Dear Arancia Parents:

Welcome to the 2017-18 school year! I am thrilled to get started with this wonderful group of children. I know that we will have a great year together.

In this folder you should have:

- A **daily schedule** for the children. This may change throughout the year, but I wanted you to have an idea of how their day will be scheduled for the beginning of the year.
- **"Classroom Socials"** explanation. This will be a monthly gathering to help keep the lines of communication open all around.
- **Elementary Going Out Program** sheet. This will explain the going out program, which is a very important part of our Elementary program, and also set expectations for parent chaperones.
- **Going Out Driver** sign up form.
- **Birthday Celebrations** This will explain what we do for birthdays to celebrate your child.
- **Classroom Event Calendar**
- **Miscellaneous Information and Reminders**

I know that you will have questions about the year that are not addressed in this packet. Please feel free to contact me by email or phone. My email address is Daneen@BergamoSchools.com, and our phone number at the school is 916-399-1900 x3.

Please keep in mind that if you send an email during the school day I may not be able to read it until after the school day has finished. If you have something urgent that requires immediate attention, please call the school and leave a message. The office will make sure that I receive your message promptly.

I look forward to getting to know each of you and working with your child!

Thank you,

Daneen Goncalves

Arancia Back to School Information, 2017-18

Daily Schedule

7:00 – 7:45	Indoor Extended Care (optional for those who need it)
7:45 – 8:20	Outdoor play
8:20 – 8:30	Begin dismissing children to their classrooms from the playground
8:30 – 11:30	Morning work period
11:30 – 11:45	Clean up and lunch set up
11:45 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:00	Recess
1:00 – 1:30	Reading aloud/handwork time
1:30 – 3:10	Afternoon work period
1:30 – 3:15	PE/Music (Thursdays only)
3:15	Dismissal/Carline
3:15 – 6:00	Extended Care and/or Clubs & Classes (optional sign-up)

Classroom Socials

Lower Elementary holds 'classroom socials' throughout the school year. These gatherings will be a time for us to come together as a community as well as a time for your child to show you the amazing things they are doing in our classroom. Each social will present a different feel, depending on what is going on in our classroom at the time. Therefore, our classroom socials will give you a 'snapshot' of our current community.

In order to keep this as a time that the children look forward to, we ask that we keep these gatherings as a time of community fellowship and information gathering for you. Although you may encourage your children to show you what they've been working on (either by showing you how they do a work or showing you their written work), this is not a time to 'test' the children about what they have learned or about what you see in their folders. If you have a question about something you observe, please feel free to set up a time with me at a different date so that you can have a discussion at a time when your child is not present.

If you are unable to make these dates, please know that you are welcome at any time to come in and look at your children's work and journals. We have only added these formal gatherings to encourage you to come into the classroom on a regular basis, feel that you are more informed about your child's work, and so that we may get to know one another as a community of parents. Because much of the early work in Elementary is done with concrete materials and writing is not always required, these gatherings will be a good time for you see how work is done in our classroom and to help you feel comfortable when you don't see a steady stream of paper coming home.

Social dates will be posted in our bulletin on a 3-month span. Here are the socials we have planned for 2017:

Friday, September 15th 3pm-4:15pm
Friday, October 20th from 3pm-4:15pm
Friday, November 17th - Lower El Thanksgiving Feast starting at 12pm
Friday, December 15th from 3pm-4:15pm

On classroom social days, the children will stay in the classroom and will not go to aftercare or car line. If you are unable to stay for the social, please stop by the classroom to collect your child. If you are not able to attend and your child is in aftercare, we will deliver your child to aftercare at the conclusion of the social.

Elementary Going Out Program

The Going Out Program is one of the most important components of the Montessori Elementary classroom. You have probably noticed that your son or daughter has changed in some very significant ways from the time they were in Primary. They are much more social and interested in being with their friends at this stage in their development. They are intensely curious about the world around them and are now able to understand more abstract concepts, the "how" and "why" of things, and are becoming aware that the world is a bigger place than just their home and school settings. They are still "hands on", experiential learners, but are now at a place in their development where they want to explore outside of these environments.

The Going Out Program is a way for the children to go out into the larger community and explore areas of personal interest in concrete ways. It is one thing for a child to read about bears or rock climbing or falcons, and quite another to go to zoo, or to Vertical Endeavors, or to the Raptor Center to see and experience these things. Going Outs are not field trips. The children must earn the privilege to go out by showing responsibility and self-control in the classroom. The Going Outs are done in connection with a research that they are doing – not as a reward for finishing that research, but as another facet to their work.

Some Going Outs are for practical reasons – going to the grocery store for cooking supplies or the pet store to buy food for the animals. These smaller journeys help the children feel comfortable with the program and serve as an indicator to me as to whether or not they are ready for a longer, more challenging trip.

The children plan their own trips, get information about the place they intend to visit, find out the hours, cost, and directions. They will also need to find a way to get to where they want to go. That's where you come in. There will be a list in the classroom of volunteers who can drive the children on their Going Outs. Once the children have done the preliminary work of finding information, they will call and ask if you are available to drive. They should give you at least two days notice.

Listed below are the expectations that I have of those who are chaperoning the children. These are very important in order to remain consistent with the child's independent learning and explorations. Please let me know if you have any questions about these expectations.

Going Out Parent Expectations

Our elementary classroom is so fortunate to have dedicated parents such as yourself, and we appreciate your willingness to support our community in this way.

While the interactions with the children will no doubt be engaging, you are there only to drive and chaperone the children. The children should be prepared with money, driving directions, and information about the place they are visiting.

The children should be respectful at all times – to you and to the staff of the establishment that they are visiting. If the children are not being respectful, you may remind them of this expectation. In any case, please let me know immediately upon your return if this has happened so that I may speak with the child at a later date.

If your child is part of a group that is going, please have a conversation at home beforehand about your role as a driver and chaperone. You must treat your child as you treat the other children, and your child needs to understand that they must treat you as they would any other child's parent. This includes not "bailing them out" if they didn't budget, or bring enough money, or failed to include parking money into their budget. The children should do as much problem solving as they can on their own. If they seem to be at an impasse, you may ask them questions that will lead them to a solution.

Please let the children lead, pay for the tickets, and ask the questions. Think of your job as a careful observer who is there in the background to watch and keep the children safe. If they defer to you (which some do by habit), just ask them what they think they should do. They will almost always come up with something.

Please let me know if there has been a problem or issue while the child was out and if you need to contact me during the time you are out, it is fine to call the school and have me paged. Thank you for your help. I know that you will find this experience interesting.

Important Note about Chaperoning

The children go through an extensive planning process in the classroom before leaving for their Going Out. This also includes the responsibility of getting their permission slip signed *and* turned in by a certain date, bringing admission money, etc. These important items are due *at least* two days prior to their Going Out date. If the child does not follow through with these responsibilities, they will not be able to go. In the event that this happens, we will notify you right away so you can plan accordingly.

Also, children who require a booster seat will need to bring it on the day of their Going Out. Once all other required items are turned in prior to their departure date, we will send a quick email reminder to bring their booster seat on their Going Out date.

Birthday Celebrations

Celebrating your child's birthday is a special event in the classroom. We typically hold birthday celebrations the last half hour of the school day, but I will be flexible if needed. During that time you are welcome to share photos and fun stories about your child. We also enjoy a short story that I read aloud, and the children in the classroom offer compliments. If you choose to bring a birthday snack, I ask that it is low in sugar. Some healthier options are muffins, fruit kabobs, yogurt parfaits, etc. Please remember we have a no nut policy, and if we happen to have any other allergies this year I will notify you of those as well.

Children often want to invite friends from the class to their birthday parties at home. To avoid any hurt feelings or invitations being lost, I ask that you mail the invitations directly to those children. You can get a list of addresses on our website in the 'Parents' section, by clicking on 'BMS Directory' in the sidebar. The password is 'maria'. Let me know if you need help locating this information.

We look forward to celebrating this important time in you and your child's life!

Your child's birthday celebration for the 2017-18 school year is tentatively scheduled for:

_____

**Please let me know ASAP if this date will not work for you, and we can work on scheduling a time that works for both your family and our classroom.

Miscellaneous Information, Forms and Reminders

Indoor/Outdoor Shoes

Arancia uses indoor shoes. Each child will need to bring a pair of shoes to keep at school on our shoe racks just outside the classroom. Children will change into these shoes before entering the classroom, and change out of them when they plan to leave the classroom to go outside. We have this process in place to keep our floors as clean as possible while children work on the floor, and offer an opportunity for children to transition into our classroom with purpose and intention.

Halloween Heroes

For Halloween Heroes, each child in Lower Elementary will choose a "hero" for this event. This hero should be someone from history (recent or long past). The child will dress as this person and present his or her hero to the class using the first person. The hero does not have to be famous, but should have made some contribution to some society. The costumes do not need to be elaborate or store-purchased.

This year our Halloween Heroes are scheduled on **Wednesday, October 25th.** We will be asking for your assistance with this project by helping your children find and research this individual. As we get closer to the event, we will send you more specific directions to help you help your child with this project.

The children will present their hero reports to the third year Primary students, and then participate in a Hero Parade for the entire campus! Because for many children this will be their first formal presentation and the children may be nervous, this presentation will be for students only. If you wish to come before school and take some pictures of your child and his or her friends, please feel free to do so.

We are looking forward to this event and thank you in advance for your help with this special presentation!

Snacks and Lunches

We encourage the children to pack their own lunches as an aid to help them to know their own bodies. We find that they get to know how much snack they need throughout the day, and can plan accordingly. In packing their own lunch, just as they choose their work, they can see that balance is key in choosing between treats and healthy foods.

We encourage fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein sources without additives and preservatives, and other nutritious foods that will provide them energy throughout the day. With this in mind, dessert-like items such as brownies, cupcakes, and other items such as chips can't be a choice for snack.

Snack time is available all morning and because of the shorter work period, snack in the afternoon normally happens at home if they are in carline, or at afternoon recess if they are in Extended Care.

Late Policy and Absence

We begin our school day by gathering at the playground and walking to the classroom, where we have the pleasure of greeting each child as they come in. It is a great way to start the day and help the child feel part of their class community. Coming in early, before 8:30, also allows the child more time to visit with their friends before the class day begins.

From 7:00-7:45, the children are invited to before school care. From 7:45-8:20, the children are on the playground, weather permitting. Although the mornings are getting chilly, we ask that your child remain outside until 8:20. This allows them time with their friends, and allows the teacher time for parent or staff meetings.

Children who arrive after 8:30 are tardy and must sign in at the office with their parents. Please do not drop your child off after 8:30 without signing them in.

A Montessori classroom is a dynamic place for learning where we meet together every day for lessons and group work. Missing many days of school will mean missing lessons and opportunities for group work. We do understand some absences are unavoidable; in which case, we can help ensure the smooth transition back to class for the child. Please be sure to inform the teacher and office of any absences as much ahead of time as possible.

Contact Information

Please feel free to contact me at any time regarding your child. I am always happy to speak with you about any concerns you may have. The best way to reach me is by email at Daneen@BergamoSchools.com, or by phone 916-399-1900 x 3, between the hours of 3:15 – 4:30 pm. If you would like to meet, it would be best to call ahead to set up a time to make sure that I am available.

Please keep in mind that if you send an email during the school day I may not be able to read it until after the school day has finished. If you have something urgent that requires immediate attention, please call the school and leave a message. The office will make sure that I receive your message promptly.

Useful links for Elementary:

All of the links below are available on the sidebar of your classroom blog. Any forms, permissions, files, etc. you need throughout the year can always be found in the sidebar.

Arancia - http://www.bergamoschools.com/parents-categories/bergamo-school/arancia/
Verde - http://www.bergamoschools.com/parents-categories/bergamo-school/verde/
Marrone - http://www.bergamoschools.com/parents-categories/bergamo-school/marrone/

Returning student emergency card: UpdateContact.Bergamoschools.com
New student emergency card: EmergencyContact.Bergamoschools.com
Blanket permission slip: BlanketPermissionSlip.Bergamoschools.com
Hot lunch: HotLunch.Bergamoschools.com
Medicine permission: BMSMedicalPermission.Bergamoschools.com
Parent handbook: www.bergamoschools.com/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/BMS-parent-handbook.pdf

Going Out Drivers

If you are willing to serve as a driver for the Elementary "going out" program, please fill in the information below. You will also be required to fill out the following background check with the DMV before driving the children:

https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/online/dr

Please take the time to read the "Going Out" instruction sheet about what is expected of you during Going Outs. It is very important that you feel comfortable with this process before you sign up.

Please understand that you will not be expected to go every time someone calls you and that you will have the ability to say no if it is not convenient for you.

Thank you!

I am available to serve as a driver for the Elementary Going Out program.

I am available the following times and days of the week:

Best times: _____

Best days of the week: _____

Phone number: _____

Number of children my car will hold: _____

Your name: _____

Signature: _____

MONTESSORI HOMEWORK

Why Homework?

