

# NEWS LETTER

HAPPY  
SPRING



## **Meher Montessori Helen Grace Fundraiser**

**From Thursday, March 8!  
To Friday, March 30!**



## ▶ Our Annual Partnership Breakfasts

Our Annual Partnership Breakfasts will be held this month for the Middle, Upper and Lower Elementary students. The children share with their parents the special projects they have created. These Partnership Breakfast celebrations not only give parents, children and teachers a wonderful opportunity to get together and enjoy the work the children have done and have breakfast treats, but also give parents and children an occasion to visit and experience the upper level classrooms. On **Thursday, March 22nd**, the oldest Upper Elementary children joined the Middle School children for their Partnership Breakfast at the Middle School. On **Wednesday, March 28th**, the oldest Lower Elementary children will join the Upper Elementary children for their Partnership Breakfast in Ms. Strand's classroom. Then on **Thursday, March 29th**, the oldest primary children and the Lower Elementary children will join together for breakfast with their parents in Ms. Tenold's Lower Elementary classroom. The children are very excited to share their projects with their parents.

## ▶ Spring Break

**April 2nd – April 6th**

## ▶ School Shirt Day

Don't forget! **Every last Friday of the month**, is Meher's School Shirt Day! We hope to have 100% participation so that every class can have a party.

## ▶ Re-Enrollment

Re-enrollment applications for the school year of 2018–2019 was sent home on **Monday, March 19th**. You must return the form by **Friday, March 30th**. 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.



It's March and our classroom is going very well. We are very happy with the progress our children are making. All our older children are reading and some are writing great words and simple sentences of their own. They use the movable alphabet everyday to spell out words that come to their minds. The young ones are mastering their different sounds of the letters and writing numbers in sequence from at least one to fifty.

Some of our children have developed a fascination with maps. They recognized the names of most of the countries in North and South America, and most of the states in the United States of America. They find joy learning more about these map pieces especially when learning through games. They see how each country has its own special shape, design, color and name. They can construct the map on a control chart, on a rug or on the table. Then the children take a paper map and write the country's name and place its flag. These activities help them to remember the country and recognize the flag.

We achieved 100% participation on School Shirt Day. We will enjoy a pizza or ice cream party one of these days. I want to thank our parents for

their support sending their children with their school shirt. So far we have won every month. Let's do it again on Friday the 30th of this month. We had just one birthday princess last February 27th and she is no other than Cristina Resendiz; she turned 4 years old. She had a great lunch party in our classroom. We have four children in our class who are March celebrants. They are: Peyton Fu and Ahnika York turning 5, Alexander Brezhnev turning 4 and Ivanna Salinas turning 6 years old. To you all a Happy Birthday! May you enjoy many more birthdays to come and be smart and well mannered children as you grow each year.

Before I go on with more activities for the month of March, let me express my gratitude, and appreciation to all our parents and their families who have given their time and effort to make our "Chinese and Korean New Year" a very successful one! From the preparation of food, distribution of money envelopes to the cleaning. There were Chinese and Korean foods, all delicious and tasty! Some of our children proudly wore their traditional Chinese and Korean attire in school this special day. Thank you so very much from the bottom of our hearts.

Xinnian hao!

We also have our projects for St. Patrick's Day – "The St. Patrick's Day Rainbow Ornament" and "The Shamrock Craft Kit." These projects are done by the children to relax after they have done at least three to four works in class. The projects are posted on our staircase walls.

We started our "Helen Grace Chocolate Fundraiser" this March 8th and it will end this 30th of this month. We do hope that you'll support our class in this activity. Selling and or buying one or two (but you are not limited) will surely help us to attain our goal. To all our parents, we thank you so much for your continuous support of all our school and class activities.

Special events coming: The "School Blue Submarine Presentation" was the 13th of March. We will have our Lower Elementary Partnership Program for our graduating children on the 29th of this month. Parents of the graduating children will be present in Ms. Tenold class to view their children's project and get to meet her. It will be a fun and memorable day especially for the graduating children. Last, but not least, before we all go on our Spring Break this April 2nd to 6th... we will have our "Easter Egg Hunt" on March 30th! As always I am indebted to my two hard working and reliable assistants: Mrs. Suh and Ms. Bayon for their help in the classroom. Both of you are patient and compassionate in your field of work and the school. Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart. Thank you too Ms. Ramirez and Ms. Kulwicki for filling in and giving a smooth flow in the classroom. You ladies are always appreciated in everything you do for

the good of the children. Keep up the good work!

