"If we are to teach real peace in this world... we shall have to begin with the children."
— Mahatma Gandhi

Calendar

**Monday, February 19th:** President's Day -- School is closed.

**Wednesday, February 21st:** Dine-to-Donate -- Pizza di Napoli.

**February 26th - March 2nd:** Winter Recess -- School is closed.

**Monday, March 5th:** School reopens.
A new lesson on the shelf is “Animals of the World”. This is a “big work”, as I call it, because it has many sections, many pieces, and it takes a long time of focused activity. Two children can work on it together. Each continent is taken from the puzzle map and placed on its own blue square. The children then identify four animals that come from that continent and place them on the square. Those who are beginning readers or even learning their sounds, place printed cards with the names on the animals…. All this culminates in a booklet of the animals and continents.

"The first aim of the prepared environment is, as far as it is possible, to render the growing child independent of the adult.” (Maria Montessori. The Secret of Childhood, 1966.)

When you enter our classroom, you will notice that the environment is well ordered and beautiful. From the youngest children to the oldest, they are taught to choose work on their own, to carry their own trays, and to wipe up their own spills. Tools and furniture are child-sized, so work can be completed with minimal frustration. Of course, the adults give assistance when necessary, but it is our greatest pleasure to observe a child being totally independent in a difficult and multi-stepped exercise. The prepared environment allows the child freedom to choose his or her own work and to complete that work at his/her own pace. The environment itself guides the child! It is also wonderful to watch an unfortunate spill……often there are several children who rush to help by picking up the many, many beads that are scattered across the floor!

I am sure you have heard excited talk about the visits from the Tisbury Police and the EMTs last week. This is a wonderful, informative series of Fridays that my class gets to participate in. Thank you to Miss Chris for arranging it!
Kindergarten is a special time in a child’s Montessori education. After two full years, the Montessori primary class is a familiar environment to these five year olds. They know the daily routines inside and out; their teachers know them well and can readily work with their strengths and encourage them to take on challenges. They are conscious of being the oldest students in the room, having lived through two years of classroom transitions, starting when they were three. It is during this third year that you (and they) will witness the “explosion of learning” that Maria Montessori observed more than 100 years ago:

- Repetition with the materials has led to perfection of skills
- They have developed the ability to concentrate for long periods of time
- They have practiced patience when working with materials that require them to follow a lengthy sequence and complete a cycle of challenging work.
- They have gained problem-solving skills from experiencing situations that allow them to resolve a situation independently.
- They have learned to make positive, independent choices.
- They understand the value of constructive, purposeful work.

The kindergarten year is a dynamic year, a year of integrating and making cognitive connections. Your child’s education will benefit greatly by staying in Montessori for kindergarten. The third capstone year is a year of extraordinary learning and a culmination of the first half of childhood.

The children worked with the wool that they had dyed previously by brushing and carding the wool. They used hand-held carders along with a table-top sized one to stretch and untangle the wool. We will be spinning it into yarn next week.

We would like to give a huge shout out to Jennifer Klein for creating our beautiful pencil holders. The children love using their individual holders to complete their work. Thank you!
Elementary I Classroom
- Miss Nora

This week, the Elementary I class worked on mastering math facts, spelling, writing, and problem solving in math and language. The students continue their work researching the animal kingdom and the study of flags and different nations. They worked on the parts of speech, prepositions, and adverbs. With Mary-Sage from Island Grown, they made delicious multigrain rolls. Since this January’s theme is grains, we thought that would be very appropriate. Our peas are growing and they are huge! Hopefully, we can harvest them soon.

