

# MEHER MONTESSORI SCHOOL

## SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

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

By Founder and Executive Director John F. Page

We started our school in 1972 - almost 50 years ago! I was attending UCLA as a Philosophy major with a minor in Education, and had the intention of becoming a public school teacher, probably at the college level. I then discovered that a friend of mine had taken Montessori training, and although she was not currently employed as a Montessori teacher, she gave me a book to read about Dr. Maria Montessori and the Montessori Method. I was very much intrigued by the book as it explained Dr. Montessori's educational philosophy and goals as being ones very close to my heart.

Dr. Montessori's approach is to group together students according to overall developmental standards, usually incorporating a three-year age span. We give each child a personalized education with individualized lessons according to each child's intellectual, emotional and physical development. And we incorporate the child's current interests (mostly through observation) and use those as keys.

This is in stark contrast with the public school model. The public school model groups children according to their birth certificate. That is an astounding model - originally based more on a factory system left over from the industrial age. Every child gets the same set of clothing to wear. Are the children measured for that suit of clothing? Yes indeed they are, and that measure is a piece of paper called a birth certificate. In great contrast the Montessori method makes a custom set of clothing for each child, and that set of clothing is constantly being monitored and altered according to their current development.

Many years ago my older daughter was a fifth grade public school teacher. After years of teaching she confided in me her frustration that she would have 30 children in a classroom ranging developmentally from second or third grade up to eighth grade. But the school district only gave her one curriculum. The fifth grade curriculum. Sure, there were some accommodations for extremely bright children and some for children who were developmentally slower. But these accommodations did not meet their real educational needs. The child who has eighth grade development should have a corresponding eighth grade curriculum and be studying along with children who are developmentally similar. But instead are treated as an anomaly and taken out of the class periodically for some gifted work. And the poor child who is slower develops a psychology that says I am slow, I am not very smart, I can't keep up with my peers in the classroom. Think of that poor child's self-esteem and subsequent behavior.

As staff members of Meher Montessori School, each of us is proud to provide this common sense yet revolutionary method of educating children. We hope you join us in supporting your child's individual needs. A child whose individual needs are being met according to his or her current development is much happier, and a more caring and compassionate human being.

**FRIDAY,  
OCTOBER  
15TH**

**TUITION & NOV.  
LUNCH SIGN-UP  
DUE**

**THURSDAY,  
OCTOBER  
28TH**

**PICTURE DAY**

**FRIDAY,  
OCTOBER  
29TH**

**MORNING  
COSTUME  
PARADES &  
CLASSROOM  
FESTIVITIES**

# Mrs. Rivera's Class

Hello everyone! I am so glad to be back at school. As I stepped into my classroom, memories flashed back and faces of children I've taught were popping into my brain. It gave me strength, confidence and inspiration to construct and arranged the prepared environment into a place of peace, love, excitement, challenges and discoveries of what the children can do and learn happily!

We would like to welcome our new children, the continuing children and also all of our parents and wish them all the best this coming school year. I hope and prayed that all of you had an exciting and restful summer.

The whole month of August I had the opportunity to fully rest and visit places together with the members of my family. But the most exciting and memorable event was celebrating my 62nd birthday together with my husband and three of my grandchildren; all September born! We had the chance to take a family picture because all my children and their family members were present. The fact that we are all fully vaccinated made our gathering safe, fun and unforgettable!

This is my twentieth year at Meher and I've been blessed to have so many parents who are helpful, understanding and supportive. Looking forward to another great and successful year with your help and fervent trust. The staff is wonderful with the children. I feel the love, care and happiness they bring to the classroom every day.

The school year officially began September 7th for our continuing children. Our new ones started on the 13th. The new students are all eager and excited to be in our class and wanting earnestly to put their hands on our Montessori materials. Likewise it is the same feeling for our returning children and they were excited to meet the new children. The new children are all doing great in class and have adjusted into our classroom and the Montessori school as a whole. They have made friends, are now very conversant and love to work with the materials they have had a lesson on.



The older children are more stable in their work and are moving forward slowly but surely; leaving their previous lessons polished. These children have worked in all four areas, practical life, sensorial, language and math, at their own pace. Aside from academic, they are learning "Grace and Courtesy," being polite to all, greeting one another and the teachers and staff in school. They are learning to maintain a clean self and environment, our prepared environment and the school as a whole! Books read and discussed during our circle time support all of these good manners. Every last Friday of the month the beautiful finished work of the children is sent home.

