Join us for these all-school events

September 21 – Welcome Coffee,
   8:15 - 10 AM, 1321 Wirt Road campus,
   Administration Building
October 1 – Adult Social, 7-10 PM, at the
   home of Teacher Ginny Langenkamp,
   8309 Leafy Lane, 77055
October 30 – Chili Cook-Off, 12-3 PM,
   Wirt Road campus
January 7 – Montessori Journey, 9 AM-1 PM,
   Wirt Road and High School campuses
April 30 – Spring Picnic, 12-3 PM,
   Wirt Road campus

Poinsettias and greenery for sale,
September 26 - October 7

It’s called “Flower Power” – that time of the year
when near-perfect poinsettias and aromatic
greenery can be ordered for the holiday season,
delivered in December. Order forms will be sent
home soon. The sale runs just two weeks.

And don’t forget BoxTops . . .

These little honeys are worth money to
our school. You’ll find them everywhere – on just about
every product you buy. Clip them off the packaging and
save ‘em up.

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.

The organization boxtops4education.com pays schools
10 cents for each one submitted to them. A full list of
literally thousands of eligible products can be seen online.

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Let’s all stay safe -
Driving and Parking Tips

⇒ South drive is ENTRY and EXIT
⇒ North drive is EXIT only
⇒ The fire lane is not a pick up or drop off area
⇒ Release and pick up only in an area attended
   by an adult (school personnel provide safety for
   children getting in and out of cars)
⇒ Speed limit on drive is 5 mph

Welcome to the
2016-2017 School Year
Reading Aloud to Your Child:  
The Most Important Home Work

*Being read to and discussing aspects of the subject matter with the reader are vital to the child's development*

by Elizabeth Stepankiw  
Elementary Classroom

The book, *Learning through interaction: The study of language development* by Gordon Wells, details years-long research recording multiple factors in the language development of children. According to *Educational Review*, the author's central arguments are that conversation provides the natural context of language development and the child learns through exploring his world through interactions with other people.

The study called "Meaningful Differences in Everyday Experiences of Young Children" showed that parents heavily contribute to a child's ability to succeed in school by the number and quality of verbal interactions. In a British study called "Language, Learning, and Education," the most powerful predictor of achievement in school was found to be the amount of time the child spent listening to stories.

Experts tell us that a triangle of communication for language learning is formed between the parent, the child, and the object of the conversation. This doesn't occur when a child is watching TV or a movie because interacting with language is very different from just listening to words. The child must be actively engaged in the conversation with another human present and involved in back and forth conversation.

Current studies prove that the foundation of reading is language; the size of your child's vocabulary strongly correlates with reading success. The best home "work" is one that can be experienced with your child with you reading aloud. Words and stories generate a larger vocabulary and a realization of ways of thinking as you share your thoughts about the books you read. Your child will come to see reading as an adventure and at the same time share this with the person in life that your child loves the most.

Although there will always be times when life gets too hectic for daily reading, it is important to set aside a little time, even if it is just 15 minutes, as often as possible to read. It is also important to share the thinking side of reading; reading allows you to share the pleasure of new learning with your child.

In the book, *7 Keys to Comprehension*, Susan Zimmermann and Chryse Hutchins give strategies for creating an
ongoing conversation between parent, child, and written word:

The first key involves helping your child create sensory images. Point out the feelings, tastes, smells, and pictures that come to mind in the story. Your child will get a sense that reading a story is like creating a movie in your mind--share your own vision of the movie image that the story invokes for you.

Another strategy for enhancing the reading experience is to discuss the background knowledge we bring to the stories we read. Each person interprets a story a little bit differently depending what it reminds us of in our own lives.

You can encourage your child to become aware of background knowledge by sharing some of your own experiences in conversation related to the story you are reading and listening to what your child brings into the conversation. This can be done even before you begin reading by looking at the book together--front, back--and discussing what the book might be about.

To deepen your child's understanding and to create dialogue and a sense of wonder, it is important to ask questions as you read. Quality questions include those that ask the whys of what is happening, where it is happening, who it is happening to, and how. A good way to encourage your child to learn to ask these questions is playing the "I wonder" game: I wonder what.... or why.... or how... etc. in relation to the anticipated information of the story.

Drawing inferences goes beyond what is on the written page; it involves making guesses about the information in the story--those things we come to understand, but are not stated as fact in the story. Practices for building your child's understanding of inference include playing guessing games, looking at cartoons together to find the joke, inferring the meaning of unknown words, making predictions, and figuring out the big message in the story.

To facilitate synthesizing, another key to comprehension, spend time with your child talking about what is most important in the reading. Retell the main parts of the story together and then ask what it means.

Reading for meaning, talking about thinking, and creating a deeper understanding during your reading time will help build a rich and rewarding experience for you and your child!

(i) Cambridge University Press
Why Sixth Graders should be in a Montessori Upper Elementary Program

adapted from an article by Robyn Breiman, MEd, and Betsy Coe, PhD

In 2014, the American Montessori Society School Accreditation Commission reaffirmed the importance of three-year multiage classrooms, making that range the standard for accreditation for Montessori Early Childhood through Upper Elementary programs.

Because students are usually 11 when they start sixth grade and turn 12 over the school year, many schools still question where the student is best served – in Upper Elementary or Middle School. Multiple factors substantiate the AMS position.

Mastery and leadership experiences in the three-year cycle final year are significant for children to consolidate strengths they have developed. By being known (by teachers and peer groups) and feeling safe and challenged in the broad Montessori curriculum they practice effective self-expression, self-awareness and appreciation for their own individual gifts and quirks. The experience of personal power solidifies the self and bolsters facing the challenges of the next plane of development.

