Montessori stated that children have a natural tendency towards learning; that stages of learning exist for which there should be corresponding educational environments and appropriately trained teachers to “prepare the environment.” The child learns independently using the components of the environment: the teacher guides and observes the child when choosing learning activities. The teacher is the link between the child and the environment. The learning environment cultivates individualization, freedom of choice, concentration, independence, problem solving abilities, social interaction, interdisciplinary breadth and competency in basic skills. 

The Montessori Classroom

“*So here begins the new path, wherein it will not be the teacher who teaches the child, but the child who teaches the teacher.*”

Montessori

Elementary (The 6 to 12 years) The environment builds on the pre-primary experience, reflects a new stage of development and offers the following:

- An integration of the arts, sciences, geography, history and language that evokes the imagination and abstraction of the elementary child.
- The presentation of knowledge as a part of a large scale narrative which unfolds the origins of the earth, of life, of human communities (agricultural and urban), of empires and of modern history, always in the context of the interrelatedness of life. The presentation of the formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc., exposes the child to accurate, organized information which reflects the child’s intelligence and interests.
- The use of time lines, picture charts and other visual aids provides a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of zoology, anthropology, geography and geology.
- The math curriculum is presented with concrete materials which simultaneously reveal the arithmetic, geometric and algebraic concepts.
- Montessori-trained teachers are able to integrate the teaching of all subjects, not as isolated disciplines, but as a part of a whole intellectual tradition. The emphasis on open ended research and in-depth study uses primary and secondary sources (books) along with other materials. “Going out” entails the on-going use of community resources that extend beyond the four walls of the classroom.

This educational information was gathered from the www.montessoriconnections.com

Evacuation Drill—
Tuesday October 6th

Next Tuesday, the children and staff will conduct their first monthly evacuation drill.

The Department of Early Education and Care requires all schools to conduct drills once a month. You may want to mention to your child, on the way to school on Tuesday, that there will be a drill in the morning.

Let them know there will be a noise and that they are to follow their teachers directions. We will also prepare them for the drill during our Tuesday morning classroom meeting.

Information

- The first banking day is Thursday, October 8th.
- Friday, October 9th is a Noon Dismissal for all children. This is the first of two professional development days in the school year.
- Monday, October 12th School is closed in observance of the Columbus Day holiday.
- Please find attached the minutes from our 9/29 PTO meeting.
- School picture day is Tuesday, October 20th!
- The next PTO meeting is Tuesday, October 20th from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Child watch will be available.
**Miss Chris and Miss Holly’s class**

This week many children were presented lessons on the Sensorial materials. These activities help to refine a child's senses. Children from birth to age six are in their “sensitive period” for exploring the world through their senses. Maria Montessori encouraged us to provide children with many opportunities to organize the sensory impressions they’ve been receiving since birth. By allowing the child to work with activities that have different textures, colors, sizes, and geometric shapes, children will discover relationships and exclaim, “This bolt is a hexagon,” or “This cloth is rough.” Sensorial experiences also indirectly prepare children for future exploration of language, mathematics, geometry, art, and music.

We had our first music class with Joyce Maxner. At first, some children were comfortable just watching quietly but by the end, all the children were happily playing instruments and singing along. One child exclaimed at the end of the class "That was the best music class ever!"

**Miss Ty and Miss Rebecca’s class**

More and more lessons are coming into the classroom. The Practical Life area is bursting with sponging, polishing, and now…. rock washing!! These new Practical Life lessons are much more complicated and require attention to detail and follow through. The exercises work the memory, contribute to self-discipline, and help the children develop a love for detail. All this while educating the HAND, humankind's wonderful, unique asset! Many more practical life exercises are on the horizon… stay tuned!

