

MEHER MONTESSORI SCHOOL

JANUARY/FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

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

By Director Adela Muñoz

Winter is coming to an end. Soon we will have more hours of sunlight to spend outside and enjoy more outdoor activities. I always look forward to the change this time of year. This is also a very busy time of the school year. We had several holidays in January and February, special celebrations, a special presentation, preparation for the next school year with partnership projects and re-enrollment and summer school enrollment.

Preparing for the upcoming school year is crucial to the ongoing success of our Montessori program. Re-enrollment secures your child's place in our schools and allows us to plan and know early how many spots will be available for new incoming children. We have already received new applications for both our primary and elementary classes for summer and next school year. It is of the utmost importance that you return your child's re-enrollment form and deposit by the due date. After that date we will begin to fill any openings with already received applications which will then let us know how many new children we can accept at our Public Open House in April. We hope that all of our current students continue at Meher for the 2024-2025 school year. You are all part of what makes this such a special place.

At our Monterey Park location, we have children that will be graduating from the primary classes in June into the elementary class in summer and fall. They have been spending part of each morning for the last few weeks in the elementary class working on special projects with the students of that class. This is a very special tradition at Meher that gives the graduates a chance to experience the elementary classroom. It is an exciting and challenging event that helps bridge the primary experience into the elementary one. During the time of the projects, the primary child blossoms into even more confident and joyful learners. The culmination of this hard work is a breakfast in the elementary classroom where those students and the primary graduates share their projects with their parents. It is so beautiful to see the excitement on the children's faces when they show their parents their hard work.

It's that time of year for our Read-a-Thon Fundraiser. This has been a very successful event for our Schools. The classrooms have benefited with upgrades in furniture and replacing lovingly used Montessori material. The children have also enjoyed special presentations. This year, along with more classroom upgrades and material replacement, we would like to install a new filtered-water bottle refilling station. Thank you in advance for your support and for encouraging your children to read, read, read!

**Friday,
March 8**

Re-Enrollment Due

**Friday,
March 29**

**Summer School
Sign-ups Due**

April 1-5

Spring Break

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Mrs. Rivera's Class

Hello dear parents, A happy and prosperous New Year to all. The year is flying by fast, and has been called the year of the "Dragon." The words 'dragon year' predict a prosperous year, and bring evolution, improvement and abundance. What a great and wonderful year!

Coming back to school after our winter break was like the first day of school for some of the younger children but they quickly settled and got back into their work. Montessori classrooms are prepared environments that are consistent and orderly which promotes what Montessori called normalization. The normalization of the children depends to a large extent on their security of knowing what to expect. When children know the plan, they feel secure and are subsequently free to concentrate. If we provide these predictable patterns for the children, then they become more self-confident and inner-directed, leading to normalization.

The children appear to have stretched over our winter break. We welcomed to our class three new smart, friendly and wonderful children. Ezra and Alexander are both 4 years old and Evelyn is 2 years old.

The children are always busy in class, learning and practicing new skills at their own pace. Every day they improve and better understand the lessons taught to them. What makes me so happy is that majority of my children come to school; rain or shine! There'll only be max 2-3 children absent on some days. Always a full house, I love and appreciate it so much!

Our graduating children busied themselves every day with lessons they have

internalized, understood and repeatedly worked on in class. They know their phonics, their sounds and appearance, and associate them with phonogram words. Every day the older children in our class are writing cursive words on their line paper. They write ideas that come into to them into their journal notebooks. They are focused on language and math areas the most, and in the afternoon unfinished work is completed, plus new lessons reviewed. Their favorite work at the moment is functions of words, and multiplying and currency for math. Reading a story to younger children is a regular practice for older children, thus establishing a love for reading, expressing ideas, and boosting their confidence. The younger children in return develop trust, respect and love for the older children.

The younger children are becoming more patient and realize that the lessons given them are the ones they have to work more. They learn that materials are not toys while they focus on the practical life, sensorial and a few lessons in the language area. Most of them are now writing numbers on the grid papers from 1-20 or 1-100. Phonics sounds have expanded and most of them are able to write their names in cursive too!

