

It's time for our great Spring Picnic

The date is Sunday, April 24. Everybody come aboard! It starts at 1 PM

The theme will once again be splishing and splashing – everyone loves that. The kids arrive in their swimsuits, ready and eager to get soaked.

The Spring Picnic menu includes all of our favorites: James Coney Island hot dogs, chopped beef sandwiches, sliced brisket, baked potatoes, Fadi's sandwiches, salads, sweet treats, coffee, water and Slushies. Everything else, too: inflatables, rock wall, crafts, hairstyling, face painting, fishing pond and Woods High School student talent is back by demand!

Admission includes everything but raffles and fundraisers. Pre-event ticket sales will save you \$5 per person: \$20/\$15 for adults, \$15/\$10 for children older than two years.

Time marches on

Here we are, marching off into April. Time to think about all the endearing events which will take place between now and the end of school. The Spring Picnic starts the beginning of the great climax.

We look forward to all the graduation doings and all the transitions to higher grade levels, and all the banquets and feasts for various activities. The grand finale is the big dance recital, June 4-5. This year's production will be "The Princess and the Pea."

And, of course, we look forward to seeing everyone back in the fall, ready for a new school adventure.

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Edited by Eloise Rochelle

March 14 was Pi day . . . 3.14 . . .

What is Pi? π

To a mathematician: "Pi is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter."

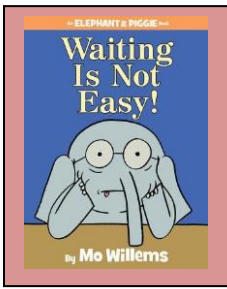
A computer programmer: "Pi is 3.141592653589 in double precision."

A physicist: "Pi is 3.14159 plus or minus 0.000005."

An engineer: "Pi is about 22/7."

A nutritionist: "Pie is a healthy and delicious dessert!"

More books – can't have too many



Waiting is Not Easy!, by Mo Willems. Gerald the elephant learns a truth familiar to every preschooler: “Waiting is not easy!” When Piggie announces that he has a surprise for him but he will have to wait. Gerald groans and moans. As day turns to twilight Piggie then gestures up to the Milky Way, which an awed Gerald acknowledges “was worth the wait.” 2014, 64 pages. Ages 2 to 7.



One Day on Our Blue Planet...in the Antarctic, by Ella Bailey. From dusk to dawn, children will love spending the day with this curious penguin chick. One in a series of picture books about the daily lives of baby animals: what does a penguin chick and her family eat?

What do they do for fun? 2015, 32 pages. Ages 3 to 7.



Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon, by Kate DiCamillo. Francine Poulet is the greatest Animal Control Officer in Gizzford County. Her family has a long line of Animal Control Officers. She's battled snakes, outwitted squirrels, and stared down a bear. She is never scared—until she's faced with a

screaming raccoon that could be a ghost. 2015, 112 pages. Ages 6 to 9.



Serafina and the Black Cloak, by Robert Beatty. Serafina's pa is the Biltmore Estate's maintenance man. The rich folk upstairs do not know that Serafina exists so they have secretly lived in the basement all Serafina's life. When children at the estate start disappearing, only Serafina knows who the culprit is: a

terrifying man in a black cloak who stalks Biltmore's corridors at night. She risks all by joining forces with nephew Braeden Vanderbilt, to reveal the man before more children vanish. 2015, 293 pages. Ages 8 to 12.

Maria Montessori said . . .

But, above all, it is the education of adolescents that is important, because adolescence is the time when the child enters on the state of manhood and becomes a member of society . . . a transition from the child who has to live in a family, to the man who has to live in society.

Montessori, M. (1973), *From Childhood to adolescence*, New York, Schocken Books, p. 98.

Key Elements of a Montessori Secondary Program

- Interdisciplinary curriculum/meaningful work
- Large periods of time for in-depth learning
- Balance of personal work and work in small groups
- Strong academic program
- Time and activities for self-construction
- Multiage grouping
- Teachers as facilitators
- Community building/student leadership
- Student-led family conferences
- Practical life skills/field studies
- Global/peace education
- Service learning
- Career education
- Economic exploration
- Technology as a tool
- Creative expression/electives
- Outdoor education
- Immersion weeks, change in pace and renewal opportunities

Revisiting a good book
Permission to Parent
By Robin Berman, MD

Permission to Parent by Robin Berman, MD, has garnered excellent reviews by a range of readers. The book was featured for our first Book Discussion meeting in October 2015, and also in a Coffee for Parents with Sherry Herron on March 9.

