



# Center News

## *Directors Notes*

**Dear Parents,**

I'm trying not to let the virus take over my thoughts about school. After all, we do have an end in sight with a vaccine and drug treatments. But this has been a pretty challenging several months. While as adults, we battle the fear of getting sick and the fear of our children getting sick, our thoughts are still focused on our work of teaching your children.

For me this is easy to do. My whole life is and has been entwined with teaching young children. I have traded my time with the experiences of being and learning from so many children. And the lessons I've learned mostly relate to the powers of children's minds.

The two educators I've studied the most have been Dr. Maria Montessori and Dr. Caleb Gattegno. Their lessons were profound and true. Their lives had been devoted to the education of children so much so that they each created programs for teaching children, programs which live today as examples of the voracity of their work. And here lies the most perplexing issue of the contributions made by Montessori and Gattegno. During my whole life I have watched dozens of children successfully learn the Montessori approach and to read with Words in Color. I am not alone in this observation, for indeed both methods still exist world-wide though their innovators have long since died. I remember one day asking Dr. Gattegno about this issue. Why didn't more schools use these methods? His answer was that the truth walked slowly on its short legs.

Perhaps change does come slowly. After all we know many people are invested in the status quo and avoid change for that reason. And unfortunately, both the Montessori and Words in Color methods require an investment in highly trained and skilled teachers, something in short supply too much of the time. Whatever the reasons every school doesn't use our ways of working, it is a statement about free choice. We are all free to make good and bad decisions. Happily for our children, we as a school community of educators do share in our beliefs about the work of these great educators. We want your children taught this way.

So once again as we start the new school year, however encumbered with face masks and social distancing, we can open our minds to change in a hopeful way. We can show our appreciation of children by being willing to use methods that work well and that are efficient with children's time. We can decide not to waste children's time in school by giving boring lessons that don't really engage children in the learning process. We can understand that children are their own best teachers and we shall respect that as we work with them. And finally, we can reach out to you, the parents, and join hands as we wisely offer the best educational course of study available.

More later,

Janice Mattina.

# Center Montessori News

*Primary 1*  
Teacher: Ms. Saleha  
Assistant: Ms. Rosa

## Meaningful Work

Young children's natural inclination is not only to observe but also to imitate us. As soon as they become capable of basic controlled movement, and contrary to what most of us may think, children find what we call "chores" fascinating! To the busy adults that we are, washing dishes, folding laundry or dusting furniture isn't always the best use of our time. However, to the children who are provided with the opportunity to take part in such activities, that we refer to in Montessori education as "exercises of practical life," a deep sense of satisfaction, accomplishment and contribution is experienced.

Engaging children in "meaningful work" is an important part of the Positive Discipline model, which we implement in our classroom along with the Montessori approach to teaching. In addition to the numerous practical life activities our classroom children partake in as an independent work choice, they each get a new job every week from the "Jobs of the Week" board. As recommended by Positive Discipline, together with the children, over the course of the first two weeks we agreed on a number of brainstormed jobs for everyone in the classroom to fill and rotate each week. Despite the fact that some jobs suggested from last year (which required a partner or a visit to a different area of the building) have been put on hold due to our new Covid procedures, we were able to generate a list of as many jobs as there are children in our class so far.

In order to ensure that everyone has an equal share and a different job each week, we keep track of the jobs in our record book. The job board contains images representing each task to help the non-yet readers identify their jobs. We are happy to report that so far, the children are becoming increasingly proficient at these weekly contributions and have been taking them seriously. I am sure your child will be delighted to tell you which contribution he/she has made to the classroom each week. This will hopefully also lead to more job participation at home.



Alexandra (shoe helper) and Mathew (electrician) referring to the Jobs of the Week Chart.



Yiyi (laundry folder) performing her weekly job by caring for our clean washcloths.

Reyna performing her Calendar Helper job by marking each passing day on our classroom calendar



# Center Montessori News

**Primary 2**  
*Teacher: Ms. Crystal*  
*Assistant: Ms. Tammy*

Hello and greetings! Tammy and I would like to welcome our returning families back and our new families to Primary 2. Please help us welcome our new class members Sydney, Isabella T, Isabella C (Isa), Eli and Rosalia. We've had a wonderful time settling back into campus life! It's been moving watching the delight in the children socializing with their peers. Boy did everyone miss that!

