

NEWS LETTER

MIDDLE SCHOOL VISITS
OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE



HAPPY
FEBRUARY

Public Open House

On Saturday, March 2nd, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. we will have a Public Open House. Get a \$100 tuition credit if you recommend someone to attend who then registers and enrolls.



www.mehermontessori.org



► **We ask all children to be at school by 8:15 a.m. Why bring your child on time?**

1. You get the most for your money. You give your child the best opportunity to progress academically, to more deeply understand the work shown to him and enough time to practice with the materials.
2. You set a good example for life about the importance of being on time to your child.
3. The first hours of the day in the classroom tend to be the time that the children work with the greatest concentration. This is when their minds are free from the distraction of the activities of the day.
4. When your child comes into the classroom late, this is a disturbance to the children who have already settled down to do their work.
5. Coming to school late can give a message to your child that school is not important and it does not matter when you arrive.

► **Spring Break Mark your calendars!**

April 15th – April 19th.

► **Taxes**

Some parents' tax situation permits them to deduct some or all of the money they pay to the School as child care expense. If you are able to do this, you will need the School's tax I.D. number, which is [95-3193683](tel:95-3193683).

► **Updates**

- Please update school of any important change. Such as address, cell phone, work phone or email.
- Please let the school/teacher know of any important family change, death, loss of a pet, parent separation.

Thank you. Mrs. Muñoz



Hello Parents,

January slipped out quickly and the month of February came in swiftly like the wind. It is the shortest month of the year and this means that in a blink of an eye it will be gone soon too! But it will leave us with colorful memories happening in our classroom, colors of red and pink. We had beautiful projects that the children made for the celebration of the Chinese and Korean Lunar New Year. The Chinese envelopes and a magnetic "2019 Year of the Pig" logo decorated our staircase going in to our classroom and were sent home after our Chinese Party, Tuesday, February 5th. The children had a great "Show 'n' Tell" for the occasion too; they brought in books related to the festivities and each child explained the reasons why they would like to share the book in class. As I read the stories of families celebrating the occasion, it was quite clear that we did the similar things for our class. Like seeing to it that our classroom was clean and dusted, decorating our classroom in colors of red and gold, and making an orange tree and money envelope decorations. We also had a beautiful "Dragon" project made by Jonah Choy inspired when he went

with his parents to a museum. Jonah explained clearly and happily all the steps in making his famous Dragon. The children and teachers said "thank you" too to Nicolas Du for distributing money envelopes to all. Some children came to school dressed with their festive Chinese attire. The children were excited as they sang a "Happy New Year" song to all the parents.



Secondly, was the festive Chinese and Korean Lunar New Year Party! The food was plentiful and delicious. Included were orange chicken, fried rice, veggie egg rolls, steamed pork dumplings, chow mein and Korean noodles (cooked by Mrs. Suh) as the main course. There were fruit platters and desserts too. A big "thank you!" to the parents and volunteers who helped to set up the food, served the children and cleaned up after. To all the parents in attendance, thank you for your presence, love, support and generosity to your children and teachers in our classroom as a whole. We had a successful, happily bonding

party.

We have been very busy in our classroom this month. All the children are taking large leaps forward in their work. The older children are now working with the special Montessori materials: animals and their groups. In them they learn about the special names that animal groups have, for example: a pod of whales, a troop of kangaroos, a gang of elks, a knot of toads, a litter of kittens (plus more than 30 others). They've also been working in a group with me in the afternoons with Puzzle Words. These are words that have to be memorized (sight words) rather than sounded out using our traditional Montessori phonetic approach. They've been doing well with it.

We have been working with our class rhythm instruments on many days upon coming inside from our lunchtime recess. Have your children mentioned any of the following instruments? Jingle clog, hand bells, wrist bells, brass cymbals, maracas, drum, hand tom tom, sand blocks, rhythm sticks and triangle. They love to tap out rhythms to the song, "Let's take a trip to the Jungle."