Lastly I'd like to mention our pets in the classroom; our ladybugs left their cocoon after being in their larvae stage for almost 2 weeks. So Friday, March 2nd we set them free in our woodchip garden. The ladybugs were so happy for we set the open container on top of a green thick leaf. Our butterflies were next; Mrs Suh brought them in the same garden area. There were tons of flowers blooming and so the little butterflies were excited to explore the new area of their habitat. The children said farewell to all of them.

Love always,

Mrs. Rivera, Mrs. Suh, Ms. Bayon, Ms. Ramirez and Ms. Kulwicki





A new season comes to us once more as we begin the month of March. The children were so excited to see the butterfly come out of its cocoon. The ladybugs have grown as well and the children observed how the color of their bodies changed from black to a bright orange or red. The children sang our ladybug song as we released them in the garden the other day. As the month progresses, we will talk more about the signs of spring.

There are several activities lined up for this month

- The Blue Submarine Presentation came to us on Tuesday, March 13th. Children learned about the creatures in the ocean through a hands-on activity. They got the chance to observe and touch some of the sea creatures.

- Partnership Project – This year, we have 6 graduating children in our class. They will be working together with the children in the Lower Elementary classroom (Ms. Tenold's class) to create a joint project. These projects will be on display on March 29th during the Partnership Breakfast.

- On March 16th, we had a special snack party to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. We read a story about St. Patrick and also talked about the beautiful country of Ireland.

- Egg Hunt – will be on March 30th. Instructions and details for this activity will be given and posted.

The older children in the classroom have been very interested in learning about life cycles and identifying the parts of the animals. Most of them also made little booklets and small charts to show these. There's an increasing interest among the older children to write in cursive and label what they made. The younger children are getting more at ease in carrying out activities in the Practical Life area like caring for the plants in the classroom by wiping the leaves or arranging flowers in a vase. The food preparation jobs are an all time favorite even among our younger children.

School Shirt Day happens on the last Friday of each month, so please make an effort to have your child wear his/her school shirt on that day. Sadly, we didn't make 100 percent last month which means we won't be able to have a Pizza lunch this time.

Our birthday celebrant for this month is Jorge Alcala. He turns 6 on March 21st.

I'm so grateful to be working alongside a supportive staff like Ms. Alvarado Ms. Martinez, Ms. Kulwicki and welcome to the team Ms. Lopez.

Songs In the Classroom:

*"Ladybug" by Frank Leto*

*Ladybug, ladybug (echo)*

*Landed on my thumb (echo)*

*Crawled up to my wrist (echo)*

*And crawled up to my elbow (echo)*

*Ladybug, ladybug*

*Crawled up my arm*

*And then it flew away.*

*Oh ladybug, oh ladybug*

*Oh won't you be my friend*

*Oh ladybug, oh ladybug*

*Won't you come and visit me again.*

*"Fireflies"*

*Winkin', blinkin', winkin' blinkin'*

*See that little light*

*Now it's here, now it's there*

*Now it's out of sight*

*Winkin', blinkin', winkin' blinkin'*

*Fireflies at night.*

Happy Spring to All !!!



**Class News**

The year is sure going by fast and we are having an exciting month! We released our butterflies that we got as caterpillars from Insect Lore. Two parent volunteers took a group of students

to the pet store to find out the gender of the bearded dragon - it is a girl and we renamed her Rose! The students in charge of her like giving her baths and interacting with her and the rest of the class. We have another going out planned for April to the Marine



Mammal Care Center, so that group of students involved in the trip are busy studying about marine mammals, with more of a specific focus on seals because that is what the care center deals with the most.

**Curriculum news**

We had a special guest speaker, Dr. Molina, to teach the class about the human body. She is a friend of Rafaela's family and comes from Argentina, and she had the wonderful ability to talk in simple terms for the students. Our class was very interested in this topic and so Dr. Molina covered four of the major systems of the body, using diagrams and pictures as aids. One highlight was the digestive system while she explained more about how what we eat affects our bodies. Students asked many good questions and we were so happy to have this great opportunity.

First and second years are still covering much ground in math, working on adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing in various ways. They might use materials or fingers, and they might do

the math in their head or work it out on paper. They are also practicing multiples every day, which is like skip counting. There has also been improvement in their writing skills, both with their penmanship and their ability to put their thoughts down. The students have worked hard at this all year, because they want to be able to write as fast as they are learning during the day.

Third years were very busy this month with Partnership Breakfast projects. They spent several mornings in the Upper Elementary with a partner or two from that class to help them do a research report. Our students look forward to this time with the older students where they get to be in the other classroom. Then they get to turn around and help the primary students who work on Partnership Breakfast projects in our classroom! Our class thoroughly enjoys teaching the younger members of our school who will be in our room next year and showing them where some of the school supplies are and which lessons they can expect for their first year in this classroom.



