Here’s an Update of Box Top collecting

We ran an article in our October 2011 issue about the importance of collecting the box top symbols from the hundreds of products every family buys.

Since the beginning of this school year, Teacher Suzy Josef has submitted a collection of 4561 emblems to be redeemed for $456.10 for the school.

Here is the logo to look for on your products, and it’s easy to spot. Since there are literally thousands of qualifying products, it’s best to go to the Box Top website for the full list – boxtops4education.com

Those 10 cent remittances per each symbol collected add up in a hurry. The children are good at spotting, too. Mrs. Josef oversees this project. Families and friends bring box tops to the school office and they are given to her. The Upper Elementary students count the box tops, fill out the required form and calculate the amount they will earn.

And don’t forget to keep up the good work during the summer vacation so additional emblems can be added by submission time next fall. You can drop them off at the school office anytime.

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle
Cultural and Ancient Civilizations Studies
Broaden the Child's Perspective Across Time and Place

By Elizabeth Stepankiw

The presentations and consequent research conducted by the children in the cultural studies area is unique to Montessori schools. Many Montessori teachers refer to these lessons as being the "cosmic education" of the child. One of the exciting new characteristics of the elementary child is the power of the imagination.

Elementary children begin to want answers to their own thoughts concerning identity and place in the world. This education is called cosmic because it answers the basic questions by telling the story of the universe, the formation of our solar system and planet, and the life that has evolved on it, including us.

It was Maria Montessori’s idea that the first study of the history of people should not be of dates and rulers and wars, but a story that tells of the accomplishments of human beings and one that reaches back to our earliest beginnings and continues up to modern times.

Through this study, “the children can easily be brought to thrill to the knowledge that there are millions of people like themselves, striving mentally and physically, to solve the problems of life, and that all contribute to a solution, though one may find it.” (Maria Montessori. To Educate the Human Potential. 1948/1973, p. 81)

In the first explorations of the history of humans, the characteristics that tie all human activities together are studied in the Fundamental Needs of Humans lessons. Michael and D’Neil Duffy explain how, "Montessori was impressed by the fact that, although humans have made remarkable progress throughout history, they are simply changing the way they meet the universal, constant needs of all humans throughout time and space" (Children of the Universe: Cosmic Education in The Montessori Elementary Classroom. 2002, p. 115).

Often we read a shortened version of the Robinson Crusoe (or similar) story to spark our thoughts on what it would be like to not have all of the modern conveniences we have today. What are the basic needs every human must take care of in order to survive?

We may use the classic Montessori chart of the Fundamental Needs after our discussions or we may create our own chart. It will include things such as food, clothing, and houses. Often children will think of friends and family, water and clean air as well. Eventually we discuss the fact that humans have created art, music, buried their dead, defended themselves, and even practiced medicine since our earliest times.

Once we have established the needs, children choose one of the needs to explore. They read and match pictures, labels, and descriptions of the way each civilization satisfied that need: prehistoric people, Egyptians, Greeks, the Middle Ages of Europe, the Renaissance, and modern times. The cards, once matched, will be placed on a timeline of the centuries. Previous work the children have done has given them a sense of the passage of time and a knowledge of how it is marked on a line.

Later, children will take on the study of one particular time period—the pull out the cards for one group of people and look at how those people satisfied all the different needs during that time. Now children have the framework they need to study any other civilization that has existed throughout time and in more detail.

This approach to the study of history provides a base for a better understanding of ourselves as human beings and other peoples throughout time and in different places. Children will continue to learn the story of human development in their studies of the origins of language, writing, and math to gain an understanding of the long succession of human discoveries and work that many humans have contributed to give us the amazing systems we have today.
With this selection of titles, our young readers venture into more nuanced concepts, such as determining importance and synthesizing.