February is the month too where we discuss the great works and leadership of two presidents of the United States. Abraham Lincoln, whose birthday was this February 11th, was the 16th President, a statesman and lawyer, known as the "log cabin" President. While reading his life story, the children heard the importance of love of reading and continuously going to school to learn. Lincoln's advice was to keep on reading books to attain your goals in life. George Washington was the 1st

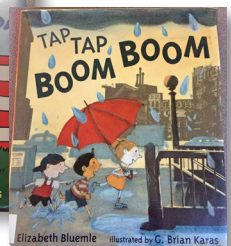
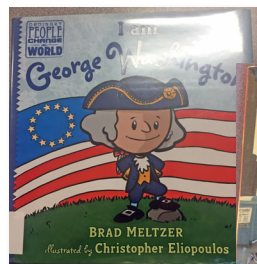
President of the United States; he was a statesman and a soldier and loves dogs and animals. The children learned that being a president isn't a bed of roses, that they have to strive hard to study more and that to be president they have to wish for it and stay focused on their aims and goals in life.

We celebrated Valentine's Day with a snack in the afternoon and a pizza lunch! The lunch is our prize for attaining a 100% School Shirt last Friday of January. The children's valentine's project was a "happy bear." All their projects will go home by the end of this month.

Last but not least, I'd like to thank Mrs. Suh and Ms. Martinez for all their efforts in making our classroom spic and span every day and especially in helping celebrate special occasions in our classroom. But the greatest of all is their showing our children "love and care" for one another. They always work as a team and are always there for the children's needs. Thank you so very much ladies.

"Wherever you go, go with all your heart." Said Confucius, the great philosopher.

With all our love and service – Mrs. Rivera, Ms. Martinez and Mrs. Suh





This month began with the Chinese New Year celebration. The children made red lanterns to decorate our hallway. It made them practice their paper-cutting skills and gluing. They also tried to make the year of the pig design using the sumi-e ink painting technique. This type of painting is done with a Chinese paintbrush. It is perfect for children because of its simplistic pictorial nature-inspired images created using simple brushstrokes and without very many details or added texture. It also focuses on controlling brushstrokes – balancing between thin and thick. Come by our classroom and see it. The children also played the cymbals and triangles to accompany this song:

***See the dragon come
On a hundred legs
Goodwill and joy he brings
On this bright New Year!***

We do appreciate your continued support when you sign up for things we need in the classroom. Thank you to everyone who brought sumptuous dishes and treats for our Chinese New Year lunch, and to the mothers who volunteered to serve lunch to the children: Desiree Carvajal (Zoe's

mom), Marilyn Diaz (Julian's mom) and Renee Pan (Aston's mom).

Early this month we also talked about Groundhog Day and read books about it. It looks like the groundhog saw his shadow after all, as winter is still going strong even here in Southern California. Jordan also shared a book with the class about different animals and creatures that live underground. Because of our cold and wet weather, several children had to stay home sick for several days, myself included. It was also a perfect opportunity to show one of the Grace and Courtesy lessons: "How to blow one's nose" (using a tissue), and reminding the children to properly wash their hands using soap and water.

We read books and talked about Abraham Lincoln and George Washington to make the children aware why we honor these two great men by celebrating President's Day.

The children have been working steadily in different areas in our classroom. Our younger students have been practicing most of the Practical Life exercises like water pouring, and polishing exercises. Our second year

students who have mastered the letter sounds are beginning to use the moveable alphabet box to “spell” phonetic words. The Bank Game is still a popular activity for several children. Our almost “graduates” are continuing to practice and write in their journals and it is both fun and amusing to see their inventive spelling. Some of them worked tirelessly to complete maps of North America, The USA, and South America.

There is also a renewed interest among the children to play on the Montessori Bells after Ms. Lopez patiently polished each bell to make it shine. Thank you so much. You can hear the song “Hot Cross Buns” being played and some of the children teaching others how to do it.

Of course, February wouldn’t be complete without Valentine’s Day. The children prepared Graham Balls to serve for our special snack.

Till next time,
Mrs. Roque
Ms. Lopez



Class News

Though we have no February birthdays, we had plenty to celebrate. On February 5, we had a big lunch party for Chinese New Year that included the families. Thank you again to the families for bringing so much food. The third-graders presented their research to the class about the history and traditions of Chinese New Year. Shortly after that was Valentine's Day and we took time that afternoon to give each other valentines and appreciate one another.

Rafaela is again directing our class in a performance that she has written herself. It is a play about gymnastics teams! We have play practice Monday afternoons right after lunch and Wednesday mornings right before lunch and she has enlisted her two assistants, Ayushi and Francesca, again as well.