To all our dear parents, thank you so very much for entrusting your child to be in our class and our school as a whole, you are all very much appreciated! Just a friendly reminder: class starts at 8:15 in the morning and ends at 2:30 in the afternoon. School Shirt Day is typically every last Friday of the month but this month because of

Halloween festivities, it is on Wednesday, October 27. We got 100% for the month of September. Let us work together as a team to maintain this percentage throughout the school year. We will schedule a pizza lunch for our first hundred percent by next month. Thank you so much for everyone's help! Our "Parent Night" was Thursday, September 30th. Thank you to all who came.

Have a safe and great fall season to one and all!

Much love!  
Mrs. Rivera



*"One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child."*

*Maria Montessori*

# Ms. Lopez' Class

Welcome parents to our 2021-2022 school year! I'm so happy to be joined by you all. Our school year officially began on September 7th. Our wonderful returning children were eager to return to their work and see all their friends. The following week (September 13) we were joined by the new students in the classroom. A BIG welcome to them.

The children have been adjusting very well to the classroom and are keeping busy with the lessons they're receiving. The returning students were excited to work with the bank game, puzzle maps, and sandpaper letters. The new students have been receiving lots of grace and courtesy lessons. Grace and courtesy lessons show the children how to 1. Care for themselves, others, and their environment, 2. Interact with other children and adults 3. Properly handle materials and 4. Follow classroom rules. The children are adjusting well and getting used to their new routine.

I have the privilege of working alongside Mrs. Suh and Ms. Bayon. They are a great asset to the classroom. They've been helping the new children adjust and making sure everyone is working and keeping focused while I give children lessons. The children enjoy talking with them and showing them the work they've created as well. There is great energy in the classroom and Mrs. Suh and Ms. Bayon play a huge role in that. Thank you to them both for being wonderful in the classroom and to the children.

Parents, your child should arrive at school by 8:15 a.m. so they can take full advantage of the 3-hour work cycle. The three-hour work period allows your child to settle down, work, and focus fully on their work. This is the time when I give lots of lessons and if your child is not receiving a lesson, they are working with materials they've already had a lesson on.

This month we got 100% for 'School Shirt Day'. Thank you parents for helping your child participate. We get a special treat when we get 100%, so keep an eye out for an email soon about that.

Lastly, thank you to everyone that came to our 'Back to School Night'. As mentioned in our session, please don't hesitate to talk to me and ask questions about the classroom and/or your child. I look forward to getting to know each of you and thank you for entrusting the care of your child to us. Until next time.

Ms. Lopez



# Mr. Mindes' Class

A warm welcome to the new and returning Meher Elementary families!

It's almost guaranteed that at some point during the week a student will ask a question or make a comment about some commonplace event; I imagine, at least hope, that at some distant point in the past, I had wondered or asked about something similar. At any rate, if I didn't then, I wish to do so now. Sir Issac Newton made the unremarkable inquiry - why do things always fall towards the earth? Two centuries later, remarkably, Homo sapiens were walking on the moon!

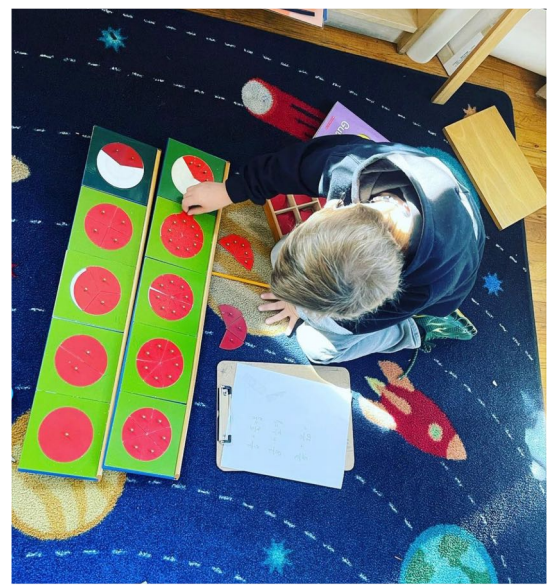
Fortunately, our students, indeed the very young generally, observe things with eyes and thoughts not yet fossilized by time! As an Elementary Montessori School, our task is to encourage that natural fascination and wonder; introduce our students to big ideas and provide them with an environment to explore their questions, while simultaneously, cultivating responsibility and covering state mandated curriculum.