**PICTURE BOOKS:**
- **Koala Lou.** By Mem Fox. A young koala longing to hear her mother speak lovingly to her as she did before other children came along, plans to win back her distracted parent's attention.
- **Wild House Winter.** by Tetsuya Honda. Based on an actual event, the miraculous saga of a herd of wild horses overcoming a raging blizzard. The simple text brings a vanishing breed vividly to life.
- **Monarch Butterfly.** by Gail Gibbons, Ages 4-8. This book describes the life cycle, body parts, and behavior of the monarch butterfly. Includes instructions on how to raise a monarch.
- **And So They Build.** by Bert Kitchen. Twelve amazing animal architects, and why and how they build their structures, are described in text and illustration. 30 pgs.
- **El Chino.** by Allen Say. The true story of a Chinese boy who, on the advice of his father, grows up to become a bullfighter. A resonant biography of an intriguing anomaly. 32 pgs.
- **The Encounter.** by Jane Yolen. When Christopher Columbus landed on San Salvador in 1492, he met the Taino Indians. A young Taino boy's story of how he tried to warn against welcoming the strangers. As an old man, he looks back at their destruction of his people and their culture. 32 pgs.
- **Rachel's Journal.** by Marissa Moss. A fictional story of a girl's trip along the Oregon Trail to California. Based on real-life accounts and much historic detail. Rachel is an expressive, artistic, and intelligent girl. Her drawings, notes, and stories of the journey will entertain and teach young readers about a fascinating chapter in American history. 56 pgs.

**LONGER BOOKS**
- **Missing May.** by Cynthia Ruland. Parentless Summer goes to live with Uncle Ob and Aunt May. After Aunt May dies, Summer and Uncle Ob struggle to come to terms with her death. Cletus Underwood, a neighbor boy, comes along to help provide an answer. Just the right touches of humor and mysticism. 89 pgs.
- **Lewis and Clark, Explorers of the American West.** by Steven Kroll. A presentation of the highlights of Lewis and Clark's exploratory expedition through the territory acquired in the Louisiana Purchase. The text reads like a fictional adventure story, but sticks to the facts. 32 pgs.
- **Dear Mr. Henshaw.** by Beverly Cleary. Leigh Botts has been author Boyd Henshaw's best fan since 2nd grade. Now in 6th, Leigh is the new kid at school, lonely, troubled by his father's absence, a cross-country trucker, and angry because someone steals from his lunchbag. When his teacher assigns a letter-writing project, Leigh chooses to write to Mr. Henshaw, whose surprising answer changes Leigh's life. 134 pgs.
- **Tuck Everlasting.** by Natalie Babbitt. This 1975 book explores the concept of immortality and reasons why it might not be desirable. The Tuck family is doomed to eternal life after drinking from a magic spring. When ten-year-old Winnie Foster stumbles on their secret, the Tucks take her home and explain why living forever at one age is less a blessing than it might seem. Complications arise when Winnie is followed by a stranger who wants to market the spring water for a fortune. 139 pgs.
- **Matilda.** by Roald Dahl. Published in 1999, this book is about Matilda, a sweet five-year-old with extraordinary mental powers—which she uses to teach her school’s evil head mistress a lesson she’ll never forget. Fortunately for Matilda, she has astonishing intelligence, saintly patience, and an innate predilection for revenge. 240 pgs.
Development occurs in stages, almost like steps. Maria Montessori noted that within each stage of development there is a creative period of intense acquisition of skills or knowledge and then a calmer period of consolidation, i.e. absorbing and making that knowledge one’s own (http://www.countrymontessori.org/montessori /planes_of_development.html).

Montessori schools make use of the similar characteristics of children in three-year age spans. Mixed age groups promote healthy interactions; students have the opportunity to reinforce previously learned concepts by helping younger children, and younger children learn by observing older children in the classroom. It is natural in this environment to have different levels of accomplishment in one classroom; therefore, each child is given the ability to learn at his or her own pace. Teachers are able to learn more about each child’s strengths and challenges, and children are able to develop a strong sense of community and belonging.