We hope you enjoyed this year's version of Back to School Night. We had a great time creating your child's recording of presenting to you his or her favorite lesson. And thank you all for joining us during the live circle time, we loved doing this!

As we come to the end of September, we are witnessing a deep sense of calmness in the classroom with a solid routine now in place. The children are familiar with the environment, their peers and us teachers, and can fully embrace and engage with the materials. It is always a pleasure to watch this transition in the children within the classroom. The children did this all so gracefully, especially during these unusual times. Tammy and I observe the children working with great concentration, interacting harmoniously with peers and remembering to use classroom etiquette. Our classroom community is thriving, and this is a direct outcome of previous lessons on grace and courtesy and care of the environment. With that now in place we are introducing new lessons such as Yoga on Wednesdays, Science on Monday afternoons, Art on Fridays. The Kindergarten children also now have a folder to keep, as we start building organization and executive function skills with their work.

During our afternoon work cycle on Fridays, the children receive lessons in science with interactive hands-on experiments. As you can imagine, this is always lots of fun. During these lessons the children are building scientific vocabulary with the introduction of terms such as observation and investigation. We also see cause and effect, learn to record observations and analyze data. It would be music to Maria Montessori's ears to see all these budding scientists.

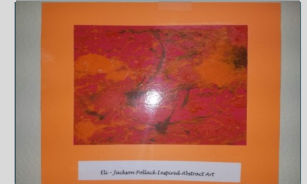
September 22<sup>nd</sup> marked the first day of Autumn. During circle time we shared gourds, talked about the cooler weather (we are hoping for) and the leaves on the trees changing colors and falling. I did highlight our weather here in Florida versus other parts of the country! Together we shared our thoughts and observations of these changes. This always leads to lessons on seasons, botany and our annual tree of thanks. A huge thank you to Salina (Colton's mom) for helping create a wall sticker for this year's tree! We will add our family photos to represent our P2 family. I will post pictures when it's up. I hope you have accessed and enjoyed exploring Transparent Classroom, if not, please do! This is such a great platform to get a peek inside the classroom and the lessons your child receives. If you have any questions, please ask!

This month's artist is Jackson Pollock. Pollock was known for his abstract expressionism. The children were introduced to the term abstract in relation to art. We then used marbles and



Meditation during our morning greetings.

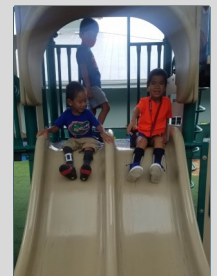
This art work is by Eli and is inspired by our artist of the month Jackson Pollack. The children rolled marbles in fall colored tempera paint onto card stock.



paint in a tray to create an abstract Pollack inspired masterpiece!

The composer for the month of September is Johann Sebastian Bach. Each morning and at rest time the children hear his music, then during circle time we discuss who he is and the instruments we can hear in his music.

School will be closed on Friday, October 12<sup>th</sup> for Parent/Teacher Conferences. I will create a sign-up genius and send you all a link closer to the time. 20-minute time slots will be available from 9am until 2pm via Zoom. Please email me directly if this day does not work for you and we can make other arrangements.



Please welcome Sydney, Luci, Rosalia, Isabella T., Eli and Isabella C. to Primary 2.



# Center Montessori News

## Primary 3

Teacher: Ms. Betty

Assistant: Ms. Amy

During these past few weeks, the children at the LWR campus have been working to get to know each other, learning the rules in the classroom, learning how to respect friends work, adapting to our schedule and becoming a part of our classroom community. It is remarkably interesting and fascinating to see new and returning students of different ages working and bonding together to build our classroom community.

Our Kindergarteners have been taking their work very seriously; they began this school year working on their reading skills. Each day they have the option to read a short story book to younger friends, to each other or to simply read to themselves in a quiet area. They also started their research, where they picked a continent and began to write as many things as they could find about that continent. Younger students watching the kindergarteners have also shown an interest in the continents, and have been learning the names of each continent and finding the locations on our map. Two of their favorite activities in this area are using the colored Montessori globe and coloring the continents in the hemisphere.

In math, the kindergarteners continue working with addition, subtraction and multiplication using the Cuisenaire Rods and making stronger connections with the Golden Bead materials. Some of our pre-k students are using Cuisenaire Rods to do simple math addition problems and some are beginning to learn the Cuisenaire Rod staircase. The beauty of the Montessori math is in the materials. The children are able to see the functions as they work through the problems, allowing us to introduce concepts to them at an earlier age as they move from the concrete to the abstract, with real understanding.

