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Upcoming Events

Feb. 25	Upper Elem. History Fair 4:00 - 6:00 PM Green Farmhouse
Feb. 26	Infant and Toddler Classrooms Closed
Mar. 1	Monthly Tuition Due
Mar. 11	Primary Parent Education Event
Mar. 12	Infant and Toddler Classroom Closed
Mar. 17- Mar. 19	Upper Elementary Restaurant Call for Reservations
Mar. 18	Coffee with the Head 8:45 AM Victorian Farmhouse

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

Headlines from Oak Farm Montessori School

502 Lemper Road Avilla, J.N 46710

www.oakfarm.org

260-897-4270

Our mission is to provide a Montessori environment that inspires children to reach their potential through meaningful work.

FROM JUDITH CUNNINGHAM, HEAD OF SCHOOL

The Original Brain-Based Education Program

During last Thursday's Coffee with the Head, we viewed Dr. Steven Hughes's presentation *Good at Doing Things: Montessori Education and Higher-Order Cognitive Functions*. Dr. Hughes is a pediatric neuropsychologist and assistant professor of pediatrics and neurology at the University of Minnesota Medical School. Dr. Hughes explained "how Maria Montessori's brain-based approach to education provides an unparalleled foundation for the development of academic, social, and executive functions critical for advanced problem solving and lifetime success." He showed "how Montessori education parallels what we now know about brain development and fosters the development of advanced cognitive functions, social cognition, and such higher-order competencies as empathy and leadership."

You can watch this presentation by clicking on the presentation's link at www.goodatdoingthings.com. Another link at this website leads to David Wheeler's blog www.justatheory.com/culture/education/good-at-doing-things.html. The following is a paraphrased excerpt from Wheeler's notes during a presentation of *Good at Doing Things*. This section is titled "Most Important Part of Talk Starts Now."

Hughes believes that a Montessori education provides an environment that is unique in its extraordinary role for developing executive functions. Executive functions are primarily what make an effective human being, capable of performing a multitude of premeditated functions that modify remote events through inten-

tional behavior. These advanced functions are performed by a developed prefrontal cortex and include:

- Judgment
- Planning
- Imagining
- Foresight
- Organizing
- Self-awareness
- Self-correction
- Strategizing
- Progress Monitoring
- Sustained Intention
- Impulse Restraint

Executive-function abilities are believed to be mostly genetic but may possibly be the result of early developmental environments also—possibly because these factors are hard to measure in children. However, all the environmental items believed to be needed for the development of these functions are amply present in the Montessori classroom, and Hughes believes that such a Montessori environment does indeed promote executive functions. He just has not yet completed the study to prove this conclusively.

The Montessori concept of normalization represents some aspects of executive functions. Working memory is essential to executive planning, and in Montessori classrooms, children plan learning games, which deliberately develops this memory. Also, need limits the number of materials, so children have to learn to limit inappropriate behavior, e.g. if only one pink

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LETTER FROM JUDITH

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tower is available, the child has to plan when its usage will be available while inhibiting impulses to act without restraint.

According to Wheeler's notes, "the only way to develop executive-function skills is through experimentation with environment," and due to Dr. Montessori's plethora of observations and research, the Montessori classroom is on its way to being proven just such an environment.

Congratulations to our Winter Wonderland Team

Congratulations to Abigail Loffler and her co-chairs, Shannon Leman and Kelly Strong, for their Winter Wonderland achievements. They coordinated a tremendously successful event that established new benchmarks for Oak Farm Montessori School. The importance of their efforts can be measured not only in the funds generated to help improve Oak Farm's library, classrooms, and teacher education, but also in the strengthening of our community. Thanks to all who attended and participated in the silent auction.

Montessori Education Week: February 22 - 26

"And so we discovered that education is not something the teacher does, but a natural process that develops spontaneously in the human being."

—Maria Montessori

This week Montessorians across the world celebrate Montessori Education Week. We recognize the history and success of the Montessori method and the contributions of Dr. Montessori herself. Children are introduced to Maria Montessori, and learn about the life of this extraordinary woman who created the classroom materials children use every day.

LOST AND FOUND

Oak Farm's lost-and-found box is located in the Victorian Farmhouse foyer and contains the following items:

Hats and caps:

- Eddie Bauer hat—tan
- Several baseball caps

Stocking caps:

- North Face—pink
- Cars
- Colts
- Purple flowers
- LFS
- Black speckled
- Gray striped

Miscellaneous gloves

Shirts:

- Large t-shirt—white
- Reebok sleeveless shirt

Jackets and Coats:

- Blue Land's End rain coat
- Deerborn Heights Redskins Jacket

Small black lunch box—Similac written on the inside

- Beach towel and swim trunks
- Several hair bands
- Mantis GS MO Composter CD

Please pick up your lost items as soon as possible. All items in lost and found will be donated to Goodwill the week after Spring Break (March 29, 2010).

