with the staff and work in partnership to support your child.

Toddler

by Terri Stahl

“Let us now turn to the child’s development of language. Some reflection on this is necessary; otherwise we may fail to see its connection with social life. Not only does it fuse men into groups and nations, but it is the central point of difference between the human species and all others. Language lies at the root of that transformation of the environment that we call civilization... Language is an instrument of collective thought.”

Maria Montessori

The Adult Plays Critical Role in Language Development

A child’s language development begins in utero around twenty four weeks when they have the ability to discern and react to sounds. Montessori said that up to six years of age children have the ability to construct and develop language skills whether in one language or many (Sensitive Period for Language). They can absorb the sounds, accent, and words of any spoken language in their environment. The language(s) learned will allow them to live and function within the community which they live.

At birth, the infant will respond more to high pitch sound than to low pitch sound, and within the first ten minutes his or her eyes will move in the direction of the sounds. He/she will respond to voices heard throughout the pregnancy, especially that of the mother.

From the beginning, we communicate by mimicking sounds made by the child, singing to the child, and bonding with the child. The “communication dance” begins. (Silvana Montenaro)

In order for language to develop, four criteria need to be met: 1) the child must be able to hear, 2) the child must be able to vocalize, 3) the child must want to speak, and 4) the environment must be rich in language opportunities.

The adult plays an important part in making sure all these areas are addressed. In fact, the greatest support to this development is the adult. As parents and teachers, we recognize that no matter the age, from the moment our day begins to the moment our day ends every interaction is a language opportunity. The desire to

DECEMBER

Thursday, December 1,
6:00 - 7:30pm
Mandatory Parent Meeting
for 6th Graders

Friday, December 2,
5:30 - 8:00pm
Holiday Adult Social

Tuesday, December 6,
5:00 - 6:30pm
PVG Meeting

Wednesday, December 7,
6:00 - 7:30pm
Mandatory Parent Meeting
for Kindergartners

Friday, December 16,
8:30 - 11:30pm
Advent Sharing
Early Dismissal 11:30am

Monday - Tuesday,
December 19 - January 2,
Christmas Break

COMING IN JANUARY:

Tuesday, January 3
All Students Return to
School

Thursday, January 5
Parent Coffee

Saturday, January 7
Parent Work Party

Monday, January 16
No School

Friday - Saturday,
January 20 - 21

speak is something we can strongly influence both at home and in the school environment.

How To Support Language Development at Home

In infancy (before that first intentional word is spoken), we can do many things that foster language, but perhaps the most important is to simply give our full attention to the child as we do the following:

- communicate by mimicking the child's sounds,
- holding gazes,
- introducing a second language/signing, singing songs, and reading books,
- enunciate, articulate, and label objects and actions for the child

We show the child that what they say and do holds importance.

Around twelve months, the first intentional word is spoken.

We continue our support for their language by:

- offering the correct pronunciation without drawing attention (“Wa wa”, “water” “spasshetti”, “spaghetti”).
- continuing to sing, read books, label objects and actions
- playing memory and questioning games

Between the ages of two and three we see a language explosion occur: three-word phrases.

Food For Thought

According to BRAIN GYM Research, we learn 10% of what we read, 20% of what we hear, 30% from what we see, 70% from what is discussed, 80% from what we personally experience, and 95% from what we teach someone else.

Primary

by Sharyn Laux

Language is one of the foundations upon which learning is built. When a child enters the Casa around 2 ½ or 3, he/she is the midst of the absorbent mind and the sensitive period for language ~ both of which span from birth to age 6. During this period, the child is hungry for, and easily acquires, vocabulary to describe the world around him/her as he/she learns to define and organize his/her environment and experiences.

Silent Journey

Saturday, January 21
Open House

Friday, January 27
Annual Meeting

Support the
School
Everyday!
Tell your friends
and family!