We have our January birthday celebrants: Esther turned 4 years old, Anna and Landon – 6 years old, Eli- 3 years old and Sofia- 5 years





our class: Remmi, Sebastian, Evan and Luna. They're settling in really well, and we've been giving them some new Practical Life lessons to help them become more focused and independent learners.

In January, we had several birthdays: Louise, Zachary, and James. Happy birthday to them!

February was an eventful month. We had so much fun with the children when High Tech High Touch came to give a bubble science presentation. They taught us the science behind bubbles, and we got the chance to make them ourselves! The highlight was getting to see bubbles made with dry ice.

We also celebrated the Lunar New Year, the year of the Dragon! The little ones were thrilled to learn about this special occasion, and we had a blast reading lots of books about it. To make things even more fun, we had a couple of parents come in to share their traditions, read more books, and do arts and crafts with the children. For our lunch, we had a fantastic spread thanks to all the amazing contributions from parents. The kids couldn't get enough of it and enjoyed every bite. Overall, it was a fantastic time, and we're grateful to have



old. Happy birthday to you all and thank you for celebrating your birthdays with us!

Thank you so much to assistant teachers Ms. Guzman and Ms. Arida for their loving care of the children. They are so helpful after class especially in arranging and putting the materials in order. A big thank you too to Ms. Tinajero for her continued teaching of grace and courtesy lessons to all our children.. Her lively and meaningful circle times are always loved and anticipated by the children! To all our dearest parents; thank you too from the bottom of our hearts for your continued trust, support of both our class and the school as a whole and most of all your unceasing generosity! God bless you always.

"The aim of education should not be to teach how to use human energies to improve the environment, for we are finally beginning to realize that the cornerstone of education is the development of the human personality, and that in this regard education is of immediate importance for the salvation of mankind."

Maria Montessori

Till next month...love and peace.

Mrs. Rivera

Ms. Lopez' Class

Hello everyone!

I've got some exciting updates to share with you about what's been happening lately in our classroom .

We've welcomed some wonderful new students to



such a wonderful community that makes celebrations like this possible.

Our class recently got a praying mantis egg and some caterpillars. We get to watch them grow and transform right before our eyes! The praying mantis egg takes a little while to hatch, but we've been



eagerly waiting and keeping an eye on it. In the meantime, we've been watching the caterpillars grow and change into their chrysalis stage. It's been amazing to see the children take such great care of them and learn how to be gentle around the chrysalis.

This experience has been so much more than just taking care of bugs. We've been learning about the cycle of life and the importance of being gentle with things around us that are more sensitive.

And last but not least, our graduates have joined Mr. Mindes' class to work on some amazing partnership projects. It's an incredible program that helps our older children transition to the elementary classroom. And let me tell you, it's been the highlight of our day for the past few weeks! The kids are having a blast learning new things and creating cool projects that compliment their work. It's so rewarding to see them grow and develop through this program.

Thank you all for checking in.

Warmly,

Ms. Lopez

Mr. Mindes' Class

For the first couple of weeks of January, with a few students still overseas on holiday and other students battling one pernicious malady or another, our classroom felt a little empty. However, by the last week of January, we were back to full capacity, just in time for two happy events: Ms. Wildhaber, our Directress at the Meher Montessori School in Altadena, joined us to fulfill her teaching requirements for her AMI



Elementary Diploma and our annual Partnership Breakfast.

Ms. Wildhaber at the Elementary

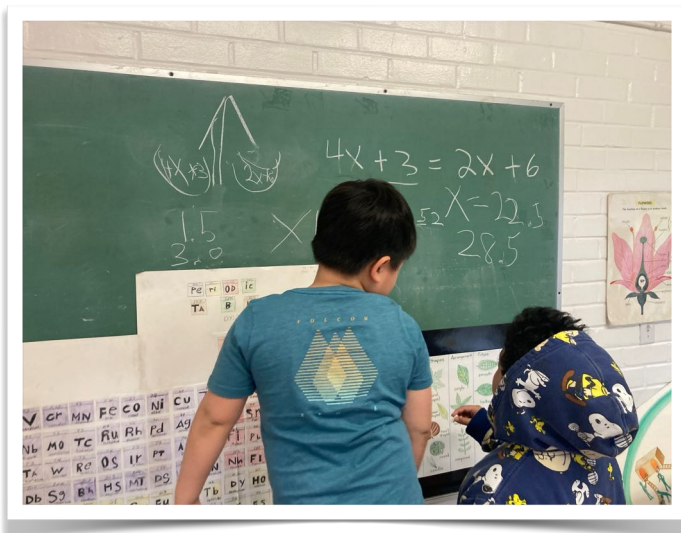
Ms. Wildhaber, who has years of teaching experience and expertise in Montessori philosophy, presented our students with a medley of lessons that included sentence analysis, flat bead frame (multi-digit multiplication), clock time, mountain formation, needs of plants, triangle nomenclature, lessons in botany, and even weaving! The students really enjoyed her lessons and her presence!

