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Upcoming Events

- Apr. 15 - **SCHOOL CLOSED TO STUDENTS**
 Apr. 16 **Parent/Teacher Conferences**
- Apr. 22 Coffee With the Head 8:45 AM
 Victorian Farmhouse
- Apr. 23 Earth Day Celebration 5:30 PM
 Potluck Supper in Victorian Farmhouse
RSVP to Nola Katinsky
- Apr. 29 OFPO Wrap-Up Meeting 6-7 PM
 Victorian Farmhouse
 Childcare Available
RSVP to Kelly by April 27
- Apr. 30 Infant and Toddler Classrooms Closed
 Summer Camp Registrations Due

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	29	30	

Headlines from Oak Farm Montessori School

502 Lemper Road Avilla, IN 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

“Summertime and the Livin’ is Too Easy” The Value of Summer Camp

Oak Farm’s summer camp program is not just another “Let’s paint our faces, tell stories about our ancestors and sing a few songs together” camp. Oak Farm’s summer camp is a fun, engaging, challenging, and exciting learning experience that builds on your child’s classroom experiences and guides her in applying that knowledge to real-life situations.

At Oak Farm we engage in a study of the land and the outdoors, from gardening to archaeological to aesthetic perspectives we study the how and why of nature and apply it to our own experiences. We continue every aspect of the classroom experience and build on it the knowledge. We strengthen the joy of learning and prepare the student for the coming academic year. And we have fun doing it.

There are eight one-week sessions and each week has a different, engaging focus. Session topics vary for each age group and might include cooking, gardening, puppet making, creating a butterfly garden, and experimenting in kitchen science depending on the age of the camper. Elementary and middle-school-age campers can join an excursion into the Eco-Arts—a children’s study of land, place, and artistic expression. Programs are available for children ages 18 months through 15 years, detailed program descriptions for each age group can be found on our website www.oakfarm.org or be picked up from Kelly in the Victorian Farmhouse lobby.

The weekly cost for half-day programs is \$100 per child, full-day programs cost \$125 per child. Before and after-camp care and bus service from Fort Wayne are available at additional costs. Registration forms are available on our website and from Kelly, the registration deadline is April 30.

We look forward to seeing your child explore his universe this summer and hearing the “oohs” and “ahhs” of discovery, and of course, the laughter.

Montessori Madness Reviewed by Karin Salzmann

Madness? Yes—with method in it. Not folly, but a carefully crafted tour led by the perfect tour guide: a Montessori parent, a dad who is a fine storyteller, witty and well-informed and canny as a spider weaving a web.

New parents—and traditional educators—view Montessori through frames of their own experiences. Frames make it difficult—often nearly impossible—for one group to grasp what another group is saying. You may have discovered this in discussions about religion or politics; certainly you have seen it in the marginalization of Montessori. Trevor Eissler’s Montessori Madness follows the uncharted path of reaching out to the uninitiated on their own terms.

To help readers understand his choice of Montessori for his children, Eissler takes them along on his personal journey, starting at places most of us can identify with: memo-

LETTER FROM JUDITH CONT.

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ries of injustice from his own childhood and other highlights from 17 years of traditional education, sometimes stinging, sometimes funny, always familiar ground. He reflects candidly on his experiences, and his conclusions are similar to those of John Taylor Gatto in *Dumbing Us Down*.

He then wrestles with the subject of how best to educate his own children—again familiar ground. Almost immediately, and rather accidentally, he finds himself observing a Montessori class. There are thirty children, one goes outside to the garden alone, another is sewing with a real needle—and he must search to find the teacher in the room. In this gentle chaos he gradually finds the natural order, the artfulness of the teacher, the concentration and joyfulness of the children. He gets it.

Much of the rest of the book is spent explaining Montessori theory to parents in a practical way, important topics like competition, concentration, freedom, responsibility, rewards and punishments. He refers back at each turn to traditional education's failure to achieve, for example, real self-reliance, initiative, concentration, responsibility, community (too often forgotten), and the inspiration to be a lifelong learner. He writes persuasively about three-hour work periods, uninterrupted work, free choice of work, absence of testing, importance of observation and record keeping. His understanding of Montessori is rare and gratifying.

Most parents—perhaps especially those reluctant dads—will find the book irresistible. Eissler understands parents' experiences, their needs, their wishes for their children.

Teachers and administrators will find the book a delightful refresher course, with some very good talking points. Where you might find yourself disagreeing, you'll have a topic for discussion. But there is little to argue with, which I, a curmudgeon, can say for very few books about Montessori. He does sometimes blur the distinction between planes of development—differences in characteristics and material—but little is lost that can't be picked up later on.