Curriculum News

Research shows spending time in nature positively affects our well-being and helps children feel more relaxed. We like to set aside at least one day out of the month as our garden harvest day. This month we focused on the leaf lesson and children ate carrots, parsley and lettuce from the garden.

In history we've kept our focus on early humans and ancient civilizations, starting with broad overviews and seeing what interests each child. Some like to keep exploring more about early humans, such as when they lived and more specifics about their diet and

life. Some choose to look at the time or the characteristics that make what we consider their early civilizations. As always we can integrate subjects. One boy asked for something new to do in language but we ended up doing math, history, and language together. I knew he would likely be interested in the history of our alphabet, and that he would like to figure out how long ago it was developed so we included some mental math as well.

One group has formed to plan a Going Out for their love of animals, and includes a first, second, and third year student. They decided on their own the role each would play so far for the research portion and are very excited.

Calendar News

We honored Lincoln's Birthday and President's Day with no school on each of those days. Some students chose to study further about the presidents. Our school held Parent Night on Thursday, February 21 for parents to learn more about their child's classroom. Thank you for coming! Lastly, School Shirt Day was Friday, February 22!



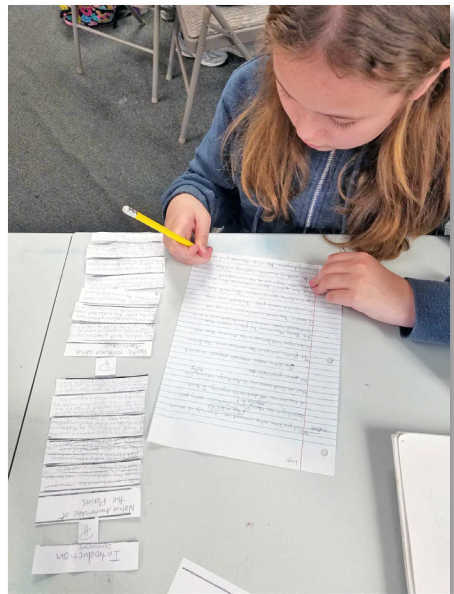


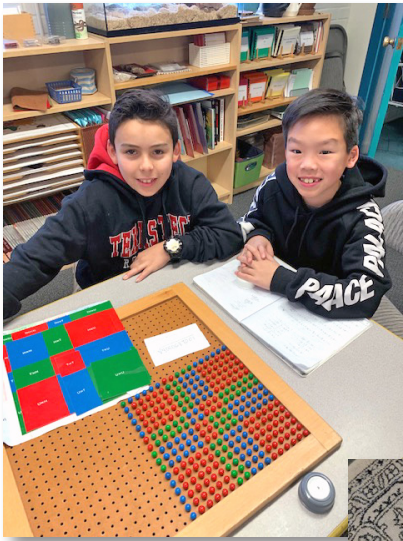
The start of 2019 has been a joyous one in the Upper Elementary. The students were very excited to plan a special Chinese New Year celebration, and decided upon a committee of people to do different aspects of the party planning. Some people were in charge of decorations, while others decided upon the food to be brought for the pot luck. A few students were interested in preparing and cooking some of the food in class, so we really enjoyed doing that all together! It turned out to be a wonderful day, and the food was excellent. Thank you to all of the families who participated in bringing in a dish to share with the group, we truly had a delicious feast!

We recently had a visit from the Meher Middle School students, and the class really enjoyed having some social time with them. It was so great to see a group of students of mixed ages really enjoying spending time together. The Middle Schoolers taught them some fun games and they even did lots of dancing.

Many students have been writing extensive research papers. The process of writing research takes many steps: narrowing a topic, reading various sources, taking short hand notes, sorting and organizing the notes, sequencing them in a logical order into paragraphs, writing a first draft from those notes, editing multiple times, and finally writing a finished draft of their very best work. The culmination of that hard work ends with composing a beautiful cover that is unique and artistic. It has been great to see how their writing is really progressing over the course of the year.

Ms. Strand





Welcome to February... the month that begins the transition to Spring. Recently, while reading a magazine article, I came across the word *liminal*, which the article's author attributes to a French folklorist, who used the word to describe a "middle phase." To construct his word the folklorist borrowed from the Latin word *limen*, meaning "threshold." I am mentioning this because when I saw the words "middle phase" and "threshold," I instantly thought of our graduates, being, as they are, on the threshold of high school - one foot firm and sure in Meher, while the other steps out expectantly, imagining their foot hold at high school.

