



# Ladybugs

Hello dear families!

**So many new things** for us all to experience in the three short months since I began ... a classroom full of great little beings ever eager to do more (our class has grown by six children); spring conferences where we became better acquainted; the Montessori math curriculum education evening sharing the huge potential of the work in the classroom, especially in the Kindergarten year; the child-led classroom Open House; the Ladybug portrait pillow created by the children, and earning lots for the school as we celebrated together at the annual school auction; we had a surprising number of snow days; and *now* ... we are preparing to celebrate the parents that “made this all possible” with a Mother’s Day Tea (and soon to follow with a Donuts with Dad event). What a lovely, lively place to be! I feel so lucky in so many ways.

**Our Mother’s Day Brunch and Tea** will be celebrated by the Ladybugs and Miss Nina’s Butterflies this Friday, May 10<sup>th</sup> from 9-10 am, in a room at the church next door. The children will help to prepare the brunch this week. ***All Ladybug moms and children are invited***, even if Friday is not your child’s day to attend. An RSVP will be appreciated.

**Your volunteer hours help to make our CMS community thrive.** Many have given their time, and others have chosen to donate desired items for the classroom. Hazel’s dad is going to build a ‘washing dishes table’ for our room (when I get him the plans). Others have done the classroom laundry, or brought in flowers for the children to arrange in small vases, or helped serve hot lunch on Thursdays. Bowen’s family recently donated a much appreciated larger habitat, an aquarium, for Tesla our fish. May 4<sup>th</sup>, and once again on May 18<sup>th</sup>, there will be a gathering of parents helping with school landscaping projects. I would love a library helper to find reading, picture and research books at the town library. I will reprint the list of ideas handed out to parents in the fall. The longer I am here, the more things I will have for parents to help with. I also have a list of classroom items we dream of having, if anyone is interested in donating in this way. The parent commitment is equivalent to two hours per month, worth \$10 per hour. Be sure to let us know so we can record

them. The children, Brandi and I send a BIG HEARTFELT THANK YOU for your time and generosity.

As I learn the new format of our school newsletter--with the help of everyone here at CMS, especially Brandi's (often bird's-eye-view) digital photos—I appreciate your patience. Please take a peek here at a few moments of the children at 'work' in our classroom. To a Montessorian, the classroom is known as 'the prepared environment' It is the place where the guide spends her time and energy when the children are not present, ever trying to be ready for what a child may need next as they build upon what they know.

**Our days ?** Typically, we gather for a few minutes in the morning, often sing a few songs, perhaps count or talk about the calendar or delight in our butterflies about to emerge, and then choose the work we'd like to begin with. The primary areas of the classroom are Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Mathematics, Geography, Music, Art and Science. Once I have introduced any particular material (a lesson or presentation), the children then have the freedom to choose the work, stay with it for as long as they wish and then return it to its place on the shelf.

There is some guidance and support along the way, but for the most part, the children work independently. Sometimes Brandi or I will gather a small group to play 'bring me' with the Sandpaper Letters (asking for them by their sound, not name) or perhaps to read a story or learn the names of things by classification (for example, things that have wheels, or animals you might see at the zoo). The children prepare their own snack at this time. Then, around 11, with the gentle ringing of a small bell, we put our work away, tidy and then prepare the room for lunch. We gather to tell true stories, sing many, many songs, perhaps have a presentation by a child showing the big work they have so joyfully completed, and then say good-bye to those staying just in the morning. That is a big day for the youngest among us! The other children go to recess and then return to eat lunch together in small intimate groups of four.

Following fresh air play and lunch, the children under five leave to rest, returning bright eyed and bushy tailed at 2:00. While they are gone, the five year olds now have a special time together to focus on big ideas and bigger projects. We often read, sometimes silently to ourselves, sometimes guided by the teacher for support, and at other times I read aloud. (I recently finished reading Charlotte's Web.) Exploring one avenue for research support recently, we recently learned how to make a diorama from a shoe box following an interest sparked by an earthquake drill. We discussed tsunamis, and the eruption Mt. St. Helens. Together we created a volcano with a fallen forest, rocks and fleeing animals. Most often the children take on challenging work. Examples include practicing writing cursive letters, creating a map of the United States and learning the state names, or learning to understand subtraction or multiplication through a number of activities. They greatly enjoy being the older children in pursuit of special interests, and show ever more understanding and compassion for others younger. They are quite social as well!

Here are a few pictures . . .



Jameson and Jaxon, close friends and an inspiration to one another. See that twinkle ?



Hazel is pin-pricking the outline of North America for a book she is making about the continents of the world.



Counting the number rods and placing the numerals with the quantity is placing the concrete experience and the abstract together, as Camden is so skillfully doing. This is the beginning of great things to come!