In her book, Dr. Berman shows that over the past few decades, the power structure intrinsic to the family unit has flip-flopped. By trying to constantly please their children and make them happy, parents are actually making their children anxious, showering praise on them in the hope of increasing self-esteem, forgetting that self-control is a key to instilling self-confidence.

Sherry Herron's coffee meeting honed in on an important aspect of the book, *Moderating Media*. Here are a few salient points:

1. **Check in – don't checkout.** Model a lack of digital distraction yourself. Eye contact and hearing parent voices without background noise is essential to learning to talk. Bonding is essential to social and emotional development.
2. **Electronics are not pacifiers or substitutes.** Brains are wired for human interaction. Parents need to build emotional skills with children face to face.
3. **Regulate media so it doesn't steal childhood.** Monitor and have rules for young children; teach older ones to monitor themselves. Missed actual social and emotional experiences cannot be reversed.
4. **Electronic games and videos are addictive.** Teach and model moderation. During video games, dopamine is released the same as with drugs and alcohol. Using screen time before bed reduces melatonin by 22%.

5. **The brain/body doesn't distinguish between real life and virtual life. All stress feels real.** Cortisol is secreted as in real life; amygdala is activated instead of the frontal cortex which controls critical thinking and judgment.

6. **You don't want your kids desensitized to gratuitous violence or to shut down.** Berman points out (p. 174) that seven-year-olds cannot 'unsee' images such as in *The Hunger Games*.

7. **Negative imagery is enduring and toxic for developing psyches.** She also notes on p. 174 that "porn" is the 5th most popular internet search for ages 6 and up.

8. **Positive images inspire good feelings and good neurochemistry.** The immune system is enhanced, and watching and doing good deeds increases serotonin, and improves mood and calms.

9. **Make sure you have more real moments than digital ones.**

10. **Consult the CommonSenseMedia.org website for a parent guide to media.** Some subjects discussed are How much screen time is really OK for babies under 2?, How much screen time is OK for my kid(s)?, How do I keep my kid safe on the Internet and Is advertising harmful to kids.

The author has extensive clinical experience in this field. She strikes the perfect balance of advice, anecdote, and research, explaining why parents need to be in charge.

Dr. Berman is Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the Geffen School of Medicine, UCLA, and founding board member of the Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital at UCLA. She also maintains a private practice.

Solving The Read Aloud Blues



Kitchen Scene: Mom and Dad are getting dinner ready after a busy day. Soccer practice is in 45 minutes. Enter six-year-old with book. "Mom! Dad! I have to read ten pages out loud to you tonight for homework!"

Mom and Dad look at each other and sigh.

Perhaps you have sat painfully listening to your child painfully read out loud.

You also might remember reading circles when you were in elementary school.

"But that's how we learn to read!" you say. "How can we be sure our child is learning to read if we don't listen to him read? It's our job as parents."

Understanding the process of reading can help you feel confident that there is a better way to help your children than to sit and listen to them haltingly and painfully read out loud to you.

If your child loves to read out loud and it is not a painful process that is wonderful for both of you.

I still think you will learn something by continuing to read this article.

Reading out loud is an expressive dramatic skill that requires the use of many skills simultaneously. To read out loud fluently, you have to take in a lot of printed matter at one time, mentally interpret the meaning and emotion, and then express it verbally. That's a lot for six-year-old or a sixty-year-old.

Research has shown that the difference in the time for the brain to process the printed word in a fluent and non-fluent reader is 1/100th of a second. Just because the brain is processing 1/100 second slower, reading becomes halting and exhausting.

It doesn't have to be that way.

Encourage your child to develop expressive language through singing, memorization of poems and bible verses, plays, etc. Work on the receptive and decoding skills needed by encouraging writing. At some point the two skills will overlap, and your child will become a wonderful expressive reader, painlessly.

Reading for meaning and understanding is a receptive language skill. Most of us have a larger "listening" and "reading" vocabulary than we have a "spoken" vocabulary. As we listen and read, we pick up contextual clues that take practice and time to help us interpret the meaning.

You've probably had the experience of reading something or listening to a speech and feeling no difficulty in understanding what was being said. The challenge comes when someone then asks you to say it in your own words. That is the difference between receptive and expressive reading skills.

There are two activities you can do to solve the read-aloud blues; encourage writing and creating meaningful reading experiences.

The first thing you can do instead of having your child read out loud, is to encourage him

or her to write or draw every day. This writing can be a letter or picture to family, copying from their reading book, copying a poem, their own writing, etc. Keep your children writing instead of reading out-loud.