The three-year cycle – from first-year newbie to second-year experienced to third-year mentor – involves all social, emotional and academic aspects, and is one of the most effective and successful elements of a Montessori Program.

Some parents may believe that a middle school sixth-grade experience might be more “academic” or more rigorous than the familiar, familial Montessori multi-age classroom.

Sometimes the argument is that children these days are different from those in Maria Montessori’s time, and certainly, they are more technologically savvy. Other parental considerations are that sixth-grade students are more sophisticated and too mature for Upper Elementary (especially for girls). AMS argues that this sophistication and maturity is “surface,” and while exposure to media may give children the vocabulary and content of an older person, their brains and bodies have not evolved as quickly.

Many educators and parents cite the physical maturity of students as a reason that sixth graders should be moved to middle school. But these children’s bodies can be misleading. One researcher has discussed the trend toward earlier physical maturity of both boys and girls, and points to several factors in early puberty: childhood obesity, premature birth, excessive light exposure (mostly from electronic devices), endocrine disruptors (chemicals in products such as plastics, pesticides, hair-care products, etc.) and family stress.

Though such maturation is happening earlier, it isn’t matched by earlier maturation in other areas of development. The prefrontal lobes of the brain evolve much more slowly. The gap between physical maturity and cognitive maturity contributes to emotional difficulties, since people treat these youngsters according to how they look, which in turn, affects the way they act and feel about themselves.

In Montessori, the first three of the four planes of development from birth to age 18 are the
touchstones for creating the prepared environment. The significant qualities and range of developmental needs characteristic of each plane are what the prepared environment honors. But sometimes both students and adults want to rush into the next plane, especially at kindergarten, sixth-grade and high-school-senior levels. However, the planes are not isolated but a continuum. The richness of the first two planes is a starting point for the prepared environment of the third plane (Adolescent level), i.e., the third plane builds on the previous two.

The third year of each three-year cycle serves a distinct purpose for Montessori students. It allows the student to synthesize knowledge, to step up to a position of leadership in the community, to be a role model for younger students, and a valued peer teacher.

Co-author Dr. Betsy Coe states than in 30 years of visiting many Montessori Middle Schools, she has never seen sixth-graders fully integrated into classrooms with seventh and eighth graders. Typically, the sixth-graders quickly separate themselves from the older students and end up working together as a single age group.

Such sixth-graders need the upper elementary program, with access to more advanced concrete materials and a developmentally appropriate planning and time-management structure. It is not fair to ask them to operate at the next plane or to ask their older classmates to function according to their younger classmates needs.

The authors strongly believe that the best placement for sixth grade is in upper elementary, and have extensive experience to substantiate this view – years of experiencing the synergistic effect of the three-year age span – citing the opportunity to grow up in a classroom, moving into a leadership role, and becoming well-known by teachers and peers. Progressing in this way academically, socially and emotionally is a powerful support to becoming a competent, responsible, adaptive citizen and a life-long learner.

This article was published in Montessori Life Magazine, Summer 2016.

Robyn Breiman, MED, is a member of the AMS Board of Directors, co-director and faculty member of Montessori Elementary Teacher Training Collaborative in Lexington, MA, and a Montessori school consultant.

Betsy Coe, PhD, is founder and principal of the Woods Montessori Middle and High School and executive director of the Houston Montessori Teacher Education Center in Houston. She is also a former president and member of the AMS Board of Directors, and its 2008 Living Legacy awardee.

References


Can you find your way home?

Lost in space? Not a problem – just look for this Milky Way galaxy. It has six whirlly arms named Norma, Scutum Crux, Sagittarius, Orion, Perseus and Cygnus. We live In the Orion Arm, pretty close to the outer edges. Look for a big sun (see picture) with eight little planets buzzing around it. Ours is the blue one. You can’t miss it.

DON’T PANIC!
What a way to end the school year!

Woods High School physics students visited the Upper Elementary classroom on May 31.

They shared a range of science demonstrations and displays which they had prepared from their physics labs.

Talk about excitement . . .
WE SCIENCE

Merrill Pecci, Emma Nix, and Morgan Stevens talk about the science behind living on other planets.

Zoe Murphy shares how the first minutes of our Universe probably looked and how we figured that out.

Emily Sobelman and Girija Chatufale present “Circumpolar and Seasonal Constellations and the Atomic make-up.”

Henry Weeden presents quantum entanglement.

Dylan Welling, Camille Simmons and Grayson Koonce-Fisher demonstrate time dilation from Einstein’s Special Relativity.

Geoffrey Tomlinson shows how particle accelerators and colliders work.

Space Management for the Montessori Child

A child who participates in the arrangement of an environment, at school or at home, and learns to select a few significant things instead of piles of unused toys, books, clothes, etc., will benefit in many ways by creating good work habits, good concentration powers, and a clear, uncluttered, and peaceful mind.

Think out the activities and the materials for all living spaces and arrange the environment to include the child’s activities.

Help your child develop a routine to keep track of things that need to go to and from school, perhaps on a small table by your usual exit door.

Have a place in each room for the child’s few, carefully chosen belongings appropriate to that room. For instance, in the living room, create a place for the child’s books and toys-neatly, attractively organized.

Don’t put out too many toys and books at one time. Those being used by the child at the moment are sufficient. It is a good idea to rotate-taking out those books and toys that have not been chosen lately and removing them to storage for a time.

Children grow and change and they need help to keep their environments uncluttered and peaceful.

Encourage children to always keep their things in the same, pre-designated places.

For older children create a space for them to work on and store homework materials. This place should be away from other household distractions.

The adult model is always the most important element in the environment. It is from observing what we do, not what we say, that the child will learn.

Adapted from Child of the World, Michael Olaf’s Essential Montessori for ages 3-12+