Ironically, earlier this month the eighth graders were afforded a flavor of what's to come after high school - college! Attending a workshop at Occidental College (Oxy), the students had a chance to interact with workshop presenters - first and second year Oxy science majors. After the seminar, one of the presenters, a first year Chemistry major, invited the students to eat in the student dining hall, discussing with them everything from getting grants for college to school size and things in between. She then took the Middle-Schoolers on a tour of some science labs and the impressive college library. Our students appeared very comfortable, fitting right in with the lively college dining hall crowds and the many college students milling about, hunched over the books, or

racing through the quad on their way (I imagine) to class.

Unfortunately, before we left the Middle School for Occidental, I forgot to remind the students to keep their eyes peeled, and their pens and notebooks handy, to jot down notes about any eccentric characters, or, for that matter, any character that ventured into their view. We have been writing, creating, if you will, fictional characters inspired by a book called, *Seize the Story*, which, Mrs. Page somehow arranged to have end up on my desk. The students are fully engaged by the book's writing exercise, which directs them to interview the characters they want to create to learn more about them. Or, the exercises ask them to describe their character's appearance, so as to fashion a mood, or hint at the character's personality type. I'm thrilled that the students enjoy these writing exercise because it gives me the opportunity to review some 8th grade common core skills, such as *RL 8.3, "Analyze how specific dialogue/incidents propel action, reveal character, or provoke a decision"* in a way that's excites the students. There's nothing like the challenge of creating fiction that enables you to detect how others writers do (or did) it.

Below, a student had included a writing exercise sample, as well as a few other items. Enjoy the cold while it lasts because transitions, like Middle School, are ephemeral!

Super Blood Wolf Moon lunar eclipse

Written by: Jordan Calderon

Have you ever seen a super blood wolf moon lunar eclipse? If not, why weren't you at Cal Tech in Pasadena on January 21, to see the earth slip between the sun and the moon, filtering the sun's rays creating a blood color moon. Why the long name/super blood wolf moon lunar eclipse. First, *Super* because the moon closer than usual which makes it bigger and brighter. Second, *Blood* which signifies the glowing red color from the earth refracted sun rays. Third, *Wolf* comes from what the native Americans called the January's full moon. Lastly, *Lunar* eclipse which is just the alignment of the sun, earth, and moon. So do you regret not looking at the super blood wolf moon lunar eclipse, don't worry you can join me at Cal Tech in 2021?

We had a great visit to Occidental College. Students participated in a workshop with the ladies from Boundless Brilliance, a non-profit which promotes the sciences. They enjoyed some fun ice-breakers and had fun learning about density and acid-base reactions. They had a lot of questions about the college experience and even took a tour of some of the science buildings.

Here are some pictures:

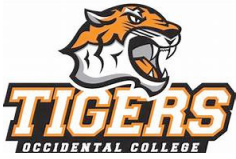


► Re-Enrollment

Re-enrollment applications for the school year of 2019–2020 will be sent home soon. You must return the form by **Friday, April 5th**. It is our hope that all families at Meher Montessori School will re-enroll their children to reap the benefits of the quality education that is offered by this school.



OUR VISIT AT





Open House

On Saturday, March 2nd, from 10:00 - 2:00, is our second Public Open House of the school year. Please pass the word on to anyone who may be interested in a Montessori education for their child.

Parent Night

On Wednesday, February 20th Meher Montessori Altadena had its annual Parent Night. This year I focused on the Language materials in the classroom.

In The Classroom

As most parents of Montessori students know, it is the sound a letter makes, not its name, that children learn in the classroom. This helps the child to develop his/her reading and writing skills as he/she learns to sound out words phonetically. However, as it is a kindergarten state standard to be able to identify the 26 alphabet letters by name, my graduates have just started working with several different materials to strengthen the associations between name and sound, uppercase and lowercase and print versus cursive. Many of these are paper materials that I

put together for them to use with existing Montessori materials, as well as to further develop their ability to abstract the answers.

This year the children have developed a real sense of unity. They are constantly pairing up to work together, helping each other, mastering lessons together, checking one another's work and observing their peers. It is non-stop, and it is Montessori at its best.