Speaking of Practical Life, one of our favorites is Flower Arranging. On the shelf is a tray with a pitcher, a place for a vase (and a supply of these), and a pair of scissors. From a larger supply the child chooses a flower or two and some greenery if available, and carefully cuts the stem or stems to fit the vase. These arrangements are lovingly placed on tables or shelves (there are also doilies!) to decorate the class, and to bring the beauty of nature indoors. This activity needs the help of our parents! Please think about perusing your gardens for late-blooming perennials and greens, or even buying a bunch of flowers at the market! Your child will be happy to share these flowers with the class, and our lives will blossom as a result. Thank you in advance.

Remember that we, at the school, are in partnership with you, the parents, to assist these remarkable children in building the adult they will become. Together we assist these children to become unique individuals. Thinking in larger terms, we not only help one child at a time, we help all life on the planet. These children are our salvation. Pretty heavy stuff!!

**Miss Ty and Miss Chris’s Afternoon class**

On Thursday the older afternoon children had their first Spanish lesson with Miss Cristina. She introduced the names of colors, numbers and weather symbols. Some of our returning students seemed very excited and proud to be able to recall the names of colors and numbers that they had learned in the previous years.
Elementary News

This week’s weather has enhanced the elementary classroom science curriculum, with many opportunities to engage in the study of weather as it relates to the students experiences. In addition we studied typhoons and hurricanes. We have been watching the pattern and wind speed of the much anticipated Hurricane Joaquin. In addition we have explored how to locate and escape riptides. We are anxiously waiting to hear about Silas’s trip to Puerto Rico. The children are wondering if he experienced any bad weather caused by Joaquin. Silas will present information on Puerto Rico when he returns.

On Wednesday we all went to Lucy Vincent Beach to experience, first hand, how the landscape has been affected by the water and wind. The class will return in the spring to note changes in the landscape and discuss how changes may have occurred. There was a review of the parts of a river such as the bank, mouth, course, source, tributary, etc. Students experimented outside designing rivers by creating different courses, running into lakes and/or going over waterfalls. We watched short videos of Bryce Canyon, Monument Valley and Zion National Park.

The accumulation of this week’s research tied in nicely with our geography lessons on wind and water eroded land forms.

Joyce Maxner has written a play for the students to perform this winter. The play is about the Pioneers. The main characters are a brother and sister who discover artifacts, left by their great great grandfather, in their attic. In the play the children are transported back in time where they meet a family member on a wagon train in the 1850’s. The students are really excited to perform this humorous and educational play. The children have already been practicing slang and Southern accents. We will be reading Little House on the Prairie as a class. Today we began our research by watching the Disney movie The Apple Dumpling Gang. The children and I will take notes on the clothing, transportation, inventions and architecture of the 1800’s to help us understand the setting and relate to the characters in the play.

Our first Violin class is Monday at 1:00 p.m. with Miss Rebecca. The children will need their violins and books.

Late Day

The Late Day experience helps to foster a child’s independence with activities that promote joy in their own abilities and ability to help others. We observe both behaviors everyday while children run, climb, dig, pour, collect natural materials and develop new friendships. I introduced the children to a Dr. Seuss book that had been recommended to us. What Pet Should I Get? was discovered and printed recently, but written years ago by Tex Geisel. The story offers wonderful opportunities to think and discuss making choices as well as the value of family pets. Other books we read this week included the "Henry the Explorer" series, Those Shoes and Mike Mulligan and the Steam Shovel. Please keep an eye on our changing weather for suitable outdoor clothing. Weezie
PTO Meeting Minutes  
September 29, 2015

Present: Rachel Shea, Co-President, Nicole deBettencourt, Co-President, Holly Lawyer, Vice President, Erin Slossberg, Treasurer, Jennifer Lorusso, Secretary, Nevette Previd, Angie Francis, Debbie Jernegan, Weezie Welz, Phillip Clatworthy, Joanna Stanton, Rebecca Laird, Tyrene Johnston, Irene Wendt, Holly Brugueire, Julie Carvalho, Chris Rasmussen

The meeting began with introductions.