Both a century of Montessori experience and the last thirty years of educational research agree

1. that people learn best when they are learning something that personally interests them and
2. that having some sense of control over one's learning is a prerequisite of personal interest.

Moreover, coercing someone to "learn" something in which they have no personal interest may- while it may seem to work in the short term- have unintended consequences in the long term. The negative emotion that accompanies being coerced to "learn" is likely to remain permanently attached to the subject of the "learning" and may obstruct future attempts to learn that subject. Moreover, repeated experiences of this sort typically lead to passivity in the learner and frequently to the development of a negative self-image with regard to one's ability and fitness to learn a broad range of subjects and skills. These are among the main reasons why Montessorians typically do not give assignments and, in particular, why we do not assign traditional homework.

Elementary guides depend on their parent partners to provide *a rich learning environment* at home where the child can build on the work they began at school. In the absence of traditional homework assignments, it may seem that the parents of Montessori students are not as directly involved in their children's homework as parents of traditionally educated children. On the contrary, Montessori children have more work to do at home than anyone, and their parents must be highly involved and highly resourceful. It's hard work, but good work – just like guiding an Elementary class.

In summary:

1. Homework is **not optional** for Montessori students.
2. We need parents to engage with their children in supporting their education after class hours.
3. The absence of screens and social phone calling on school nights creates the **time** for homework.
4. **Assignments** are not very effective and may be harmful. They are simply a pain to police.
5. A homework list, to which the child and parent may add similar activities, offers the important element of **choice.**

What Homework?

If homework is not assigned reading, worksheets, and projects with deadlines, what is it? We are looking for many opportunities for the children to both consolidate and expand the knowledge they are working with in the classroom. Inevitably, these real world experiences will also spark new questions and other interests which the child will bring back to the classroom, enriching both their own classroom work and that of the other children. We want to foster this sort of "virtuous feedback loop" between school and home to the benefit of both, and to the great benefit of the child.

For learning to be assimilated and integrated, it must be repeated in another setting. It must go from school to home and be recalled, revisited, repeated. Recalling, revisiting, and repeating in the same setting is not as effective.

We are looking not for worksheets and assignments but for *learning as a way of life*, both at home and at school. And, of the two, the home will ultimately have a far greater influence on the child's future way of life than will the school.

In Summary:

1. Things begun or done at school should be **recalled, revisited, and repeated.**
2. The homework idea-list, to which the child's parent may add similar activities, offers the most important element**: CHOICE.**
3. Montessori homework seeks to inculcate **learning as a way of life.**

Guidelines for Home Work

In order to better support learning as a way of life, we are providing the following guidelines for the child's work at home:

1. The child should spend at least **three hours per day** on Montessori homework. Three hours a day of homework allows the child to spend time each day on a **wide variety of activities**: physical exercise, service, intellectual activity, household responsibilities, the arts, etc.
2. At least 30 minutes of that time must be spent **reading.**

Montessori Home Work Ideas

Creative Arts / Construction

- Knit, crochet, spin, weave, sew, quilt, hook rugs, embroider, tie-dye, beadwork, paint, and sculpt.
- Make pottery.
- Learn new art projects by reading in books or taking an art class. Prepare an art project to teach to the class.
- Take weaving classes at our local Art Center.
- Get a good book on tying knots and learn as many knots as you can.

- Work with a knowledgeable adult to build a fence, a doghouse, a bike ramp, a bookcase, a bench, etc.
- Find an adult who has a lot of tools and likes to build or repair things. Learn the names of all the tools the adult has. Learn to write the names as well as say them.
- Learn what each tool is used for.
- Learn photography – how to take a really good picture.
- Learn how to operate a video camera. Make your own movies. Document a week in the life of your family using a cam-coder or camera. Write a paragraph about each family member and what they are currently up to. Mail the package to your grandparents or some other relative or friend who would like to receive the update.
- Practice your musical instrument or learn new songs to sing. If possible, take private music lessons on your musical instrument.
- Learn a new song to teach the class. Bring a copy of the words when you teach it to us.
- Learn to dance.
- Get a copy of *Curve Stitching* by Jon Millington and work your way from front to back.
- You'll be ready to invent your own curve stitching designs next year!
- Visit one of the art museums in town. Visit the gift shop after you've toured the museum.
- Buy postcards of your favorite works, and try to copy them at home with colored pencils or watercolors.
- Go to symphony concerts and concerts of folk music from other countries.

- See a play or take an acting class.

Language / Words / Literature

- Schedule a weekly trip to the public library. Plan to spend at least an hour looking through books, looking up things in the catalog, reading magazines, etc.
- Take regular trips to the bookstore.
- Read books from the Terra/Nova Reading List or try to read all the Newbery award books. Keep a list of the books and the number of pages you read in each.
  Write a description of a friend, a friend's house, a pet, a favorite place, a vacation spot, etc.
- Interview your family and relatives. Start a family newsletter.
- Enter an essay, story, or poetry contest. Submit your work to magazines that publish student work. Stone Soup is a one resource.
- Practice telling stories. At the library, look for books of folktales from around the world. Pick a few to learn by heart. Tell them to your classmates.
- Find a newspaper article you want to read and discuss with your family. Set aside a family reading time. Everybody reads whatever he or she wants in the same room. Start small: perhaps for 15 minutes after dinner. Gradually increase the time.
- Have a read-aloud time. One person could read while the others clean up from dinner or do some other simple task. Family members take turns being the reader.
- At the bookstore, look for books of crossword puzzles, anagrams, and other word games. Keep a book of word puzzles in the car to work on whenever you are riding around.
- Play great board games such as Scrabble, Up-Words, Boggle, or Word Thief.
- Write with your family. Start a family journal. In the journal, keep lists of things to around the house, descriptions of special events such as hosting houseguests, notes about phone calls to family friends and relatives, anything you want to record from your everyday life. See Peter Stillman's book *Families Writing* for more ideas and inspiration.
- Listen to books on tape while driving around on errands or on vacation.
- Read and write poetry. Memorize a poem a week.
- Choose a story to practice reading aloud. Practice the pronunciations of all the words.
- Try giving each character a different voice when you read. Try to use your voice to make the story more interesting to your audience.
- Put on some calming music (Bach, Mozart, Satie, Gregorian chant are nice) and practice making the most beautiful cursive or italic letters you can.
- Instead of phoning, write letters to your friends and relatives. Try starting a round robin letter to your friends or relatives. First, make up a list of 3 – 5 people and their addresses; put your name and address last on the list. Write a letter to the first person on the list, and enclose a copy of the list of addresses. The person you wrote to writes a letter and sends it, your original letter, and the list of addresses to the next person on the list, and so forth. Eventually, all the letters will come back to you!
- Write a review of a book you read or a movie you saw. Tell the basic idea of the book or movie and what you liked and didn't like about it. What did the author do well? What did they not do so well?
- Learn to touch- type (that is type without looking at the keys or your fingers).

Math / Numbers / Geometry

- Comparison shop: figuring price per pound, calling various stores, etc. When you shop at the grocery store, take along a pad and pencil; keep a running total of the cost of items

you buy. Check your answer against the cash register receipt you get when you pay for your items.

- Read *The Number Devil* by H. M. Enzensberger. This an especially good book for people who have not yet learned to love math, but those who have will enjoy the book, too. Every Upper El student should read this book.
- Keep statistics. Graph when you go to bed, how many pages you read each day, how far you walk each day, how many ounces of water you drink per day, how often you have friends over, how long it takes you to eat breakfast, how many meters per day you swim, how fast you can jog around the block, how many multiplication facts you can do in a minute, etc.
- Measure things around the house and calculate their surface area and volume. Take trips to the park, etc., to measure things there.
  Help with the family budget. Record the family expenditures for a week. Help your parents write the checks when they pay the bills (they'll have to sign the checks).
- Play good "thinking" games such as chess. Learn how to notate chess games. Learn to play chess by mail with your friends (that's where you mail your moves back and forth on post cards or in letters).
- Make up math problems for yourself to work. Consider making a "Math Workout" for yourself once a week.
- Work on memorizing all your multiplication, division, addition, and subtraction facts.
- Once you've mastered your math facts, work on speed.

Nature / Plants / Animals

- Whenever you travel to a new city, visit the local zoo and aquarium or the local natural history museum.
- Before you travel to another part of the country or to a different country, read about the biomes there. Read about their climate, animals, and plants. While you're there, look for things you read about.
- Go camping with your family or friends.
- Learn more about nutrition. Visit www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/pyramids.html to learn about the Harvard Food Pyramid. For a week, keep a journal of what you eat. See if you are in balance with the Harvard Food Pyramid. Pick one or two things you can do to start moving your diet closer to the recommendations of the pyramid.
- Make a botany map of your back yard. Place each plant in its place on the map and label each plant with its common name and scientific name. (You might need some help from a library book or a knowledgeable adult gardener.)
- Go berry picking on a local farm such as Impossible Acres
- Visit Woodland Veterinary Hospital and inquire about their VSI: Veterinary Science Investigation classes.
- Visit the Bohart Entomology Museum at UC Davis.
- Visit the UC Davis Botanical Conservatory
- Visit the UC Davis arboretum. Walk around and find some interesting plants to sketch, research and report on.

History / Geography

- Help plan the family vacation or an outing. Research the landmarks, geography, culture, special attractions of the area you'll be visiting. Map out the route you'll take.
- Make a map of your house and gardens. Make a detailed map of your room.

- Study world religions. Pick a religion you don't know much about. Read about it in books you check out from the public library. See if you can find a local group that practices that religion. Plan with your parents to visit their church, temple, synagogue, mosque, or other place of worship. Good religions to start with: Baha'i, Buddhism, Christianity (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant), Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Unitarianism.
- Visit the California History Museum in Sacramento
- Visit the Crocker Art Museum
- The website at http://www.kryo.com/dinek/histlink.htm links to scores of other sites on ancient civilizations.
- Pick a continent you'd like to know more about. (If you can't decide, work on Europe first.) Using an atlas, make flash cards of all the countries in that continent. On one side of the card have the country's name; on the other side, the country's capitol city.
- Memorize all the countries and capitols in that continent, and then do the same for another continent.
- Interview someone from another country. Ask them about their country's history, landmarks, cities, agriculture, industries, religions, festivals, form of government, famous scientists, famous artists and writers, etc. Ask them for permission to tape the interview.
- From the tape, makes notes. From the notes, write a summary of what you learned about the person's country.

Science

- Check out Explorit in Davis.
- Learn the stories of the constellations. Find someone with a telescope and study the stars.
- At the library, look through the children's books on science. Choose one that has experiments you can do at home, such as the books by Janice Van Cleave. Try some experiments at home with your parents.
- Try some of the activities from the San Francisco Exploratorium website: www.exploratorium.edu/explore/handson.html
- Explore the *Life on Earth* site at the University of California – Berkeley. www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/exhibits/historyoflife.php. This is pretty advanced stuff, but, boy, is it cool!

Sports / Exercise

- Play on a team. Practice a sport or physical skill.
- Hike, bike, skate, swim, walk, go caving, climb, canoe, golf, snorkel, run, do gymnastics, play basketball...
- Spend as much time outdoors as possible.
- Work on developing the habit of drinking enough water each day. To find the minimum amount of water your body needs to avoid dehydration, use the following formula: (*your body weight in pounds* ÷ 10) × 2 = *minimum ounces of water you need each day* You'll need to drink more than that if you are exercising in the heat.
- Download a free book of cooperative games at freechild.org/gamesguide.pdf. Try these with your friends.
- Check out the rock climbing places in Sacramento.
- Play hockey or skate at an indoor sports center.

Community Service / Activism

- Keep a scrapbook of newspaper articles on issues you care about in the community or world. Write letters to elected officials (congresspersons, senators, the President, city councilors, etc.) expressing your opinions about issues you've read about.
- Teach lessons of something you're skilled at.
- Babysit younger children
- Help a parent who has work to do at home. Be a Mother's Helper.
- Participate in an environmental clean up. This might be as simple as going to the park with your family or friends and filling up a big trash bag with all the trash you can pick up. Save recyclable bottles and plastic in a separate bag to recycle later.
- Help younger children learn to do something they want to do.
- Visit an elder. Look for opportunities to assist the elderly. Some children call out bingo at a retirement home every other week.
- Volunteer at a local animal shelter or zoo. Does a Raptor Center need help? How about local County Animal Shelter?
- Volunteer at Meals on Wheels.
- Offer to help neighbors with pet sitting, picking up their newspaper when they're out of town, etc.

Household Service

- Help out more with the household chores since you have more time at home. Learn to do some new things such as washing clothes, ironing, folding laundry, polishing furniture, vacuuming, mowing the lawn (if your parents agree). Work alongside another family member whenever possible.
- Cook together with your family. It can be more fun than cooking by yourself.
- Be responsible for one or two meals per week. Plan the menu with your parent(s). Make a shopping list. Do the shopping. Cook the meal with your parent(s). Try not to use a microwave oven when you cook!

