

Glen Montessori Opens Elementary Program

The Glen Montessori School in Emsworth is excited to announce its plans to open a First (1st) through Third (3rd) grade classroom for the 2010-2011 school year. The new program will emphasize an authentic Montessori curriculum that focuses on values; Respect for Work; Respect for Feelings; Care of Self; Care of the Environment; and the conviction that everything in the universe is somehow connected. The Elementary Program will be strongly rooted in Montessori philosophy and emphasize each child's individual development.

The cultural curriculum (geography, history, botany and zoology) is emphasized at the elementary level in Montessori with the goal of helping children to see themselves as citizens of the world and the heirs to the tremendous human potential in each of us.

Children in the elementary Montessori classroom will be challenged to exceed typical expectations by stressing the importance of skills that determine lifelong success. Projects and lessons will highlight proficiency in traditional areas, as well as social skills, community service and care for the Earth.

When you walk into a Montessori elementary classroom, you may see a small group sitting on the floor with an adult facilitating a lesson. Other children will be working individually, with partners, or in groups of three or four. There are shelves full of science experiments, models and other hands-on project materials. There are cartons and cabinets full of card materials and research project outline forms to help children remember the steps in finding things out for themselves. There are various collections of reference materials laid out within convenient reach of the project materials. Every child also has a form to help track his daily progress as he fulfills his work contract, covering subject by subject, step by step according to the individualized path that he and his teacher have agreed to.

With so much going on, you may find it difficult to get a sense of the big picture. The elementary classroom may appear to be unstructured, but this seemingly random, yet obviously purposeful activity, is basic to the independent learning and self-directed activity of the Montessori approach. A Montessori teacher looks at each child as a unique human being and strives to challenge each child according to his or her developmental needs and abilities.

Since Montessori allows children to progress through the curriculum at their own pace, there is no academic reason to group children according to one grade level. In a mixed age class, children can always find peers who are working at their current level. In multi-level classrooms,

younger children are constantly stimulated by the interesting work that the older ones are engaged in.

Dr. Montessori was convinced that children are born curious, creative, and intelligent. In designing the elementary program, she was attempting to cultivate this human potential, nurture the spontaneous curiosity with which all children are born, and inspire a sense of wonder in their spirits. At the elementary level, Montessori students learn to think for themselves. We know that each has particular strengths and a distinct learning style. We know that each child's emotions and self esteem play a critical role in whether or not they are ready to learn.

All of the Montessori elementary begins with the philosophical conviction: the ideas that meaning is both possible and worthwhile. As children explore the Elementary curriculum, they will encounter webs of connections and networks of meaning in all that they do. In this sense the child will discover that, no matter how small or apparently insignificant, every particle of the universe serves some purpose. The social and natural sciences in Montessori elementary are presented with a specific goal in mind; to set each child out on a lifelong search for meaning.

The elementary curriculum prepares children in middle childhood for the challenges they will face as adolescents. It also helps children to face critical issues that occur from ages 6 to 12. At that age, the child must come to view himself as able to master skills and complete tasks. Criticism, comparison, and competition weaken children at this age. They need an environment that builds motivation and notices improvement. The need "mastery learning" an approach that allows every child the multiple methods and the time needed in order to succeed at high levels of competence.

The new program will be headed by Mrs. Jackie Herrmann and Ms. Christy Peluso. Ms. Herrmann has a Master's degree in early childhood education and has been a Montessorian for the past 13 years with experience teaching grades 1-6. She is also a member of the faculty of the Columbus Montessori Education Center Teacher Education Program. Ms. Peluso has a Bachelor's degree in elementary education and experience as a teacher and coach in both traditional and Montessori schools.