The Parent Volunteer Community

The Parent Volunteer Community is responsible for many of the fun events on our campus. Here are the committees for this year.

Cindy Oldham, Events Coordinator; Diane Koonce, Events Treasurer; and Bridget Tomlinson, Communications

Committee heads -
Back to School Social: Katherine and Mark Bodron
Care Committee: Barbara Bends
Chili Cook-Off: Coordinator & Volunteers
Flower Power: Kristen Wright
Newsletter: Eloise Rochelle
Spring Picnic: Coordinator & Volunteers
Staff Appreciation: Denise Welling
Welcome & End of Year Coffees: Coordinator and Volunteers

And how to volunteer? We’ve made it super-easy for you and you will love the camaraderie of our campus families. To sign up, go to the opening screen of the school’s website – www.schoolofthewoods.org – and click on this little emblem:

That makes it a done deal.

THE PARENTS’ SOCIAL
Don’t miss this first big event of the new school year! It’s always great fun.
Saturday, Sept. 13, 7 PM
at the home of Katherine and Mark Bodron
1241 Ridgeley Drive, 77055

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

Poinsettias and greenery for sale, October 1 to 13
It’s called “Flower Power” – that time of the year when near-perfect poinsettias and aromatic greenery can be ordered for the holiday season.

The sale runs just two weeks, October 1 - 13, so be sure to remember to put your order in. And, be on the lookout for flyers and such from the Parents’ Organization.

And then there are BoxTops . . .

Don’t throw good money away. Keep an eye open for this little pink logo on every product you buy, clip them off the package and save ‘em up. They’re everywhere. The organization boxtops4education pays schools 10 cents for each one submitted to them. After you save a bunch, you can turn them into the Upper El classroom or the School’s main office. Counting and processing is done by Upper Elementary students.

A full list of literally thousands of eligible products can be seen online.
LEARNING TO LEAD AND FOLLOW

The adult is the most important part of a child's environment. We may fill a child's space with all kinds of learning activities. We may be able to give a child all types of advantages. What becomes significant, too often in hindsight, is the quality of the adults as being the indicator of how a child learns to navigate through life.

As the adult we need to learn to lead and follow. To lead, we model to children what it means to be an adult. We also need to follow children as they try to build themselves into adults through activities in their environment. Being a role model is a serious business, one that most adults ignore. When I went through my Girl Scout leader's training many years ago, the trainers emphasized this duty to be a positive presence in the lives of the girls in my troop. As I drove home, I thought, "But I don't want to be a role model!"

Like it or not, children look for excellence in the adults in their lives. What principles should we follow to lead effectively?

A good mentor is an example of what it means to be a happy healthy adult. We model that we take care of ourselves-body, heart, mind and spirit. We maintain a level of physical fitness through diet and exercise. We find ways to express our love--our love of others, our love of our families, our work, our communities. We are open to new ideas and learning, and remain curious learners. We live a spirited life, following our dreams.

A good mentor is available. If the adult is the most important part of a child's environment, a commitment to simply "be there" for our children gives us strong credibility. As many of us discovered during our parenting years, quantity of time is more important than quality of time. Yes, we want both quantity and quality of time with our children, but for our children our predictable presence and plenty of it, is what they truly need. Our challenge is leading ourselves more than leading our children.

A good mentor has proven experience. As we follow this parenting and teaching road, we think we cover new territory. In fact, we follow paths laid in our own childhood. We have experience of being a child. As a Chinese proverb says: To know the road ahead, ask those coming back. We are coming back to mentor a child with our experiences. Fortunately, we can also ask the advice of others.

A good mentor provides friendship and support. As adults we provide and create social support for our children through our families, our schools, our churches, and our communities. Children need people who will promote their interests and dreams; practice with them; point out important things; protect them from physical and psychological harm; and most importantly enjoy the adventure of live with them.

A good mentor shows how to make a difference. All of us want to make a difference, even the toddler want to help his families in the activities of everyday life. When we help our children learn skills, we help them learn to take care of themselves and others. To help our children learn to make a difference, we show them how to be good at doing things that bring joy to themselves and those around them.

It is the quality of the adult that determines how a child learns to journey through life. Be a good guide.