Reading aloud for the new reader is a lot like being asked to tell something in your own words. Writing is going to allow the child the time to process the information and make for deeper and more meaningful understanding of what is being read. Writing is also a form of expressive language, but without the dramatic interpretation.

The second thing you can do is to create meaningful reading experiences for your child. You can do this by writing daily notes to your child. Also, help them memorize and recite poems. The young child from age three to six has a tremendous capacity to memorize spoken language. Choose some meaningful literature and encourage memorization. How much better to memorize "Now We Are Six" instead of some commercial jingle.

For the new reader create a set of "action" cards on 35 index cards. Action cards will help create deeper reading understanding by involving the whole person. Make a set of ten to twenty cards with one action per card, and place them in a small basket. At the beginning level, the actions will be just one word with words like jump, hop, sit, stand, skip, sing, smile, stop, run, walk.

Invite your child to take the basket of cards, read the activity silently, and then go and do it. You will know that she knows what she is reading when you see her jump, hop, and skip when following the action cards.

The next step would be to give three word actions like get a drink, giggle out loud, set the table, wash a glass, eat a cookie, fix a snack, sing a song, ask a question, make a bed, sweep the floor, draw a bug, play a game, get the cards.

Keep these action cards in a small basket in your kitchen and add to them every few days. Your child will ask you when he doesn't understand a word. You'll know he or she is reading when you see them doing the activity. Be sure to add some fun, yummy, or silly actions into the set of cards.

You can keep adding actions until they get quite complex, such as:

Go to the window. Rub your finger along the sill. If you think there is too much dust, please dust the windowsill with a paper towel. If you think that it is not dusty, please tell me that the windowsill is clean.

When you hear "Oh, Mom! Do I really have to dust the window?" you'll believe they truly are reading.

You'll have the confidence to know they are reading without enduring the read-aloud blues!

Maren Schmidt
www.kidstalk.com

I MET A DRAGON FACE TO FACE

I met a dragon face to face
the year when I was ten,
I took a trip to outer space,
I braved a pirate's den,
I wrestled with a wicked troll,
and fought a great white shark,
I trailed a rabbit down a hole,
I hunted for a snark.
I stowed aboard a submarine,
I opened magic doors,
I traveled in a time machine,
and searched for dinosaurs,
I climbed atop a giant's head,
I found a pot of gold,
I did all this in books I read
when I was ten years old.

Jack Prelutsky

The MFAH in particular



The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is among many great museums in Houston but remains the pre-eminent one, the oldest and largest. Several exhibits are currently on display and are well-worth a family trip out South Main St. One such is *Arts of Islamic Lands: Selections from The al-Sabah Collection, Kuwait*. It presents a spectrum of some 250 art objects from the 8th to 18th centuries. The exhibit is long-running – it began in 2015 and ends January 29, 2017.



Another showing is due to end soon – *Statements: African American Art from the Museum's Collection*. It opened in January and will end on April 24. The exhibit features works by pioneer black artists and follows through to contemporary artists – all in all, 1930 to the present.

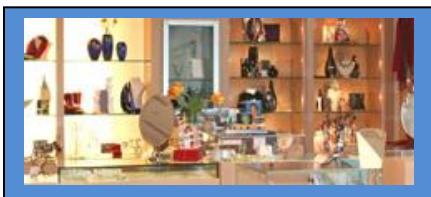


One exhibit you won't see every day in the week is *Sculpted in Steel: Art Deco Automobiles and Motorcycles, 1929-1940*, 14 cars and 3 cycles. It has recently opened and runs through May 30. The innovative, machine-inspired Art Deco style began in France in the early 20th century, but was interrupted by World War I. It re-emerged across Europe after the war, and flourished in the 1920s to 1930s in all areas of

design. The cars and motorcycles on view in *Sculpted in Steel* were crafted from the finest materials of the time.



New exhibit: *High Society: The Portraits of Franz X. Winterhalter* opens April 17, runs through August 14. The painter was the 19th century's most renowned portraitist of European aristocracy, capturing the elegance and opulence with unrivaled brilliance. This major survey features works drawn from public, private, and royal collections around the world.



The MFA Shop offers a curated selection of artful gifts, prints, jewelry, books, toys, and more. No need to pay Museum admission—it's always free. Check the MFAH website for open hours.

FEES. There is a general admission charge, which usually gives admission to most exhibits. For the car and cycle showing, there is an additional charge. On any Thursday, all day, there is no admission charge – it's free, courtesy of Shell Oil Company. For admission fees and details, see the museum website, www.mfah.org.

