



NEWS LETTER

Pathfinder Ranch
Outdoor Education Camp

THANKFUL!



www.mehermontessori.org



► Winter Break

This year the Winter Break will be from Dec. 24th – Jan. 4th. The school will resume classes on Jan. 7th. Happy Holidays!

► Fundraiser Results

Thank you for your support!

Our fundraiser was an amazing success! We could not have achieved the final sales total without everyone's effort.

We will announce the results next Newsletter!

► Food & Toy Drive

Our Food & Toy Drive will begin Monday, December 3 - 14.



► Parent Conferences

Our first round of Parent Conferences begins on Monday, December 3rd. Each class will have their own sign-ups. Look out for them on the sign-in books.

► Happy Thanksgiving

Wishing all of our Meher families a happy Thanksgiving filled with love, joy, family, friends and lots of delicious food. I am thankful to be of service to you and all of your wonderful children.

Remember to follow us on [instagram](#). [meher_montessori_schools](#).

Peace,
Adela Munoz

► Information Changes

Please notify the office immediately if there are any changes in your personal emergency information, for our files. It is very important that we always have up-to-date information in case we need to reach you in an emergency. Any home or work changes and also any changes in those authorized to pick up your child should be written down and turned into Mrs. Muñoz or Mrs. Chavez as soon as possible.



Hello everyone! October's excitement went by quickly and November is having a blast of it too! To begin with, I'd like to wish everyone a happy Fall season! Our classroom is bright with Fall colors! The children punched a dark brown turkey and covered it with Fall leaves for its feathers, then glued two goeey eyes to make it look cute and funny. These are all posted in our staircase. To make our Thanksgiving a festive one, each child will make 4 rings of fall colors, connect them and then Mrs. Suh will put them all together. She will hang them onto the hallway ceiling and form a Fall banner! Thank you so much Mrs. Suh for this colorful, and fun project; the children are enjoying every bit of it.

We had another 100% School Shirt Day for the month of October; this is our second time around. We had "pizza lunch" last October 31st, the day of our Halloween Parade. The children paraded their beautiful costumes of "princesses," "cartoon characters" and "Marvel heroes" with a smile and a wave to the happy and excited parents and relatives. The children were the center of the "Paparazzi" crowd. Mrs. Suh was a beautiful witch with her matching dancing broom! I was a simple "cat." We posed for our Halloween class picture

then walked back to our classroom. Thank you dear parents for helping during this special event. For lunch the children feasted on their sumptuous "pizza" of cheese and pepperoni toppings complete with extra snacks and desserts brought by the children. I'd like to thank Christina Hessing (Nicholas's mom) and Annie Chew (Julianna's mom) for bringing in extra treats at lunch time. After their first playtime, we had our regular circle time to sing songs, recite poems, and read a book on Halloween. The children who brought in "Goody Bags" distributed them and the other children thanked their classmates for their generosity. At 1:00 pm, the class went outside to enjoy the different areas of entertainment prepared by the Middle School children, staff and parents. They had face painting, games and prizes, and decorated their own cookies and snacks! The children went home happy and fulfilled..

Our classroom is full of energetic and enthusiastic children. Younger children love to explore and are working on materials from the practical life and sensorial areas: water works, cutting papers on the line, tearing or punching papers on the line, polishing, and tracing with their two fingers, to mention a few. How their faces change gladness

and concentrations as they see the good results of their works. The older children are working on their reading of words, phonograms and puzzle words. Phonograms are combinations of letters that create unique sounds that may not sound exactly like the phonetic expressions of these letter combinations. For example, "ea" makes an "ee" sound; the child reads words like "mean," "bean" and "lean." There is a list of more words of this sound that the child practices before moving on to other phonogram words, puzzle words on the other hand is a specific Montessori term for a word that can't be analyzed phonetically. This basic "flash card" memorization uses singular irregular words printed on individual cards. Examples of these words are: is, I, at, on, me, he, she, to, for are, to mention a few. They practice writing their cursive words too and moves on to math as the day progresses. After class, they are tired but still excited to play after in the playground with their friends and classmates.

October 18th was The Great California Shake Out Drill; it was a success. The children understood the meaning of some terms like: California Shake, otherwise known as "earthquake," drill which means "practice." On the day of the drill, the children were calm, alert and followed the rules as I led them outside. After a while, Mrs. Munoz gave the OK signal for us to go back in to our classroom.