A Montessori Moment was presented by Irene Wendt. A lesson on equivalence presented with different materials. The lesson is typically given to 4th grade student. There is an identification of parts, statements are learned and written in their math book. Then the student will work with the lesson until they have worked with the materials, mastered the concepts and understand the language.

Jennifer Lorusso volunteered for the position of secretary. There was a MOTION by Rachel that Jennifer be secretary. Nicole, second the motion. There was unanimous agreement. Jennifer did say that she may not be able to make every meeting and was hoping to share the secretary position with another parent.

**Head of School Report  (Please find attached)**

Nevette asked about Banking Day. There was a clarification of the deposit process. The first banking day is the 10th and there are now 3 parent volunteers.

We are still waiting to receive the check from the Flatbread Company and eager to know how many pizzas were purchased that evening. We all felt that the benefit was well attended.

Chris, Ty and Irene presented their enrichment programs that begin this week. Island Grown Schools will begin in all classrooms, Spanish in the primary classrooms and French lessons in the elementary classroom. Music with Joyce began this week in the primary classroom and Theatre with Joyce in the Elementary classroom. At the end of October The Yard will begin their movement program in the primary classrooms. Next week the Elementary classroom will begin a Violin Program and Tennis lessons. Our hope is to begin the afternoon art program in Pam Benjamins studio in October and we are waiting to hear from the Cape Cod 5 Foundation on the grant submitted to support the program.

**Treasurer Report**

Erin reported that there is $20,600 in the account. $108 from the raffle and we are waiting for the check from the Flatbread Benefit Night.
Playground Subcommittee (Please find the attached report)

The playground subcommittee request funds to purchase a monkey bar climbing structure for the Elementary children. The cost is $2,495 and there will be some additional costs for shipping and installation. A MOTION was made by Rachel to approve the purchase, Nicole 2\textsuperscript{nd} the motion and all agreed to the purchase.

The playground subcommittee would like the PTO, as a group, to consider a fundraising goal for this year to not only cover the amazing enrichment programs and support scholarships but to purchase the Outlast Block Set (pictured below) from Community Play Things and a new climbing structure, which will replace the older wooden structure next to the playhouse.

![Durable, weatherproof playthings for your outdoor learning space.](image1)

![Durable, weatherproof playthings for your outdoor learning space.](image2)

The cost of the complete set is $6,600 with free shipping.

They are durable, nontoxic, and environmentally friendly.

They come with a standard 10 year warranty.

Outlast Blocks deliver all the benefits you associate with open-ended block play – math and science, language skills, and socialization. Amazing opportunities for heavy productive collaborative outside work and years of priceless fun!

Truckin’ MV

In collaboration with the MVRHS a date of Saturday, November 14\textsuperscript{th} has been set for Truckin’ MV. If you are interested in participating on the subcommittee, please contact Kim D’Arcy, Chair of Truckin’ MV at kimmydarcy@gmail.com. Kim will contact everyone with the first meeting date.

Open Discussion

Nevette suggested we begin thinking about the spring fundraiser. Debbie contacted the island preschools and found out their already dates for their spring fundraisers set for May 7 and 14 this year. Our hope is to be as respectful as possible of other programs and their event dates. The last 2 years Flying MV and Fly me to the Moon have occurred on the same day. There was discussion about having only one event.

Thank you to Nicole deBettencourt and Rachel Shea for providing snacks and coffee for the parents as well as snacks for the children.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 20\textsuperscript{th} from 6 p.m. -7 p.m. .

The meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erin Slossberg, Treasurer
Flatbread Pizza Benefit Night
The money raised from the Benefit night has not yet been sent by Flatbread. I spoke to their general manager and he said it is on its way from the corporate office. I hope to have a total at the next meeting. The evening itself was well attended by current and alumni families as well as faculty. Overall we felt that it was a successful evening and we are looking forward to knowing what we were able to raise in pizza sales.