We had our first presentation of Trouble with Trolls for Miss Chris’ class. It was very successful. We are having a show on Friday at 11:00 for the Upper Elementary class. If you are not able to make the 1:40 show, you are welcome to watch the morning show. Be careful to not be late or you may miss the play. It is very entertaining and short.
Students presented their Ancient Africa projects this week with enthusiasm! The first portion of the project was to create a two-dimensional poster board with information or a three-dimensional model. A week later, they were assigned a one-page typewritten essay on their topic. Here are the subjects that were chosen:

- The Karnak Temple Complex or Luxor Temple, which comprises a vast mix of decayed temples, chapels, pylons, an obelisk, and other buildings in Egypt.
- The shaduf, an ancient device used for lifting water that was invented to assist farmers near the Nile River. It is still in use in some parts of the world today.
- The three pyramids of Giza, which were built by three generations of kings in Egypt. (This was a sought-after subject.)
- The Kingdom of Kush, which was an ancient kingdom in Nubia located where three rivers meet: the Blue Nile, White Nile, and Atbara. This is now known as Sudan. The kingdom eventually took over Egypt in the 8th century BC.
- The Kintampo Complex - A group of people who lived in what is now known as Ghana. It was a civilization which started somewhere between 2500-1400 B.C. and a classic example of early forest dwellers in West Africa. Kintampo is significant because there is evidence of a drastic change in food production techniques due to the transition from nomadic hunter-gather lifestyles to life in stationary settlements.
- The many metals which were mined in Egypt were covered as well, along with the different types of Egyptian chariots and their uses.

This Friday, we were invited by the Elementary I students to attend a rehearsal of their play, *Trouble with Trolls*. Two years ago, some of my older students performed it for their parents, so we were very excited to see the performance and reminisce about earlier times. Nora’s students are stupendous performers! Last week, we had fun playing Jeopardy to review some of the body systems that we have been learning, along with our history topics.
Lastly, we had a fun visit from a VMS alumna who was well remembered by some of our students. He wanted to check out our classroom, so our exuberant hosts and hostesses all volunteered to show him around and include him in our activities for the day.

Middle School  
- Miss Ty

The Middle School, along with the Upper Elementary, have been working with island artist, Valentine Estabrook, as we get started with this year’s auction project. She introduced the classes to the concept of “reverse painting on glass”. This is an art form rooted in the Middle Ages that consists of applying paint to a piece of glass and then viewing the image by turning the glass over and looking through the glass at the image. We are using an antique twelve-pane window for our canvas. We started last week in her West Tisbury studio and continued this week in our classroom. It is an exciting process that will take many weeks.

In history, Matthew finished his Native American project with a wonderful report and diorama. He chose the Inuit people of the far North. He chose to make a diorama of one of their hunting shelters – what many of us call igloos. It is very realistic, complete with mountains! A quote from his paper: “Did you know that Eskimos actually object to being called Eskimos? They prefer the official term, Inuit, which means “the people”. The Inuit have gone through, and are still going through, many frustrating, unfair, and discriminatory treatments by the government of Canada.” --- Matthew Coggins

Science finds us starting a new unit on cell functions. We started with the cell membrane and are delving into the meaning of diffusion and osmosis by dissolving the shells of eggs and measuring their masses at different times in the experiment.

Late Day  
- Miss Weezie and Miss Cristina

The highlight of our Late Day Program this week was the joy of new fallen snow on Tuesday.
Children designed make-shift sleds or simply used their bodies to go zipping down the hill on our playground. What a treat to see their ruddy faces and hear their squeals of delight enjoying the simple pleasures of winter.

We also had a puppet show this week. I often borrow the finger puppet kits from the Edgartown Library. Following my presentation, I encourage the students to present their own versions. This week, we chose *The Three Little Pigs*. Puppetry enhances creativity and fosters skill development in many areas.

Please take note of our bulletin board at school for some wonderful upcoming library events, including Peter Rabbit's visit to each of the libraries this Saturday.

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**Recommended Reading**

"There's No Such Thing as the Real World" by Peter Piche in MontessoriParent

Read article here.

**Book Corner for Parents**

"Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14" by Chip Wood

"The Six Stages of Parenthood" by Ellen Galinsky

**Book Corner for Children**

"What Do You Do With An Idea?" by Kobi Yamada