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Upcoming Events

Dec. 1	Monthly Tuition Due
Dec. 11	Infant and Toddler Classrooms Closed 11:45 AM Dismissal for All Students (Half-day accreditation in-service for staff)
Dec. 16	Jolly Holiday Sing-Along 2-3 PM Victorian Farmhouse Recreation Room
Dec. 21	Winter Break Begins- School Closed
Jan. 1	Monthly Tuition Due
Jan. 4	School resumes 2010-2011 enrollment begins

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	31		

Headlines from Oak Farm Montessori School

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

FROM JUDITH CUNNINGHAM, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Why Doesn't Oak Farm Montessori School Give Grades?

Parents often ask this question because that is the model of education and the measure of accomplishment with which we are all familiar. Oak Farm doesn't assign letter grades because they compare a child's development instead of describe it.

When teachers assign letter grades, they are evaluating children either against the other students in the same class, or against an arbitrary external standard and set of expectations. As Alfie Kohn and many others have long shown, encouraging children to work and compete for high grades often originates from the expectations and fears of anxious parents, and commonly leads children to look to teachers for the right answers, instead of thinking and researching things for themselves. It encourages children to do what they must to earn the right grade. In many schools it leads to learning that is shallow; right answers memorized for a test, and then quickly forgotten once the grades are announced. Furthermore, students begin to identify who they are with a letter grade.

In good Montessori practice, we encourage children to discover and learn because it is engaging and fun. To challenge oneself is the joy and the reward. Intrinsically, the child loves to learn for her own sake rather than for the extrinsic reward of a grade. At the same time, it is the responsibility of the Montessori teacher to inspire and guide children in academic areas they

may neglect.

To be effective learners, we all require feedback. Students are asked to fix or correct mistakes in their work. The value is that all work is worthy of being as complete and perfect as possible. In the elementary and middle school, students are often provided with rubrics that show the expectations for the work. In that way, they can assess their own work and set their own goal.

At Parent Teacher Conferences and in our Progress Reports, we describe children's progress in terms of their individual development in many different areas.

To end, I would like to share some research on grading.

Grade Expectations: Examining a Chain of Assumptions

(Adapted from *The Schools Our Children Deserve: Moving Beyond Traditional Classrooms and "Tougher Standards"* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), pp. 188-89.)

To read the available research on grading is to notice three robust findings: students who are given grades, or for whom grades are made particularly salient, tend to (1) display less interest in what they are doing, (2) fare worse on meaningful measures of learning, and (3) avoid more difficult tasks when given the opportunity -- as compared with those in a nongraded com-

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LETTER FROM JUDITH

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parison group. Whether we are concerned about love of learning, quality of thinking, of preference for challenge, students lucky enough to attend schools that do not give letter or number grades fare better. Where grades are still given, students benefit from a concerted effort to make them as invisible as possible. The more they can forget about grades, the better the chances they will be engaged with ideas. (For more details about all this research, see [The Schools Our Children Deserve](#), or the article "[From Degrading to De-Grading.](#)")

JOIN US FOR A JOLLY HOLIDAY SING-ALONG

Please plan to join your children and our faculty for a fun-filled holiday sing-along on Wednesday, December 16 from 2-3PM in the Victorian Farmhouse Recreation Room. Students will return to their classrooms after the sing-along, we invite you to stay for cookies and hot chocolate in the Multi-purpose Room. All toddler through middle school students will participate.

KEEP US IN THE LOOP!

We know that many Oak Farm students (both past and present) are involved in activities and events outside of Oak Farm. We'd like to share this information with the Oak Farm community but need your help. We welcome newsletter article submissions from parents and students, please email your article and any pictures to Laura lpounds@oakfarmschool.com by 9 AM Mondays.

CARPOOL FORUM

Please submit information you would like included in or removed from the forum to Laura lpounds@oakfarmschool.com by 9 AM on Mondays.

I'm looking for an Oak Farm Middle School family that drives through **Waterloo and Auburn** who would be willing to pick-up my brother near the Auburn Wal-Mart and take him to school and drop him back off in Waterloo, five days a week. If interested please contact Natasha at 260-5 70-3096, just leave a message and I will get back with you. Thanks very much.

Looking for a half-day carpool family on the **north side of Fort Wayne**. I live in Woodmont off of Dupont Road and have two little ones attending half-day—one in Primary and one in Toddler (3 days a week). I am available to drive home everyday if anyone would be willing to drive mornings. Please contact me if you are interested. Thanks so much!

Gretchen Fruchey gretchenfruchey@gmail.com or 414-4331.

GRANDPARENTS DAY ATTENDANCE HIGH DESPITE FOG

Oak Farm Montessori School celebrated its third Grandparent's Day on November 24, 2008. The day was set aside to celebrate the value of Oak Farm students' grandparents and the effect they have in the lives of their grandchildren. Despite a two-hour school delay due to fog, nearly 160 family members journeyed to Oak Farm from all over the country to enjoy the campus and the events of the (shortened) day. Activity offerings included classroom visits, refreshments, and musical performances. Judith briefly addressed the grandparents and underscored the importance they hold in the lives of the students.

Grandparents and surrogate-grandparents alike play a significant role in the lives of Oak Farm Montessori's young students through their devotion and support to the school and its children. They provide an example for all of us to aspire to, as they teach, share, mentor, and guide. Grandparent's Day has become a new school tradition.

For additional Grandparent's Day photos, visit the Image Gallery on our website: www.oakfarm.org Thank you to Shannon Leman and Suzy Ulmer for the photos.