Use the

Language Blossoms in the Classroom

We make sure we provide an environment that is rich in oral language and accurate in vocabulary, that encourages conversation which further develops the child's resources for richer thought through expanded ideas and vocabulary. The classroom offers poetry, songs, carefully chosen books that are engaging and informative, as well as communication that enriches anyone who might hear. We also provide the child with respectful listening when he/she is speaking, thereby creating an atmosphere where the child can grow in security and confidence as he/she expresses himself/herself.

The child in the Casa, nearing 3, begins to receive lessons on the sandpaper letters, simultaneously experiencing the shape of the cursive letter while learning its sound. As he/she grows in knowledge of the sounds and their shapes through much repetition, he/she is introduced to the cursive moveable alphabet. The guide works with the child to first make phonetic words, then lists of words in a classification (favorite colors, trees, books, songs, etc.), followed by phrases, sentences and paragraphs. The child guides the work based on his/her interests and his/her writing then reflects the work done to expand and enrich spoken language.

Language Leads To Reading

About 6 months after the child begins writing he/she will experience an 'explosion' of reading. This is observable when the child is using the moveable alphabet and saying back the words he/she has written ~ not by memory, but by phonetically pronouncing the word. As the child pronounces the words he/she has made, he/she discovers that he/she is reading, rather than consciously acquiring the ability. It is important to emphasize the discovery as this shift of emphasis eliminates the pressure put upon a child to read at a certain time, or the shame that a child would feel if he/she were not reading at that time.

How To Support Language Development at Home

In the home, it is helpful to remember the ease with which children learn new vocabulary, phrasing, tone and attitude.

- Talk with your child in the way that you hope they would talk with you.
- Attribute to them positive intent and watch as they attribute it to others.
- Sing songs in the car, point out that which awes you, notice the world around you and share it with them in detail. They will grow

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accessing the internet.
Designate the school
as your preferred
charitable organization
and we receive cash
back for every search
or purchase made.
If you are shopping
on-line, use the
GoodShop.com
website and a
percentage of
your purchase is
donated back
to the school.



Be sure to check your
packages for the
Box Top coupons.
Place them in the
collection bin in the

in the desire and ability to share with you as well.

- If your child is searching for a word, wait patiently and they will find it and you will build trust as they build confidence.
- You and your children have so many gifts to share with each other, give each of you the chance and the vocabulary to do so.

Elementary

by Cheryl Lazar

Language is not just reading and writing. It is the ability to symbolize in an abstract form objects, ideas, emotions, and events, taking them out of their immediate context and holding them in the mind. In the Casa, the child explores language sensorially, but the child in the Elementary environment has more of a drive to explore language on a more literal level. Therefore, language is presented very imaginatively.

Language Exploration Gets Creative

When we talk about using the child's imagination in the elementary environment, we are appealing to a characteristic of the elementary child, the second plane of development. In the Elementary environment this is done by using symbols, impressionistic charts and stories. This allows the child to hear information, but also to use their own imagination to think about what is being said.

One of the five Great Stories the Elementary child will hear each year is the "Great Story of Communication". This is a story about the history of language and from where our alphabet comes. The children hear about Egyptians, Phoenicians, Romans, and Greeks.

The Hand Timeline is just one of the materials from that story used to show that people did not always write, but they were still able to communicate with one another.

Abstract Ideas Become Concrete With Language

We introduce the parts of speech to the children using symbols and colors. This allows the child to take such an abstract idea and make it a bit more concrete. For example, when we talk about a noun, the child will associate it with a black triangle, the article--a small light blue triangle, and the adjective--a medium dark blue triangle. This material allows even the non-reader to begin working with parts of speech as everything is color coded.

It is hoped that by the time children arrive in elementary, they

Communications
Center on the second
floor landing.

already feel comfortable writing stories, narrating events, etc. This process continues to scientific writing, research, poetry and recording of all kinds. We help the child to make the work so beautiful through editing so he/she is proud and wants to keep it.