Mrs. Suh and Ms. Martinez are busy guiding the children with their Thanksgiving Turkey Headresses. They sit and direct the children also in right manners and good conduct, ever watchful of them throughout class time and during recess periods. I'd like

to thank them both for being great assistants in our classroom. Ms. Bayon, Ms. Kulwicki and Ms. Ramirez are all helpful as floaters for both Primary classrooms. They are quick to assist and direct any child who seeks help.

We have a "Harvest Table" in our classroom. Children brought in some autumn foods: pomegranate, persimmon, corn, and pumpkin to mention a few, as well as maple leaves of different colors. This is related to our discussions on the Fall season and Thanksgiving Day. We discussed, what we are thankful for and listed the answers on each child's turkey.

Parents are invited to join us in celebrating Thanksgiving Day on Wednesday, November 21st. A flyer will soon be posted in the sign- in book with further instructions.

"Today be thankful and think how rich you are. Your family is priceless, your time is gold and your health is wealth."

Love always: Mrs. Rivera, Mrs. Suh and Ms. Martinez



Thanksgiving Poem:

Funny Bird

**A Turkey is a funny bird,
its head goes wobble, wobble.
All it knows is just one word,
"Gobble, gobble, gobble!"**



The Costume Parade

The children were so excited to show off their colorful and innovative costumes that day... they came as super-heroes, princesses, fairytale/storybook characters and more. Some family members even got so involved as to make original costumes. Julian Diaz wore a robot costume from recycled material created by his grandpa. Cylis Garcia had a unique piece made by his aunt who makes costumes for the LA Opera.

Later that day, the children were given a Halloween bash/party organized by our Middle School girls. They were treated to carnival games like ring toss, hit the cans, bean bag toss and the hammer game (which became quite popular among the boys). There was also face-painting, musical chairs, cookie decorating and of course snacks like popcorn and lemonade. Congratulations for planning such a successful event. We are indeed grateful to the Middle School and all the parent volunteers who manned those booths. Anasofia's parents (Lizette and Giuseppe) were among those who volunteered for this event.

Harvest Table

Our table is slowly being filled with

fruits and vegetables being harvested this time of year. Daniel was the first one to bring a white pumpkin to our table. The following day, Jake came with a small orange pumpkin. Then Luke brought a large persimmon and two mandarin oranges harvested from their fruit trees. It's a wonderful experience for children to see, smell, touch and taste all of these. Yes, even listen to the dried seeds inside a gourd we had saved from last year and kept by the window ledge of our classroom.

The other day, our class did an experiment on floating and sinking using items from our harvest table. Can you guess which ones floated and which one sank? Your children will be eager to tell you if you ask them.

Cooking in the Classroom

We have been incorporating simple cooking activities in the classroom. On the first Friday of this month, we made banana pancakes for our snacks. The children mashed the bananas, mixed the eggs, milk and flour. It was a surprise to see everyone eating and finishing what they made. Up ahead on the 3rd Friday of this month, we will be making Persimmon bread.

We start this activity early on a Friday as soon as they come in the

► Ms. Tenold's Class

Class News

We have a new student! A 7-year-old boy named Anthony Perla. We are thrilled to have another wonderful individual to add to the mix and energize the class. Our students always jump to action to help show new students around and invite them to work together.

Arin Onar turned 6 on November 12 and Mateo Chavez turned 7 on November 17.

Curriculum News

We are seeing children taking initiative, being creative, and doing new, exciting things. A third year student recently wrote a letter to a favorite author of hers, with questions about how she came up with the ideas in the book, and we sent it to her hoping to hear back. Making books is a favorite choice this month, and a couple of 2nd year students who enjoy this immensely made each one in the class their own template so they could write a book. Mrs Gonzalez does many thoughtful crafts with the children which they love.



classroom at 8:15 a.m. so bring your child to school on time and they won't miss the fun of cooking.

Thanksgiving Feast

As Thanksgiving approaches, we will take time to reflect on what we are thankful for. We will read stories about the first Thanksgiving and talk about how people shared during that first meal together. So in keeping with this tradition, Parents are invited to come to our Thanksgiving Feast on Wednesday, November 21st. The children will make "Stone Soup" from the items we collect from our harvest table. Come and bring a dish to share for this occasion.

Our birthday celebrants this November are:

- Cylis , turning 6 on the 15th
 - Kelsey, turning 4 on the 20th
 - Connor, turning 4 on the 23rd
 - Zoe, turning 5 on the 27th
- Happy Birthday to you all!!!