Adapted from Austin Montessori, 2009

An Open Letter To New Elementary Parents

Dear Parents,

Welcome to our elementary community and to your new role as the parent of an elementary-age child. You did it! You successfully nurtured your child through the crucial first six years of life, giving them a solid Montessori foundation on which they will now begin to build a healthy childhood as the foundation for a healthy adolescence. It wasn't easy at times, and there was so much to learn about your child and yourself as a parent, so many surprises, so much to think about.

Much of what you now know about parenting will continue to stand you in good stead, but it is also important to acknowledge that you are now the parent of a new child. Those sweet, transparent, cuddly little ones that you have so loved and enjoyed will quickly be leaving their infant selves behind to stretch and strengthen themselves to leave the nest and began to venture out into the larger world. The environments and the relationships we and you so carefully prepared at school and at home to support the developmental needs of the young child no longer fit this new child. New preparations are in order! Not to recognize this and change our ways of working with the child would be like forcing a frog to continue living underwater as though it were still a tadpole.

Your child will very likely find their new elementary classroom to have much that is familiar to them from their previous school experience. They will see some of the same materials on the shelf. They will see children working by choice and with the grace and courtesy characteristic of the Montessori community. They will find that their new guide has the same respect for and commitment to children that their old guide had.

All the same, your new elementary child will need some time to grow into the new classroom environment. The elementary environment is full of freedom, friends, group work, and unstructured blocks of time, for these are some of the elements that elementary children need to reach their full intellectual and social/emotional potential. To a newcomer, however, it may seem like a never-ending party! Don't be too surprised if your little Primary worker bee is initially a bit disoriented and drunk on freedom. The guide and the community of older children will bring them around in due time and show them what it means to work productively in the collaborative environment of the Montessori elementary. The elementary is largely about learning to balance freedom and responsibility, and this is the work of years, not days or weeks.

Don't worry if your child is not yet reading or doing arithmetic. The elementary guide will know how to meet them wherever they are and keep them moving forward. From the first day of school, there will be work for them to do as they pick up the thread from last year. The beauty of Montessori education, and the reason it is still flourishing around the world in scores of countries, cultures, and conditions, is that it is organized

to support the natural development of each child according to their individual developmental timetable. Save yourself and your child the anxiety created by comparing them to other children and to students in curriculum-driven lock-step traditional programs.

As a new member of the elementary community, you can expect the guide to provide extra support for you as well as your child. The guide will be working diligently to create a solid partnership with you on behalf of your child. They will also be working to help you and your child find your respective places in the community of parents and children. They will be getting to know your child and connecting them to meaningful work. They, with the help of the older children, will be acquainting your child with the culture and customs of their new community. Later, sometimes as late as the second year, they will be introducing your child to Work Journals or other tools that will allow your child to gradually take more and more responsibility for their own education.

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It goes without saying that your child's guide is there to help them develop academically and intellectually, but the bigger and even more important work they will be undertaking is the creation of a classroom culture that supports the development of character, positive habits of mind, and the social skills needed to be a happy contributing member of our work culture based on collaboration, mutual help, and mutual care. This greater focus on the social nature of work parallels the elementary child's psychological needs and natural interests. While the guide will continue to work

with each child as they have need, they will work more often with the whole community. In a very real sense, the elementary child has two guides – the adult and the community of their peers – and a skilled guide will understand that they always have that other partner in the room to consider and support.

The stimulation and intensity of the well-functioning Montessori elementary classroom can be physically and emotionally exhausting for the new children who are still in transition. There's so much to take in, so much to think about, so much to learn! Plan now to offer them extra support at home by seeing that they have the very best nutrition and 9-11 hours of sleep each night. Renew your commitment to protecting them from daily exposure to television, computer games, and video games. Give them lots of "down time" and time outdoors in nature. This is not the time to load up their schedules with private lessons and extracurricular activities! Read aloud to them daily from books recommended by your school or your child's guide. Have a family meal at least several times a week to practice the art of conversation about topics your child will be encountering in school. Practice giving your elementary child room to talk, to speculate, to question, to imagine aloud. Speak less and listen more.

Ask your guide to recommend good parenting resources for parents with elementary-age children. Be sure one of the books you read soon is How to Talk So Kids Will Listen, How to Listen So Kids Will Talk by Faber and Mazlish. Check out Sandy Blackard's book and online course at languageoflistening.com. And stay in touch with your guide as you have questions and concerns.

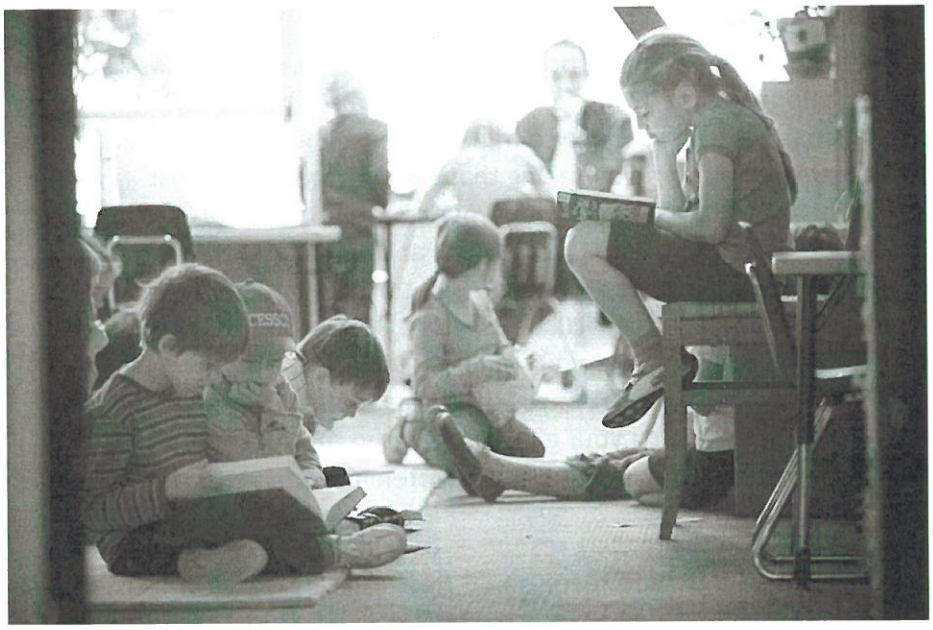
Above all, enjoy getting to know this new child of yours, as they come to know themselves. The elementary years will be rich, challenging, and full of new experiences and vivid memories. Grow joyfully along with your Montessori elementary child these next six years! Never again will you have such an opportunity for self-improvement and personal growth. This is the gift of your new child to you, if you will only accept it.

Sincerely, John

John Snyder is an administrator at Austin Montessori School. Follow him onTwitter @jrs1231.

Apples vs. Oranges

by John Snyder | Montessori Blog



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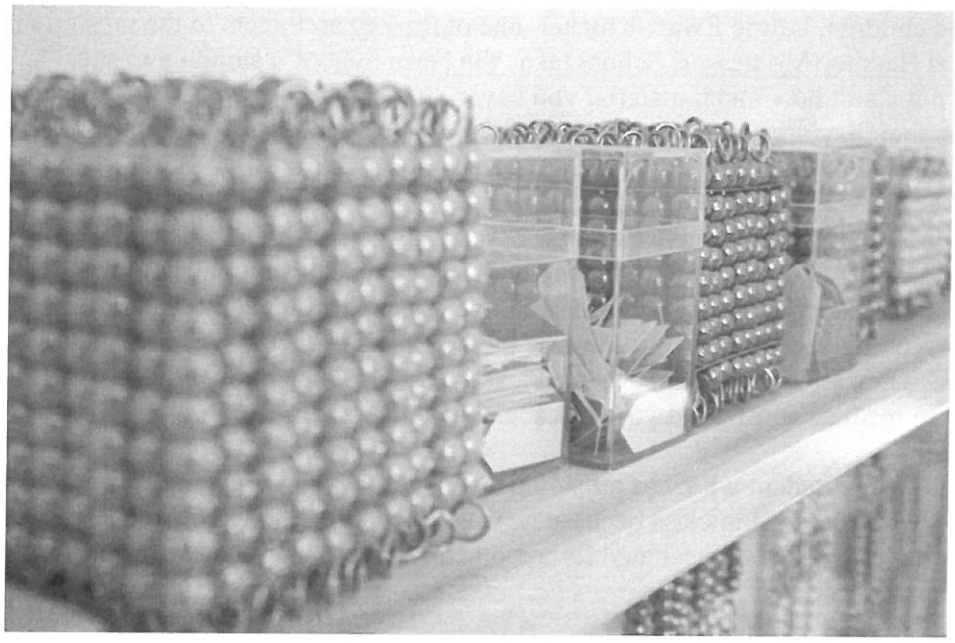
Montessori teachers and school administrators often hear versions of the following questions from parents who are wondering how well their children are being academically prepared in Montessori programs: *How does the Montessori curriculum compare to traditional curricula? Are Montessori elementary programs usually academically "accelerated" in relation to their traditional counterparts? How do Montessori graduates compare to other students?*

It is difficult, and I think unhelpful, to make blanket statements on these questions, one way or the other. To be sure, there are some recent scientific studies, as well as a hundred years of anecdotal evidence from around the world, that attest to the academic efficacy of the Montessori approach. Dr. Montessori herself famously claimed that graduates of her elementary schools would know as much as the average Italian high school student of her day. But all this should not mislead us into thinking conventionally about what is really a very non-conventional approach to education.

Dr. Montessori's work was not aimed at creating accelerated learning, better grades, or precocious children. Her desire was to support the development of the whole child, the whole human being – not to isolate certain cognitive powers of the human being and build an educational system based solely on these. Her method of support had mostly to do with removing what she saw as impediments to human development that are common features of conventional educational systems (both in her time and in ours). These included traditional understandings of the role of the adult in the classroom.

Secondarily, Dr. Montessori supported the children's development by creating some brilliant educational materials designed to dovetail perfectly with the observed cognitive and psychological characteristics of children at various stages of development. Always pragmatic, she would try her ideas out in a number of classrooms, keeping the materials that children loved and used and removing the rest. In some cases, materials made for a certain age were found to be of more interest to children of a different age, and she duly noted that and made adjustments.



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The history of education is littered with the ruins of many, many educational reform movements – all of them seeking to find a better way for children to learn or a better way to shape future society. We were able to celebrate the *centennial* of the Montessori "method" in 2007, even as the worldwide Montessori movement was beginning to achieve unprecedented momentum, because her ideas were based on a lifetime of careful observation of children in real educational settings and not on what seemed right to some educational philosopher or political appointee with this or that academic or political axe to grind.

I was reminded of the importance of this real-world foundation of Montessori at a 2010 lecture by Professor Dan Willingham of the University of Virginia, a leading researcher into the cognitive science behind learning (and a Montessori dad). Professor Willingham pointed out the qualitative difference between what he as a scientist can observe in an artificial laboratory setting and what Montessori guides can observe daily in the dynamic real world of the prepared environment. Said Willingham, "The Montessori method is way beyond what cognitive science knows. We are slowly catching up."

So, speaking to the questions with which we began, we do see many children who go farther faster in Montessori than they would have been allowed to do in a school with a lock-step curriculum – even a curriculum for the "gifted and talented." We see some who do not. *The*

important difference is that even the ones who do "average" academic work – and even those who struggle to do any academic work at all – come out of the process with their psyches, spirits, and moral values intact; with positive attitudes toward any future educational endeavors; and with a feeling of "ownership" that comes only from being supported to educate oneself.

I was recently at a Montessori elementary teachers' conference in Ohio. During a heated conversation about how much more new academic material Montessori elementary teachers should cover with the children, Laurie Ewart-Krocker, one of the key architects of the prestigious adolescent program at Hershey Montessori School (aka "the Farm School") stood up to say, "I need to tell you, it's not about how much material you cover. It's about how *unimpeded* these children have been in their development. If you [elementary guides] will keep sending us *whole children*, we'll take care of turning them into great artists, scientists, and so forth."

Although they wouldn't think to put it into the same words as Ms. Ewart-Krocker, high schools love Montessori graduates. I have been told by many high school teachers that our former Montessori students are the only ones that will speak up in class or show an active interest in learning. They are never the ones to ask, "Will this be on the exam?" They have "ownership" of their own educations. They are responsible, organized, and helpful. They know how to work with others and how to mediate conflict – two key leadership skills.

A former Austin Montessori student who was attending a well-respected private high school was told by an instructor that he could skip class because he was ahead of the other students and didn't need a review session. The boy hesitated for a moment and then asked, "Well, why would I want to do that?"

What the teacher didn't know is that "rewards" such as getting to skip class would just make no sense to most adolescents nurtured in the Montessori tradition. They would not have been comparing themselves to the rest of the class; they would not expect to be extrinsically rewarded for something excellent that they saw themselves as doing for themselves, not for a teacher; and missing out on possible learning would likely be seen as a punishment, not a reward.