When students transition from one level to another, they begin to build a new foundation for the next stage of development. The second year in a new level is a year of practice as knowledge is reinforced, and the third year becomes the year of synthesis and taking on responsibility as classroom leaders. Moving to the next age group often contains a mixture of apprehension as well as anticipation and excitement for what is coming next.

School of the Woods students who are moving up will visit their new classrooms during the month of May. They will have the opportunity to become familiar with teachers, students, and the classroom. The following reports from last year's new students in first, fourth, and seventh grades may be helpful to the students who will be moving up this year.

First grade students recalled their feelings when they were about to move to the next level. They remembered looking forward to making new friends and seeing old friends, seeing the new classroom and getting to know the new teachers, having more time at school, moving to a higher level with "harder" work, and having fun. Most were happy and excited about the move, and one student was particularly looking forward to new math work.

When asked, many children didn't recall having big concerns. Those that did, expressed being concerned about the difficulty of new work and being able to finish their work. Some children said that they had concerns about meeting new people and making new friends.

Most of the children found the new classrooms to be bigger, the work to be more challenging, and the teachers to be nice, helpful, and "giving good lessons." Students said they had made new friends, and some reported that they were still able to see old friends. Most did not report having difficulty adjusting, but one student said that the tire swing had made her vomit at P.E.

Finally, the students gave advice for those who will be moving to first grade in the fall. They should expect new and harder work. Many children said that the work is fun, "I like this work," and one student specified that cursive is fun to learn. New first graders should know that you only get one P.E., but you get three hours each of art and music and, you will stay in school for a longer day. Also, the children want the new first graders to know that there is nothing to be scared or shy of because older students will help them.
Students new to fourth grade this year were overwhelmingly looking forward to making new friends and seeing old friends. They also mentioned the fourth grade field trip, research work, new teachers, a bigger classroom, and moving up a grade. They had concerns about adjusting to having more structured homework, and a few were concerned about adjusting to a new classroom environment. Most students reported that homework turned out to be "not so bad."

Fourth grade students noted that the classroom is much bigger, and the teachers are nice, helpful, and fun. Most students feel the work is more challenging and advanced, yet they did not have problems adjusting to Upper Elementary. Attending summer school made adjusting easier. All the students have made new friends, and, with a few exceptions, most of them are able to see old friends as well.

New fourth graders should expect the work to be "plentiful, but it pays off." You should "always know what your teachers are saying, or they will call on you when you are not paying attention."

Also, the field trip is long; you will do more research, and there is no reason to be afraid because, "we are all friendly." Most of all, this year's fourth graders want next year's fourth graders to know that, "You will love Upper Elementary." In fact, one student described fourth grade as being super fun 36 times (except for the homework)!

When anticipating the move to seventh grade, Middle School students reported that they were looking forward to more challenging work and lessons, seeing old friends, learning new things in a new atmosphere, having lockers, service learning, the bonding trips with new and old friends, being able to use the microwave and kitchen appliances, trying new learning styles and lessons, and the freedom of making more choices.

Many new students said their concerns were about how the new class would affect their work: tests, not being able to finish on time, too much challenge, homework, and the independent study. Once school began, they found that they enjoyed the emphasis on interaction between students, more independence, longer lunch, the relaxing times during the day, the three color group rooms, small groups, and computer. They wrote that the work was challenging, with more assigned work, more projects and presentations, more detailed and complicated information, and required organizational skills.

Seventh grade students made new friends and got to know some old friends better. Some still had contact with friends no longer in their class. They found their new teachers to be both nice and funny. The teachers encourage independence, are helpful to students with their work and emotionally, present lessons well, are engaging, and have "cool interests." Some students had difficulty adjusting at first, but felt that things had improved as they became more familiar with the expectations.