Through your generous fund raising support our classroom has been blessed with some brand new Montessori materials like the Pink Tower and the Brown Stairs. The children have been very eager to use them. Even our fish tank has new fish added to it. Thank you so much.

Calendar Reminders:

December 3-7 – Parent/Teacher conferences. Please make time to come to this as we will discuss your child's work and progress in the classroom. Sign-up sheets will be out soon.

"In everything give thanks"

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Mrs. Roque, Ms. Lopez, and Ms. Bayon

For Garden Harvest Day, we focused on the parts and function of a seed. Children wrote about and drew a seed, and the third years showcased the garden by explaining what they have been doing and making a salad for everyone. For read-aloud, we are reading "The Nutcracker". The artist of the month is Leonardo da Vinci, with a specific focus on the "Mona Lisa", and the music we are playing and discussing this month is the "Four Seasons" by Vivaldi.

Timelines are a learning tool we are focusing on a lot lately, because the students are interested in them. They are a big, long material that children have to carry, and roll out across the whole rug. They can work on it together for quite awhile and also incorporate different subjects like art and music history, or the study of California's history, or the formation of plants, animals, rocks, and the world.

We have been incorporating games into lesson practice, sometimes ones I suggest and other times one that the students came up with on their own. For example, a group of 5 students take out our work that shows a unit, ten, hundred, thousand, etc., 3 students put the material in various places around the room while the other 2 don't watch, and then they go find them and name what they bring back. With geometry terms for shapes and lines, a big group decided to each take one card at a time that had a term written and pictured on it, and go around the room looking for something that matched their card. A particularly fun game was put on entirely by one of our third years.

She called it the "Around the World Scavenger Hunt" and spent weeks making cards with different countries and a landmark or natural resource from that particular country. For the game, she hid the cards around the room and the rest of the class happily searched for them and then everyone learned together where each country is located and what their card said.

Calendar News

Holiday season is upon us and after celebrating Halloween and Dia de los Muertos, we went right to Veterans Day and Thanksgiving. My students were not familiar with the word "veteran" and thought maybe it was "vegetarian". We do talk a lot about vegetables so it makes sense they might think that!

BEAUTIFUL CRAFTS



FOREST ECOLOGY



ANIMAL ECOLOGY



ALPINE TOWER



MAD SCIENCE FAIR



**HALLOWEEN CELEBRATION**

One of the biggest highlights of the school year comes around in November: our camping trip to Pathfinder Ranch. This past week, the Upper Elementary along with the 3rd years from Ms. Tenold's room, left for the mountains and were immersed in nature for 4 days. Pathfinder is a 2.5 hour drive away, and is a lovely outdoor facility that offers horseback riding, hiking, geology studies, canoeing, archery, wilderness survival skills, plant and animals studies, cooperative and team challenges, and climbing walls and a large climbing tower.

When we arrived at camp, we listened to the Director of Pathfinder discuss respect and expectations of camp, while we ate our lunches. That was followed by getting settled in our cabins and unpacking. Our cozy cabin had 3 main rooms: a girl's dorm, a boy's dorm, and one common space that joins the two. During the week, we enjoyed spending some free time playing games next to the fireplace in the common room. Each day, the students had a busy schedule to follow: breakfast at 7:30am, followed by morning class for 3 hours, then lunch and a 3 hour afternoon class,

followed by dinner. After dinner, they had a bit of free time for journaling, playing soccer, card games and then a short evening class. At the end of the day, everyone was quite exhausted and fell asleep by 9pm.

On Thursday evening, we laughed quite a bit during our school's skit night. Many of our students signed up and shared a variety of talents: magic card tricks, Kung-Fu and Hapkido, and a few dramatic and silly skits. We also had a special guest come and visit us on Skit Night, Mr. Harrod! Mr. Harrod and his wife, Seve, joined us for the evening. Mr. Harrod told a wonderful Native American story to the group at the end of the night, that everyone enjoyed. It was really special having Mr. Harrod return to Pathfinder and join us this year.

We were accompanied by 5 parent chaperones: Anthony Alvarado, Magdalena Cordoba, Fred Marquez, Len De Castillo, and Lizette Espinoza. Thank you so much for joining us on this wonderful and challenging experience; we would not have been able to go if it were not for your support!

Until next year, Pathfinder!

Happy Autumn Meher Families! True, the first day of fall arrived some time ago, but until daylight noticeably shortened and chilly mornings occurred regularly, the first day of autumn was just a date, a positioning of the earth in its revolution around the sun. Now, as in this last week, seeing the students bundled in sweatshirts and shivering, it's fair to say - fall is here - just in time for Thanksgiving!