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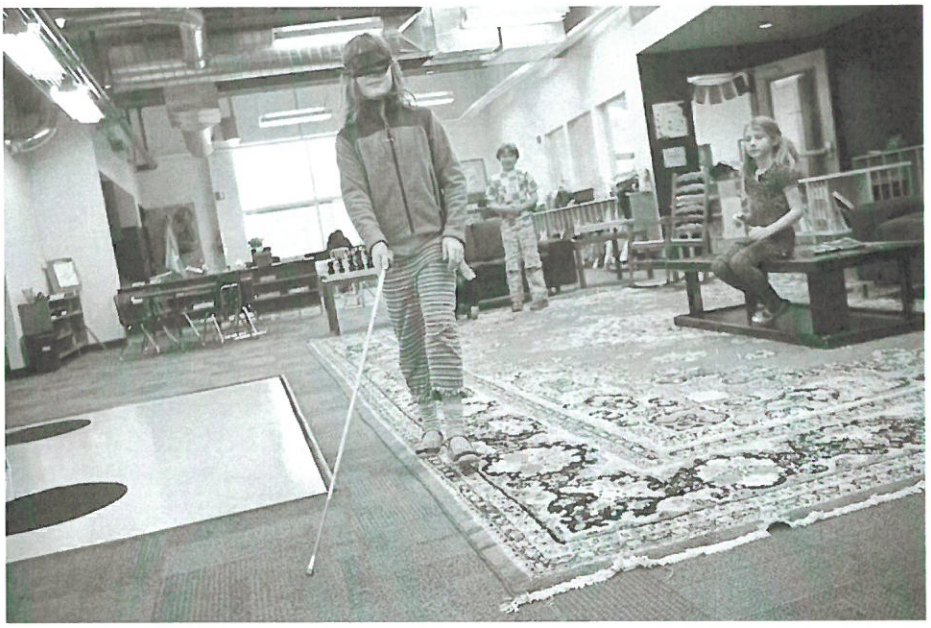
By means of contrast, I can also think of former students who waited until adolescence to learn to read fluently, to do independent research, to make friends with math or writing, or to find enough inner peace to sustain lasting friendships. When they really needed to do those things, they did them – and that, too, is part of being a former Montessori student.

My point is that all these children – those on the developmental "fast track" and those who were not – were equally well-served by their Montessori experience because they each got exactly what they needed at the time to do their very different work of self-construction. To a Montessorian, success in education is not about how many Montessori graduates are ready for "advanced placement" (although many are), or about how many go on to world-class universities (although a disproportionate number do), but about serving real children as they need to be served.

Sometimes the question is not so much about children's performance as it is about the relative difficulty and sophistication of the curricula in Montessori and traditional public schools. Funny word, "curriculum." It comes from the Latin "*currere*," meaning "to run," as does its close cousin "course" (in both its noun and verb forms). The metaphor is that of a racecourse laid out ahead of time for all the runners to follow – and may the best man win. If we speak of "curriculum" *with its common meaning*, we are already far, far away from the approach that Maria Montessori worked out for her schools – one about which she never failed to claim, "not I, but the children showed me." If this traditional race course metaphor is what we mean by "curriculum," then we would have to say that Montessori education has no "curriculum" at all in the traditional sense – no predefined path through knowledge that all children will follow, no mandatory checklists of lessons, no set of lessons tied to the child's calendar age (or "grade"), no academic forced marches of any kind.



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Because we may find it difficult to imagine how learning can be structured without a traditional curriculum, to hear that Montessori has none can be alarming. We are all heirs of several thousand years of educational thinking that begins by asking the questions, "What is to be known?" and "What is the structure of that knowledge? How does this fact or skill depend on others?" The natural end product of such questioning is a curriculum – a logically coherent, stepwise plan for leading a student through some culture's particular answer to "What is to be known?"

Having established the curriculum, the conventional educator may turn to "pragmatic" questions of method, instructional technique, educational setting, measurement, and so forth. Conclusions about these pragmatic issues may (or may not!) be informed by studies of the cognitive, emotional, and social characteristics of the children for whom the curriculum was designed. Curriculum design, then, is one thing; curriculum "implementation" another. *In this common approach, "the children" are an abstraction to be modeled, not a living part of the process.*

Maria Montessori's big insight – the difference that made all the difference – was to start *not with questions about knowledge*, but with the "question of the child." This "question of the child" was something that she came back to again and again throughout her long career. In effect, she turned the conventional approach on its head by asking, "What sort of being is this who learns? How does this being naturally exercise its powers of learning? How may we best serve the work of this being?" Only when she thought she had – through observation and experimentation – some insight into these questions was she ready to ask the questions of *what* and *when* – the sorts of question that are traditionally answered in the form of a curriculum.

If Montessori education does not have a linear "curriculum" in the traditional sense, what does it have? A vast, interconnected ecology of human knowledge, precisely and economically

represented, both in its content and in its interconnectedness, in the Montessori materials and the enticing, inspiring key lessons and stories that go along with them – what Dr. Montessori eventually came to call *Cosmic Education*. In such an environment that mirrors concretely the structure of knowledge, children are led by the lessons and materials to explore the interconnections for themselves, both individually and in groups, guided by the teacher who constantly observes and serves their optimal development. Skills develop naturally and deeply, according to the child's specific blueprint for development.

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While there is no unique, linear path through the field of knowledge, children who are given the full six or seven years of the elementary for their guided explorations forge their own paths through all the disciplines. They get to all the topics that would be in a traditional linear curriculum, but there is a qualitative difference in how they "own" their learning. Nothing has been crammed or forced and immediately forgotten. There is no throw-away learning in the Montessori classroom. Instead, the child has a personal relationship with what they have learned; the knowledge is *theirs*. The result of such unimpeded learning is a young adolescent – a *whole* person, in Ewart-Krocker's terms – who has acquired the skills, knowledge, and self-confidence necessary for their work in the next stage of life.

So let us also start with the "question of the child" instead of the "question of knowledge" and not worry too much about comparing the Montessori holistic approach to standard curricula. Better to ask "Will my child have all that he or she needs to develop to full potential in this classroom?" Chances are, if the child's natural drive to learn is stimulated by an educational environment that is always leading children out of the classroom and into exploration of the whole world *and* supported by a home environment that protects the authentic nature of the child from harmful influences, we will get to experience for ourselves Maria Montessori's own surprise and joy at just how far beyond our "expert" expectations the children can go.

The Great Lessons

by John Long | Montessori Blog

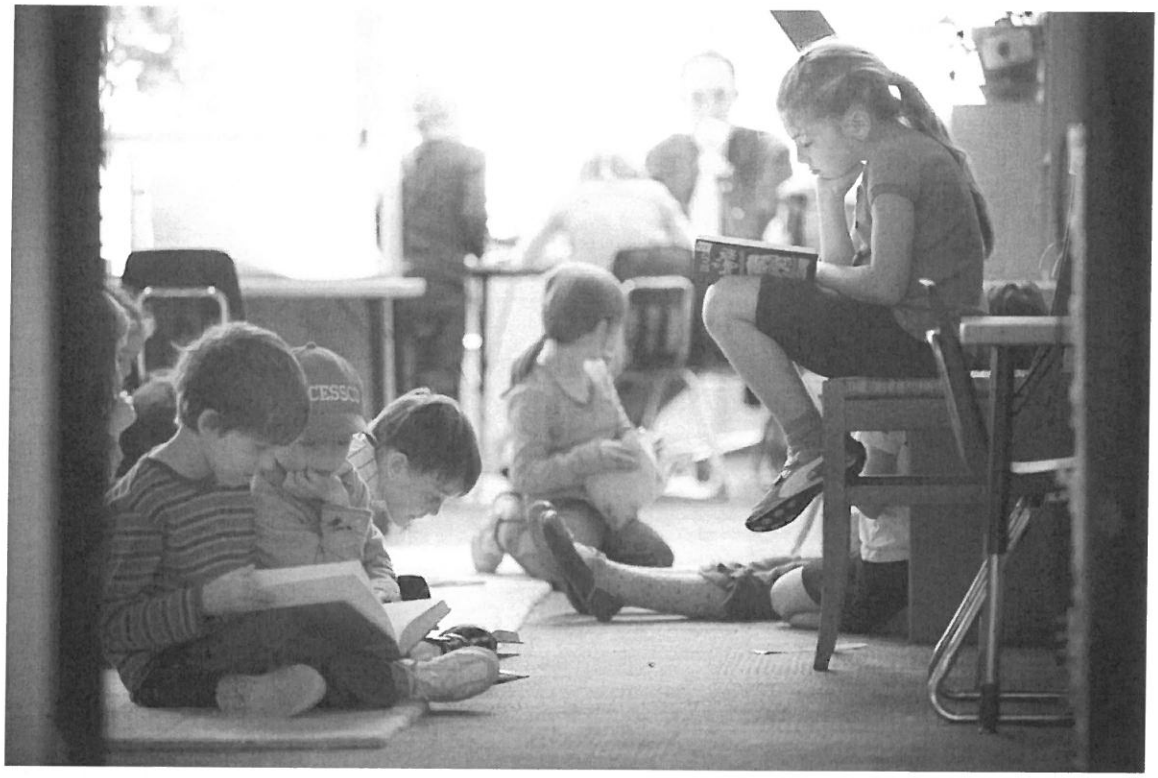
"In the beginning, before you were born, before your mother and father were born, before your grandparents were born, before there were even people on the earth, before there was an earth!

There was nothing...nothing at all."

The eyes of elementary students grow large as they imagine this, the story of creation, which they hear from their teacher at the beginning of each school year. It is one of five Great Lessons, narratives that weave together the study of all subjects, presenting elementary students a vision of the universe, and of the interconnectedness of everything, living and non-living, from the cosmos to the span of human culture.

Elementary classes begin with that story each year because it sets the stage for the study of the sun and the earth; of day and night, climate and seasons; of volcanoes and rocks and minerals; of mountains and rivers; of plants and animals; of trees and flowers, butterflies and bees; of trilobites and crinoids and dinosaurs and saber tooth tigers; of Australopithecus, Neanderthal and cro magnon man; of Sumerians, Egyptians and ancient Greeks; of geometry, arithmetic, grammar, and literature.

This is the academic side of their work, what parents think of when they ask about "curriculum". But there is more.

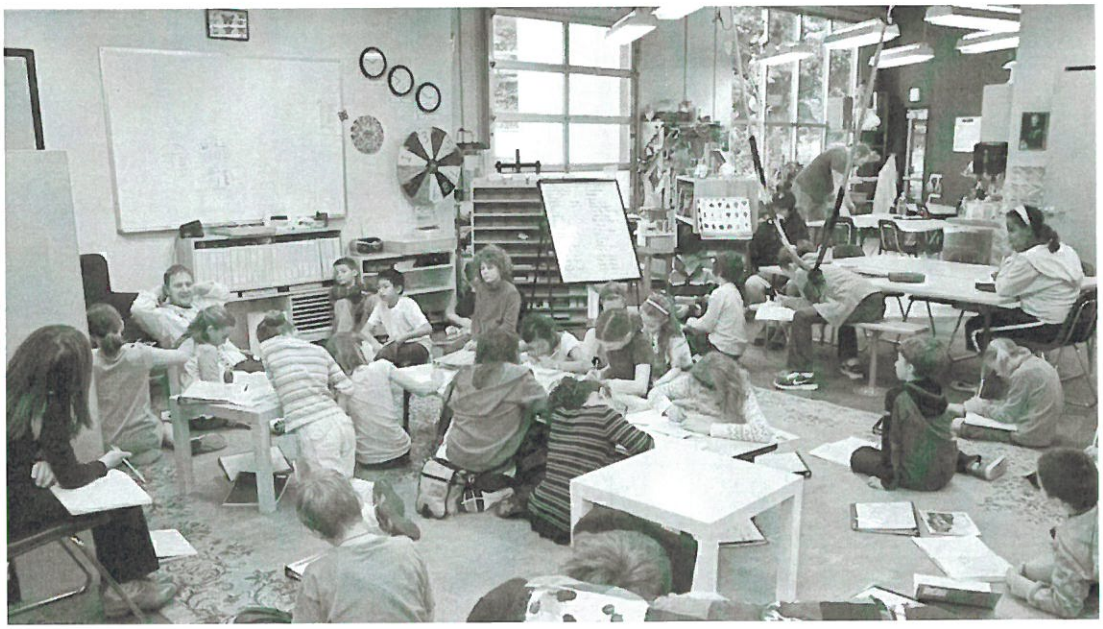


Even as the children hear the story of creation, practice cursive handwriting, and work on subtraction problems, each classroom is busy building an intentional community. Teachers sit with children in a circle, an arrangement that enables everyone to see everyone else; a shape that says, "We are all working together here," and they ask questions such as "What rules do we need?" or "What kind of place do we want our class to be?" Together they develop a list of key rules to govern their class for the year. Not too many; practical and concrete, the rules reflect the character of the elementary child: "Walk in the classroom. Use kind words. Use inside voice." The children speak of "voice," and they have a voice in shaping their class community. It belongs to them, and they belong to it. This does not mean there will be no problems. There will be. And the children are empowered to settle many of the problems on their own, sometimes with a simple reference to the rules they have created together, sometimes by bringing an issue to their class meeting, a regular gathering where children express appreciation for one another, and as needed, solve problems that affect the group. Children learn to work together cooperatively, and to solve social problems constructively. This is how they develop emotional intelligence and social skills.