THIRD ANNUAL ELEMENTARY SCIENCE FAIR PROMOTES LEARNING NOT COMPETITION

By Jamie Worman

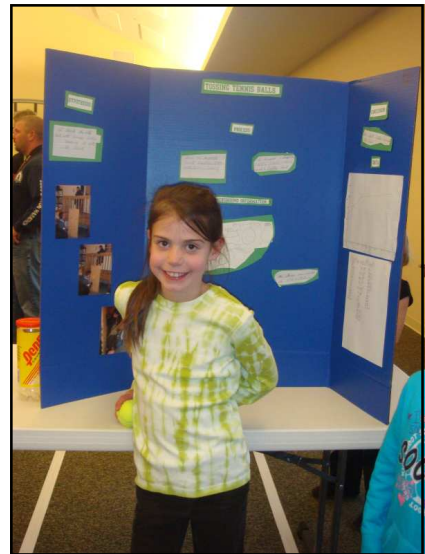
Last week, the Lower Elementary students held their third annual Science Fair. In the Montessori tradition, the students were encouraged to pursue projects related to their interests and, after researching their topic, write a hypothesis that could be tested. The double-dipping debate; the effects of caffeine, salt water, and milk on plants; whether or not temperature affects how high a tennis ball bounces; and electricity were just a few of the subjects researched and presented.

Lower Elementary families and friends were invited to attend the fair and ask the students questions about their projects. The projects were not judged. Montessori students compete with themselves, not against others. The project was an opportunity for each child to experience the research process from start to finish.

Students were eager to comment about the Science Fair. Tia, a first-year student, said, "There were a lot of people at the science fair. They asked me lots of questions about my project. It was really fun answering their questions and telling them about my project." Yahya, another first-year student, remarked, "This was my first science fair, and I really like showing my project to my friends and their families."

Tatum, a second-year student, excitedly shared that "Science Fair is so fun because you get to learn about things you are interested in. I like it because I was able to do it all by myself. I actually got my idea from my project last year, but this year I wanted to test how gross it is to 'double dip'. I think germs are really gross, but it is cool to learn about them." Marie, a third-year student and seasoned Science Fair participant, commented, "My favorite part is trying to think of a project. It is always fun to think about things you like and get your idea from there."

Several parents commented about the overall quality of the students' work on display last Thursday. Many parents and grandparents were pleased as the students shared the results of their efforts.



Yahya, Tatum, and Marie proudly display their work at Lower Elementary's third annual Science Fair.

WINTER RECESS GUIDELINES FOR ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

At what temperature is it safe for elementary and middle-school-aged students to go outside for play during winter months? What is “too cold?” On our quest for this information, we found that “too cold” for outdoor play varies from school to school as well as from region to region. For Texans, anything below 32 degrees Fahrenheit is too cold. For Canadians, it may mean 10 degrees with a wind chill.

After seeking advice from a local family physician, we found that **appropriately dressed** elementary and middle-school-aged students can safely be outdoors in 10 degrees (without wind) based on their levels of activity. However, we have decided to be more conservative and will go outdoors when the temperature is at least *15 degrees with the wind chill*. Please make sure your child has the appropriate outdoor clothing and accessories so that he/she can enjoy being outdoors for the few remaining weeks of winter.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MOVEMENT AVAILABLE IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

By **Andrea Deihl, PE Specialist**

Is your child's need for physical movement greater than you can provide for at home? Children reach developmental stages where they have a high need for large gross-motor movement. Oak Farm's physical education program helps students fulfill their movement needs; however, PE may not be enough for some. There are several year-round options in most communities to help parents meet this developmental need of their child. Many YMCA's offer activities for children including swimming classes and swim teams. Some YMCA's offer a rock-climbing wall, which helps develop many areas of the body. Classic City Center (CCC) in Waterloo (across from DeKalb High School) offers gymnastics, dance, and soccer. Hayden's ATA (American Taekwondo Association) in Kendallville offers Karate and Taekwondo classes, which are additional opportunities for large gross-motor movement and development of character and leadership skills. In addition to the contact information provided below, you might ask other parents about opportunities for physical movement in your community.

YMCA

www.ymca.net

Use this website to find contact information for your local YMCA. Programs are often available to YMCA members at reduced or no cost.

Classic City Center

3375 CR 427
Waterloo, IN 46793
260-837-8282

www.classiccycitycenter.com

CCC offers gymnastics classes for ages 2-18 and tap, ballet, clogging, and hip-hop dance classes for ages 3 and up. CCC also offers soccer team play. Call for details.

Martial Arts

Visit www.ataonline.com and search for schools near your home. Call for prices and class times.

Hayden's ATA

111 W. Rush St.
Kendallville, IN

<http://haydensata.com/>

Tiny Tigers classes for ages 4-6
Karate for Kids for ages 6 and up
Teen Taekwondo for ages 13 and up

ATA Martial Arts Academy

541 North Grandstaff Drive
Auburn, IN 46706
866-858-2102 or 260-925-4282

www.ataindiana.com

Tiny Tigers classes for ages 2-6
Karate for Kids for ages 7-12
Teen Taekwondo for ages 13 - adults

Aloha

The students of the Upper Elementary cordially invite you to attend Pineapple Paradise on March 17, 18, & 19, 2010.

The meal will be served at noon.

The Menu:

- Drinks- Water, Coffee, Tea, or Fruit Juice
Pupu Platter- Spam musubi and other traditional Hawaiian foods
Main Course- Kalua Pork (Kalua Tofu - vegetarian option)
Sweet Potatoes
Fruit Salad
Dessert- Pineapple Sorbet served with a Macadamia Nut Cookie

Cost per person- \$15.00 adult
\$10.00 students (age 11-15)
\$8.00 children (10 and under)

Twenty-five percent of the profits will be donated to the Haitian Relief Fund.

Please call 897-4270 ext. 25221 to make your reservation. Daily seating is limited. Please make vegetarian meal requests at the time of making your reservation. We hope you will join us on this Hawaiian adventure. We promise to make you feel as though you have escaped to a Hawaiian paradise.

Make your reservation today.

Mahalo!