Vineyard Haven Public Library Annual 5k Run/Walk and Fun Run for Kids
The Elementary children and teachers volunteered at and participated in the Annual 5k Run/Walk sponsored by the VH Public Library on Sunday, September 20th. There is a large curriculum component in the Montessori elementary years which includes community service. The elementary children and teachers collaborate with the VH Public Library on events and fundraising! When you visit the library you will find several books and puzzles that the elementary children have fundraised for and donated to the Library.

Inly School Visit
Irene and I traveled to Scituate, MA last Thursday. I went to meet with the Head of School, Donna Milani Luther. Donna has been the Head of School since 1996. Irene observed in the 2 upper elementary classrooms continuing the requirements of her Elementary II certification.

Sub-Committee Opportunities
If you are interested in joining one of VMS’s subcommittees, please let me know. There is a PTO Playground Subcommittee, Board of Trustees Building & Grounds Subcommittee and a Board of Trustees Marketing Subcommittee.

Back to School pictures will take place in October
Mary Shea of Mary Shea Photography will be conducting school pictures this year. Mary is an island photographer as well as Brendan Shea’s aunt. We are excited and honored to have her taking the photos. She has put together package options that you are welcome to choose from after you have seen you child’s photos. The date and package options will be sent home a week before the photo day.

Banking Program
Cassie Stanek, Silas’s mom and Emily Melnick, Amelia’s mom, have volunteered to be the parent bankers. We are looking forward to Thursday, October 10th when the program begins. If you have not yet signed your child to participate there is still time.

Grant
I applied to the Cape Cod 5 Foundation for a grant to support the after school art program at Pam Benjamin’s studio. I also applied to the Permanent Endowment of MV for a grant to support the Elementary students Montessori Model United Nations trip to New York in the spring.

Montessori Model United Nations
Irene will be participating in a Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN) in the fall. Irene, the students and parent chaperones will be heading to NYC to the MMUN Conference in the spring of 2016. The primary goal of the 2016 Montessori Model UN Conference for the students, called “delegates” is to learn cooperation and the art of compromise develop a connected network to support each other, learn about other cultures and about themselves, and produce young leaders with a can-do mentality.

Jeannine Fitzgerald
I have organized with Jeanine two parent VMS education evenings just for VMS families. The dates will be February 17th and May 26th. The topics have not yet been decided. She is frequently on the Vineyard, holding workshops and meeting with parents. As an author, Jeannine has published The Dance of Interaction and a national training program entitled Education with Insight. She is currently putting the finishing touches on her second and third books, Educating the Heart and Through the Eyes of a Child. Jeannine has appeared on public television in four states, and currently has air time in her home state of Massachusetts. Topic Opportunities: Parenting With Style, Different Children, Different Needs, Teaching Self-Regulation to Young Children, The Hand That Rocks the Cradle, Helping Children Cope: Putting Humpty Back Together Again!, The Truth About the Hard and Sensitive Topics, Beyond Bossing, Begging and Bribing, Children in the Shadow, Don’t Pop Your Cork, Freeing Children from Fear, Nurturing the Young, Raising a Happy Child, The Dance of Interaction, Calming the Storm, When Kids Don’t Play Nice, etc. You can visit www.thefitzgeraldinstitute.com/our-services/parent-professionaldevelopment/ to look at the information that goes with the topics. If you have any interest in one or more of these topics, please email me. I will be coordinating the 2 evenings after hearing from parents and what topics most interest them.
PTO Playground Subcommittee

Present: Kim D'Arcy, Phil Clatworthy, Jennifer Lorusso, Debbie Jernegan

Reviewed 2015-2016 accomplished goals

· Focused on creating more activity in the sand area. Additional sifting and digging products were purchased and added to the area. Organizational products were included to hold the equipment.

· Bulbs were strategically planted on the exterior of the fence, around the VMS sign located on Tashmoo Street and around the new Holly Tree.

· Sand in the sandbox and top soil for the entire playground was spread in the spring.

Reviewed what goals weren’t accomplished in 2015-2016

· The plan was to purchase monkey bars for the Elementary children.