Maren E. Schmidt, M.Ed.
www.kidstalk.org

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

. . . . . Robert Frost


Wait!!! Don’t throw that away!
SCRAP MATERIALS NEEDED FOR CREATIVE KIDS IN ART CLASSES

Elementary art teachers Lise Lawrence and Kathleen Packlick need many kinds of household discards for their budding artists to create with.

DO YOUR PART FOR ART. We’re going to list a bunch of suggestions, but new kinds of things present themselves all the time. You’ll think of some other usable items, too.

Assorted small cardboard containers,

Washed yogurt cups and butter containers

Egg cartons; Cereal boxes;

Cardboard tubes;

Fabric, lace, ribbon scraps;

Buttons, beads, sequins, feathers;

Extra spools of thread, yarn, or anything else of that kind.

How about “orphaned” socks, one of a pair, or even good pairs that no longer fit the tiny feet of the family. Clean, please.

Magazines with LOTS of varied pictures (travel, art, general features). Even some types of catalogs have great pictures.

Beautiful or unusual wrapping papers, gift ribbons, greeting cards, gift boxes

Tinsel, glitter, garlands, plastic flowers.

Calendars – new and old.

Paper and plastic grocery bags.

Styrofoam meat trays – clean! Also, large Styrofoam packing pieces or packing peanuts.

But, PLEASE, no glass,

It’s chili time again, October 26, for the Chili Cook-off and Halloween Festival.

Events Coordinator Cindy Oldham is the go-to person for this yearly event.

All the things we look forward to will be there – the Rock Wall, Mechanical Bull, Obstacle Course, Slide, Dino Play Land, Caterpillar Craze, face painting, tattoos, hairstyling, Fishing Pond, and crafts.

There will be all that wonderful food, too – James Coney Island hotdogs and baked potatoes, Goode Co. House Chili, and Kettle Korn by Jason Mann.

The Parent Volunteer Community would be pleased to receive $10 donations to underwrite raffle items for the event. If you wish to help underwrite the Chili Cook-off, please send your check to the school office.

ARS LONGA, VITA BREVIS

Inside the Woods September 2014 3
Twelve years ago, we slid across the millennial threshold into the much-anticipated 21st century. We did so with optimism, hope, anticipation and a reasonable measure of angst. Beyond the initial relief (computer systems held fast and the apocalypse failed to materialize), pundits of all description made, and continue to make, grand predictions about a range of global changes in the new age, on subjects varying from climate change to world population growth to the globalization of economies.

The Industrial Age, it was generally agreed, was now a dinosaur lumbering toward extinction; the recently hatched term “Information Age” became the new framework for an era in which ideas and data offered more promising job prospects than assembly lines and production of consumer goods. In educational circles, the raging question was (and is): In this new Information Age, what future will our students face, and how can we best prepare them for it? What changes to the educational landscape are essential in order to prepare them?

Educational institutions change slowly, and sometimes superficially at best. Large public (and sometimes smaller private) systems can be highly resistant to deep change. Schools are notorious for rearranging the deck chairs for a while, then reverting back to something very close to the original design. Even the most well-intentioned of educational innovations can at times do more harm than good.

The 2001 landmark “No Child Left Behind” legislation stated to even the playing field in American Education, has instead become an excuse to test children relentlessly, powerfully forwarding the notion that the only knowledge that is worth gaining is testable and measurable, and that successful students are repositories of knowledge rather than processors of information, creative thinkers, and problem solvers. Such change-resistant constructs as age-specific grade levels, the division of curricula into discrete subjects (read: Henry Ford’s assembly line in Flint, MI), teachers as knowledge dispensers, and learning as a competitive boxing match between children (some of you do a good job! and some of you, well . . .) have persisted since the Industrial Age.

Enter the new millennium and serious discussion among educations, corporate executives, government leaders, and entrepreneurs regarding the skills, knowledge and expertise today’s students will need in order to succeed in their future jobs and, indeed in life. This complex set of competencies, now termed “21st century skills,” includes not only knowledge in core areas but also technological prowess, environmental literacy, cross-cultural communication skills, and the ability to solve complex problems, think creatively, and work collaboratively. Children, future citizens of the world, will need to think across disciplines, reach across cultures, and embrace new knowledge at every stage of their lives.