Personal Expression Happens Through Written and Verbal Language

The Elementary child will not only practice language with the written word, but he/she will also work with the spoken word. It is in Elementary, because the child is always asking, “why?”, that research becomes so interesting and along with that comes presentations. The children want to share what they’ve learned with their peers and will often create beautiful charts and dioramas. Much practice and work goes into preparing for presentations. Often, by the end of an Elementary child’s first year he/she will have presented to the class multiple times.

It is our goal that the elementary child work towards the ability to express his/her own thoughts and spirit independently. We must help him/her to do this through both written and verbal language. This can be done both at school and at home. It is so important for children to not only read silently, but also be read to...even when they are able to read independently. We must be aware of our own use of language, both verbal and written. We must continue to guide the child, even at the elementary level, to see the awe and wonder that is language.

Middle School

by Jeanne Fleischacker

The writing program in the Middle School supports the conviction that the opportunity to formally express one’s ideas enhances the adolescent’s personal and intellectual development.

Language Brings a Higher Understanding

All kinds and forms of writing—essay, research, reading response, opinion, fiction, personal, reflective journaling—are regularly exercised in the students’ weekly work. They are expected to re-read and revise their own work, and to further improve their writing through discussion with the writing teacher and by sharing with their peers. Writing class provides the tools which enable them to communicate their ideas and feelings clearly, serving as a forum for the students’ intellectual, social and personal/emotional development.

The emphasis on self-expression not only helps clarify students' thinking, but also leads to a sharper understanding of ideas. This progression was evidenced in an essay the students wrote recently describing their observations and reactions to time spent in a primary class looking for Montessori's Human Tendencies exhibited by the little children. They were keen in discerning examples of the Tendencies in the activities of the primary children, and their descriptions clearly reflected their personal delight in the project. No surprise, they want to do it again!

PVG News

Parent Volunteer Group Update

What a great turn out we had at our first meeting! So many enthusiastic parents volunteered for school events. Some highlights:

- The book fair will be shortened this year to only Thursday and Friday but we expect it to have a great turn out as always. Thank you to Andrew Klimek who is leading the book fair, and to all the volunteers assisting the parents and children through their choices.
- Our committee will develop a "Day of Donation" which includes a gently used clothes sale. We are working hard to create this event to act as a fundraiser for International Day. Look for more information coming soon. Anyone who wishes to participate in the planning or the staffing of the day is welcome (just contact Samantha Provencio).

Adult Parent Social

Friday, December 2, 6 - 9 pm:

Celebrate the holiday season on a night-out with other parents! On **Friday, December 2, 6 - 9 pm**, join our third annual Holiday Social at the Middle School. Browse the galleries open late during the Art Walk. Bring a bottle of wine or snack to share. Child care will be provided at the main school building. A sign-up sheet for child care will be available in the communication center before Thanksgiving break.

New Taste Chairpersons

What a great response in filling the new chair positions available for the Taste Committee! I think the new members will enjoy working together with those who have been on the committee for a few years. We will have a meeting after the first of the year to familiarize everyone with

the event planning and responsibilities.

PVG Meeting

Tuesday, December 6, 5:00pm:

Bring your creative ideas and enthusiasm! Our last meeting of the fall semester will include the update on our "Day of Donation" and Valentine's Day Dance. A light meal will be provided (a baked potato bar and salad!) and even a nice dessert. As always, childcare is available, please sign up in the communications center.

We need people to volunteer for the Parent Work Party on January 7 in preparation for our Open House on January 21. Volunteer opportunities to staff the Open House are available as well.

If you would like to volunteer for either of these activities, look for the sign-up sheet in the parent communications center.

And one more thing...Ssshhhhh...its a secret. We will be planning Teacher Appreciation Day.

A PVG Thank You!

LIA RADKE-LITTEN has been a MSHR parent since 2008 when her son, Max began attending the school. As a teacher she has a very busy schedule during the school year, however she finds time to chair Grandparents and Special Person's Day which is held each year during November. In addition, Lia has been managing the coordination of the restaurants that participate in the Taste of Little Italy fundraiser-- a very important job in our event! Thanks, Lia for your hard work and contribution to the school.

Thank you,
Samantha Provencio