

# MEHER MONTESSORI SCHOOL

## DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

### Meher Montessori School is the Oldest AMI Accredited Montessori School in Southern California!

By Director Adela Muñoz

As Meher Montessori School begins to prepare for our 50th year anniversary in 2022, there are so many wonderful memories to think back and reflect on. I believe that some of the keys to our longevity are the consistent ownership and dedication of Founder and Executive Director John Page, our staying true to Dr. Montessori's method by continuous AMI accreditation and our long-term dedicated staff.

One of these staff members is Cynthia Martinez. Cynthia began her work at Meher in 1984 and has been a constant face and presence at our school for so many years. Her dedication and kindness to the children and her impeccable work ethic were such an inspiration to me when I began my career at Meher in the mid 90s. She is one of the reasons for the success of our school, so it is with sadness but also immense gratitude that I announce that Cynthia is retiring. December is her final month working at Meher and although we will miss her daily presence here, she will forever be a part of the Meher family and we will always keep in touch. Thank you Mrs. Martinez for all your hard work, dedication and love to the many Meher children's lives you have touched through all of your years here. Meher will not be the same without you but we will continue the quality work that you have inspired in so many of us.

I would like to thank everyone that donated to our annual toy drive and food drive. Although our community is much smaller right now, through your generosity we were still able to take a good amount of toys and food to the Boys and Girls Club in Monterey Park and to the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank in Montebello. The Elementary students also made a beautiful large Christmas card for the fire fighters next door. They took the card along with a tray of cookies to the fire station and fire fighter Paul was so kind and gracious to the children. He thanked them and the children took a picture with him.

I wish all of our Meher families a safe and joyous holiday season. Please be mindful of the Covid guidelines that we are being asked to follow so that we may have a safe and healthy return in January.

Peace and love to you all and a very happy new year.



**Friday,  
December  
24th**

**SCHOOL CLOSSES  
AT 12:00**

**December 27-  
January 7**

**WINTER BREAK**

**Monday,  
January  
17th**

**MLK HOLIDAY**

# Mrs. Rivera's Class

Hello everyone! Malicayang Pasko at Maligayang Bagong Taon (Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year).

Our classroom is ready for this festive month. The children have been busy with all of the arts and crafts and have decorated our classroom walls with their beautiful work. Their Christmas punching work will decorate their holiday bag. These holiday activities are some of the fun things that are added to the classroom projects during this time of year. The children are looking forward to the class holiday party and gift exchange.

The students are working hard and with great effort every day, all while progressing at their own pace. Older children are busy with reading cards of mammals, reptiles and clothing to name a few. They practice their cursive writing by writing the words on the cards onto lined paper. They are very interested in their word study and function of words. These activities help the children work with words in different groupings, help to broaden the child's understanding in reading, increase vocabulary and help spark curiosity of language. There is some preliminary work of phonetic association, sound puzzle words and phonograms. The younger children are beginning to write cursive letters and are very focused on the practical life and sensorial work. They are also beautifully developing their grace and courtesy skills that are important in our Montessori community.

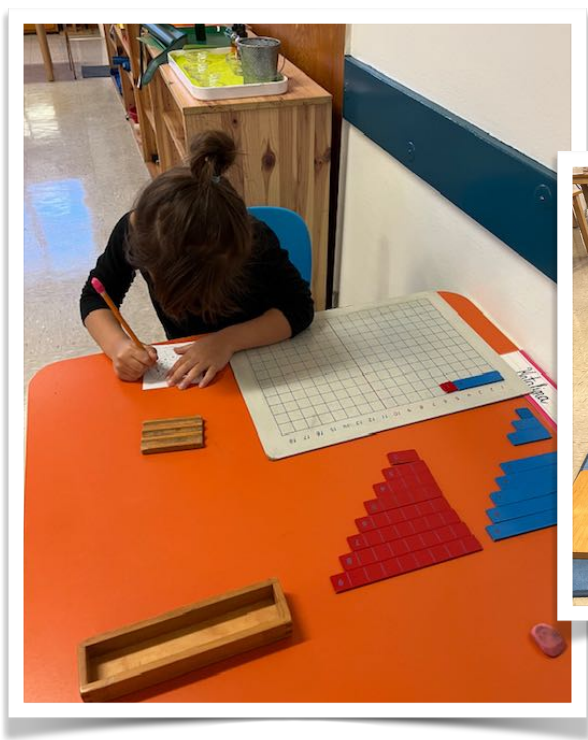
I would like to thank our dear parents for their continued support, understanding and love of our school, their

generosity and always being partners with us in their child's education.

Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. Also, a heartfelt thank you to my passionate assistants, Ms. Mills, Ms. Martinez and Ms. Ramirez. Ladies, without your constant follow through and love for the children in our class, they would not reach the levels of personal and academic growth that they do.

Have a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy prosperous new year to you all. God bless.

With love and gratitude,  
Mrs. Rivera



# Ms. Lopez' Class

Hello Parents!

We made it to the end of the year!! As I reflect on this year and everything the children have learned and done, I'm so excited for what the New Year has to bring. One of the favorite activities we have for the children is in our practical life area; caring for plants. Not only do the children learn about different plants we get throughout the year (depending on the season), but it's also an excellent way for children to care and be responsible for something beyond themselves. Throughout the year we talk about plants and how they provide oxygen for us. The children know the importance of oxygen; and they see the importance of our plants. They know that when we have clean and healthy plants, we get clean and fresh oxygen. It's beautiful to see the children being so gentle with the plants and sometimes even thanking them for the oxygen they provide.

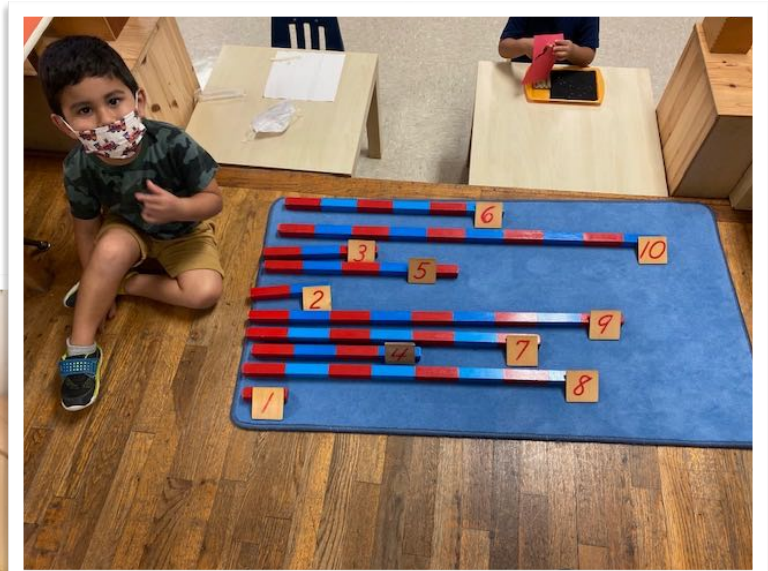
The children dust and sponge the leaves and mist and water our plants (in that order) when they choose this

activity. They follow a logical sequence of steps to provide optimal care for the plant. A logical sequence of steps emphasizes what comes first, next, and last. Attaining this skill later transfers to the academic side of the classroom, where they do multi-step activities.

This month we celebrated Zayn's birthday. Happy Birthday, Zayn.

I hope you all have a joyful and restful Holiday season and Happy New Year. See you in 2022.

Ms. López



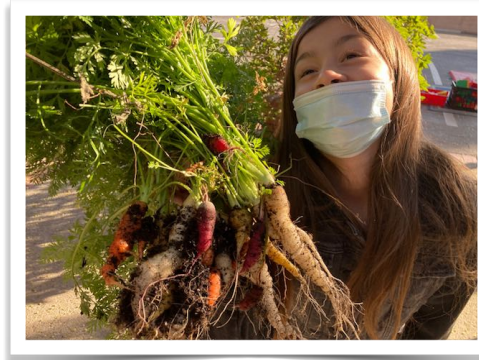
# Mr. Mindes' Class

Happy Holidays Meher Families! December always feels like a month with a lot of movement: holiday activities, students leaving for vacation or returning, and the transition to next year, the sun having travelled to its furthest southern point (the Tropic of Capricorn), and reversing course, northward, bringing the cycle of the seasons!