· A willow tunnel structure was to be planted next to the double slide.

· A grant was written to purchase wooden outside blocks with a storage shed. The grant was not received and the blocks were not purchased.

Goals for this school year

· Purchase a climbing structure for the Elementary children.

· Purchase outside block set, including the shed to store the blocks, from Community Playthings. The cost is $6,600

· Purchase of a new climbing structure for the primary children.

· Install the willow tunnel and/or natural tunnels for the playground.

· Consider a rock climbing wall separate or as a part of the climbing structures above.

The playground committee will request funds from the purchase a stand-alone monkey bar system from Custom Playground Equipment. The cost is $2,495.

The playground committee would like the PTO to consider fundraising this year for a new climbing structure.
Why Montessori Education is Priceless

By Sunitha Pailoor, MEd

One of my favorite commercials, even though it is simple and sentimental, is the MasterCard ad that shows family time or human interactions and calls them priceless. To me, Montessori education is priceless in the same way. It is beautiful, comprehensive, and, in its most authentic form, a treasure of experiences that leads a child to absorb the wonder and joy of learning.

Montessori education is paced to meet the needs of the child. The teacher encourages the child to master a concept, though it might take a week or a month; the child indicates to the teacher when he is ready to move on to the next skill or concept. This individualized, self-paced form of education comes from understanding that each human learns in a unique way.

Montessori is a form of education that respects the child and her desire to learn. The child is not an empty vessel whose head needs to be filled by the all-knowing teacher. The Montessori teacher respects the child and engages him as a partner in learning. Students are encouraged to explore and discover for themselves. The teacher presents lessons using concrete materials, but the child discovers the rules. Recently, a student of mine had been using the stamp game to do addition, exchanging ten units for a ten stamp. After weeks of doing this, one day she came up to me and announced that she did not need the concrete materials to do this anymore since she had now figured out how to do addition using numerals. The pride and joy that she experienced and expressed at that moment was priceless.

Montessori is a holistic form of education. The physical, social, emotional, and spiritual growth of the child are valued as much as academic progress. A quality Montessori program creates an environment that encourages the development of all these areas. I've heard people say that it is a waste of time for teachers to be teaching art to students when they could be teaching reading or math. I disagree; art supports (among other considerations) concentration, fine motor skills, an eye for aesthetic quality, and stress reduction. A relaxed child learns better and is more receptive to new ideas. Tools that help children learn to manage stress will help them be healthier and happier adults.

Montessori education provides children experiences in learning how to learn. I recently spoke to a parent who was dismayed that her child was not using a textbook at school. I asked her why it upset her so much. Did her child know how to learn? Starting at the Early Childhood level, a Montessori child learns to ask the right questions to learn more about any topic he is studying or in which he is interested. For example, while researching biology at the Elementary level, the child asks how the animal meets its fundamental needs. Through this lens, the child can research any other life-form. In math, the child asks the question, What is the rule that I can discover with this operation? Will this rule be the same with all numbers? Once the Montessori child knows the right questions to ask, she needs only the guidance of the teacher and the support of the environment to affirm that she is on track. Learning how to learn is a lifelong skill far more powerful than regurgitating facts that may be forgotten after a test.

The greatest gift that a Montessori education gives to children is the joy of learning. A quality program is one where students come to school eager to learn, not because the teacher is going to lecture to them, but because in the environment there are many opportunities to learn and discover. In my class, students have a checklist to keep track of what they are learning each week, but there is no sense that learning is a chore after which they can go have fun. Instead, we celebrate learning by asking the question, What else can I learn or how else can I learn when I have finished my checklist? For one child, art might be her choice; for another, it may be more mathematics.

When you have a quality Montessori program, the child, the family, and the school will work as a cohesive unit, and this program is priceless!

SUNITHA PAILOUR, MEd, teaches at Malhby Elementary School in Snohomish, WA. She is AMS-credentialed (Elementary I–II). Contact her at spailoor@gmail.com.

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