Partnership Breakfast

Our students were also excited about the primary students working with them for the Partnership Breakfast. They joined on research and art projects with enthusiasm. The Partnership gives our elementary students a chance to nurture a sense of responsibility for their fellow schoolmates and a perspective on how much they have matured since their primary years. It helps the primary students acclimate to the elementary class.

Bubbles

Another event that led the students to bubble with excitement, was a visit by a scientist who uses bubbles to introduce the kids to surface tension and elasticity. In this hands-on class, our students used a "magic wand" to blow bubbles that eventually formed into a sphere. A sphere has the least surface area of any shape. The students also gleefully used their magic wands to make bubble sculptures!



Some Academic Notes

After a holiday like our winter break, of two weeks or more, I like to revisit skills developed previously, then push on to new ones. I have noticed that many younger students appear much more confident in their reading and writing skills. Many older students forged ahead solidifying skills such as adding and subtracting fractions with different denominators, and multiplying and dividing decimal fractions. One or two students have taken to writing a novel, while others have been



given lessons on the earth's two movements and its composition, as well as various other lessons in math, language, biology, etc.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Finally, parents, please don't forget to sign up for parent-teacher conferences! It's an opportunity for us to discuss the needs, successes, and growth of your child!

Len Mindes

Mrs. Wildhaber's Class

Hello everyone.

While I learned a lot from my three weeks of practice teaching in a 6 to 12-year-old classroom, I missed my classroom so much while I was away. I was so happy to return on Valentine's Day and celebrate love with the

class. I think some of them missed me, too, as they were eager to show me the lessons Miss Tinajero had given them in my absence.

This month, I want to do a deep dive into the sensorial materials. When I first took my training and learned about the sensorial materials, I remember being blown away by them. The quote I often use when describing them is, "The sensorial materials are concrete representations of abstract concepts."

Children are taking in sensorial impressions from before birth. However, they have to learn to sort and order all the impressions they are taking in. In the 3-6 classroom, sensorial materials are given to the child as a way to isolate the concepts of the sensorial experiences they have already had. An example would be an aspect such as size or shape. The sensorial materials are isolated with the particular quality or property we want to illustrate, to limit the distractions of trying to sort too many impressions simultaneously. For example the iconic pink tower is uniform in color and form (cubes) and only varies in size. The same is true for the brown stairs, with the only variation being breadth, and the red rods, with the only variation being length.

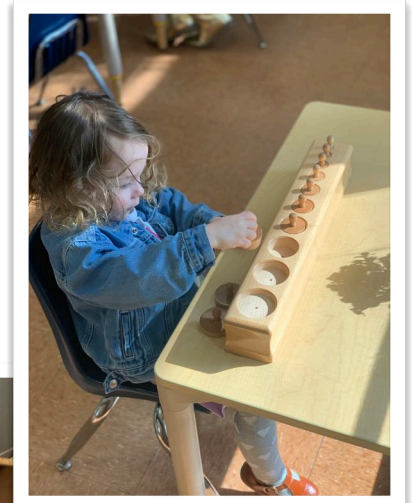
Sensorial materials provide the child with the sensory means of experiencing abstract concepts such as breadth (the brown stairs), pitch (the bells), weight (the baric tablets), etc, through concrete sensorial experiences. And with the sensorial materials working off a base of ten - ten cubes, ten prisms, ten cylinders, etc., I knew they were an indirect preparation for mathematics. However, after diving deep into the Montessori environment for children 6-12 years old, I learned that the sensorial materials are so much more! And now I am even more in love with them than before.