Like the cycle of the seasons, rocks have their own cycle: forming, dissolving and reforming! The students' intense interest in rocks, identifying them, collecting them, and trading them has led to lessons on the rock cycle, the difference between rocks and minerals, the structure of crystals, atoms, etc.. It was pretty common this month for a student to come up to me with a rock in hand and say, "Mr. Mindes look at this pyrite rock" or "this beautiful rose quartz!" At the Lower Elementary, science lessons are meant to leave the students with impressions, seeds, if you will, to grow when the conditions (student interest) are ripe.

Finally, during parent/teacher conferences, a number of parents were excited at the prospect of book reports and presentations, which we will begin after the break. Reading a book certainly offers an alternative to electronics! And a trip to a bookstore that has a section for children Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena comes to mind, with its rows of children's books (upstairs) is as tantalizing as any computer game or app!

Wishing all a peaceful holiday!  
Len Mindes



## Altadena News

Meher Montessori will close at noon on December 24th for the start of winter break. We will reopen on Monday, January 10th. The Meher staff wishes all families a happy, safe, and restful winter break.

## Mrs. Wildhaber's Class

As the younger children have adapted to the daily flow of our classroom, they have become more active and engaged with their lessons. It is very exciting to see a look of focused determination on their faces as they purposefully walk over to the Practical Life shelf to pick an activity to start their day.

The thing that has brought me the most joy is watching the young classmates play the "Bring Me" game...with each other!! The "Bring Me" game is when a student sets up a material that requires language (think an assortment of picture cards with everyday household objects), and another person (usually staff) asks the student to "bring me" one of the objects by name.

Movement, language development, and memory are all points of interest when playing this game. Apparently, doing this activity with the staff is no longer enough. They have taken it upon themselves to play it with each other! Listening to two-year-olds ask each other if they want to play the "Bring Me" game, and then figure out who is setting up the materials and who is asking for the objects, is very entertaining.

Since September, the graduates have been gradually increasing their workload. This month has brought their biggest challenge yet. They must now log every activity they take out. While this has been an adjustment, they have all been doing very well. Many of the higher activities in the classroom have been

labeled to promote proper spelling whenever possible. The goal is for them to think about their classroom choices, not to frustrate them with constantly trying to sound things out. Logging their activities will also help me when we do weekly check-ins to see if they are avoiding an area or activity or are highly interested in a specific area.

Until 2022,  
Mrs. Wildhaber



# Ms. Tinajero's Class

“What the hand does, the mind remembers”. Dr. Montessori designed materials so that children would be able to manipulate and discover from the experience of interaction. When children are introduced to the materials, the teacher shows the child how to manipulate the materials with slow and precise hand movements. This allows the child to observe and take in all the hand movements the teacher is showing her, we call them lessons. For example, one of the first lessons a child is shown is squeezing a sponge. In this lesson the teacher sets up two bowls side by side. The teacher then fills the left bowl with water, sets the sponge on the water, and patiently waits for it to soak up water. She picks up the sponge and lets the excess water fall out of the sponge into the bowl. When the water is done falling out, she transfers the sponge to the right bowl and squeezes the sponge dry, emphasizing how she grasps the sponge. She repeats these steps until the water is completely in the right bowl. She then switches the bowls and invites the child to do the same steps. All the hand movements are an indirect preparation to build hand strength and an indirect

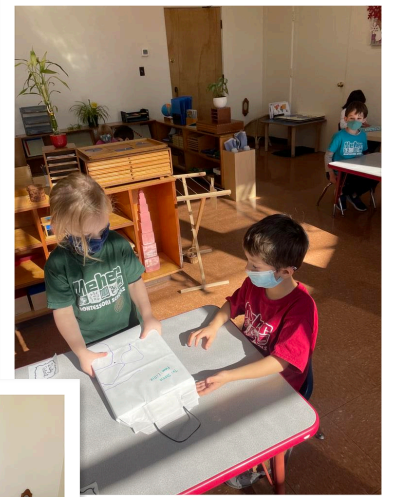
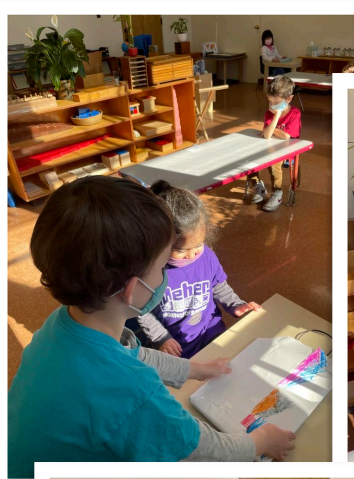
preparation for writing.