If traditional schools wish to prepare children for their futures (rather than the lives their parents and grandparents faced), they will need to dramatically retool curricula and pedagogy and reframe priorities. To achieve the desired results, discrete strands of curricula (20 minutes of math, 30 minutes of science, etc.,) must now be thoughtfully interconnected, age-specific grade levels must become communities of learners, rote memorization must give way to the use of knowledge to solve real-world problems; competition for grades and prizes must shift to collaboration with classmates; learning must become student-centered and driven by inquiry rather than imposed by textbooks; and the role of the teacher must become that of skilled coach rather than central knower and dispenser of information. The student, or child, becomes central to the process and an active co-constructor of knowledge rather than a passive vessel waiting to be filled.

If the above description of the new school reform movement is beginning to sound familiar to those who are knowledgeable about Montessori tenets, that is...
because many of these seemingly radical reforms accurately describe what has been going on in good Montessori classrooms for decades. One hates to sound smug, but I suggest that the school reform we are so eagerly trying to define and achieve is already a part of the contemporary educational scene in the form of Montessori education.

But, wait, you may ask, can a methodology that has been around for 100 hears possibly satisfy the needs of today’s learners, moving them toward unknown futures and rapidly evolving context, complications, and technologies? A comparison of key practices in Montessori education with those advocated by the “21st-century skills” proponents indicates yes. Yes, with a few caveats, but nonetheless, an emphatic yes. While the scope of this article does not allow for a detailed and exhaustive summary of all the ways that Montessori education moves us into (and, hopefully, beyond) the 21st century, it may offer potent samples.

Let us first look at the very center of the Montessori classroom. This center is not the teacher, fount of wisdom, seated in front at an imposing desk. This center is the child. Dr. Montessori said, “There was no method to be seen. What was seen was a child” (1966, p. 136). She began with no fixed a priori knowledge or theory of a full-throttle curriculum and a carved-in-stone methodology. Rather, Dr. Montessori started from the notion that the child is actually the center of education, and that all practice should build on that core. From this comes the phrase “follow the child.” And from this we realize that one of the teacher’s most essential roles is that of observer; an observer of life, which manifests itself through the development of each human potentiality. This moves the teacher from the role of “chief knower” and dispenser of knowledge, to that of guide, supporter, facilitator, and coach. The role of the adult as guide, and this open stance in the face of knowing, are essential in the educational paradigm if 21st century skills. One cannot both pretend to know all that is known and usher students toward their own discovery of vast, unknown worlds. Respect for the learner and his/her potential is absolutely central to the new educational paradigm. Montessori got this right from the start.

Next, look at the multiage classrooms that are essential to the Montessori approach and the benefits they offer, especially in 21st century classrooms that are based on knowledge acquisitions in order to pass a test. These classrooms nurture the kind of inquiry that feeds a lifetime of learning. At every phase of the Montessori progression, we have three-year cycles, which offer the opportunity to be a beginner, or an upstart novice, who notices and begins to internalize that which is to come by observing those who are older and more experienced. In the middle are the second years . . . who know the ropes and test their mettle against more advanced materials and complexities. These are the friends who go out of bounds a little bit and can act quite silly; they are also the experimenters and bold adventurers of the room. Next are the third-years . . . those who are integrating past knowledge and externalizing it in the form of huge and complex new works and exploding new abilities (think of the 5-year-old who is eagerly beginning to read or the 12-year-old who is completing a complex research project) and leadership skills. What better environment could be imagined to support the development of communities of collaborative learners, learners who find it natural and even essential to consider the ideas of others, even others who are different from them, when solving a complex problem?

Consider now the overall attitude toward knowledge that is exemplified in a Montessori classroom. Each child moves at his or her own pace, progressing to new materials, skills, and concepts as he or she is ready. Each child has the opportunity to choose materials from within a given range; this supports the development of the intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning, both of which are key ingredients in the mix of becoming a lifelong learner in a world where learning and knowledge have no end.

Montessori classrooms favor error as a step toward such self-directed learning, and offer built-in “controls of error” within each material so that the learner can reflect on his or her “mistakes,” developing problem-solving skills through the discovery and correction of the same. This stands in contrast to seeking out the “right” answer from the teacher, panicking over incorrect answers on a test, or cheating in order to do well, all according to someone else’s standards.