## ► Ms. Strand's Class

## CLASSROOM NEWS

Our very own 5th and 6th years participated in the Montessori Model United Nations Conference recently. MMUN is a real simulation of UN Committees that discuss actual issues the world faces, and convene to create resolutions proposed by students who act as delegates from countries all over the world. This conference, attended by students from every continent, requires a great deal of preparation from every attendee. Meher's students represented Portugal, Cuba, South Korea, Venezuela and Pakistan, and discussed solutions to issues such as Rights of Indigenous People, Reduction of Military Budgets, and Diplomatic Protection. The week we spent in New York City for the conference is one that we will all remember for a long time.

THE STATUE OF LIBERTY







**MONTESORRI MODEL UNITED NATIONS  
OPENING CEREMONIES**



**CAFE UN DEUX TOIS**



**ENJOYING AN EUROPEAN MEAL**



**BRUNCH**

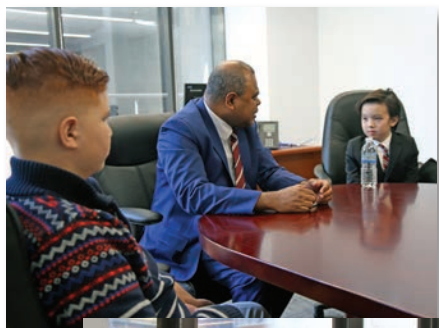


**TIME SQUARE**





**MET WITH U.N. AMBASSADOR OF VANUATU  
ODO TEVI**



**LOCAL PIZZA JOINT**





## U.N. HEADQUARTERS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Hello Meher families! Spring is here, which means the school year is two-thirds finished. At this point in the year, the 7th graders have fully transitioned into Middle School students, comfortable with the new demands and expectations placed upon them, while the 8th graders, on the edge of graduating, eagerly anticipate their move to high school.



Back to School Night the feeling among parents was, "I want to take that class!" So below is a little update from Mr. Chavez about the exciting things happening in his class ...

**I think I can, I think I can, I can!**

I found it very rewarding earlier this month when one of our 7th grade students had a breakthrough and faced their long-held fear of mathematics, bravely taking on a series of challenging word problems! However, that wasn't the only demonstration of self-confidence this month. Mrs. Holmes, the music teacher, commented to me the other day, "Many of the students are understanding that with practice and work they can learn to do something that they didn't think they'd be able to do." She was referring to how well they are learning the music pieces she assigned to them and how skilled they have become playing their instruments in ensembles, "a task," Mrs. Holmes explains, "is a much more challenging than one might think!"

In Biomimicry and Design class we have explored how humans can take cues from nature's models to imitate and innovate from nature's designs and processes to solve human problems. In this analysis the kids have gotten introduced to a variety of design and engineering fields.

For example, we have explored how coral sequesters carbon dioxide work and were introduced to a few innovative chemical engineering companies that are mimicking this process to create CO2 sequestering concrete to address climate change.

We have compared how nature makes material vs traditional man made methods and have learned about new technologies that are being utilized to develop products and solutions via non destructive and sustainable practices.

We have become structural engineers and have examined the strategies that trees utilize to gain insight on what makes the design of a tree so effective.

**Middle School Design Class looks anew at Nature!**

Way back in September when Mr. Chavez, the Middle School Design teacher, introduced his class during

We have played the part of bio inspired biomedical engineers to look at how nature is influencing health related innovations.

We have analyzed how software engineers are taking cues from nature to develop algorithms that are based on evolution itself to provide life-like video games and swarm technology.

We have also spent time connecting with nature via grounding, creating bio-inspired art, exploring the fascinating world of cymatics, and even building a website! Check us out at [mothermuse.org](http://mothermuse.org).

Cymatics  
Coral inspired print project  
Leaf inspired clay project

The Middle School Garden Project just in time for spring!

Maria Montessori writes “work does not hinder study, but even makes it possible to study better,” which is great news for our coming garden project. After five years, and small steps towards incorporating a working garden in our Middle School home, Mrs. Chagoya has enabled the Middle School to take a great leap. Here is her announcement letter.



**PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS**

Hello all,

I'm excited to announce that we will begin our Natural Agriculture Garden Project at the Middle School next week. Ron Hegelsen and Masayo Sugimoto from Shumei America, will begin the first of four monthly workshops with the kids. These will take place during Science class and Health class and will incorporate lessons from both.