Once a child is well acquainted with most of the practical life area and has an idea of sequence, the child is able to do more difficult work like washing a table. Lessons like washing a table can teach the child multiple things, like how to care for their environment, learning how to do things in order, and also preparing the hand muscles for similar movements in writing.

The Montessori approach has been alive for more than 100 years and is still proving that children benefit from learning through their hands.

The children had a lot of fun exchanging their holiday books/puzzle gifts in the classroom. They also had a lot of fun decorating holiday crafts. Wishing you all safe and happy holidays.

Until next year,  
Ms. Tinajero



# “HELP ME TO DO IT MYSELF”

## THE CRY OF THE YOUNG CHILD

On the primary level, 2½ to 6 years of age, the children so much want to do things for themselves. This is a cardinal predominant urge of all young children.

Very often when young primary level children start school with us, they have been waited on hand and foot, all the way from infancy. Sometimes it's not due solely to an over-abundance of affection from the parents. Rather it may be more expedient for the parents to get the child dressed and rushed off in a hurry rather than wait for the child to dress him or her self.

Often a misbehaving child is a child who wants to do things for himself but his parents or grandparents are doing those things for him instead. Usually parents are unaware that children will happily do those things for themselves if shown how.

Many children are used to having their parents or grandparents:

- Hang up their sweater or coat for them
- Dress them
- Fill up a cup with water and hand it to them when they are thirsty
- Put away their dirty dishes for them
- Make their beds for them
- Put away clean clothes for them
- Put food in their lunchbox for them and clean the lunchbox once it gets home

These and a dozen other examples, even when done with the best of intentions, rob the child of much needed development. In our classrooms we teach the children how to do things for themselves, and then as they master these things they are so proud of themselves and like to show other younger children how to do things that empower them.

A classroom example is each child learns how to set up their own lunch and clean up after themselves. What a change there is when at the beginning we had a little child who, when it was time to eat lunch, waited for an adult to come over and set up their food for them! They would sit helplessly waiting for the “magic hands” to make an appearance and make the food appear in front of them! Some children are even used to having their parents feed them - as though they were still infants.

When we have new young children beginning, we ask which of the older children would like to help the new ones learn to set up their lunch. There is usually competition as to who will show the new child how to do it! The new child is invited to the table of a couple of older children and shown how to do things. And gradually over a week or two the new child takes great pleasure in setting up her lunch herself, carefully eating it, and then putting away all of the uneaten food into the lunchbox (so mom and dad can see what is and is not eaten) and then cleaning up the table. In fact, after a while

the child would be furious if anyone tried to do these things for them as they had learned to do it themselves!

One thing that parents often fail to notice is that children take a great deal of pride in their accomplishments when they learn to do things for themselves.

Another example in the Montessori classroom is the set of Dressing Frames. There are half a dozen or so of these Dressing Frames in the classroom, each of which is designed to teach the child a particular skill in dressing themselves. There is a dressing frame for learning to button, another for learning to snap, lace up a shoe, tie a bow, zip, and other necessary skills for independent dressing. When the children learn these things and parents starts to fuss over them and want to expeditiously zip up their jacket or button

their sweater, it is always fun to see the child say no in a very loud voice and try and do it themselves to show their parents that they can do it.

**Everything in the Montessori classroom works in one way or another towards self-empowerment.**



Everything in the Montessori classroom works in one way or another towards self-empowerment. And of course, we are not only interested in the children learning to independently manipulate their environment, we also want them to be independent thinkers. We want to develop children whose thinking process, the ability to analyze, and make decisions is not be supplanted by other people. Society does not need more “group thinking” people who go along just because others do. We need more people who think for themselves, who make bold independent decisions and reap the plusses and minuses of those independent decisions.

At home parents can:

- Have a low dowel rod with hangers in a closet so the child can hang up her own sweater or jacket
- Have a stool in the kitchen or bathroom so the child can get herself a glass of water
- Have the materials for a place setting at a level easily accessible to the child so she can set up her place at the table
- Have some safe cleaning materials accessible to the child so she can clean up her area after eating
- Buy clothing that is easy to put on and off and doesn't require too much fine motor control



Thank You to all the Meher families that donated to our Toy Drive for the Boys and Girls Club and to our Food Drive for the Los Angeles Regional Food Bank. The spirit of giving is alive and well at Meher.