“Help Me to Help Myself”: Independence and the Montessori Philosophy

by Jennifer Shields

Maria Montessori had an innovative perspective regarding education. She did not look at a set of skills or a body of knowledge. Instead she focused on the development of the whole person over the course of gaining maturity:

“Montessori saw education as a means whereby children might develop their personalities so as to eventually achieve a mature and independent adulthood.”

(Mario Montessori, Education for Human Development)

Isn’t that what each of us wants? For our child to become an adult who can make good decisions, who feels confident and knows herself? Who can both accept her reality and work to make the world a better place? The fundamental foundation for this independence is laid at the beginning of a child’s life.

The results are in and it was another successful evening!

Saturday night’s Big Night Out net approximately $16,350. This was the result of a fun band, The Somerville Orkestra which brought about 140 people to Lola’s Restaurant, an auction full of generous donations, sponsors that supported the cost of the evening and the collaborative efforts of hard working parents and teachers!

Fun Fridays will start again beginning May 13th through June 10th. Parents host the Fun Fridays by bringing snacks, crafts and/or games for the children. All children not enrolled in the late day program should be accompanied by a parent and welcome to stay. Please email Debbie if you are able to host one of these fun afternoons.
This week I was able to introduce the children to a couple of new lessons. First was weaving at the giant loom. The children were shown how to go over and under with the colorful strands. This will be a on-going, collaborative work where each child will be able to add to the loom. I am hoping to incorporate some natural materials including leaves, flowers and grasses into the weaving.

We are beginning a unit on insects and the children started off by matching different species of insects and butterflies. They are able to draw and label the insects and are learning about the life cycles of a butterfly, ladybug and house fly. We will be receiving some caterpillars in the mail soon so that we will be able to witness the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly.

Miss Emily took the children outside this week to measure the growth of our peas. She used unifix cubes to see how tall they have grown. This week the peas measured in at 8 cubes. The children are excited to follow the growth progress in cubes.
Elementary with Miss Irene and Miss

This week in the Elementary classroom we celebrated Matthew’s 11th birthday! The students are working with various levels of adding and subtracting fractions and just completed their study of Vincent Van Gogh’s artistry.

Some students are finishing The Sign of the Beaver time line project. The 5th grade students are working on Time Line projects about the Revolutionary War and the French and Indian War. They have begun new lesson learning Greek roots and new geometry lessons.

Today, we went on a field trip to Cedar Tree Neck for a tour, picnic and hike with Samantha Look, educational leader for the Vineyard Conservation.

Late Day Program with Miss Weezie and Miss Cristina

We have been singing a song at school called “I'm Growing”. The song incorporates the days of the week with “growing” a little each day. As we sing we stretch our bodies taller and taller and our voices get louder and louder until the children see and feel how high they have stretched by the end of the song.

The last time we sang this together, I looked around the circle and realized just how much our students truly have grown in all of the important developmental areas. Physically, they are taller, stronger, more agile and coordinated; cognitively, they are more focused and able to attend, and socially and emotionally, the children are able to speak up for themselves in a direct, appropriate manner. It is a joy to observe this growth and be a part of their lives.

The books we enjoyed this week included: Gone Fishing, Rabbit Food, First Peas to the Table, and Planting the Wild Garden.

“It is the child in man that is the source of his uniqueness and creativeness, and the playground is the optimal milieu for the unfolding of his capacities and talents” – Eric Hoffer