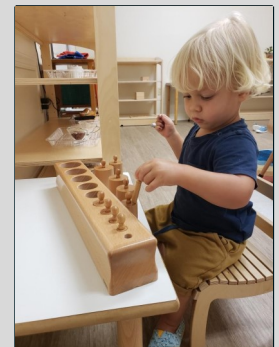
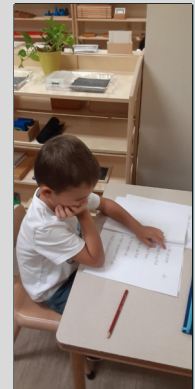
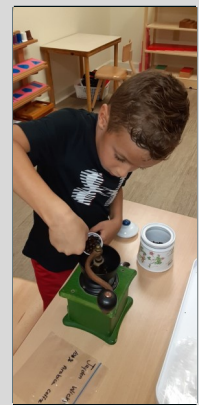
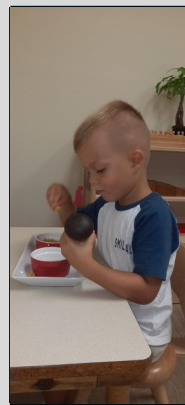
The week of September 14th we introduced our Composer and Artist of the Month. Our first artist is Wassily Wassilyevich Kandinsky and we learned about his abstract art. Each child had the opportunity to paint a circle using the Kandinsky style and their best ability to paint a circle. This children's work will be put together to decorate one of our classroom walls.

Starting next week we will have group science experiments on Thursdays. This is one of the students' favorite activities to do as a group. They all participate and can ask questions and offer their different opinions regarding the experiments. This a great opportunity to learn from

each other how to respect the opinions and ideas of one another.

We are happy to announce that our Primary communication platform, Transparent Classroom, is open and available to parents. Please let me know if you need help logging on or have any questions regarding this program. You can always reach me at [bcamacho@centermontessori.org](mailto:bcamacho@centermontessori.org), or the school phone number is 941-753-4987.

A special thank you to the Schneider Family for the donation of toys, activities, and tricycles for our outside environment.



# Center Montessori News

## Elementary 1

Teachers: Ms. Rachel & Ms. Giannina  
Assistant: Ms. Melanie

### Art and Meditation

It was wonderful to welcome the children back to school, physically and virtually. We are building classroom community and enjoying our time together. One important aspect of learning how to be together peacefully and share space during a global pandemic is finding new and interesting ways in which to take care of ourselves.

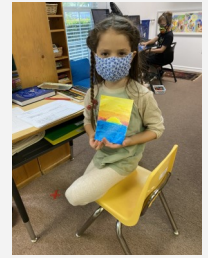
Therefore, this year, we are excited to enhance our daily meditations. While the Center has been committed to teaching the children meditation for several years now, we have added a new aspect to our daily meditations.

Over the summer, Ms. Rachel attended a training online about “Art and Meditation” through The Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia. Rachel has a Master’s Degree in the History of Art and has combined her education and training to teach the children to look closely, think critically, and find their own peace.

Every Monday, the children focus on a famous work of art for their meditation. After looking closely and quietly, the children are invited to identify and share different things that they see in the art work. Then Ms. Rachel gently guides them through a meditation based on the art work.

For example, while looking at Mary Cassatt’s “Children on the Beach,” the children imagined lying peacefully on the warm white sands of our beaches. They were invited to feel the sand supporting their bodies and smell the gulf waters. Some children could even “hear” the seagulls circling above their heads. The children in Cassatt’s painting are shown playing in the sand. In the meditation, the E1 children were asked to imagine a fun day at the beach with their family or friends with these words: “I wonder what you can do with your family and friends to enjoy a day at the beach? Do you like to build sand castles together? Or to ride the waves on a raft? Or have a picnic? Or play volleyball? Hold these thoughts quietly in your head. Let this scene play out in your mind, as you quietly imagine a fun day at the beach. Who are you with? What are you doing? How much fun are you having? Hold onto those thoughts, children. Fill your heart and your mind with peace and happiness. When you are ready, bring your awareness back to the room and open your eyes. You may raise your hand if anyone would like to share something about their beach meditation.” Then beautiful things happen.

We wish you all a happy, healthy, and peaceful year where we can all work together to grow our brains and our hearts.



Mila, Trophym and Gabriella's painting based on the Lake Meditation.