November naturally elicits thoughts of gratitude, and while I have many things to be thankful for, one of them is the more confident attitude students are displaying in their mathematical ability, that is not to say that they don't generally resist doing math, particularly at the beginning of class, but having taught the subject for over ten years, it's not a reaction I am unfamiliar with.

Currently, we are following a rather demanding high school text, which is mentally taxing, not so much because of long problem sets, in fact, the activities usually have no more than four or five questions, but because the students are required to translate ideas and situations into mathematical language. And even though I believe the joy of math is found in its conceptual component, there is value in being able to manipulate numbers quickly and effortlessly, which is why I like to have the students warm up with rote problem sets. Additionally, I will sometimes randomly ask a simple math problem like, say, "convert four-fifths to a percent" just to keep their mathematical minds agile!

Another thing for which I am grateful is the students' enthusiasm for literature, which their literature teacher, Eli Chavez has inspired. It was so satisfying to hear students excitedly discuss the first novel they read for class, *The Giver*, and eagerly speculate about what will happen next in the story. Or, later, from their second

reading assignment, Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel, "American Born Chinese," I got to overhear their conversations about being an outsider and acceptance. Below, Eli explains some of his thoughts for assigning "American Born Chinese"...

From a young age I was enamored with comic books. In these fantasy worlds where people had superpowers and their differences didn't make them outcasts, but rather made them stronger. Spending a majority of my summers in the air-conditioned sanctuaries of a bookstore, I would surround myself with graphic narratives and comic books. However, to teachers and parents spending my time reading comics books, though reading, was more of a vice than a virtue, and I was often chastised for choosing to read comic books. However, the canon of literature, like the canon of any art form, is constantly changing and evolving and this marriage of words and images that a graphic narrative creates is quickly becoming a valid medium for literature. For my class I wanted to teach the students that what is considered to be "literature" is not necessarily static and does not have to be defined as many pages of long-winded sentences. Furthermore, I wanted to demonstrate to the class that a graphic narrative is just as valid a vehicle through which to tell a personal story as any traditional work of literature can be, in fact it can even be more impactful. For this assignment, creating a graphic narrative of their own to speak to what makes them different, I wanted the students to feel the same way I did reading comic books as a young student. That our differences aren't there to make us feel worse, but that they can make us super-heroes too.

— Elias Chavez
Literature Teacher



Poem by Nixus Flores

Standing in a line with all my other friends.
Little do we know, this is where our lives end.
Standing in a line now shorter than before,
We're closer to where we're going. I can see the door

Standing in a line, even closer to our destination,
Some of my friends don't answer when I call them,
Giving me a sense of great frustration.

Standing in a line, I now hear what sounds to be
a chopping
Repetitive, and it's not stopping.
Standing in line, surrounded by strangers,
other animals in their pens talking
The only words I make out are...danger?

Standing in a line, now anxious and tense;
I realize what's going on,
something I didn't earlier sense.

Standing in a line, my legs shaking like maracas
in a mariachi band
It's too late now,
I can see my body on the table,
but my neck in the farmers hand.

He picks me up and walks inside,
I pinch myself but no,
this is real life.

I won't say what he did next,
but it brought an unfortunate fate

Now me, no longer standing but lying on a plate,
hope you know about this whole ordeal.
Because now I am your thanksgiving meal.

I walk into the kitchen, greeted by the smell of gravy and biscuits. My grandma is setting the table in the dining room while my grandpa slices the turkey. My stomach growls at the sight of a small table in the kitchen, filled with mashed potatoes, stuffing, biscuits, ham, and pumpkin pie. As time passes, more family members arrive. Before eating, we gather in a circle and thank God for everything He's given to us. I smile as I watch my family eat their food. I dig into my plate. I raise a piece of turkey to my mouth. I am overwhelmed with gratitude.

I Love Fall
by Nirali Bhakta

I love fall. I love hearing the sound of feet crunching on leaves, wearing my sweater all day, and eating pumpkin pie. It's the season when it's okay to chug hot drinks every morning and burn your tongue, the season when you wake up and get to cuddle in your blanket because it's so cold, but then you don't want to get up when it's time too, because it's really cold and your blanket is warm. I love fall colors and seeing people dress up very seasonal. I love getting sick because of the wind and I also love drinking water in fall, I don't know why. I love eating Thanksgiving dinner and hanging out with my family for a lot of reunions. I love how it is almost the holidays, and almost Christmas season. I just really love fall.