Even singing reinforces the work of beginning the school year, for Dr. Montessori understood the power of learning through different media and modalities. Montessori education is not two dimensional. It is more than books and paper. "At the beginning is

a good place to be. What will each day bring for you and me? New life, new friends, new things to do...At the beginning is a good place to be."

Yes, it is. Beginnings are full of wonder...and more. The children are anxious at the beginning, anxious in both senses: full of eagerness, and perhaps a bit fearful, too, for children live change each and every day, and they inhabit the steep part of the learning curve.



We create for them at each age learning environments where they feel welcome, where they are known, where they are respected, where they can be fully engaged by work that calls out to them, where they can challenge themselves, where it is safe to make errors while learning, where they can be themselves, where they are valued for who they are, where they can get help when they need help from their teachers or from their peers, where they can offer to give help when they are able.

At last night's orientation for middle school parents, the mother of a new 7th grader turned to me and asked, "Could I be a student here?" Parents ask me that question every year. Too few of us attended schools that felt right. Many of us would love the opportunity to do school again. Instead you are giving your children an extraordinary opportunity. Welcome to the beginning.

John Long is the Head of School at the Post Oak School, an AMI school in Bellaire, Texas.

Six to Twelve Years

1. **Seek to understand your child's developmental changes.** Your child from 3 to 6 years of age was interested in absorbing information and asking question "what" in an effort to label new information. Now your child begins to ask much more elaborate, analytical questions: why, where, when and how. He becomes curious about culture, history, animals, botany, geography, and many more topics.

   His analytic nature will be accompanied by a growing interest in his peers and wanting to work in groups. Your child in his first stage of development (0 to 6 years of age) was busy creating himself, now your child will be focused on the outside world and his place in the community. This focus on the group will lead to a better understanding of acceptable behavior as defined by cultural norms. This new, moral development will give rise to questions regarding right and wrong, justice, and compassion.

2. **Understand that your child will have a distinctive learning style and approach based on his genetic propensities and his environment.** Your child has a range of capabilities dictated by his genetics that can be influenced by his environment. The smarter the environment, the stronger his skills and abilities. Seek to understand how your child's brain should be functioning from year to year within the systems of learning defined by Levine (2002). Addressing the eight core cognitive functions possessed by every individual, these systems provide the foundation for how and what a person learns:

   a. **Language.** Sensitivity to spoken and written language including the ability to process the 44 different sounds of the English language

   b. **Sequential Ordering.** Responsible for carrying out mathematical problem solving and analyzing information and directions (e.g., most instructions and geometry).

   c. **Spatial Ordering.** This is the ability to visualize patterns and configurations. This is important for math and science as well as picturing images when reading.

   d. **Motor.** The connections between the brain and various muscles.

   e. **Social Thinking.** The ability to understand and engage in a cooperative manner with others.

   f. **Attention control.** The administrative bureau of the brain. It regulates and controls learning and behavior. It directs the distribution of mental energy and causes your child to finish what

child share in the cooking, shopping, gardening, and cleaning. Encourage him to pack his own lunch, keep track of his own belongings, and honor his promises.

13. **Encourage your child's exploration of the world outside of the home and the classroom as he continues to orient himself to his culture and society.** He will gain a growing understanding of what is typical and acceptable behavior in society at large.

14. **Have your child arrange excursions to cultural events and the like.** Schedule outing to concerts, ballets, symphonies, plays, and art exhibits to broaden your child's. exposure.

15. **Involve your child in party/event planning for holidays and birthday celebrations.**

16. **Follow-up on your child's spontaneous interests by arranging trips to the zoo, library, museum, mountains, etc.** It is important to expose your child to a variety of rich experiences.

17. **Encourage social interaction with others in the community through various forms including sports, clubs, and community service.** One activity per week is plenty.

18. **Help your child go into the community to discover it and to experience the satisfaction of providing a service.** Consider opportunities at nursing homes, political offices, conservation centers, theatres, museums, and universities.

19. **Help your child make contact with his role models: painters, musicians, teachers, writers, firefighters, or other professionals.** This will allow your child to better understand his opportunities and possibly find mentors.

20. **Take family vacations that expose your child to different cultures and their unique attributes like food, art, language, and customs.** Study about the culture before you start the vacation.

21. **Create a home library with reference materials covering a wide variety of subjects (e.g., history, biology, geography, outer space, etc.)**

22. **Set up a room with plenty of space for different collections and purchase and provide other tools for research such as bug nets, a microscope, notebooks, and a telescope.** Provide shoe boxes for your child to arrange and group items of interest.

32. **Provide an emotionally safe home environment where your child feels free to discuss and explore parts of himself without judgment.** Actively listen to your child. This may include repeating part of your child's words or ideas in your response. Have an honest discussion about your child's physical changes through the adolescent maturation process.

33. **Model and support healthy self-esteem by appreciating your child's difference, helping to develop his strengths, encouraging him to have his own passions, and supporting his "down time" to think.**

34. **Try to allow your child to follow his own rhythms in regard to eating and sleeping.**

35. **Know your child's friends and host them frequently.**

36. **Promote independence in daily life – cooking, cleaning, and caring for others.**

37. **Encourage entrepreneurship, economic independence, and responsibility in handling money and personal belongings.**

38. **Encourage your child's connection to a bigger world.** Have him read the newspaper and discuss world events. Among other things, continue to have your child attend cultural events, visit museums, and volunteer. Expect service to others and the community.

39. **Encourage interest in studying and living abroad.**

40. **Support weekend retreats with peers and young adult leaders.**

Working Towards Responsibility
by Sandra Westcott

As children grow, they should become more responsible - more willing to help, more aware of the needs of others, more able to manage tasks on their own. By eighteen, parents want children to know both what needs to be done to handle everyday life and how to accomplish these jobs. Nurturing a responsible attitude is the first item on the "parent job description". How do we begin? Can it be enjoyable? What responsibilities can we expect children to assume at different ages?

Always bear in mind your child's stage of development when you ask him to assume a responsibility.

* The interests of young children, from birth to age 6 focus on self care leading to physical independence.
* During the 6-12 years, children are interested in decision-making which leads to mental independence.
* During adolescence, financial independence becomes the chief concern.

Naturally, after your child has learned a particular skill, it becomes a habit of everyday living. That's why the following list of suggested responsibilities is cumulative.

Be sure to talk from time to time with your children about the chores they consider interesting and fun, and those they find boring and disagreeable. Use your child's birthday as an excuse to schedule the discussion. You might make a list together of jobs they'd like to try and jobs they want to avoid. The results may surprise you! The jobs your children want might be harder and more time-consuming than the ones they hate. Why? Certain jobs seem more interesting or challenging. Maybe they involve real adult responsibilities. By allowing your children to try a challenging job, you give them the chance to feel the same pride and self-confidence we get from doing satisfying work.

What tasks fill the "Chores I Hate" column? Picking up dirty clothes, weeding the garden, making the bed, taking out the garbage? They may be boring, but dull jobs are a part of life, too. Point out the positive results of your children's assistance. "Bring down your laundry so you'll have clean clothes tomorrow." "If we finish the housework together on Saturday morning, we'll have time to go swimming in the afternoon." Nobody likes to work alone. By including one of your children in a task you have chosen, you are spending time together, which is much more fun for everyone! Remember to notice and praise your child's completion of a job, even if he only does it occasionally at first.

Never expect a standard of orderliness or cleanliness from your child that you would not demand from yourself. It's good to examine periodically your own standards. Make sure you don't ask for the impossible! Provide the means required for your child to complete the job. For instance, putting toys on shelves is only possible if there is enough space on the shelves for all the toys.

Keep your child's schedule in mind when assigning chores. Make your system flexible enough to work around sport practices, music lessons, and outdoor play. Don't ask your child to do so many jobs he feels overwhelmed. Remember most children need to have tasks broken down into steps. "Clean your room" is ambiguous. What does it involve? Define your tasks together. Accept the fact that you will probably have to work alongside your child if you want the job done your way.

Sandra Westcott's parent handout on building responsibility provides sensible advice for supporting Montessori principles at home

Home Responsibilities

The following list was compiled by parents and teachers. You may add to it as you try various tasks and see that they are appropriate for a particular age group.

For Two and Three Year Olds

Be sure you supply tools children can handle before asking them to do the job.

* Pick up toys and put them away in the correct place.
* Put books on shelf, magazines in a rack, and newspapers in the recycling area.
* Sweep the floor with a child-sized broom.
* Set the table.
* Clean under the table after meals with a dustpan and brush.
* Choose between two different foods for breakfast and lunch.
* Carry his own dish and silverware to the kitchen after meals. Scrape the plate. Place it on the counter or in the dishwasher.
* Learn to use the toilet.
* Brush teeth, wash and dry hands, and brush hair. You will need to supply a sturdy stool in the bathroom so your child can see himself in the mirror.
* Undress himself. Dress himself with some help.
* Mop up spills or accidents.
* Put away boxes or cans from the grocery store on lower shelves.
* Accompany you to the recycling center and carry items from the car to the various bins.

For Four and Five Year Olds

This is a good age to begin using a goal chart. Choose jobs together and put them on the chart. When the jobs are done, the child and parents enjoy a special treat together.

* Help with grocery shopping and suggest foods to purchase.
* Polish shoes.
* Feed and water pets.
* Assist with raking, weeding and planting.
* Help make his bed.
* Help vacuum with electric broom or lightweight vacuum.
* Help fill and empty the dishwasher.
* Dust furniture.
* Begin some "cooking", such as pouring his own drink, spreading peanut butter on bread, pouring cereal, adding topping to gelatin or ice cream, tearing up lettuce for a salad, adding certain ingredients to a dish mom or dad is cooking, holding the electric mixer to mash potatoes or combine ingredients for a cake, prepare plates for the family dinner, clean up afterwards.
* Bring in the mail.
* Polish silver, help polish the car.
* Sharpen pencils.
* Dressing on his own including choosing an outfit for the day.
* Learning to tie his shoes.
* Scrubbing the sink, toilet and bathtub.
* Cleaning mirrors and windows.

* Separate the wash into various loads
* Folding clothes and putting them away.
* Learn to answer the telephone and how to dial emergency numbers.
* Help clean out the interior of the car.
* Take out the garbage.
* Begin learning social skills: Sharing toys with playmates, asking before going out to play, etc. The child should be able to play for short periods without adult attention.
* Begin to suggest family activities he would like to be taken from the "entertainment fund".
* Begin handling money - paying for small purchases in cash and receiving change.

For Six and Seven-Year Olds

* Water house plants, the lawn and outdoor flowers.
* Sweep and hose off the patio or deck.
* Begin using sharp knives to peel vegetables and the stove and microwave to prepare simple foods.
* Carry in the grocery sacks.
* Prepare his own school lunch.
* Gather wood for the fireplace.
* Take his dog for a walk (if the dog is not too big).
* Give the dog a bath.
* Be responsible for bandaging minor injuries.
* Wash out the trash cans.
* Wash walls; mop floors.
* Straighten or clean the silverware drawer.
* Hang his own clothes in the closet.
* Do simple ironing.
* Leave the bathroom in order; hang up towels, put dirty clothes in hamper, etc.
* Care for his bicycle, including locking it when not in use.
* Care for outdoor play equipment.
* Use an alarm clock to get himself up in the morning. Go to bed at night on his own.
* Carry lunch money and notes to school.
* Run errands in the neighborhood when parents ask.
* Take telephone messages and write them down.

For Eight and Nine-Year Olds

* Mop or buff the wooden, tile or vinyl flooring.
* Wax the furniture.
* Clean miniblinds.
* Straighten his own closet and drawers.
* Run his own bath.
* Fold his blankets.
* Perform minor repairs to clothing, such as replacing buttons or sewing rips in clothing.
* Scoop up animal waste in the yard or house, including cleaning the cat box.
* Shop for and select his own clothing and shoes along with a parent.
* Change to play clothes after school without being asked.

* Begin to read recipes and cook occasionally for the family.
* Cut flowers and make a centerpiece.
* Pick fruit off trees or bushes.
* Build a campfire.
* Prepare food for cooking outdoors, such as hamburgers or shishkebobs.
* Paint a fence or shelf.
* Begin to write letters and thank you notes.
* Feed the baby occasionally.
* Watch younger siblings briefly as long as parents are available. For example, playing a game with a sibling while dad mows the lawn and mom is grocery shopping.
* Know how to cross streets safely: Do so without assistance.