Montessorians who read this book will be refreshed. Parents who read it will be blessed.

The author has a lively website: www.montessorimadness.com. There are special purchasing deals, including part-of-purchase donations to schools. Mr Eissler schedules talks for schools at the site, and has a chat room he keeps going with his superb enthusiasm and energy.

1001 Children's Books You Must Read before You Grow Up

Review by Chandra Fernando, course director of the Northeast Montessori Institute and instructor at Seacoast Center for Education in New Hampshire

I was out Christmas shopping for my nine-year old granddaughter, when I came across this treasure trove! It is a marvelous collection of children's literature from adventure stories and fantasy to books about real life written for children all over the world. This memorable compilation includes the classics as well as the work of several international authors and illustrators of diverse backgrounds. The 960-page collection contains attractive colour artwork from the reviewed books and reproductions of original book jackets. Each book review also lists the name of the author and illustrator, their nationality and birth date. The first few pages of the collection feature an index of titles. It is followed by five sections, each of which is dedicated to age appropriate selections: Ages 0-3, Ages 3+, Ages 5+, Ages 8+, Ages 12+

The collection begins with such favourites as *The Little Engine That Could* and *Make Way for Ducklings* and includes most of the books we all enjoyed as children. The older children's section features the work of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Arthur Conan Doyle's, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Virginia Hamilton's *The People Could Fly* and others. It includes personal selections of some of the world's famous contemporary writers as well. The publication ends with an index by author/illustrator.

This is a fascinating anthology of children's literature depicting a geographical and historical presentation of children's thoughts, fantasies, and daily lives through memorable stories depicting the wonders of childhood.

The organization of this collection will certainly help teachers and parents respond to children's questions, 'What can I read next?'

LETTER FROM JUDITH CONT.

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1001 Children's Books You Must Read Before You Grow Up. Ed. by Julia Eccleshare (children's book editor, The Guardian, UK) Preface by Quentin Blake CBE(Children's Laureate, UK 1999), produced by Quintessence, London, UK 2009

OFPO IN ACTION

OFPO Wrap-Up Meeting By Belinda Burton

Hello Parents! Please plan to join us at this year's Oak Farm Parent Organization Wrap-Up meeting on April 29th from 6 - 7 PM. We've had a great year! We would like to celebrate our successes with you, and get your input for next year. We will have refreshments and a little social time as well. Hope to see you there! We had 60 parents attend the Kick-Off meeting last fall. Will we exceed that number this spring?

Childcare will be available from 5:45 – 7:15 for \$5.00 per child. Please RSVP with pre-payment to Kelly no later than April 27th.

SPRING CHICKS INTRODUCED TO PRIMARY 4

By Primary 4

Before spring break, Primary 4 had the pleasure of having chicks in the classroom for the day. Andrea, an Oak Farm PE Specialist, first introduced us to the chicks that she had been caring for during the past few weeks. She told us all about them, what stage of their growing cycle they were in, why they were different colors, and what kinds of foods they eat. She also answered many other questions we had about the chicks.

The chicks were brought into the classroom with their own special brooder with food, water, and a heat lamp to keep them warm. We each got a chance to hold a chick if we wanted to. Some of us were a bit shy and just petted a chick while it was held for us. We thought their feathers were very soft. Once everyone got his/her turn to pet or hold the chicks, then they were put back into the brooder for the rest of the day.

The brooder was placed in our quiet reading corner and we could come visit the chicks as a work choice throughout the day. Two of us at a time could sit quietly and watch as the chicks slept, ate, and frolicked about the crate.

We were also presented a sequencing lesson with beautiful photos of chickens in their various stages of life. This work was placed on a shelf so that we could choose it as well.

At the end of the day, the chicks had to go back to their home and be cared for by Andrea. She will eventually place them in the chicken coop.

Thank you Andrea for visiting our classroom with the chicks, and thank you for allowing the chicks to stay for the day. It was a wonderful hands-on experience!



Amani gently holds one of the chicks.



Vivi gets ready to pet the chick as Ritika looks on.



Cassidy and Mia enjoy watching the chicks.

NOTES FROM THE CHEF

By Jill Hoffelder



Nicholas, a third-year student in Primary 2, helps in the kitchen by destemming grapes.



Fourth-year elementary students Ellie and Samantha concentrate on chopping carrots for stir-fry.



Primary students Bethany, Cayragan, and Madison clean up after a morning of cooking.