Speaking of unity, we have spent a good deal of this month talking about Black History Month, which tied in seamlessly from last month's MLK talks. We have been reading books and reflecting (as much as children of this age can reflect) about how everybody is just as good as anybody else. It is not the color of our skin, the shape of our eyes, or the curl of our hair that matters. It is what is on the inside that counts. Hearts filled with love and kindness are what matters. I have made sure to include books that celebrate the beauty in our uniqueness as well.

Additionally, we are listening to a broad spectrum of music from black musicians. So far, we have listened to reggae, pop, jazz, and Motown. After we listen to the music, we

watch a short video performance of the musician on YouTube to help the children put a face to the name.

This month we have also been learning about Chinese New Year, also called Lunar New Year. We have been reading about the 12 animals in the horoscope and what they represent, as well as identifying the children in each year. We have also learned about the rituals designed to usher in good luck for the New Year and scare away the bad luck. The children have been amazing when it comes to making connections and recalling something from one book to tie into another book.

Next Month

As of press times, the class had not yet celebrated Valentine's Day or President's day. Look for those topics to be covered in March's newsletter.

Also, for the second year in a row, we will cover Women's Month in March. If anyone would like to come in a give a presentation or read a book honoring Women's Month, please contact me to set up a time.

Until Next Month,
Mrs. Wildhaber,
Miss McCray & Miss Tinajero & Miss Sykes

YEAR OF THE PIG

1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019

The pig is known to be kind.

You love school and your pals! You get along best with sheep and rabbits!

CHINESE ZODIAC

What is your animal?
Find the year you were born to see which animal you are. For example, if you were born in 2006, you were born in the year of the dog. Then read your animal description below!

DRAGON
If you were born a dragon, you have lots of energy. You will live a long life with lots of luck. Dragons get along best with monkeys and rats.

SNAKE
The snake is quiet but friendly. You enjoy reading and music. You get along best with dragons, oxen and roosters.

HORSE
If your sign is the horse, you like to have fun! You're also very kind. You get along best with tigers, dogs and sheep.

SHEEP
The sheep cares for others, especially animals. You love being outdoors. You get along best with rabbits, monkeys, pigs and horses.

MONKEY
If you are a monkey, you have a great memory and love solving puzzles. You get along best with dragons, rats, rabbits, sheep and dogs.

ROOSTER
The rooster is a good worker. You are also good at telling stories and fun to be around. You get along best with pigs, snakes and dragons.

DOG
If this is your sign, you know how to keep a secret. Like a real dog, you are always playful. You get along best with tigers, rabbits and monkeys.

PIG
The pig is known to be kind. You love school and your pals! You get along best with sheep and rabbits.

RAT
If your sign is the rat, you are a hard worker. You are also honest and good at saving money. You get along best with dragons, monkeys and oxen.

OX
The ox is patient and a good listener. You always keep your promises. You get along best with roosters, rats and snakes.

TIGER
If you are a tiger, you are brave and strong! You also have a wild personality. You get along best with dragons, horses and dogs.

RABBIT
This is a very lucky sign! You are polite, yet a little shy. You are also smart. You get along best with sheep, pigs, dogs and monkeys.

China Fact:
Chinese people name each year after 1 of 12 animals. Each animal is known to have certain characteristics. It's believed that people share the same as the animals are born on.

Association Montessori Internationale

fyi

© The Estate of Mario Montessori Junior

February 4, 2019

Universality and Permanence

This year we are celebrating 90 years of AMI, and throughout the year we will bring you snippets from our history. Mario Montessori Junior described the power and influence of the movement over the years on the occasion of our 60th birthday. It still rings all very true.

From a presentation by Mario Montessori Junior to the Irish Society, in 1989, in celebration of AMI's 60th birthday

...Today, I shall highlight particularly the relevance of AMI for those of us who have understood the originality and profundity of Montessori's contribution to a better understanding of the human being, and who wish to continue her work, developing it further in concordance with the very clear



directives given by her to guide us.

It is true that Maria Montessori gained her world fame as a pedagogue. Nevertheless, that does not explain why her initiative, based on the observation of the behaviour of small children from working classes, has started a movement so vital that it has survived two world wars, the persecution of totalitarian regimes and the sharp criticism of the academic world. Nonetheless, this movement spread over all continents, forming stable roots among people of different languages, cultures and religions and what is more, bringing us together today (...) — not to discuss its past history only, but in particular, its topicality with regard to what it has to offer to our children.