Halloween
by Vanessa Artiga

On Halloween day, the middle schoolers threw a Halloween party called the Spooky Smash, for the Elementary and Primary Students. We served food and drinks; played games, and offered face painting. A popular game that everyone liked was musical chairs. For musical chairs we played Halloween music. Another thing that the kids enjoyed was the face painting. Jordan, Julia and Nirali at the face painting booth painted a lot of cute things that little kids requested such as, a sugar skull, dogs, cats, unicorns, and lady bugs!! We all had a really fun time at the Spooky Smash!!

We especially want to thank Margarita Gill for donating to our Halloween party!!









Happy November!

Halloween

This year marked the second year in a row that our annual costume parade was held in Upper Heicher Hall. Hosting a costume parade on Halloween is a great way to give the kiddos one more opportunity to show off their costumes. The older children enjoyed walking the loop and showing off their costumes and posing for pictures. As we had so many new and younger children this year, the parade itself was not as successful as years past. But that is ok. We know it is best to go with the flow of the children and not try to push our own agendas too much on such a high-energy day. Regardless, it was a great way to let out of that pent-up excitement and energy that has been building up all month long.

I want to thank all the parents that stayed to help the kiddos change out of their costumes after. It made the transition back into class mode all the easier. Once again, by 9:15, anyone entering the classroom would think it was just a regular school day. The children were able to settle back into our daily routine seamlessly. Our class snack party in the afternoon was a

big hit. The children loved sitting together in large groups and eating off of festive plates with some music going.

School Closed

The school will be closed on Thursday, November 22nd and Friday, November 23rd for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Missing Pieces

Since the start of school, we have had several small pieces go missing in the classroom. Should you find wooden beads, small cubes, plastic beads, or any other small random items in your child's pockets or lunch bags, please return them to the school. They may seem insignificant, but each missing piece means that we have an incomplete material in the classroom that has to be removed from the shelf until a replacement can be located. And, truth be told, I am running out of on-hand replacements for some of the materials.

In the Classroom

In October, I introduced sticker work to the class. Many of the younger children work on it daily. While it may just seem like your child is placing a

sticker on paper, there is much more to it than that. The limit is five stickers. Therefore the child is practicing counting; often times an older child will walk over and “check” that a younger child has indeed stopped at five stickers. Placement of the stickers, so that all five fit on the paper, helps with visual spatial awareness. And the ability to peel the protective sheet off the back of the sticker helps with fine motor skills as well as concentration.

Another material that I am super excited about is the Parts of an Animal Booklets that my older students have been doing. Last year, the children simply colored in and labeled preprinted booklets. At the consultant’s suggestion, I removed the preprinted booklets this year. Now the children have to draw out the booklets by hand. I must admit, at first I was hesitant, but I should have known better than to doubt the suggestion of the consultant or the ability of the children. And, as usual, all it takes is one child to be the first, and then a bevy of them want to try out their illustrative skills as well. Instead of being put off by how labor intensive it is, they are inspired and up to the challenge! I have continuously been blown away with the level of concentration, and attention to detail with each booklet a child has recreated.

As November 6th was the midterm elections, we talked a little bit about voting. This stemmed from some of the children asking about my “I voted” sticker in the morning. At the end of the day we put voting to practice by having the children “vote” for which

musical activity they wanted to end their day with: bean bag music or alphabet music. By popular vote, the alphabet music won. One child opted out of the voting, which provided a great practical example of choosing not to participate in the process but being upset about the outcome. The best part for me was when an older child said: “but you didn’t even vote!”

Before moving on, I would like to thank the parents who have made wishlist purchases for the garden, daycare and classroom. Ruby’s dad, Indra, has been checking in to see what Miss Tinajero would like for the garden for the aftercare children. And it sounds like the children that stay late



are enjoying the special gardening time with new plants, potting soil, and tools. We have been enjoying new music and movement activities at the end of class thanks to the CDs Andrew has purchased from the wishlist. Additionally, the children have loved the new books also purchased for the class from Elodie and Andrew. Thank you for your generosity!

School Shirt Day

The children all wore their school shirt last month. We are on a two-month streak! Apple muffins were on the menu for baking this month,

and the children loved making them. This month's school shirt day is Friday, November 30th. If all the children wear their school shirts again this month, we will have another baking activity in December. Also, on a side note, December's School Shirt Day will come a week early. It will be on Friday, December 14th. Please mark that on your calendar.