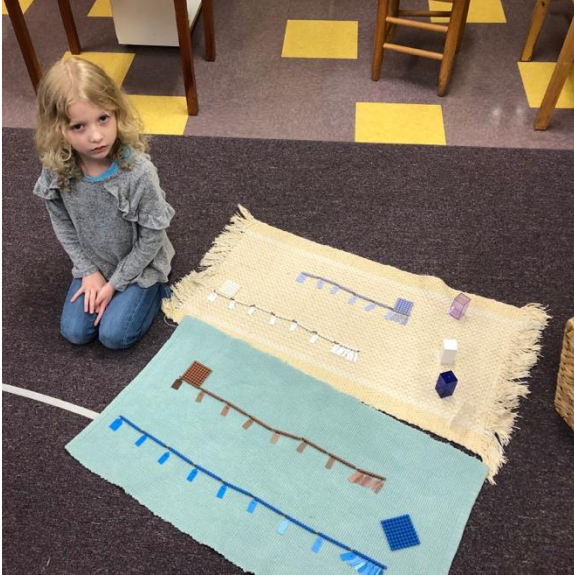


'Walking on the line', listening and controlling our movement also includes rhythm.

There's more...

keep looking...





Amelia mastered counting to 100 on the short bead chains, placing the labels, and then, built upon her understanding of the teens. She is learning many things very quickly these days!



Our newest friend, Archer, enjoying the ever popular geo-shape blocks which foster so many creative endeavors.



Sarah reads quite fluently. The children often ask her to read to them, which she happily does, that is if she's not studying the names of the countries in South America or writing and painting her stories.



Nadine has spent many days returning to the cutting presentation, ever repeating and perfecting her skills.

And more....



Richy has begun a number roll, writing to at least 100. Some children choose to write beyond 1000. ("To infinity, and beyond . . .")



Paige easily works with the stamp game as she adds 4 digit numbers, carries and reads the equation aloud. Paige often chooses big work, which Dr. Montessori noticed is the interest of the older child. The elementary age will be the time when they do their biggest work. The older children are becoming aware of how far they have come, the choices and possibilities of where they can go, and the pleasure of building upon their abilities quite independently. Honestly, it's *quite fun* to be around them.



Preparing food, slicing bananas or apples, brings many children joy. They often serve others. Lillian thinks about all the steps to remember: to bring what she needs, do the work and put it away on the shelf for another child to do.



The activities found in the Practical Life area are attractive for they offer such *purposeful* work. Ivy is washing the vases from our flower arranging work, happily making our environment lovely to be in.

And more...

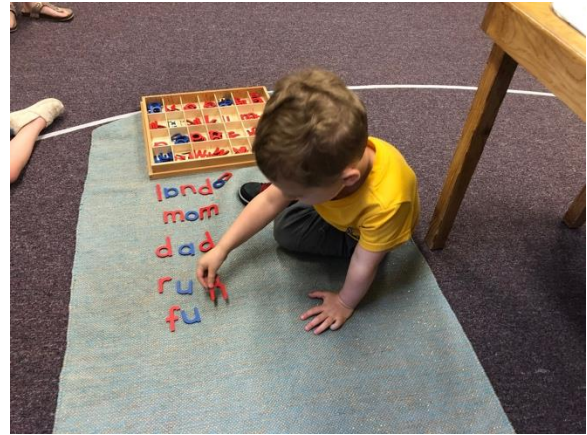




Bowen has set a table place setting. A spoon and fork, glass and plate are familiar, very real things and part of every day life. This work calls to a child's desire to do for them self.



Hazel turned 4 on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Holding the globe of the Earth, she walked around the Sun, (represented in the center of our ellipse by a small candle) four times, each representing a year of her life. This tradition is how many Montessori classrooms celebrate a birthday.



We learn the letter sounds and practice their shape, sound and appearance using the lower case sandpaper letters. The child can then *build* words, listening and analyzing the individual sounds, using the Movable Alphabet. Landon is quite good at this! Reading will come a bit later.

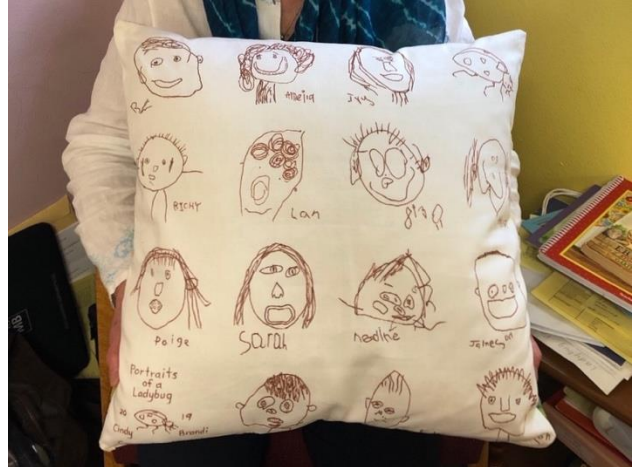


Reid is exploring what objects a magnet is attracted to. This expands to exploring magnetic attraction to things found around the classroom.

And more...



Ethan is tracing Sand Paper Letters, finding the one Brandi named (by sound) in a Bring Me game he is playing with Reid and Hazel. English is Ethan's second language and he is learning quickly, always eager to share his thoughts aloud.



Here is a close-up of our beautiful portrait pillow that we created for the CMS Auction. Reid's family brought it home!



There is so much excitement and curiosity as our butterflies emerge from their chrysalis. We watched it happen!



Here we are!

And the grand finale...





And here, the youngest of our children, Payton, works at building the Pink Tower. She takes it apart, modifies and then rebuilds it, trying to get it just so, guided by her sensibilities (sense abilities...).

The Pink Tower is work based directly on the earliest observations of Maria Montessori, following the child and noting their interests—not unlike so long ago.



The pure joy of work!

Lucky me!!