To my knowledge, there is no other educational approach showing a similar universality and permanence in our turbulent times. Dr Montessori's plea on behalf of the child reached the hearts of many people, because it contained a truth that was so evident that no matter what their own profession or social standing was they took steps to put her ideas into practice. Once started on that road (the children are everywhere and a concern of us all), they remained friends of her cause. ■

Child Mind Institute

Danielle Cohen

Why Kids Need to Spend Time in Nature

They may prefer to stick to their screens, but here's why getting outdoors matters

In the early 1980s, a Harvard University biologist named Edward O. Wilson proposed a theory called biophilia: that humans are instinctively drawn towards their natural surroundings. Many 21st century parents, however, would question this theory, as they watch their kids express a clear preference for sitting on a couch in front of a screen over playing outside.

The national panic about kids spending too much time indoors has become so extreme that the crisis has a name: Nature deficit disorder.

While calling it a disorder might be merely rhetorical, it's clear kids spend significantly more time inside than outside. This shift is largely due to **technology**: The average American child is said to spend 4 to 7 minutes a day in unstructured play outdoors, and **over 7 hours a day in front of a screen**.

Richard Louv, author of the book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*, tells the story of interviewing a child who told him that he liked playing indoors more than outdoors "cause that's where all the electrical outlets are."

Increasing parental fears about diseases and dangers of playing outside—despite evidence to the contrary—are another big factor.

And as suburbs and exurbs continue to expand, nature is parceled off more, and kids seem less inclined to spend time in a fenced-in yard, let alone jump the fence into a neighbor's or walk in the woods. Instead, indoor activities can seem easier (no sunscreen necessary!), safer, and even more sociable for kids who are growing up with multiplayer video games and **social media accounts**.

Why go outside?

Recent studies have exposed the benefit—even necessity—of **spending time outdoors**, both for kids and adults. Some argue that it

can be any outdoor environment. Some claim it has to be a "green" environment—one with trees and leaves. Others still have shown that just a picture of greenery can benefit mental health. These nuances aside, most of the studies agree that kids who play outside are smarter, happier, more attentive, and less **anxious** than kids who spend more time indoors. While it's unclear how exactly the cognitive functioning and mood improvements occur, there are a few things we do know about why nature is good for kids' minds.

- **It builds confidence.** The way that kids play in nature has a lot less structure than most types of indoor play. There are infinite ways to interact with outdoor environments, from the backyard to the park to the local hiking trail or lake, and letting your child choose how he treats nature means he has the power to control his own actions.

- **It promotes creativity and imagination.** This unstructured style of play also allows kids to interact meaningfully with their surroundings. They can think more freely, design their own activities, and approach the world in inventive ways.

- **It teaches responsibility.** Living things die if mistreated or not taken care of properly, and entrusting a child to take care of the living parts of their environment means they'll learn what happens when they forget to water a plant, or pull a flower out by its roots.

- **It provides different stimulation.** Nature may seem less stimulating than your son's violent video game, but in reality, it activates more senses—you can see, hear, smell, and touch outdoor environments. "As the young spend less and less of their lives in natural surroundings, their senses narrow," Louv warns, "and this reduces the richness of human experience."

- **It gets kids moving.** Most ways of interacting with nature involve more **exercise** than sitting on the couch. Your kid doesn't have to be joining the local soccer team or riding a bike through the park—even a walk will get her blood pumping. Not only is exercise good for kids' bodies, but it seems to make them more focused, which is especially beneficial for kids with **ADHD**.

- **It makes them think.** Louv says that nature creates a **unique sense of wonder** for kids that no other environment can provide. The phenomena that occur naturally in backyards and parks everyday make kids ask questions about the earth and the life that it supports.

- **It reduces stress and fatigue.** According to the **Attention Restoration Theory**, urban environments require what's called directed attention, which forces us to ignore distractions and exhausts our brains. In natural environments, we practice an effortless type of attention known as soft fascination that creates feelings of pleasure, not fatigue.

So while screen time is the easier, more popular choice, it's important to set aside time for outdoor play. For fun, stimulating activities you and your kids can do in nature, see **Ideas for Getting Your Kids into Nature**. ■