For Ten and Eleven-Year Olds

* Strip the bed and replace the dirty sheets with clean ones.
* Operate the washer and dryer including measuring of detergent, fabric softener and bleach.
* Buy groceries using a list; choose more economical brands by using comparison shopping.
* Keep track of his own schedule including regularly scheduled practices, doctor and dental appointments, etc.
* Receive and answer mail addressed to him.
* Pouring and preparing tea, coffee and cold drinks.
* Waiting on guests.
* Plan his own parties.
* Know simple first aid.
* Learn to use a sewing machine.
* Learn about bank accounts. Begin savings account.
* Wash the family car.

For Eleven and Twelve-Year Olds

* Begin earning his own money by mowing lawns, babysitting, etc.
* Learn safety rules for staying at home alone.
* Learn to take public transportation such as light rail or bus.
* Pack his own suitcase for overnight trips.
* Take responsibility for his own hobbies.
* Learn to handle himself safely and politely when in public places alone or with peers.
* Join organizations and take some responsibility for leadership.
* Dress and undress younger siblings and put them to bed.
* Clean the pool and pool deck.
* Run his own errands when reasonable.
* Mow the lawn and learn lawn mower care and maintenance.
* Work along with parents during home repair or construction projects.
* Clean the oven and refrigerator.
* Set his own schedule to manage homework and instrument practice.
* Learn to pump gas and add oil to the car.
* Purchase his own treats.

For Adolescents

* Be able to determine his own bedtime.
* Be able to discuss and decide along with parents his curfew for evening gatherings.
* Take complete responsibility for preparing a family meal.
* Learn and understand how to maintain good health through exercise, adequate rest, weight control, eating nutritious food, and annual check-ups.
* Begin to anticipate the needs of family members and friends and offer to help.
* Understand and accept his capabilities and limitations.
* Respect himself and take responsibility for his decisions.
* Demonstrate loyalty, honesty, and respect to others.

If you are patient with your children, add responsibility as they become developmentally ready for it and express your appreciation for their involvement with the family, you will earn their gratitude when they are young adults. All parents want their children to become independent, competent adults. Using these suggestions will help!!

Computers in the Montessori Home: Guidelines for Decision-Making

By John R. Snyder

Thirty years ago, digital computers were large, complex machines expensive enough to be owned only by businesses, universities, and agencies of government. Today computers are small, complex machines cheap enough to be owned by children. It is almost taken for granted in America that children who do not have ready access to computers at home are at a terrible educational disadvantage. Hardware and software manufacturers have found, to their delight, that parents who would never buy computers and software for themselves can be persuaded to buy them for their children. In many households, the family computer monitor has become (along with video games and network television) the third in the unholy trinity of screens that dominate the family's recreational life. As the adults in the family become more and more attached to their computers, disappearing into individual laptops can become what the family typically does "together."

There is no doubt that the personal computer, when used wisely and with attention to the child's true developmental needs, can be a powerful adjunct to classroom learning. However, because so many parents are themselves new to the computer or new to Montessori education, it is difficult to sort out what "wise use" means in concrete situations -- all the more so because of the confusing messages circulating in the culture and its media.

Perhaps the most important thing that Montessori educators can say to today's parents is "Relax. Your child will not be intellectually stunted because they do not have access to a home computer. Virtually nothing a well-rounded child needs to know requires the use of a computer to learn it." In truth, with the possible exception of certain mathematical and engineering ideas related directly to the design and programming of computers themselves (hardly the focus of most software marketed to children), the introduction of the digital computer has changed almost nothing in the fundamental intellectual landscape of childhood. This is largely because the child's most important intellectual tasks are determined not by fads or the advent of new technologies, but by the unfolding of the human organism according to a genetically coded plan conditioned by the entire span of human evolution. It was the genius of Maria Montessori that she was able to map out much of this process of human development and begin to understand how educators might support it in a systematic and universal way. When we understand the true needs of the developing child, much of the hype about how indispensable computers are to children quickly evaporates.

Many of us already have computers at home, and we will have noticed that our children seem to be fascinated by them. How can we use the computer in the best interest of our child's learning and development? Here are four questions that may help.

1. Is my child at least 7 years old, reading fluently, and writing effortlessly in cursive?

If not, the child is simply not ready to use the computer -- or, more accurately, the computer is not designed to support your child's development. Children below age 7 learn in ways very different from those of adults and older children. Young children learn primarily through physical movement and by using all their senses to explore the physical environment. Computers restrict both these modes of learning. Young children also tend to uncritically absorb whatever is presented to them -- a disturbing thought, considering many of the sounds and images that flow through the multimedia screens of our home computers.

2. Does this software support my (older) child's current developmental needs? Are there better ways to meet those needs?

Most software marketed to children can be divided into two categories: games and "educational software." Some educational software is packaged in a game-like format, ostensibly to make it more interesting to the child.

The question to ask about games (computerized and non-computerized) without educational content is "Could my child be having the same kind of relaxation and fun doing an activity that is not a developmental waste of time?" With a little thought and creativity, we can almost always answer "yes." Educational games and other educational software need to be carefully reviewed, case-by-case. The educational benefits of the software need to be balanced against the potential side-effects, such as

- social isolation,
- missed opportunities for collaborative learning,
- missed opportunities for neurological development that comes from activities based on intensive use of the hands, body and creative thinking,
- development of sedentary habits (contributing to the current epidemic of obesity in children),
- presentation of material in ways that conflict with the Montessori child's classroom experiences,
- substitution of extrinsic rewards for the intrinsic joy of learning.

This last side-effect deserves more comment. Much software for children is based on the tacit assumption that children are not intrinsically interested in learning and must therefore be tricked or manipulated into learning by hiding the educational content under layers of multimedia gimmickry. Nothing could be farther removed from the Montessori philosophy and experience. On the contrary, it is precisely the joy of learning and increasing self-mastery that drive the child to overcome the challenges of the material. If a child finds certain material uninteresting, the Montessorian would usually take this to mean that it was not yet the right time for this child to learn that material. From this perspective, it can be a positive harm to seduce a child into "going through the motions" just to be rewarded with a funny noise or a favorite cartoon character cartwheeling across the screen. What is the child really learning? That learning is boring, but cartoons are fun? To expect whiz-bang, showbiz responses at school for each little increment of effort? That they cannot learn without an authority figure to validate and praise their efforts? All this is really just a high-tech way of once again imposing an adult educational agenda on the child, instead of supporting the child in the exciting task of constructing a self according to the blueprint that is uniquely theirs.

Proponents of video-gaming and other computer software for children are now citing research that shows that children who play video games out-perform their peers in certain aspects of cognitive development. This is hardly a surprise: people do tend to get much better at things they extensively practice, and the brain adapts to whatever training it receives. Closer examination of these claims reveals that unless one wants to be an air traffic controller or a fighter pilot, these enhanced cognitive-spatial skills are good for little more than playing more video games. All that time and effort is better spent developing cognitive skills that can only be developed the "old-fashioned" way: by many years of creative use of hands, body, and mind in a sensorially and socially rich environment. It is these higher "executive function" thinking skills that research profoundly links to success and happiness throughout life.

3. Does this software support my family's values? The values of the school community of which my child is a member?

Many computer games, and even some "educational games," have shocking amounts of violence. Unfortunately, this will continue to be the case since violent games sell like hotcakes in our country. Nevertheless, protests from parents have made software developers a little more sensitive to the needs of the children's software market. Sometimes the violence is softened by presenting it as "good guys versus bad guys" or "monsters fighting monsters." Even non-violent software can have questionable content. For example, at the end of one popular game, a bikini-clad girl runs in from the side of the screen and gives the winning character (always male) an adoring kiss. What messages is this game sending about gender equality and human dignity? Suffice it to say, parents need to review software before giving it to children and make conscious choices about what is acceptable in their family and in the larger school community.

If adult members of the family choose to play violent or sexually suggestive computer games, it is very important to do it when the children are asleep or not in the house. Earphones will keep children in their beds or playrooms from hearing the gunfire, explosions, screams, profanity, war cries and other disturbing sounds that go along with most violent games.

4. Does this software ultimately increase or decrease my child's creativity and natural self-expression?

Most adult computer users have found that they can do things well on the computer that they could not do by hand -- at least not in the available time. It is easy to assume that what is wonderful for us will also be wonderful for our children. Not necessarily. For example, desktop publishing tools are a boon to the writer or the small business owner; they even appear to have played a part in the democratization of eastern Europe. However, in the hands of a child struggling to master cursive handwriting or conventional spelling, they may become a way of avoiding the difficulties of mastery. Computer graphics tools have opened up a whole new range of possibilities for modern visual artists. Yet, will the child who makes complex, fantastic digital collages from images captured from the Internet be more motivated or less motivated to master the classic art of drawing a human face with paper and pencil? The general principle here is an important one: walk before you run. Our children will have plenty of time as adults to use sophisticated software to do all sorts of amazing things. Childhood is for laying the groundwork of creativity by training the eye, the hand, the ear -- using simple, time-tested tools specifically designed for each. Although they are not the first generation to have tried, our children are the first generation to actually have the option of leaving the basics of craft to automation; so far, the aesthetic results are not promising.

Some computer software can be viewed as a surrogate for adult expertise. For example, a good chess program can teach a child far more about chess strategy and tactics than most of us personally can. There are musical ear training and music theory programs that can tutor a child (or an adult) almost as well as the average music teacher. For adolescents, access to the Internet can open up the world in a very effective and exciting way. In the right social context, and with ongoing parental observation and monitoring, these sorts of application can be a positive addition to the home learning environment.

Most importantly, the computer should be used as a tool to accomplish some purpose greater than the use itself. For example, older children who are fluent readers and writers of cursive, can use the word processing capabilities of the computer to explore different ways of composing a story; or they can use music software to learn how to write a fugue or harmonize a melody. What must be avoided at all costs is the use of the computer as an open-ended entertainment device. The child should sit

down at the computer with a clear purpose and plan, not with the question, "I wonder what I can find to do on the computer to amuse myself?" As an open-ended entertainment device, the computer has a remarkable ability to become an addiction; as a purposeful tool, it does not. Children who use the computer as a tool may become "addicted" to writing stories or composing music or exploring fractal geometry, but they will not become addicted to "using the computer." Nevertheless, even goal-directed computer use should be restricted to one 20-30 minute session per day, at most. Longer sessions can be a strain on young eyes, necks, and hands.

If you would like to read more extensively on the effects of computer use on children and families, an excellent place to start is the report "Fools Gold: A Critical Look at Computers in Childhood," available online from the Alliance for Childhood (www.allianceforchildhood.org).

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Favorite Websites

http://www.commonsensemedia.org/

This website provides reviews and ratings of books, movies, video games, and various types of media. The information can assist you in finding age and topic appropriate media for your family so that you can make informed choices about media exposure your child receives.

www.MariaMontessori.com

This website provides a variety of articles written by Montessori guides and was created by Matt Hillis.

www.goodreads.com

This website helps you choose your next favorite book!

www.greatgood.berkeley.edu

This website provides articles and information relevant to humanity, social justice, and Cosmic Education. It's very inspirational!

http://www.michaelgurian.com

We heard Michael Gurian speak at the Montessori Congress in Portland last August. He is the author of several books about the workings of and differences between boys' and girls' brains and the social and educational implications. His discussion about bridge brains and nurturing aggression really helped me mentally shift the ways in which I thought about behavior I observe in the classroom. I recommend his website and his books.

As many of you know, I spent the summer immersed in environmental education. Here are some of my favorite websites related to nature and children.

http://www.discovertheforest.org/where-to-go

This website helps you plan your next family adventure and provides information on different hiking trails and camp sites.

http://www.childrenandnature.org/

This website provides a lot of wonderful information and articles about the importance of children playing outside. And, there is a blog written by Richard Louv (the author of The Nature Principle and Last Child in the Woods).

http://www.nwf.org/Wildlife/Wildlife-Conservation/Citizen-Science.aspx

Citizen science is a way for families to connect with nature. There are many opportunities to volunteer and make a difference in our local environments. Your family can help pick up trash along the river, get rid of invasive plants, make your backyard a certified wildlife habitat, or record the birds in your backyard. This website provides some examples of citizen science and information on how to become involved.