Consider as well the notion that the classroom is a community in which social problems are resolved naturally, through use of conflict resolution skills taught and practiced on a daily basis within the context of a supportive social environment. Montessori teachers share what are quaintly referred to as “grace and courtesy” skills from the earliest age: how to say “good morning” and look someone in the eye; how to accept or decline an invitation; how to politely interrupt
someone; how to walk carefully and respectfully around another’s work so that she or he is not distracted.

When conflicts arise, and they inevitably do, children learn to clutch the peace stone or use some other procedure to assertively but respectfully state their feelings or thoughts, and then (and this is critical) they listen to the thoughts, feelings, even passions of others. Older children, moving beyond the “I,” learn to resolve group problems and find solutions that make sense for all. Middle school students learn that disagreement is essential to taking multiple perspectives and finding consensus, and discover ways to move forward with a project even with divergent points of view strongly felt. For meaningful collaboration, one needs to learn to gracefully appreciate another’s point of view and find common ground.

In Montessori classrooms, from toddler through high school levels, students make active choices about the work they find most compelling at a given time. And they are afforded long, uninterrupted activity cycles in order to deeply explore this work, to engage with it, pose problems, and resolve them through self-directed activity. No reward is greater than a child’s sense of inner victory over a problem solved or a complex work completed. There are no gold stars, no prizes – just a deep love of process and outcome, and the quest for further knowledge.

Montessori children begin to develop a global perspective from the youngest age. Handling the land and water globe gives way to continent studies which give way to the “cosmic curriculum” of the elementary years, in which students develop an appreciation for the oneness of things, the awareness that everything has a cosmic task.” and that all things, living and nonliving, are interconnected. As the child deeply absorbs this integrated curriculum, she or he develops a strong sense of being a citizen of the world and a steward of its precious resources.

Through the gradual development of self-discipline through active engagement in an environment where “freedom within limits” is the rule of the realm, children develop a sense of their own responsible place within the greater scheme of things. We all have rights, we all have responsibilities. As children (and their senses of ethical and moral rightness) mature, they more consciously develop a sense of compassion, a sense of respect for the complexity of living and nonliving things, a sense of justice, and an ability to weigh priorities in the use of resources.

The spiraling, interconnected curricula that begins with the youngest child’s experience of concrete materials and advances, one awareness and skill at a time, to the older child’s reach toward such abstractions as congruency, place value, decimal fractions, expository writing, peace, and sustainability, is a major, mind-numbing gift of this method. Children do not need to memorize for the test; they assemble constructs from the inside out. They know. Montessori teachers use a wide range of assessment tools to ascertain what their children know and understand. Some of these assessment tools are tests, but most of them are more authentic, performance-based tools. Children demonstrate their knowledge every day by applying it.

Are there things that we, as Montessorians, can work on, do better, as we march more deeply into the 21st century? Of course. In my opinion, we could engage our children in more projects of a deeper nature. We would muck about more, especially in the sciences, in early childhood and lower elementary programs. We can pay more attention to the serious topic of play as a human construct; this most essential of collaborative skills strikes at the heart of the 21st-Century need to create, explore and collaborate. And the technology issue is a potent one. How much? What kind? At what ages? We can explore these modalities in the spirit of Dr. Montessori, who stated, “I believe that I have by my method established the conditions necessary to the development of scientific pedagogy, and whoever adopts this method opens, in doing so, a laboratory of experimental pedagogy: (Montessori, 1964, p. 370).

Dr. Montessori knew that her work was not complete, nor could it ever be. Her legacy to those of us who work every day in Montessori education is the the gift of roots in the deep, rich soil of Montessori tenets that have served many thousands of children from all parts of the globe for the past 100 years. Our wings lift us and our children into a future of ever expanding challenges, wonders and possibilities.


Martha Torrence is head of Summit Montessori School, Framingham, MA, and former president of the AMS Board of Directors. She is AMS-credentialed (Early Childhood). This article was published in Montessori Life Magazine, Summer 2012, American Montessori Society.
The Museum also presents rotating Press Replica; and Printing; Illuminated Manuscripts; 1450 Gutenberg Papyrus Fragments; Asian Movable Type & early Asian artifacts such as: Revolution to the Civil War. The Museum features printing press. American history is dramatized through invention of movable type, to Johann Gutenberg's transformed our lives. Trace significant developments and the ways in which the technologies of printing have History narrates the story of written communication Through its permanent exhibits, the Museum of Printing The Printing Museum

Contemporary Art: Selections from the Museum’s Collection, highlighting the Museum’s exceptional works that are new to Houston audiences. Both exhibits run through September 21.