Anna, Will and Mila paint beach scenes after our Mary Cassatt lesson and meditation.



Serena and Hailey painted the Eiffel Tower after the skyscraper meditation.



Still Life with Flowers based on the artwork of Berthe Morisot.



# Center Montessori News

## Elementary 2

Teachers: Ms. Jayne & Ms. Erica

One of the safest and best places to be, during these unprecedented times, is outside. That is just what the Elementary 2 students are doing. Keeping a nature journal has long been a part of our classroom efforts for many reasons. Montessori believed that, "... there is no description, no image in any book that is capable of replacing the sight of real trees, and all the life to be found around them, in a real forest. Something emanates from those trees which speaks to the soul, something no book, no museum is capable of giving." One's first hand experience with nature inspires the child's writing. She cultivates her ability to express herself through observations of the world using all of her senses. Patterns in nature reveal themselves to the child which enhances her understanding of math, like the Fibonacci sequence. For example, the number of petals in a flower follow this pattern. Studying nature first hand supports the understanding of the scientific method as well as the systems of scientific classification in botany and zoology. This experience outside is also a counter balance to the longer screen times inherent in the blended classroom. Montessori saw it this way: "When children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength."

Early Humans is the subject of much of the year in the Upper Elementary environment. To start the year we review some the lessons from E1. Review has a different meaning in Montessori who saw the curriculum as a spiral. Lessons touched on at an earlier age would be expanded upon as the child grows older. This is a thematic approach that ties the separate disciplines together into studies of the physical universe, the natural world, and the human experience. This is the way one lesson can lead to many others. So we have circled back around to once again view, but at a deeper level, the beginning of the universe, the Paleozoic era - when most of life was under water, the Mesozoic - the age of dinosaurs, and the Cenozoic - the age of mammals. It is at this time, that we introduce the study of our ancient roots, the Australopithecines and all of our early ancestors. Lessons in science, history, math, art and language naturally emerge as part of the study. We are off to a great start with many Montessori lessons designed to inspire the child.



Emmalee and Zina working in their Nature Journal.

# Center Montessori News

## Level 3 6th Grade

Teacher: Ms. Deana

One thing we know, is that children really want to learn, and this year is no different. With the current craziness in the world, one constant is school. Our sixth-grade students are on campus and ready to learn!

Our school year began with a two-week orientation plan. This helps the students to acclimate to their new classroom. Students took a math diagnostic test to determine which Saxon textbook is appropriate for their skill level and learned the expectations in middle school.

After this introduction, our first two-week work period began. In science, the students researched animal species that are invasive to Florida and created posters, working to strengthen their research and writing skills. We studied the layers of the atmosphere, heating of the atmosphere, and the water cycle. They learned how to use a sling psychrometer to measure relative humidity.

We had lessons in math on Base 10, Base 2, and converting one base to another. We broke into small groups for geometry lessons, reviewed polygons, quadrilaterals, point line and plane. The students have enjoyed their writing assignments; each day they have a journal topic and also have started creative writing prompts. They wrote about their favorite childhood toy and what type of candy bar resembles their personality. Writing lessons have also included structure on writing a proper paragraph. Our history and geography lessons picked up from where they left off with Greek history in E2 and will continue with Ancient River Civilizations. We have a thirty-minute silent reading time daily. Students can choose their own books to read during this time. We also read a story from the Junior Great Book series named Through the Tunnel.

As we round out our education of the whole child, we are also focusing on building executive function skills. Our students learned how to run the school store snack business and take turns running the class meeting. We are off to a great start. The students may be wearing masks, but there are plenty of smiles!



# Center Montessori News

*Level 3 7th & 8th Grade*  
*Teachers: Ms. Robin & Ms. Beronica*

## Learning to Grow in Our New Reality

By Robin Edidin

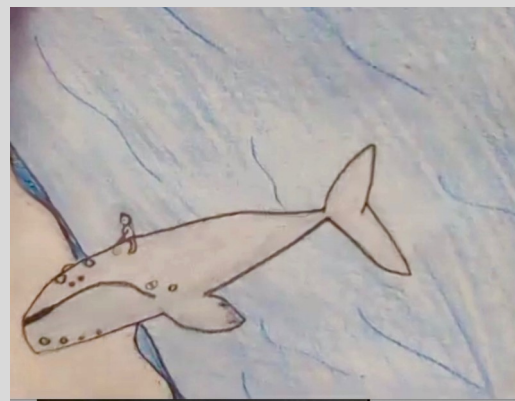
How is Level 3's 7th and 8th grade managing in a group in which some students are working remotely, and some are working in the physical classroom, given that our goal is to be integrated into one cohesive group? Here are two stories and several observations to help give you an idea of a work in progress.