Here is a general plan for the outdoor part:

- Start seedlings
- Plant root vegetables in planters
- Prepare soil on grounds for eventual transplanting
- Design garden area and a swale (pathway to save rainwater.)
- Begin digging a rudimentary swale.

Students will also learn about Natural Agriculture practices, soil microbiology, GMOs, and how the economy and misinformation affects the farming business. I am writing the curriculum with Ron and Masayo.

We hope to also work together with Esteban Chavez with garden design and Lizette Espinosa with the business end of it.

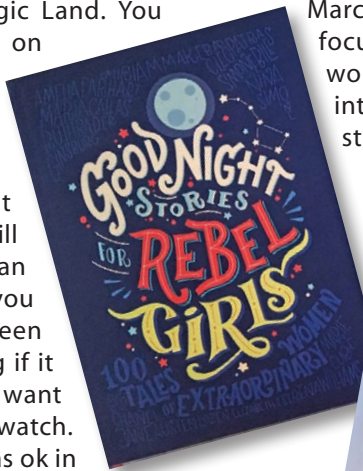
This Tuesday, students will begin planting seeds in small containers. Ron and Masayo will provide pots, Natural Agriculture seeds, and soil. There is also a plan to get some carrots going if we can purchase a deep planter.

If you would like to learn more about Natural Agriculture practices, please visit this website: <https://www.shumei-na.org/>

Thanks and stay tuned for more!  
Elizabeth Cardenas-Chagoya

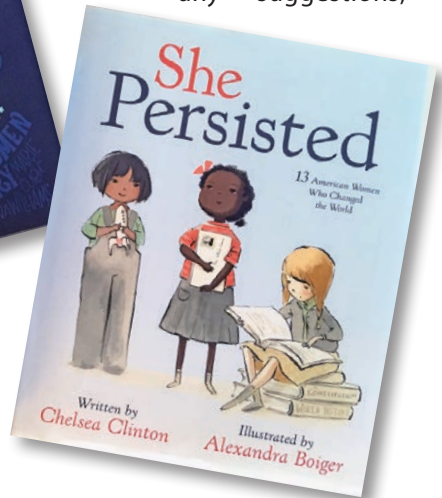


**Last Month** - I would like to thank the parents that were able to attend Parent Night Last month. It was a small group, but hopefully, it was informative for those who were able to make it. As the topic was the Mathematics Materials, I went off on a bit of tangent while talking about how math is in just about everything we see and do in our everyday lives. This tangent included my mentioning a great old cartoon called Donald Duck in Mathmagic Land. You can find this on youtube very easily. I know because I went home and looked it up after Parent Night. It's still great! But, as it is an older cartoon you may want to screen it before deciding if it is something you want your children to watch. Language that was ok in 1959, when the video was released, might not be ok for today's young viewers.



done online only. At back to school night, way back in September, a flyer went home with our Class Code. In case you lost the flyer or enrolled later in the year, our class code is PXY4L. Also, I have books on the classroom wishlist that you are more than welcome to purchase for the class.

**In The Classroom** – This year I am doing something new in the classroom. March is Women's Month. So my focus will be to read about strong women in history and highlight intelligence, perseverance, and strength in little girls. I welcome any suggestions,



**Scholastic Orders** – Just a reminder that all Scholastic book orders are



## MONARCH BUTTERFLIES

books, or presentations from parents. I would like to thank Gabi Young and Maelin O'Connell for starting the month by letting me borrow 2 great books to read. The books are "Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls," and "She Persisted."

March 17th was St. Patrick's Day. The children were all encouraged to wear green the day before, the 16th. As a festive treat, I always provide Lucky Charms for their morning snack on this day. This is the day we had our March cooking activity as we did earn 100% participation for February's School Shirt Day. The children are very excited to make Ina Garten's Irish Soda Bread recipe. It is my favorite of all the cooking activities we do as a class.

Friday, March 30th, is this month's School Shirt Day. It is also the day of our annual Class Egg Hunt. The Hunt is from 11:00 – 11:15 on the playground. Parents are welcome to attend and take pictures. A notice for that has been on the coat rack since March 9th. All children are encouraged to bring 5 filled plastic eggs. No candy or chocolates in the eggs, please. Money, stickers, bubbles, crayons, etc. are some of the more popular items parents have filled the eggs with.

**On March 18th, Meher will once again have an information table set up at Sierra Madre's Wistaria Festival. Volunteers are always welcome.**

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



## AFTER SCHOOL ART CLASS



**Children need opportunities to develop hand strength and dexterity needed to hold pencils**

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**An overuse of touchscreen phones and tablets is preventing children's finger muscles from developing sufficiently.**



**Children struggle to hold pencils due to too much tech, doctors say**

Children are increasingly finding it hard to hold pens and pencils because of an excessive use of technology, senior paediatric doctors have warned.

