

Elementary – October 5, 2018



This year, we are pleased to launch a new communication tool from school to home titled Weekly Note. Throughout the year, you will learn about exciting moments within the children's school days and how they relate to the Montessori approach. The notes may vary in length depending on the week! We hope that the information shared in each note will spark family conversations, inform parenting choices, and provide you with helpful resources.

At the beginning of each year, all the elementary classrooms begin by telling the Five Great Stories that open up the grand Cosmic Education curriculum that will ignite their passions and invite exploration across all subject areas. The elementary child wants to understand how the world works, and these stories are passed on orally, like ancient storytellers, revealing a piece of the puzzle, one Great Story at a time.

In the First Great Story, children hear about the universe and the creation of the earth. This led to a lot of science experiments and opens up the world of Geography, Geology, and History. Afterward, some of the First Year students were learning how to do their first scientific experiment, and the older students were diving deeper into the scientific process and procedures. Even though it is a story they hear at the beginning of every year, each time they listen to it, they make a deeper connection to the science behind the story. For example, they learn about three states of matter: solids, liquids and gases, and the laws they follow.

The Second Great Story introduces the first existence of life on earth. It is told in such a way that the children learn how the earth was preparing for the coming of human life. This leads to even further interdisciplinary studies of Botany and Zoology. The children usually will want to recreate parts of the story, and that is why children are seen up and down the hall, drawing massive timelines beginning with the first living cell to the gigantic dinosaurs and all the way to the existence of the human being, just like themselves! In this week's photo, the children are retelling the story of how long it took for the earth to prepare for the coming of humans. Initially, Maria Montessori put this black material on the back of her bicycle and rode through the town, telling the story as the material was unraveled. Back then, it was much longer, but now it is 30 meters long so the children can use it.

All the stories have not been told yet, and there are still three that will explore the human beings.

As the teachers reflected upon this week and the work inside their communities, a universal message seems to permeate all the classrooms, and that is Montessori's foundation of Grace and Courtesy. Throughout the environments, children are exploring what it means to be helpful. One message that the teachers are inviting the children to practice is, "I can help!" Another one is, "How can we help?" Many times over the course of the week, as adults stood at the entrance of the doorways of the classrooms, an eager child greeted the guest with a graceful, "May I help you?"

In response to the Great Stories, many things happened to connect the story to the world around them this week. Some children planted colorful Mums outside. Pink, lavender, yellow and red flowers will soon bloom out on the elementary patio. Children also took nature walks and collected leaves and seeds to examine, and classify. Children are also creating 3-D animal habitats, bringing their new knowledge about animals to life. To close up their week, they released butterflies this morning.

Alongside experimenting with volcanoes, the children wanted to know more about the five senses. They learned that when you eat a plant called the Miracle Berry, it will make everything you eat afterward taste sweet, even lemons!

In elementary, a new development occurs. It is called Big Work. When children receive a lesson, their imaginations start stretching, and the child wants to explore! An example of this was seen after some children received a math lesson on the categories units, tens and hundreds. They were so eager to expand beyond the original presentation of working up to one million of each category and had to go to the gym to tape the perimeter and size of ten million and one hundred million.

Some of the older students dove into research right away. Some students have begun a fundraiser project to save the Manatees. This requires a great deal of planning. This is a typical response of the Upper Elementary child who is becoming more concerned about the moral rights and wrongs about the things happening around them. Please be on the lookout for the Save the Manatees fundraising store arriving in December.

Also in Upper Elementary, the students are writing their first biographies in preparation for an exciting event called Mystery History. On November 2, the children will open up their museum of historical people who have inspired them, but no one knows who they are. It is the job of the adults to guess by the three clues provided by the children.

In a reflection of the week, it is both inspiring and beautiful to see science, biology, language, math, Grace, and Courtesy, geography, and history come alive in so many ways.

Lisbeth and the Elementary Team