Picture Books

"Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain" by Verna Aardema

"A Chair for My Mother" by Vera B. Williams

"Frederick" by Leo Lionni

"Henry's Freedom Box" by Ellen Levine

"I Wish I Were a Butterfly" by James Howe

"Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters" by John Steptoe (an African Tale)

"The Old Woman Who Named Things" by Cynthia Rylant

"One Grain of Rice" by Demi (an Indian Mathematical Folktale)

"One Small Blue Bead" by Byrd Baylor

"James Herriot's Treasury for Children" - A James Herriot Treasury

"Make Way for McCloskey" - A Robert McCloskey Treasury

"Rakoto and the Drongo Bird" by Robin McKown (out-of-print)

"The Keeping Quilt" by Patricia Polacco

"The Reluctant Dragon" by Kenneth Grahame

"Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt" by Deborah Hopkinson

My First Little House Books adapted from the Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder: "County Fair," "Dance at Grandpa's," "The Deer in the Wood," "Going to Town," "Going West," "A Little House Birthday," "A Little Prairie House," "Prairie Day," "Sugar Snow," "Summertime in the Big Woods," "Winter Days in the Big Woods," "Winter on the Farm"

Biographies:

Childhood of Famous Americans series: "Benjamin Franklin, Young Printer," "Elizabeth Blackwell, Girl Doctor," "Mark Twain, Young Writer," "Jean Felix Piccard, Boy Balloonist," "Sacagawea, American Pathfinder," and others

"A Weed is a Flower" by Aliki (the story of George Washington Carver)

"A Picture Book of ....." series (many titles by David Adler, some may depict scenes of violence depending on subject material): "A Picture Book of Rosa Parks," "A Picture Book of Abraham Lincoln," "A Picture Book of Christopher Columbus," and others

"Eleanor" by Barbara Cooney (the story of a young Eleanor Roosevelt)

Books by Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire: "Abraham Lincoln," "George Washington" "Benjamin Franklin" and others

Science/Animals

Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science Books - Stage 1 and Stage 2 reading levels, many titles in this series, here are a few:

"Follow the Water from Brook to Ocean" by Arthur Dorros

"Look Out for Turtles" by Melvin Berger

"Where Does the Garbage Go?" by Paul Showers

"How Do Apples Grow?" by Betsy Maestro

"Bugs are Insects" by Anne Rockwell

"Why Frogs are Wet" by Judy Hawes

"Archaeologists Dig for Clues" by Kate Duke

"Fossils Tell of Long Ago" by Aliki

"Be a Friend to Trees" by Patricia Lauber

"Big Tracks, Little Tracks" by Franklyn Branley

"All About" series by Jim Arnosky (many in this series, some out-of-print)

"All About Turtles," "All About Turkeys," "All About Alligators," and others

Books by Nic Bishop (beautiful photographs): "Nic Bishop Spiders," "Nic Bishop Marsupials," "Nic Bishop Frogs," and others

National Geographic "Face to Face" series: "Face to Face with Caterpillars," "Face to Face with Wild Horses," "Face to Face with Dolphins," and others

Books by Seymour Simon (numerous topics, here are a few): "Volcanoes," "Saturn," "The Heart"

"A Drop of Water" by Walter Wick

"Stars Beneath Your Bed: The Surprising Story of Dust" by April Pulley Sayre

"Living Sunlight: How Plants Bring the Earth to Life" by Molly Bang & Penny Chisholm

"Pale Male: Citizen Hawk of New York City" by Janet Schulman

Social Sciences/History

"A True Book" series and "A New True Book" series - many, many diverse topics (

"A Life Like Mine" by UNICEF in association with DK

"Celebrations" by UNICEF in association with the United Nation's Children's Fund

Holidays Around the World series by National Geographic:

"Celebrate Rosh Hashanah & Yom Kippur," "Celebrate Hanukkah," "Celebrate Ramadan & Eid Al-Fitr," and others

The "If You..." series published by Scholastic: "If You Sailed on the Mayflower," If You Were There When They Signed the Constitution," "If You Lived in Colonial Times," and others

Poetry/Fables/Myths

"All the Small Poems and Fourteen More" by Valerie Worth

"Around the World in 80 Tales" by Saviour Pirotta (Explore six continents through retellings of traditional tales)

"Comets, Stars, the Moon, and Mars" by Douglas Florian (space poems)

"D'Aulaires Book of Greek Myths" by Ingri and Edgar Pain D'Aulaire

"D'Aulaires Norse Gods and Giants" by Ingri and Edgar Pain D'Aulaire

"Dogku" by Andrew Clements (a shaggy dog story told in haiku, picture book)

"Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices" by Paul Fleischman

"A Light in the Attic" by Shel Silverstein (and other titles)

"My Dog May Be a Genius" by Jack Prelutsky (collection by the first Children's Poet Laureate)

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost (picture book)

"Unwitting Wisdom - An Anthology of Aesop's Fables" retold/illustrated by Helen Ward

Emerging Readers

DK Readers, such as: "Born to be a Butterfly," "Tale of a Tadpole," etc.

Rookie Readers, such as: "From Seed to Plant", "The Seven Continents," etc.

Beginner Reader Chapter Books (short chapters, simple stories)

"An I Can Read" Books - many titles and series, here are a few:

- Little Bear books by Else Minarik: "Little Bear," "Father Bear Comes Home", "A Kiss for Little Bear," etc.
- "Amelia Bedelia" by Peggy Parish
- "Danny and the Dinosaur" by Syd Hoff
- Frog and Toad books by Arnold Lobel: "Frog and Toad are Friends," "Frog and Toad Together," etc.
- Harry books by Gene Zion: "Harry the Dirty Dog," "Harry and the Lady Next Door", etc.
- "Owl at Home" by Arnold Lobel
- "Mouse Tales" by Arnold Lobel
- "There is a Carrot in My Ear and Other Noodle Tales" by Alvin Schwartz

Billy and Blaze series by C.W. Anderson - adventures of a boy and his horse: "Billy and Blaze," "Blaze and Thunderbolt," "Blaze Shows the Way", and others

"The Blue Hill Meadows" by Cynthia Rylant - Four short chapters describe a family's existence through the seasons.

Dick and Jane books: "We Look," "We See," "We Play," "Away We Go," "Guess Who," "Fun with Dick and Jane," "Go Go Go" and others

Henry and Mudge (series) by Cynthia Rylant - Adventures of a boy and his big dog: "Henry and Mudge, The First Book," "Henry and Mudge in Puddle Trouble," and others

Little House Chapter Books (adapted from the Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder)

"The Adventures of Laura and Jack," "Pioneer Sisters," "Animal Adventures," "School Days," "Laura and Nellie," "Farmer Boy Days," "Little House Farm Days," "Hard Times on the Prairie," "Little House Friends," "Christmas Stories," "Laura's Ma," "Laura's Pa," "Laura and Mr. Edwards," "Little House Parties"

Mr. Putter and Tabby (series) by Cynthia Rylant - Adventures of an elderly man and his tabby cat: "Mr. Putter and Tabby Pour the Tea," "Mr. Putter and Tabby Walk the Dog," and others

Snipp, Snapp, Snurr series and Flicka, Ricka, Dicka series by Maj Lindman (originally published in the 1940's and 1950's and recently reissued)

Chapter Books - Level 1 (longer chapters, dynamic story lines)

26 Fairmont Avenue (series) by Tomie DePaola (later titles in the series concerning WWII may not be appropriate for younger children) - DePaola shares engaging childhood memories

"All of a Kind Family" by Sidney Taylor - A heartwarming story of five little girls living with their parents in New York City at the turn of the century. When Mama tells them her big news, it's the most wonderful surprise of all!

The Boxcar Children series by Gertrude C. Warner - The adventures of four siblings, the fist 19 books in the series are by the original author, the entire series includes 100+ titles.

"The Courage of Sarah Noble" by Alice Dalgliesh - In 1707, young Sarah Noble and her father traveled through the wilderness to build a new home for their family. "Keep up your courage, Sarah Noble," her mother had said, but Sarah found that it was not always easy to feel brave inside. The dark woods were full of animals and Indians, too, and Sarah was only eight!

"The Enormous Egg" by Oliver Butterworth - When twelve-year-old Nate Twitchell takes care of a gigantic egg laid by one of his hens, he is shocked to find that it hatches into a triceratops.

Fudge books by Judy Blume: "Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing," "Otherwise Known as Sheila the Great," "Superfudge," "Fudge-a-Mania," "Double Fudge"

"Gooseberry Park" by Cynthia Rylant - An assortment of domesticated pets and untamed creatures band together to help a friend in need.

The Henry Huggins books by Beverly Cleary: "Henry Huggins," "Henry and Beezus," "Henry and Ribsy," "Henry and the Paper Route," "Henry and the Clubhouse," "Ribsy"

"Ida Early Comes Over the Mountain" by Robert Burch - Ida Early is as tall as the tales she tells, a gangly scarecrow who comes to the rural Georgia home of widower Mr. Sutton during the Depression years. Her offer to help out for a spell delights the four Sutton children and their father ... and life becomes a three-ring circus for the kids.

Magic School Bus series by Joanna Cole - The books feature the antics of Ms. Frizzle, an elementary school teacher, and her class, who board a magical school bus which takes them on field trips into the solar system, under the Bed, into the American Flag, or to other such impossible locations.

Magic Tree House Series by Mary Pope Osborne - Go back in time and discover history with Jack and Annie! From France in the Middle Ages to the prairies of America, then to the Moon.

Moffats books by Eleanor Estes: "The Moffats," "The Middle Moffat," "Rufus M" - Meet the Moffats. There is Sylvie, the oldest, the cleverest, and-most days at least-the responsible one; Joey, who though only twelve is the man of the house...sometimes; Janey, who has a terrific upside-down way of looking at the world; and Rufus, who may be the littlest but always gets in the biggest trouble.

"A Mouse Called Wolf" by Dick King-Smith - the adventures of Wolfgang Amadeus Mouse (Wolf for short), a little mouse with a big name and talent to match! The world's first singing mouse, Wolf sings his way into the heart of Mrs. Honeybee, his music-loving, human housemate, and even helps save her life.

"Mr. Popper's Penguins" by Richard Atwater - The 1938 classic tells the story of Mr. Popper, the small-town housepainter who dreamed of exploring Antarctic regions, and Captain Cook, the redoubtable penguin who turned Mr. Popper's world upside down.

Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle books by Betty McDonald: "Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle," "Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Magic," "Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Farm" - Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle lives in an upside-down house that smells like cookies. She was even married to a pirate once. Most of all, she knows everything about children.

The Ralph S. Mouse books by Beverly Cleary: "The Mouse and the Motorcycle," Runaway Ralph," "Ralph S. Mouse" - "Pb-pb-b-b-b. Pb-pb-b-b-b." With these magic vocables, Ralph the mouse revs up a dream come true--his very own motorcycle. Once a mouse can ride a motorcycle ... almost anything can happen!

The Ramona Quimby books by Beverly Cleary: "Beezus and Ramona," "Ramona the Pest," "Ramona the Brave," "Ramona Quimby, Age 8," "Ramona Forever" - Nine-year-old Beezus Quimby has her hands full with her little sister, Ramona. Sure, other people have little sisters that bother them sometimes, but is there anyone in the world like Ramona?

"The Saturdays" by Elizabeth Enright - *The Saturdays* is the first installment of Enright's Melendy Quartet, an engaging and warm series about the close-knit Melendy family and their surprising adventures (Other titles in the series: "The Four-Story Mistake," "Then There Were Five," "Spiderweb for Two."

Three Tales of My Father's Dragon by Ruth Gannett - "My Father's Dragon," "Elmer and the Dragon," "The Dragons of Blueland" - The story begins when Elmer Elevator (the narrator's father as a boy) runs away with an old alley cat to rescue a flying baby dragon being exploited on a faraway island. With the help of two dozen pink lollipops, rubber bands, chewing gum, and a fine-toothed comb, Elmer disarms the fiercest of beasts on Wild Island.

<u>Chapter Books – Level 2 (More complex themes and language)</u>

American Girls Series (Kaya, Josephina, Kirsten, Molly, Samantha, Kit, Rebecca, Felicity, Addy, the "Julie" series is not recommended for Early Elementary children) – A set of six books for each title character takes you into the life of a girl during different times in American

history, from 1764 and the life a Nez Perce girl to 1944 and the life of girl on the home front during World War II.

"Babe: the Gallant Pig" by Dick King-Smith - The story of an extraordinary pig that wants to be a sheepherder.

"Bunnicula" by Deborah and James Howe - Before it's too late, Harold the dog and Chester the cat must find out the truth about the newest pet in the Monroe household -- a suspicious-looking bunny with unusual habits...and fangs!

"Because of Winn-Dixie" by Kate DiCamillo - Because of Winn-Dixie, a big, ugly, happy dog, 10-year-old Opal learns 10 things about her long-gone mother from her preacher father. Because of Winn-Dixie, Opal makes new friends among the somewhat unusual residents of her new hometown, Naomi, Florida. Because of Winn-Dixie, Opal begins to find her place in the world and let go of some of the sadness left by her mother's abandonment seven years earlier.

"Black Stallion" by Walter Farley - From Alec Ramsay and the Black's first meeting on an ill-fated ship to their adventures on a desert island and their eventual rescue, this beloved story will hold the rapt attention of readers new and old.

"Caddie Woodlawn" by Carol Brink - Caddie Woodlawn is a real adventurer. She'd rather hunt than sew and plow than bake, and tries to beat her brother's dares every chance she gets. Caddie is friends with Indians, who scare most of the neighbors -- neighbors who, like her mother and sisters, don't understand her at all.

"The Castle in the Attic" by Elizabeth Winthrop - A magical replica of a castle transports William to adventures in another land.

"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" by Roald Dahl - The gates of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory are opening at last . . . and only five children will be allowed inside.

"Charlotte's Web" by E.B. White - An affectionate, sometimes bashful pig named Wilbur befriends a spider named Charlotte, who lives in the rafters above his pen. A prancing, playful bloke, Wilbur is devastated when he learns of the destiny that befalls all those of porcine persuasion. Determined to save her friend, Charlotte spins a web that reads "Some Pig," convincing everyone that Wilbur is no ordinary animal and should be saved.