When your child is in the spotlight

Performing arts, athletic and other public programs are important events in your child's life. They are celebrations that give youngsters an opportunity show what they've learned and how they've grown.

Performing or playing in front of a group is never easy for children (or adults). Even self-confident, socially-oriented students can use a little help from you to ensure that their performances are a success.

When you arrive: Arriving too early or too late is very hard on children. Plan to arrive five or ten minutes before program, rehearsal or game time. Let children be on their own just as they are, during a regular school day. Assume that they know what to do, but do not expect them to verbalize it. They will show you.

During the performance or game: If one or more of the children becomes confused or forget to participate (which often happens), they won't even realize it if we don't call attention to it.

Leave all expectations at the door! Whatever happens will be just what is supposed to happen. Let yourself be surprised and give yourself permission to enjoy everything, just as it unfolds. Try to watch the group as a "whole," being especially aware that your eye contact with your own child will cause much self-consciousness and break their concentration on what they are doing.

Best ways to say "good job!" – When you talk to your child after the program, the best type of comment to make would be something like: "All of you did a great job." Types of comments you should **avoid** are: "Why didn't you _____???"

Maria Montessori said, "Never let a child risk failure until he has had a reasonable chance of success." Your family's reactions to the program or game will make the difference.

Reprinted from "Just for Parents" from the American Montessori Society, written by Sally Heard, Head of School, Great Falls Montessori, Montana.

What's all that stuff in those classrooms?

Mother Nature has plainly not entrusted the determination of our intellectual capacities to the blind fate of a gene or genes; she gave us parents, learning, language, culture, and education to program ourselves with.

. . . . Matt Ridley

The external environment must satiate, constructively, the needs of a child's internal development process because children are wired for adaptation. Based on her research and observations, Dr. Montessori wrote about the principle of adaptation. Adaptation encompasses family, culture, society, the world, the universe, and, in the cases of early childhood and adolescence, one's own body and self.

The goal of the Montessori classroom is to unleash the natural drives to adapt, learn, grow, and reach one's fullest potential (*Pedersen and Pedersen*). The environment of the child is prepared according to the needs of each three-year age group related to the sensitive periods.

In the critical early childhood years, children have a once-in-a-lifetime ability to take in their environment with what Dr. Montessori called the "absorbent mind." At this age, children need to explore and discover; the materials are designed to invite activity. The early childhood environment contains furniture and materials that are scaled to fit the physical dimensions of the child's body.

The classroom is usually divided into distinct areas, yet the subjects are not taught in isolation -- the curriculum is interdisciplinary and interactive. Practical life provides a bridge from the home to the school with child-size tools that really work. Young children refine gross motor control and hand-eye coordination, which leads to greater physical skill, perfection of movement, independence, and concentration. Sensorial materials aid the child in ordering and organizing by color, size, dimension, shape, form, sound, touch, taste, and smell, which provides a basis for the development of other skills, such as music, mathematics, or language.

The mathematics materials build on the child's natural ability to reason, calculate, estimate, and sense quantity. The children begin to work on a mathematical journey that will lead them from the concrete to abstraction through the manipulation of a variety of well-thought-out materials such as rods, spindles, cards, beads, cubes, and counters.

The Montessori classroom emphasizes spoken language as the foundation for all linguistic expression. Throughout the classroom precise vocabulary for activities is used and children are given classified nomenclatures to experience new vocabulary in science, geography, and social studies.

The materials for written language introduce the child to the alphabet letters and their sounds and encourage the child to begin composing words, sentences, and whole stories (David Kahn, *What is Montessori Preschool?*).

Like the early childhood classrooms, the Montessori elementary curriculum is an integrated, individualized, and academically challenging program that meets the changing developmental needs of the child. It balances the child's developing imagination and powers of abstraction with down-to-earth, concrete, sequenced, hands-on materials.

Mathematics is presented through three-dimensional, manipulative materials that reveal simultaneously arithmetic, geometric, and algebraic correlations.

Grammar materials use symbols and visual patterns to help the child discover parts of speech and analyze the structure, style, and logic of sentences. Phonics-based reading and spelling curricula create a knowledge of the English language that builds a solid base for the growth of fluent reading and comprehension skills that will be needed as reading materials become increasingly complex.

The numerous interdisciplinary materials for the study of botany, zoology, geography, and history give many opportunities for the elementary child to learn new vocabulary and practice writing skills. In-depth studies and projects encourage healthy social relationship building in the classroom setting and later on as the child begins to explore the world outside the classroom (David Kahn, *What is Montessori Elementary?*).

. . . . Elizabeth Stepankiw