For instance, one student this year became obsessed with knowing which animal had the strongest bite, or weighed the most, or ran the fastest; so while we looked up a list of the fastest animals on earth, I already knew I was going to ask what I hoped all students would see as the next obvious question: 'What makes that animal the fastest?' In this particular case that question led to an impromptu anatomy lesson on muscles, bones, and joints. Another classroom example involves a student from a previous year; after lessons on land and water forms (islands, lakes, straits, isthmus', archipelagos, etc.) they took it upon themselves to locate and identify all the known land and water forms on earth. This combination of self-directed and guided work is what our classroom fosters.

## Back to School Night

During our Back to School Night on September 30th, it became clear, listening to parent questions and comments, that a quick check-in once a month would be helpful. To this end, next week (October 18, 2021), I will put a sign up sheet at the sign-in area, listing available times for telephone or FaceTime meetings during the week of October 25th.

Len Mindes



# Altadena News

We are so excited to welcome so many new and returning families to Meher this year. The returning children are showing their leadership skills by helping all their new classmates settle in and adjust to their classroom routines.

While many of this year's children are experiencing school and family separation in ways unique to living through the pandemic the last year and a half, the staff is doing all we can to help ease the transition. Reaching out to other AMI-trained guides across the country to find out what has been working for them, as well as reading books and articles relevant to this year's educational experience are some of the ways the Meher staff is stepping up their education for life approach to the classroom.

We are pleased to announce that Lillian Van Ness (Milo and Sylvia's abuela) has joined the Meher staff. She is a teaching assistant for both Mrs. Wildhaber and Ms. Tinajero's classrooms. We are so fortunate to have someone with 29 years of teaching experience, including 17 years at the preschool level, eager to expand her educational knowledge by diving into the Montessori experience. Her patience and energy are a welcome addition to both classrooms.

## A few reminders:

Please remember to close the playground gate every time upon entry and exit. Also, please continue to limit yourselves to one family per teacher's coatrack at a time.

Children's reusable water bottles should be clearly labeled and spill-proof. Additionally, please make sure all nap gear is clearly labeled. We have a large number of nappers right now, and it really does expedite the setup and breakdown process for the staff if we can readily identify who everything belongs to.

## October dates to remember:

**October 15th** is Picture Day

**October 21st** is The Great California Shakeout. We will have practice drills leading up to this.

**October 25th-29th** is Red Ribbon Week. As we focus on healthy bodies, this is also the week of our Hygiene Drive. Everything collected goes to our landlords, the Altadena Community Church, for them to distribute to homeless and refugee shelters.

**October 29th** is School Shirt Day. Each classroom will also have an in-class celebration for Halloween. Details to follow.

## Thanks Again!

Meher Montessori would like to once again thank all the returning families who participated in our spring read-a-thon. It was our most successful fundraiser ever. And due to your efforts, the school got several upgrades including new woodchips, a fresh paint job in both classrooms, new materials, and new daycare and playground toys. With only a few short months before Meher Montessori turns 50, we were due for a facelift!

## Mrs. Wildhaber's Class

What a difference just a couple of weeks makes. The children have settled into the daily flow with far more ease than I had anticipated. The teary mornings have practically become a thing of the past. And there is an eagerness to socialize and explore materials in the classroom.

As for what is happening in the classroom, we are working on the preliminary lessons in the classroom and building upon each child's readiness. We are reinforcing that every time the child gets up from their chair, they must have empty hands, as two hands are needed to properly push in their chairs. Some of the children have already caught on to this concept, others need reminders every time. That is ok. With continued, consistent reinforcement, they will get there. This is an important skill to master because it leads to greater control and coordination of movement, as well as care when handling materials.