Arts of Islamic Lands: Selections from The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait: A year-long exhibit ending on Jan. 4, 2015. Islamic masterworks from Kuwait’s privately held al-Sabah Collection, one of the greatest collections of Islamic art in the world. More than 60 examples from the 8th to 18th centuries are on view, made in the Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The collection was founded by Sheikh Nasser Sabah al-Ahmed al- Sabah and his wife, Sheikha Hussah Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah. It presents all aspects of Islamic art, with more than 30,000 pieces.

Asia Society Texas Center, 1370 Southmore, Houston 77004 – 713.596.9901. You haven’t much time to catch this exhibit, The Hindu Deities Unleashed, as it closes on September 14, but it is considered a real eye-popper. We will keep track of future events.

The Printing Museum, 1324 West Clay – 713.522.4652. Through its permanent exhibits, the Museum of Printing History narrates the story of written communication and the ways in which the technologies of printing have transformed our lives. Trace significant developments from ancient Mesopotamian clay tablets, to the Chinese invention of movable type, to Johann Gutenberg's printing press. American history is dramatized through newspaper accounts of major events from the American Revolution to the Civil War. The Museum features artifacts such as: Mesopotamian Cylinder Seals; Ancient Papyrus Fragments; Asian Movable Type & early Asian Printing; Illuminated Manuscripts; 1450 Gutenberg Press Replica; and Old Master Etchings & Engraving.

The Museum also presents rotating exhibitions old fine art prints, rare books, and artifacts.

We have more museum visits available than the law allows

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1001 Bissonnet, Houston, Texas 77005 - 713.639.7300 – several shows:

Arts of Europe, exemplified by this 1878 painting, The Orange Trees, by Gustave Caillebotte, in which he has captured the decidedly modern theme of refined leisure activities. Also showing in tandem:

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The Museum also presents rotating exhibitions old fine art prints, rare books, and artifacts.

The Buffalo Soldiers National Museum, 3816 Caroline – 713.942.8920. This is the only museum in the U.S. to honor the legacy of African-American soldiers. It is the largest repository of African-American military history in the world, stretching from the Revolutionary War, both world wars to the present. The 10th cavalry, an all-African-American Army unit, was nicknamed Buffalo Soldiers by Cheyenne warriors in 1867 because of their fierce fighting ability. Over time, the term was applied to all African-American soldiers.

Houston Maritime Museum, 2204 Dorrington, Houston 77030 – 713.666.1910. The Houston Maritime Museum has existed for ten years yet is not as well known as it should be. Houston is the second largest port in the nation largely because of its maritime foundations. This museum has exhibits of over 150 model ships that span the Age of Exploration to the Modern Merchant Marine, Sailing Ships and Steam Power, Ships-in-Bottles, Great Lakes Vessels, Convict Models, Ancient Chinese & Middle East, History of Navigation, Voyages of Discovery, Ocean Liners, as well as model drilling rigs, navigational instruments and other maritime artifacts.

The Houston Museum of Natural Science, 5555 Hermann Park Dr., Houston 77030 – 713.639.4629. The HMNS has so much to see, the exhibits can’t be listed in just a paragraph, even a long one. We should mention two major permanent exhibits, though: The recently opened Hall of Ancient Egyptology and the Morian Hall of Paleontology (Don’t mess with Rexes). Be sure to access the Museum’s website so you’ll know everything that’s available, and also where. They have more than a few special locations.

The Holocaust Museum, Morgan Family Center, 5401 Caroline St., Houston, 77004. 713-942-8000. This is the Museum’s 18th year, and its current exhibit is “Life: Survivor Portraits” - photographs by local artist Kelly Lee Webeck. It includes images of 18 local survivors and the home spaces each has created. Exhibit ends October 12.

The Menil Collection, 1533 Sul Ross, Houston, 77006. The Menil’s permanent works are always on view. The current major showing is Dario Robleto: The Boundary of Life is Quietly Crossed, sculptures exploring emotional themes of the human condition. Exhibit closes January 4, 2015.