### Collaborative Literature Work on ZOOM

Small group projects are an important element of our middle school program, and we are continuing group work online (usually on Zoom) so everyone can share in it equally. One of the first group activities the students undertook was a discussion and art project for the summer thematic novels they read. For one of their summer reads, students chose between three novels: *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, *Whale Rider*, and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. During our orientation, the students gathered in Zoom breakout rooms, according to the books they had read. Their assignment was to discuss significant images described in their book, and chose one to depict. Two of the projects are shown below. The picture on the left is a screenshot of a picture which was drawn online, on a Zoom whiteboard in fact. The other was drawn by a member of the group who was in the classroom, while conferring with group members online.



Wedding Scene from *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*



Paikea Saves the Whales, from *Whale Rider*



# Center Montessori News

## Level 3 7th & 8th Grade

The students who had read *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* chose to create four different depictions of the scene in which the protagonist finds Wellington the dog murdered. This project also came out extremely well, but we'll spare you the graphic images the students created!

My impression was that the collaboration went more smoothly and the work time was overall a little more productive on Zoom than what we had formerly seen when all of the students are together in person.

### Adapting Science for a Hybrid Class

New situations force us to think outside the box: what might seem at first like a problem turns into an opportunity. When we found out this past summer we would have a hybrid class -some students online and some in the actual 7th and 8th grade classrooms, but socially distanced- I wondered how science was going to work this year. In our middle school, it's always collaborative and hands-on, but also with a fair share of individual work. Exploration has always been encouraged.

Then a thought came: what about an individual science kit for each student? If each person had their own equipment and materials to investigate velocity, acceleration, Newton's laws, electrostatics, and electromagnetism, it could achieve our goals through a different path. Students could collaborate by designing experiments together, to be carried out individually. They could then share their data and work together to interpret it. They'd have the equipment and materials around all the time, silently encouraging them to explore.



What the science kits ultimately contained were a force-measuring spring scale, a battery holder, a compass (for detecting and measuring magnetic fields), a small motor with a pulley attached (allowing it to also function as a generator), several magnets of different strengths, a bi-colored LED light, alligator clips and wires, measuring tape (for velocity and acceleration measurements), odds and ends for static electricity experiments, and a goofy little car, made from scrap wood in my garage. It was important to have the cars' masses in the 200-500 gram range, so they would work well with the spring scale.

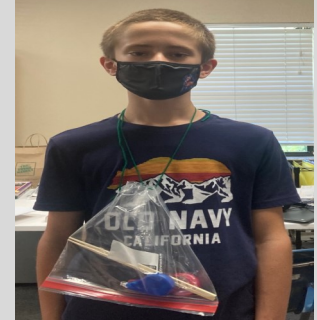
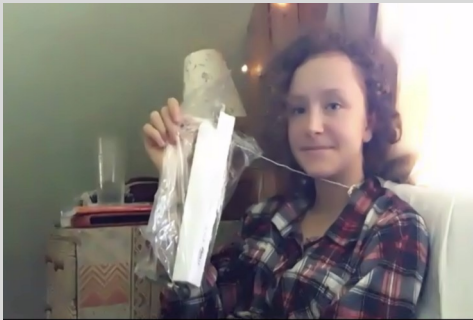
# Center Montessori News

## Level 3 7th & 8th Grade

The students have just started using their science kits. And what attracted them most, when they opened their kits, were the goofy wooden cars! Students have been busy painting and decorating them in imaginative ways. One student used his computer to design an elaborate graphic that he plans to transfer to his car. Below are pictures of several of the decorated cars.



The first assignment with the science kit material was to make a One-Newton Necklace: a “necklace” that pulls down with a force of one Newton (the international unit of force). After making it, the students were required to wear it for one hour, and to have their picture taken while wearing it. This would give them a personal familiarity with an abstract unit. Below are some of the One-Newton Necklaces our students created.



A core tenet of Maria Montessori’s approach is observation and response. It will be interesting to observe student reactions to science activities, see their modifications, and hear their suggestions. Who knows? It might be a new and better way for us to do science. We’ll keep you posted!