First is the connection to biology. The sensorial materials help the children to provide a manner for classification, which helps them organize their minds. And what is biology if not classifying things by an internal or external quality? The children are later presented with vocabulary to help build a foundation of knowledge from their own experiences and observations, allowing for systematic classification. These opportunities help the children have clarity in their minds and build their intellect.

Until Next Time,
Mrs Wildhaber,
Ms. McCray & Ms. Van Ness

Next is the connection to geometry. Many of the sensorial materials in the 3-6 classroom directly correlate to geometry materials in the 6-12 classroom, such as the binomial and trinomial cubes. Just ask

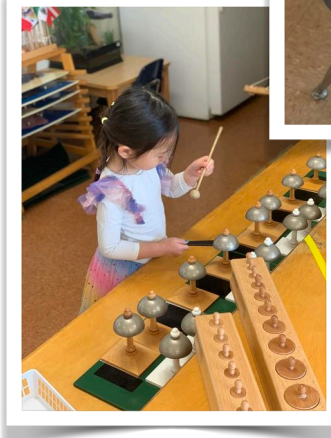


Pythagoras. Some of them are even used in both classrooms, like the constructive triangles and geometry cabinets. Of course, at the 3-6 age, the children are just working with them sensorially and concretely. They experience such abstract concepts as an indirect preparation for deeper exploration in the elementary classroom.

How can you not fall in love with the beauty of the sensorial materials after reading all this?

Friday, March 29th, High Touch High Tech will give a presentation at 10:30. This year's theme is My Planet My Home. Everyone is welcome to attend. March 29th is also School Shirt Day and our last school day before Spring Break.

Meher will be closed April 1-5 for Spring Break.



You Are Not a “Bad” Parent Because You Use Roadblocks

This is adapted and edited from a recent [blog post](#) from Gordon Training - the home of Parent Effectiveness Training. I am a strong proponent of P.E.T., having taken the training twice while I was a teacher. I saw the dramatic effect it had on my teaching ability. Later I became an accredited P.E.T. trainer and offered it to parents and staff a number of times in evening and weekend classes.

If children (actually the case for all people) feel listened to and understood when they have a problem, they are able to increase both their emotional vocabulary and skills and problem solving skills, in addition to feeling closer to the person who actively listens to them.

Conversely, the training also teaches one to express the difficulties they are having due to another’s behavior in a non-blameful way which helps bring about change. Using “I Messages” is not covered here.

John Page - Meher Montessori Executive Director

The Gordon Training Blogpost

Throughout our lives, we have learned a variety of ways to help our kids when they have strong feelings, thoughts or problems. We want to be helpful, yet many of our responses actually make it more difficult for the child to express him/herself, make a decision or solve a problem.

Listed here are twelve of the more frequent “helping responses” which can become “Roadblocks” to communication. When you read this list, you may feel like the rug has been pulled out from under you because so many of your regular responses are now called roadblocks.

1. ORDERING, DIRECTING

“Stop feeling sorry for yourself...”

- Communicates lack of acceptance
- Can cause resistance, hostility
- Promotes rebellious behavior, retaliation

2. WARNING, THREATENING

“You’ll never make friends if...” “You’d better stop worrying so much or...”

- Communicates unacceptance
- Can produce fear, submissiveness
- Can cause resentment, anger, alienation

3. MORALIZING, PREACHING

“Life is not supposed to be easy...” “You shouldn’t feel that way...” “Patience is a virtue you should learn...”

- Creates “obligation” or guilt feelings



- Can cause the other person to “dig in” and defend his or her position even more (“Who says?”)
- Leads to withdrawal, alienation, or to counter moralizing (“Well, you shouldn’t . . . either!”)

4. ADVISING, GIVING SOLUTIONS

“What I would do is...” “Why don’t you...” “Let me suggest...”

- Can imply the other person is not able to solve own problems
- Prevents them from thinking through a problem, considering alternative solutions, and trying them out for reality
- Can cause dependency or resistance

5. USING LOGIC, ARGUING

“Here’s why you’re wrong...” “The facts are...” “Yes, but...”