We are also encouraging children to complete a cycle of work when they take a material out. Concentration, focus, and perseverance are skills that need to be learned by many. Several of the new children will take a material out, start it, and then put it away as soon as



they experience struggle. The struggle might be figuring out how to twist a top off of one of the objects in our opening and closing containers basket. Or using only a spoon to transfer all the grains from one bowl to the next without pouring them in. Or squeezing tongs firmly enough to hold that bean in place as they transfer it from one bowl to another. These may seem like small, insignificant things. However, this is where it all begins. These basic practical life skills are designed to help the child learn independence, concentration, perseverance, and a sense of joy from within as they experience success. This is where my six returning students come in. They are often right next to a new friend, modeling, helping, and encouraging the new friend to complete the task.

Now that the weather is starting to turn cool, learning to hang and secure outerwear is a big, ongoing, lesson in the classroom. You can reinforce and model this for your child by making sure to secure your child's outerwear on the school hangers if you hang their outerwear up for them. That means making sure to snap the top snap, button the top button, or fully zip up a zipper to prevent the outerwear from easily falling off the hanger.

The graduates are working on reading, writing, and mathematics every morning. Next month, we will build on that and incorporate a fine motor skills activity into their morning curriculum. In the afternoons, they are receiving group lessons from me. These are basic right now, like reviewing the names of geometric solids (cube, sphere, cone, etc). However, as the year progresses, they will become more complex.

If your child receives a kindness card in the mail, please encourage them to bring it to school for me to read aloud to the class. Kindness cards are always a surprise to the recipient. I never tell a child when I "catch them being kind." However, when I read their spontaneous act of kindness back to the class, the children beam with pride. This helps the other children to identify acts of kindness in the classroom and inspire them to try to be more kind. Although, do not fret if your child does not receive one right away. Firstly, I do not write out a card for every act of kindness. After all, spontaneous reinforcement is the strongest motivator for repeated behavior. Secondly, many of the younger and newer children, who have had very limited social interactions over the last year and a half, need time to develop this skill. They will get there at their own pace.

Before closing out for the month, I want to say how humbled I am by the overall parent support so far this year. I have my first ever room parent: Melissa Amonoo-Neizer, Ama's mom! Although I am not quite sure what that means, I was so excited she volunteered, I said yes immediately. Several families have already purchased so many of my Scholastic wishlist books, it was like an embarrassment of riches when the order arrived. And, I cannot begin to describe the joy I feel every time an Amazon box arrives and I know inside is something from my classroom wishlist.

Until Next Month,  
Mrs. Wildhaber,



# Ms. Tinajero's Class

Welcome back to all our returning families and welcome to our new families. I would like to start by saying thank you to the families that came to Back to school night. It is nice to be have been able to host Back to School Night in person. There was definitely more discussion and communication from the parents, which I appreciate. It is important that we continue to stay connected as a community even when we are not always able to see each other whether it be an email a phone call or a quick chat after school. The children spend an equal amount of time with me and at home during the week, when we communicate their needs it makes it effective for me to understand the child.

Last year my classroom was in constant transition because I was getting all the new students but this whole month has shown me that my returning students have been "normalized" and with very few new students we have an opportunity to get into a routine. The children and I have been working on our preliminary exercises. Preliminary exercises are an introduction to the environment to the child, they show the child how to care for and explore our materials in the way they were intended. They show the child how to interact and how to safely handle the materials. Every lesson they get has an area whether it be on the floor with a rug or at a table with a placemat. There are also classroom rules that the children are given when the lesson is presented. For example, children

may not step on the rugs, they must walk around the rug or if need be they can kneel on the rug. Another example is when taking out material the material must be returned to the same spot on the shelf when the work is finished, this helps the children remember that that particular material goes in that same place.

I gave all the children a review on most of the preliminary exercises because although some of the children were in summer camp and in summer school they tend to forget how to do certain things in the classroom. It was also very helpful for our new students to be able to see an example from their peers.

We have been practicing things like walking in our environment, walking on the line with objects in hand or our heads, how to roll and unroll a rug, how to wipe our nose, how to hold a tray, cleaning up spills, and washing our hands. Most preliminary exercises are given impromptu since things like wiping their nose and spills come to our surprise.

The children and I have also been talking about how our body movements are important when we work in an environment where we have glass objects and other objects that are prone to break or rip. Keywords we have been using are being gentle and walking gently in the environment of course backed by some modeling.

We finished the month well with the kids being able to guide themselves in the classroom and work independently.

Unfortunately, our class did not get 100% for school shirt day. Reminder school shirt day is Friday, October 29.

Thank you all and until next month  
Ms. Tinajero