Next Month

Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences will take place the week of December 3rd. Conference sign-ups are all done online through PTCFast.com. An email with the login info will have been sent out to all parents by the time this newsletter arrives. If you have not received it, please contact Mrs. Wildhaber.

Altadena Tree Lighting Ceremony

On Saturday, December 8th, Meher will have an information table set up at the Altadena Tree Lighting Ceremony Winter Arts & Crafts Festival. A sign-up sheet for parent volunteers will go out at the beginning of December. If you cannot volunteer, we encourage all of our Meher families to come by and show their support in their Meher Montessori School t-shirts and hoodies.

High Touch High Tech

On Friday, December 14th High Touch High Tech will be here for a hands on presentation on bubbles. We had this presentation about 3 years ago, and it has been my very favorite so far. I am really looking forward to this batch of children

getting to experience it. Parents are welcome to attend. More details will go out in early December.

Winter Program

On Friday, December 21st, we will have a short Winter Program, followed by a refreshment party at 1:00 pm. Families are invited for both the program and the party to follow. More details on that will go out at the beginning of December. Additionally, if you plan on being out of town on the 21st, please let me know as soon as possible, as it will affect the seating arrangements for the performance.

Also, since December is a month filled with celebrations, please, please feel free to bring in books about any holidays or celebrations your family participates in. The more the children are exposed to celebrations that differ from their own, the more understanding they become of differences within families.

This year winter break will be from December 24th to January 4th. The school will be closed during that time.

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





The Washington Post

Photo:

Emilia Schweitzer, left, and Danielle Falls write with homemade quills during a summer day camp devoted to cursive instruction in Danbury, Conn. (Monica Jorge/For The Washington Post)

Karen Heller



September 2, 2018

From punishing to pleasurable, how cursive writing is looping back into our hearts

DANBURY, Conn. — Francesca Curatilo attended three camps this summer: wilderness, martial arts and — in the final days before the start of school — cursive.

Yes, cursive.

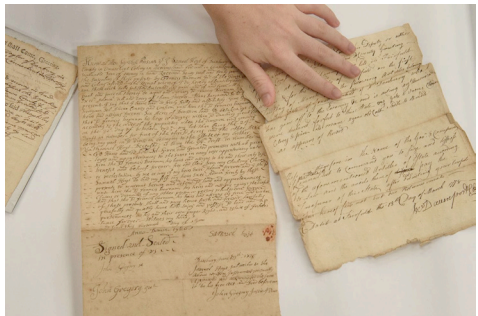
On a sunny morning, Francesca sat in a windowless room practicing the majestic swoop of an F. And she was delighted.

“I love how, at the end of the day, you see all the amazing stuff we can do with letters,” said Francesca, 6, who also answers to Cece. At home at night, she practiced her favorites: capital R, P, Z, Y, G and A. There was no assigned homework; Francesca did this for fun.

“When I’m older,” she vowed, “I can sign my name on contracts in cursive.”

Cursive in all its flowing permutations — the opal-shaped calligraphy of Spencerian, the simplified and precise Palmer Method; the spare D’Nealian, distinguished by its saucy “monkey tails”; the stolid and reliable Zaner-Bloser — was once a staple of American elementary education. In the classroom pantheon of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, cursive was the writing.

In recent decades, cursive was declared moribund, if not dead, after it was shredded from the Common Core in most states, including Connecticut. Typewriters, copiers, computers, phones, a veritable “Murder on the Orient Express” of culprits, had conspired to kill it. By the mid-aughts, only 15 percent of SAT essays were submitted in script. Today, many adults utilize a mash-up of cursive and print that often can be deciphered only by the author.



Historical documents at Danbury Museum & Historical Society, handwritten in script. The Historical Society organized the week-long camp after struggling to find interns who could read the records.

Brigid Guertin, executive director of the Danbury Museum & Historical Society, has struggled to find interns capable of deciphering the sepia-tinted documents of their city’s handwritten past. “The majority of our assets are in cursive and not transcribed,” she said.

So three years ago she launched cursive camp, in hopes of training tomorrow's interns today. Surprisingly, children and parents flocked to it.

The campers, ages 6 to 14, spent their waning days of vacation under the guidance of third-grade teacher Kathleen Johnson creating their own ink (a mashing of berries, vinegar and salt), scratching their names on paper with Day-Glo quills, or with their fingers in generous smears of shaving cream.

They created hat ads in cursive (Danbury is the "Hat City," having produced a quarter of the nation's toppers a century ago) and pored over postcards from that era penned in script. Similar camps are popping up across the country and in Great Britain, generated by parents' Palmerian nostalgia, a desire for children to master the (literally) old-school arts and enhance their research and writing skills.