An overuse of touchscreen phones and tablets is preventing children's finger muscles from developing sufficiently to enable them to hold a pencil correctly, they say.

"Children are not coming into school with the hand strength and dexterity they had 10 years ago," said Sally Payne, the head paediatric occupational therapist at the Heart of England foundation NHS Trust. "Children coming into school are being given a pencil but are increasingly not be able to hold it because they don't have the fundamental movement skills.

"To be able to grip a pencil and move it, you need strong control of the fine muscles in your fingers,. Children need lots of opportunity to develop those skills."

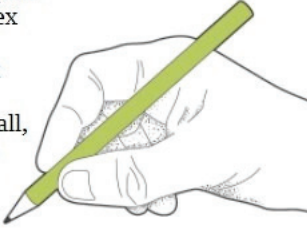
Payne said the nature of play had changed. "It's easier to give a child an iPad than encouraging them to do muscle-building

## Holding a pencil correctly requires strong finder muscle control to help produce legible writing and avoid discomfort



### Dynamic tripod

Thumb, index and middle fingers work together allowing small, coordinated movements



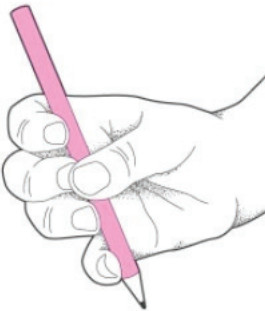
### Thumb-wrap grasp

The thumb is used to stabilise the pencil rather than to assist with movements



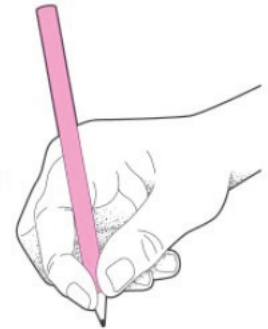
### Five-finger grasp

Movement is initiated primarily by the little finger



### Upright tripod grasp

Pencil is held low and is not resting between the thumb and index finger



play such as building blocks, cutting and sticking, or pulling toys and ropes. Because of this, they're not developing the underlying foundation skills they need to grip and hold a pencil."

Six-year-old Patrick has been having weekly sessions with an occupational therapist for six months to help him develop the necessary strength in his index finger to hold a pencil in the correct, tripod grip.

His mother, Laura, blames herself: "In retrospect, I see that I gave Patrick technology to play with, to the virtual exclusion of the more traditional

toys. When he got to school, they contacted me with their concerns: he was gripping his pencil like cavemen held sticks. He just couldn't hold it in any other way and so couldn't learn to write because he couldn't move the pencil with any accuracy.

"The therapy sessions are helping a lot and I'm really strict now at home with his access to technology," she said. "I think the school caught the problem early enough for no lasting damage to have been done."

Mellissa Prunty, a paediatric occupational therapist who specialises

in handwriting difficulties in children, is concerned that increasing numbers of children may be developing handwriting late because of an overuse of technology.

“One problem is that handwriting is very individual in how it develops in each child,” said Prunty, the vice-chair of the National Handwriting Association who runs a research clinic at Brunel University London investigating key skills in childhood, including handwriting.

“Without research, the risk is that we make too many assumptions about why a child isn’t able to write at the expected age and don’t intervene when there is a technology-related cause,” she said.

Although the early years curriculum has handwriting targets for every year, different primary schools focus on handwriting in different ways – with some using tablets alongside pencils, Prunty said. This becomes a problem when some of the children also spend large periods of time on tablets outside school.

But Barbie Clarke, a child psychotherapist and founder of the Family Kids and Youth research agency, said even nursery schools were acutely aware of the problem that she said stemmed from excessive use of technology at home.

“We go into a lot of schools and have never gone into one, even one which has embraced teaching through technology, which isn’t using pens alongside the tablets and iPads,” she

said. “Even the nurseries we go into which use technology recognise it should not all be about that.”

Karin Bishop, an assistant director at the Royal College of Occupational Therapists, also admitted concerns. “It is undeniable that technology has changed the world where our children are growing up,” she said. “Whilst there are many positive aspects to the use of technology, there is growing evidence on the impact of more sedentary lifestyles and increasing virtual social interaction, as children spend more time indoors online and less time physically participating in active occupations.” ■



▶ **Spring Break**

**April 2nd – April 6th**

▶ **Elementary Camp Surf**

**April 23rd – April 27th**

▶ **Middle School  
Camp Whitsett**

**April 25th – April 27th**