- Provokes defensive position and counter arguments
- Often causes the other person to “turn off” to you, to quit listening
- Can cause them to feel inferior, inadequate

6. JUDGING, BLAMING, CRITICIZING

“You are not thinking maturely...” “You’re just lazy...” “Maybe you started the fight first...”

- Implies incompetency, stupidity, poor judgment
- Cuts off communication from the other person out of fear of negative judgment
- The other person often accepts judgments as true (“I am bad”), or retaliates (“You’re not so great yourself!”)

7. PRAISING, AGREEING

“Well, I think you’re doing a great job!” “You’re right! – that teacher sounds awful!...”

- Implies high expectations and possible future evaluation
- Can be seen as patronizing or as a manipulative effort to encourage desired behavior
- Can cause anxiety when the other person’s perception of self doesn’t match the praise

8. NAME CALLING, LABELING

“Crybaby...” “That’s stupid to worry about one low test grade.”

- Can cause other person to feel unworthy
- Can have devastating effect on their self-image
- Often provokes verbal retaliation

9. ANALYZING, DIAGNOSING

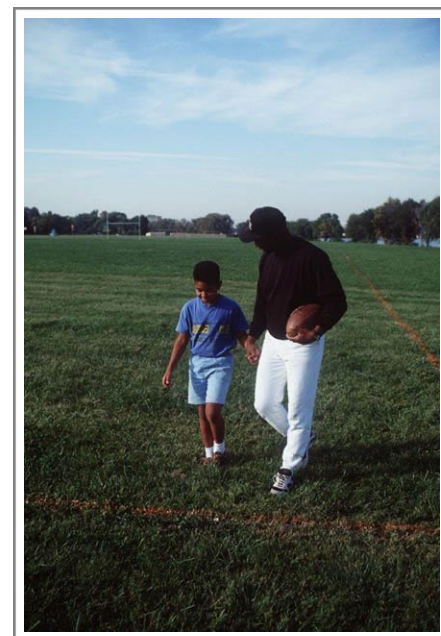
“What’s wrong with you is...,” “You’re just tired...” “What you really mean is...”

- Can be threatening and frustrating
- Other person can feel either trapped, exposed or not believed
- Stops them from communicating for fear of distortion or exposure

10. REASSURING, SYMPATHIZING

“Don’t worry,” “You’ll feel better,” “Oh, cheer up!”

- Causes other person to feel misunderstood
- Evokes strong feelings of hostility (“That’s easy for you to say!”)
- Other person often picks up your message as “It’s not alright for you to feel bad”



11. QUESTIONING, PROBING

“Why...?” “Who...?” “What did you...?” “How...?”

- Since answering questions often results in getting subsequent criticisms or solutions, other people often learn to reply with non-answers, avoidance, half-truths or lies
- Since questions often keep the other person in the dark as to what you’re driving at, they may become anxious and fearful
- Other person can lose sight of his or her problem while answering questions spawned by your concerns

12. AVOIDING, DIVERTING, SARCASM

“Let’s talk about more fun stuff...” “Why don’t you try running the world!”

Remaining silent; turning away

- Implies that life’s difficulties are to be avoided rather than dealt with
 - Can infer other person’s problems are unimportant, petty or invalid
 - Stops openness from other person when they are experiencing a difficulty

Well now what? Now this....

ACTIVE LISTENING

The purpose of Active Listening is to understand and accept your child’s reality and then to let them know you understand and accept it. (Note: acceptance doesn’t mean agreement.)

To Active Listen effectively, you want to:

1. Face the other person, give him/her your full attention and maintain eye contact (if appropriate).
2. Tune out your own thoughts and feelings.
3. Tune in to what the other person in the conflict is saying and feeling.
4. Give feedback to the speaker stating your understanding of what s/he is saying and feeling.

Two things to know about “Roadblocks”:

1. These are roadblocks when your child is experiencing a problem or strong feelings (“Other Owns a Problem”). When the relationship is in the “No Problem Area”, many of these are not blocks (e.g. joking, asking questions, etc.). Some, like name-calling and ridiculing are always risky and cause problems.

2. You are not a “bad” person because you use roadblocks. You are doing what you have been taught to do to help your kids. P.E.T. provides you with more effective alternatives to begin using instead of these common roadblocks.