"Cursive," Guertin said, "is an artistic expression of who we want to be."

Which was ironic, considering cursive's historical reputation.



Twin brothers Benjamin and David Miller examine an antique postcard written generations ago.

In the early 20th century, cursive was sometimes taught for an hour each day, and all the way through high school, as an almost military exercise. Handwriting

drills were supervised by taskmaster penmanship supervisors, armed with awards and demerits.

Cursive was "all about conforming to rules, other people's rules," said Tamara Thornton, a University of Buffalo history professor and author of "Handwriting in America: A Cultural History." "Your signature was the one place where people could express themselves."

The Palmer Method dominated much of the century's teaching, Thornton said, though "it wasn't so much a particular script as a method of teaching" that deployed "your whole arm in penmanship calisthenics." It wasn't art; it was exercise.

Back then, the preferred handwriting of artistic-minded free spirits was good old block-letter printing, introduced into schools by progressive educators such as Maria Montessori and John Dewey, who "believed writing should be about expression and communication," Thornton said. Because cursive required a level of fine-motor skills not typically accessible before third grade, printing was embraced as a way to get younger children to express themselves through writing.

Now that technology has routed children to communicate via typing or (shudder!) emoji, experts are finding more to recommend about pencil and



Students practice writing cursive in smears of shaving cream...

ink. Handwriting — print or cursive — increases development in three areas of the brain, according to a 2012 study, and “may facilitate reading acquisition in young children.”

Any kind of writing “is going to have massive benefits for the brain,” said Indiana University professor and co-author Karin James. Other studies demonstrate that students retain more information if they write their notes, instead of typing them. For all the challenges of cursive, young children acquire the skill “very fast, as soon as they get exposure,” she said. “Visual recognition during childhood is so plastic and malleable.”

A week will do. Campers seemed to luxuriate in the tactile activities, the way cursive allowed them to rarely raise their pens from paper, an entire word recorded in a few swooping strokes. By the end of the five-day program, Johnson said, “they read historical documents so much better,” and were mesmerized to unlock their secrets. Benjamin and David Miller, 10-year-old twins, thrilled at being able to read a 1908 postcard written in pristine script, addressed to an earlier Miller. “I think we found a relative!” exclaimed David.

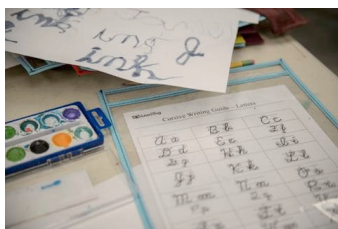
Janelle Minar drove almost two hours round-trip from Norwalk to Danbury so her sons, Davey Joe, 13, and Sparky, 8, could learn cursive. “I looked for well over a year for a program. It’s important for their hand-eye development. It’s very empowering to maximize their potential,” she said.



...and on paint-filled bags.

Johnson isn’t required to teach cursive during the school year but sometimes adds it to the curriculum after she’s met the state testing requirements. “Now that we have email, no one writes letters anymore,” she bemoaned. In camp, though, “I can teach it my own way. We can have fun and be messy the way you can’t be in school. Someone would probably come in and worry about a shaving cream allergy.”

Cursive’s resurgence, Thornton argues, is — like so much else these days — tied to politics. “Society has gotten nervous about deviating from what is the norm,” she said, and cursive “tends to make a comeback when conformity is threatened.” Still, “what’s most important is that kids enjoy it, and some people find it a wonderful form of expression,” she said. “Where is cursive really, really big? Christian home schooling and places like Louisiana.” But also the New York City schools, which last year encouraged, but didn’t mandate, teaching script.



Practice materials for cursive camp. Once a rigorous, mandated part of school, cursive is now regarded as more of an art by some taking it up today.

“Handwriting is about nostalgia,” Thornton said. “It’s about the past, and how we feel about our present and the future. Perhaps. Kayla Schweitzer, 7, just thought cursive was fancy and pretty and might be useful someday. “Like when you’re older and you’re famous,” she said, “you’ll know how to do your signature. To children, “cursive is an unknown, a secret language,” Guertin said. “If we don’t build out a connection to history, and the study of history, how will we know where we came from?”

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Stephen Marche



Why You Should Stop Yelling at Your Kids

The use of spanking to discipline children has been in decline for 50 years. But yelling? Almost everybody still yells at their kids sometimes, even the parents who know it doesn't work. Yelling may be the most widespread parental stupidity around today.