"The Cricket in Times Square" by George Selden - The story of a musical cricket and his friends, a mouse and a cat of real character, who took up their abode in a Times Square newsstand.

Encyclopedia Brown series by Donald Sobol - Encyclopedia Brown, fifth-grade mastermind behind Idaville's police force, "a complete library walking around in sneakers." Each book is set up so that readers can try to solve the case along with the boy genius, and the answers to all the mysteries are found in the back.

"The End of the Beginning: Being the Adventures of a Small Snail (and an even Smaller Ant)" by Avi - Avon the snail has never had an adventure. And adventure, he has heard, is the key to a happy life. So with his new friend Edward the ant, Avon sets out on a journey to find the excitement his life has been missing.

Freddy the Pig books by Walter R. Brooks, 26 books written from 1927-1958, some titles: "Freddy the Detective," "Freddy Goes Camping," "Freddy the Magician" - Freddy is

introduced as "the smallest and cleverest" of the pigs on the Bean farm. He becomes the central character shortly into the series. Freddy's interests drive the books as he becomes a detective, politician, newspaper editor, magician, pilot, and other vocations or avocations.

"Half Magic by Edward Eager (many other titles by author as well) - The title refers to a coin that the children find. Through a comical series of coincidences, they discover that the coin is magic. Well, it's not totally magic--it's only (you guessed it) half magic. Imagine the results emerging from inaccurate efforts: half invisible, half rescued, half everything!

"The Great Brain" by Fitzgerald - The best con man in the Midwest is only ten years old. Tom, a.k.a., the Great Brain, is a silver-tongued genius with a knack for turning a profit. When the Jenkins boys get lost in Skeleton Cave, the Great Brain saves the day. Whether it's saving the kids at school, or helping out Peg-leg Andy, or Basil, the new kid at school, the Great Brain always manages to come out on top—and line his pockets in the process.

"Harriet the Spy" by Louise Fitzhugh - Harriet is determined to become a famous author. In the meantime, she practices by following a regular spy route each day and writing down everything she sees in her secret notebook. Her life is turned upside down when her classmates find her notebook and read it aloud!

"Homer Price" by Robert McCloskey - Welcome to Centerburg! Where you can win a hundred dollars by eating all the doughnuts you want; where houses are built in a day; and where a boy named Homer Price can foil four slick bandits using nothing but his wits and a pet skunk.

"The House at Pooh Corner" by AA Milne - The House at Pooh Corner continues the adventures of Pooh and introduces the bouncing, pouncing, lovable Tigger.

"The Indian in the Cupboard" by Lynn R. Banks - What could be better than a magic cupboard that turns small toys into living creatures? Omri's big brother has no birthday present for him, so he gives Omri an old medicine cabinet he's found. Although their mother supplies a key, the cabinet still doesn't seem like much of a present. But when an exhausted Omri dumps a plastic toy Indian into the cabinet just before falling asleep, the magic begins. Turn the key once and the toy comes alive; turn it a second time and it's an action figure again.

Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder - Based on the memories of Laura Ingalls Wilder's childhood in the Midwest region of the United States during the late 19th century: "Little House in the Big Woods," "Farmer Boy," "Little House on the Prairie," "On the Banks of Plum Creek," "By the Shores of Silver Lake," "The Long Winter," "Little Town on the Prairie," "These Happy Golden Years."

"Mary Poppins" by P. Travers - From the moment Mary Poppins arrives at Number Seventeen Cherry-Tree Lane, everyday life at the Banks house is forever changed. This classic series tells the story of the world's most beloved nanny, who brings enchantment and excitement with her everywhere she goes.

"My Side of the Mountain" by Jean Craighead George - Every kid thinks about running away at one point or another; few get farther than the end of the block. Young Sam Gribley gets to the end of the block and keeps going--all the way to the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York. There he sets up house in a huge hollowed-out tree, with a falcon and a weasel for companions and his wits as his tool for survival. In a spellbinding, touching, funny account, Sam learns to live off the land, and grows up a little in the process.

"Minn of the Mississippi" by Holling Clancy Holling - The history of the Mississippi River Valley is told in text and pictures through the adventures of Minn, a snapping turtle, as she travels downstream.

"Misty of Chincoteague" by Marguerite Henry - On an island off the coasts of Virginia and Maryland lives a centuries-old band of wild ponies. Among them is the most mysterious of all, Phantom, a rarely seen mare that eludes all efforts to capture her--that is, until a young boy and girl lay eyes on her and determine that they can't live without her. Phantom would forever be a creature of the wild. But her gentle, loyal colt Misty is another story altogether.

"No Talking" by Andrew Clements - Dave Packer's fifth-grade classmates are so boisterous and difficult to quiet down that the teachers have dubbed them "The Unshushables." Dave has just read about Mahatma Gandhi and learned that the man practiced silence one day a week to bring order to his mind. Though Dave likes to talk nonstop, he's determined to give the idea a try. An encounter with Lynsey, another chatterbox, sparks the boys and girls into challenging each other to a no-talking contest for 48 hours.

"Paddle to the Sea" by Holling Clancy Holling - A young Indian boy from Nipigon country in the Canadian wilderness carves an Indian figure in a 12-inch canoe that he names Paddle-to-the-Sea. Wishing that he could undertake a journey to the Atlantic Ocean, the boy sends the toy carving instead. Paddle-to-the-Sea begins on a snow bank near a river that eventually leads him to the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence River, and finally the Atlantic Ocean. Along the way, Paddle's journey is fraught with danger including wild animals, saw mills, fishing nets, and a shipwreck.

"The Penderwicks: A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits, and a Very Interesting Boy" by Jeanne Birdsall - This summer the Penderwick sisters have a wonderful surprise: a holiday on the grounds of a beautiful estate called Arundel. Soon they are busy discovering the summertime magic of Arundel's sprawling gardens, treasure-filled attic, tame rabbits, and the cook who makes the best gingerbread in Massachusetts. But the best discovery of all is Jeffrey Tifton, son of Arundel's owner, who quickly proves to be the perfect companion for their adventures.

"The Phantom Tollbooth" by Norton Juster - This fantasy centers around Milo, a bored ten-year-old who comes home to find a large toy tollbooth sitting in his room. Joining forces with a watchdog named Tock, Milo drives through the tollbooth's gates and begins a memorable journey. He meets such characters as the foolish, yet lovable Humbug, the Mathemagician, and the not-so-wicked "Which," Faintly Macabre, who gives Milo the "impossible" mission of returning two princesses to the Kingdom of Wisdom...

"Rascal" by Sterling North - Rascal is only a baby when young Sterling brings him home. He and the mischievous raccoon are best friends for a perfect year of adventure—until the spring day when everything suddenly changes.

"Sarah Plain and Tall" by Patricia MacLachlan - Two children experience the apprehensions and joys of the possibility of a new mother.

"The Story of Doctor Dolittle" by Hugh Lofting - Doctor Dolittle is truly extraordinary. Not only can he talk to the animals--he can also understand what they say to him. One day Doctor

Dolittle receives a message from Africa. The monkeys there need his help. So he sails off from his home, bringing along all his animal friends: Dab-Dab, the duck; Jip, the dog; Gub-Gub, the baby pig; Polynesia, the parrot; and Too-Too, the owl. The doctor and his friends have many amazing adventures. They even meet the rarest of all animals, the two-headed pushmi-pullyu!

"Thimble Summer" by Elizabeth Enright - A few hours after nine-year-old Garnet Linden finds a silver thimble in the dried-up riverbed, the rains come and end the long drought on the farm. The rains bring safety for the crops and the livestock, and money for Garnet's father. Garnet can't help feeling that the thimble is a magic talisman, for the summer proves to be interesting and exciting in so many different ways.

"The Toothpaste Millionaire" by Jean Merrill - Likable, clever, and inventive sixth-graders Rufus Mayflower and Kate Mackinstrey develop and sell toothpaste to become millionaires in just one year! This fun, breezy story includes many real-life mathematical problems which the characters must solve to succeed in their budding business.

"The Trumpet of the Swan" by E.B. White - Like the rest of his family, Louis is a trumpeter swan. But unlike his four brothers and sisters, Louis can't trumpet joyfully. In fact, he can't even make a sound. And since he can't trumpet his love, the beautiful swan Serena pays absolutely no attention to him. Louis tries everything he can think of to win Serena's affection--he even goes to school to learn to read and write. But nothing seems to work. Then his father steals him a real brass trumpet. Is a musical instrument the key to winning Louis his love?

"Winnie the Pooh" by AA Milne - Whether Pooh is tracking a wild Woozle with Piglet, finding a tail for Eeyore, or sailing off in Christopher Robin's umbrella, he is always ready to lend a paw to his friends.

"Where the Mountain Meets the Moon" by Grace Lin - In the valley of Fruitless mountain, a young girl named Minli lives in a ramshackle hut with her parents. In the evenings, her father regales her with old folktales of the Jade Dragon and the Old Man on the Moon, who knows the answers to all of life's questions. Inspired by these stories, Minli sets off on an extraordinary journey to find the Old Man on the Moon to ask him how she can change her family's fortune. She encounters an assorted cast of characters and magical creatures along the way, including a dragon who accompanies her on her quest for the ultimate answer.

"The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" L. Frank Baum - Follow the adventures of young Dorothy Gale and her dog, Toto, as their Kansas house is swept away by a cyclone and they find themselves in a strange land called Oz. Here she meets the Munchkins and joins the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion on an unforgettable journey to the Emerald City, where lives the all-powered Wizard of Oz.

Chapter Books - Level 3 (Challenging Language, Great Read-Aloud for Older Children)

"Alice in Wonderland" by Lewis Carroll - Alice falls down, down, down into a land of wonder, a place filled with White Rabbits, Mock Turtles, screaming Queens, and Mad Hatters. Join Alice as she experiences the silliness and excitement of a place gone crazy.

"Adam of the Road" by Elizabeth Gray - Eleven-year-old Adam loved to travel throughout thirteenth century England with his father, a wandering minstrel, and his dog, Nick. But when Nick is stolen and his father disappears, Adam suddenly finds himself alone. He searches the same roads he traveled with his father, meeting various people along the way. But will Adam ever find his father and dog and end his desperate search?

"Anne of Green Gables" by L. M. Montgomery - When eleven-year-old Anne Shirley arrives at Green Gables with nothing but a carpetbag and an overactive imagination, she knows that she has found her home. But first she must convince the Cuthberts to let her stay, even though she isn't the boy they'd hoped for. The loquacious Anne quickly finds her way into their hearts, as she has with generations of readers, and her charming, ingenious adventures in Avonlea, filled with colorful characters and tender escapades, linger forever in our memories.

"Heidi" by Johanna Spyri - What happens when a little orphan girl is forced to live with her cold and frightening grandfather? The heartwarming answer has engaged children for more than a century, both on the page and on the screen. Johanna Spyri's beloved story offers youngsters an endearing and intelligent heroine, a cast of unique and memorable characters, and a fascinating portrait of a small Alpine village.

"The Hobbit" by J.R.R. Tolkein - Bilbo Baggins, the hobbit, is a peaceful sort of cozy hole in the Shire, a place where adventures are uncommon and rather unwanted. So when the wizard Gandalf whisks him away on a treasure hunting expedition with a troop of rowdy dwarves, he's not entirely thrilled. Encountering ruthless trolls, beastly orcs, gigantic spiders, and hungry wolves, Bilbo discovers within himself astonishing strength and courage.

"Just So Stories" by Rudyard Kipling - How did the camel get his hump? How did the leopard get his spots? How did the elephant get his trunk? For one hundred years, these classic tales -- drawn from the oral storytelling traditions of India and Africa and filled with mischievously clever animals and people -- have entertained young and old alike. Intertwined within these delightful tales are little pearls of wisdom about the pitfalls of arrogance and pride and the importance of curiosity, imagination, and inventiveness.

"A Little Princess" by Frances Hodges Burnett - When Sara Crewe arrives at Miss Minchin's London boarding school, she seems just like a real little princess. She wears beautiful clothes, has gracious manners, and tells the most wonderful stories. Then one day, Sara suddenly becomes penniless. Now she must wear rags, sleep in the school's dreary attic, and work for her living. Sara is all alone, but keeps telling herself that she can still be a princess *inside,* if only she tries hard enough.

"Little Women" by Louisa May Alcott - Set in New England during the Civil War, the novel follows the adventures of the March sisters as they struggle to pursue their dreams.

"The Secret Garden" by Frances Hodges Burnett - Frightened orphan Mary discovers the joyful wonders of life on the Yorkshire Moors with the help of two local boys and a mysterious, abandoned garden...where all things seem possible.

"Wind in the Willows" by Kenneth Grahame - A classic of magical fancy and enchanting wit, this children's tale follows the adventures of an intrepid quartet of heroes-Mole, Water Rat, Badger, and the incorrigible Toad.