The mission of the Oak Farm Montessori School lunch program is “to provide our students with quality organic, nutritious, healthy, whole foods that enable them to work to their fullest potential.” Every day students participating in the lunch program enjoy a freshly prepared meal and most importantly they get to help prepare the meal.

Cooking at School

Did you know that students from Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Middle School help prepare lunch? Each level has a designated day of the week when two students help to prepare lunch. Just like the cycle of activity in the classroom, students experience the beginning, middle, and end of lunch preparation. Not only are students capable of the work, they are enthusiastic and welcome each task that is placed before them.

Cooking at Home

I like to share this experience with you because cooking with your child empowers him/her through hands on learning and teaches lifelong skills. Before cooking, always set up clear guidelines about the use of the stove, cook top, and any sharp equipment. Always consider the age of your child when designating a task. Set up work areas that are at his level or provide a stool that you know he can easily stand on. A toddler can successfully cut a peeled cucumber with a butter knife while a Primary student can use a blunt-tip serrated knife to cut carrots or peppers. Elementary students are ready for paring knives. Remind your child to always bend her fingers and tuck her thumb. This is something students hear repeatedly while assisting me in the kitchen. Practice and improve math skills by counting and measuring; have your child read ingredients and directions when applicable. Most importantly, always supervise your child closely while working in the kitchen.

It’s been said that picky eaters are more willing to try new foods when they help with the food’s preparation. Go one step further and involve these children in planning the meal and shopping for the ingredients as well as preparing the food.

Purposeful Practical Life is one the most fulfilling activities a child can experience and what is more purposeful than preparing a meal? I encourage all parents to include their children in meal preparation as it teaches lifelong skills and the time you spend together is priceless. I am always amazed at the conversations I have with students while we are preparing lunch!

HOW TO GET ORGANIZED IN FIVE MINUTES

By Tracy Reincke, Toddler Teacher

(The following is the fifth article in the “Creating Connections” series.)

People today are busier than ever. We have activities to run to, meetings to attend, and we often leave behind a trail of papers and things to get done. Is there ever enough time in the day for everything? Getting organized takes some time initially but saves us time in the long run. Disorganization can certainly slow us down. It can be stressful when we don't know where something is, how to find it, or if we even have it at all!

Here are a few five-minute tips for creating a sense of order which could save you time in the long run.

1. Consolidate

Have a place for everything and put everything in its place. If you have a lot of notes lying around—lists of things to do or reminders—take a few minutes and type them up. Add phone numbers to your phone or little black book if they are scattered about, and add special dates to your calendar. Keeping things digitally and consolidated makes editing easy and things are easier to find.

2. Pick a Space

Start with one small space in your house, like the top of a closet or your car, and clean it like crazy. Sort through and organize just one small area. When you are finished start cleaning another small area. Breaking tasks down make them less intimidating and more manageable.

3. Mind Dump

Every so often write down everything that is on your mind or “in your head”. Write down things you need to do, things that bother you, things you would like to know—whatever it is, get it down on paper. This will help you know exactly what is in on your mind, and what you need to do to turn thoughts into reality. A mind dump may be one of the best things you can do for your sanity and productivity.

4. Recycle

Go through your piles and look only at the things you want to recycle, ignore what you want to keep. It may be easier to do this digitally with your files, but it works with your home or office just the same. It takes time to figure out what to do with the things you want to keep so ignore those temporarily and just get rid of the things you don't want. You will be amazed at how much you recycled and what little you have left to sort through.

5. Systemize

Filing is logically the next step after recycling. Create a simple system, find the ten things you have the most of: where does each go? What do you want to do with them? Once you know where everything goes, make it a habit to put things away. A filing cabinet with well labeled tabs in alphabetical order is helpful for paperwork.

6. One Thing, One Place

Start small. Pick one thing and decide where it goes. If you have many board games, find one place for all of them. Develop a habit of putting the board games in the same place every time. If nothing else, you will at least have one thing that will be easier to find. Have a place for everything (eventually) and everything in its place.

7. Make it Digitally Searchable

Create folders on your computer with names that make sense: taxes, shopping lists, homework, office documents. Name your documents with a simple title like “grocery list”. Adding a date to your document name helps as well: grocery list 3.25.10. Then if you forget where you filed it you can search for the name or date of what you are looking for.

Getting organized can be an overwhelming task, but is made much easier by doing it in spurts – a few minutes, or one particular thing at a time. Before you know it, you will have created a sense of order and gotten a clean space and a huge boost in both your sanity and your productivity.