Households with regular shouting incidents tend to have children with lower self-esteem and higher rates of depression. A 2014 study in *The Journal of Child Development* demonstrated that yelling produces results similar to physical punishment in children: increased levels of anxiety, stress and depression along with an increase in behavioral problems.

How many times in your parenting life have you thought to yourself, after yelling at your kids, "Well, that was a good decision...?"

It doesn't make you look authoritative. It makes you look out of control to your kids. It makes you look weak. And you're yelling, let's be honest, because you are weak. Yelling, even more than spanking, is the response of a person who doesn't know what else to do. But most parents — myself included — find it hard to imagine how to get through the day without yelling. The new research on yelling presents parents

with twin problems: What do I do instead? And how do I stop?

Yelling to stop your kids from running into traffic is not what we're talking about here. We're talking about yelling as a form of correction. Yelling for correction is ineffective as a tool and merely imprints the habit of yelling onto the children. We yell at our kids over the same stuff every day, and we yell at them some more because the original yelling doesn't work. Put your clothes away. Come down for dinner. Don't ride the dog. Stop hitting your brother.

The mere knowledge that yelling is bad, in itself, won't help, said Alan Kazdin, a professor of psychology and child psychiatry at Yale. Yelling is not a strategy, it's a release.

"If the goal of the parent is catharsis, I want to get this out of my system and show you how mad I am, well, yelling is probably perfect," Dr. Kazdin said. "If the goal here is to change something in the child or develop a positive habit in the child, yelling is not the way to do that." There are other strategies, and they don't involve screaming like a maniac.

Many think of positivity as a form of laziness, as if parents who are positive aren't disciplining their children. But not yelling requires advance planning and discipline

for the parents, which yelling doesn't.

Dr. Kazdin promotes a [program called the ABCs](#), which stands for antecedents, behaviors and consequences. The antecedent is the setup, telling a child, specifically, what you want them to do before you want them to do it. Behaviors are where the behavior is defined and shaped, modeled by the parent. And the consequence involves an expression of approval when that behavior is performed, an over-the-top Broadway-style belt-it-to-the-back-row expression of praise with an accompanying physical gesture of approval.

So instead of yelling at your kid every night for the shoes strewn across the floor, ask him in the morning if he can put his shoes away when he comes home. Make sure when you come home that you put your own shoes away. And if your child puts his shoes away, or even puts them closer to where they're supposed to be, tell him that he did a great job and then hug him.

The ABC method of praise is a highly specific technique. You have to be effusive, so you actually have to put a big dumb smile on your face and even wave your hands in the air. Next thing is you have to say, in a very high, cheerful voice, exactly what you're praising. And then the third part is you have to touch the child and give him some kind of nonverbal praise. The silliness is a feature, not a bug. It makes the kid notice the praise that accompanies correct behavior. And that's the point.

"We want to build habits," Dr. Kazdin said. "The practice actually changes the brain, and in the process of that, the behaviors that you want to get rid of, having all kinds of temper tantrums and all the fights, all that just disappears." Furthermore, he noted, "as a side effect, when you do these things, the parents' depression and stress in fact go down and family relations pick up."

If our kids behave better, then we won't feel like yelling. And if we don't yell, our kids will behave better.

The beauty of having a system is that instead of reacting after your kids do something bad, instead of waiting for them to mess up and then getting angry, you have a conscious plan. But planning requires discipline on the part of the parent, and it's tough. "We know that humans have what's called a negativity bias," Dr. Kazdin says. "The technical term for that in psychology is 'normal.' This is something in the brain, in which through evolution we are very much sensitive to negative things in the environment."

We are hard-wired to yell. It's an evolutionary survival instinct that has turned on those it was meant to protect. It's hard to abandon yelling, because it gives us the impression that we're parenting.

In the 1960s, 94 percent of parents used physical punishment. A poll in 2010 found the number had declined to 22 percent. There are probably many reasons, including the influence of a number of childhood development educators. But surely one reason has to be that the reason to spank your kids evaporates if there's a more effective way to change their behavior that doesn't involve violence. Why spank if it doesn't work? The same applies to yelling: Why are you yelling? It isn't for the kids' sake.

Ultimately, techniques of discipline have to be about effectiveness, about getting through the day while trying to get your kids to do what you want and not do what you don't want. Praise works. Punishment doesn't.

[Stephen Marche](#) is a novelist and the host of a parenting podcast available on Audible. ■