To prepare for Middle School, students advise you to be organized, concentrate on grammar because you will need it, learn what study guides and homework notes are, be prepared to take tests, and know that you will get better at it. In addition, do not put off doing your homework, find your own best work strategy, ask questions, be prepared for fun, and be positive. Remember to be nice to your friends because you may end up having to work with them every day for five weeks. Relax and be sure to ask another student or teacher for help if you need it. You will only need a good binder, not a new backpack. There will be more work, but you can look forward to learning new concepts - most of them are fun!

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**REMEMBER: BRIDGE MEETING**
**MAY 9 -- For parents of K, 3rd, 6th & 8th grade students**

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Providing Structure in the Life of a Child

Dr. Robert Shaw in his book, The Epidemic, tells us that there are two "emotional vitamins" we can provide for our children: clear structure and clear expectations.

How do we go about giving our children these two important items? This issue, we'll explore how to create a clear structure, and next issue (September) we'll look at creating expectations.

Why does a child need clear structure? An environment with transparent organization provides the child with an element of protection—protection from physical and psychological abuse. It also provides a framework of adequate challenges for individual development.

Providing clear structure in our homes and schools involves three basic elements: physical, order and human.

The physical aspect of structure allows a child to know that they have a place of their own to live and work. The physical elements communicate to the child that they belong.

Child-sized tables, chairs and activities allow children a certain dignity. Cleanliness, light, fresh air, and temperature also communicate an important sense of place. Movement is allowed, and the consequences of movement are considered. The limits to the child's space are well defined.

The importance of the physical aspect is probably best seen in its absence. A college friend was 6'8". A classroom we meet in had 7-foot ceilings and the standard college student desks. Steve contorted himself into the desks, tried to avoid hitting his head on the door jams and ceiling fans. Steve stooped to write on the chalkboard. To pull off a sweater, Steve bent over so his arms wouldn't hit the ceiling. Our children deal with similar discomforts for many years in an oversized world.

The aspect of order might be summed up as "a place for everything and everything in its place." Order might seem obvious to organized people. Kitchen items in the kitchen. Garage items in the garage.

Material is grouped by area and sequence, and areas are defined for different activities. We eat at the table. We do watercolors in the kitchen and not the living room.

There is order in each activity. Wash your hands before you eat. Put your napkin on your lap. Carry your plate to the kitchen after you eat.

There is order in the sequence of activities. At bedtime we brush our teeth, put on our pajamas, read a story, go to the bathroom, say our prayers, turn off the lights and kiss goodnight.

There is order in the life of the group. We go to school and work on Monday through Friday.
Saturdays we run errands and play. Most of us have a Sunday routine, as well. The order must be respected and understood by adults in order to provide an unambiguous organization to the child.

Structure for the child also has a human dimension that includes adults and children. The adult's role in providing structure is to direct the child's activities and to prepare those activities. In these activities, the adult needs to respect the child as a fellow human being. The adult also observes the child's interaction with the world and looks for the aspects of concentration and independence the child exhibits.

As adults, we protect the few rules of basic order for the child, and we keep the environment clean and neat. Activities for the child are accessible and are in good working order.

We model what it means to be an adult by being careful of our appearance, keeping healthy and rested, along with staying interesting to the child by pursuing our own interests.

The child's role in this structured environment is to self-construct an adult.

An amazing feat. We assist the child in providing as unambiguous a system as we can, so that the child can become an adult with an "eye that sees, a soul that feels and a hand that obeys."

Clear structure is a large vitamin to concoct, but worth the time and effort. Creating a well-defined organization for our children will help us avoid a few "pills."

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Maren E. Schmidt
www.kidstalknews.com
(“Creating Expectations” may be found at the above website)

“We laughed when they picked up a palette . . .”

But, by golly, things turned out just great.

Pinot’s Palette Painting Party was one of the auction items at our recent 50th Birthday Gala, donated by Katherine Bodron, Barbara Bends and Bridgett Pracht.

The idea was to do your own copy of a genuine masterpiece. All these talented folks took a stab at it and did a fine job.

But who painted the blue vase?