

Spring 2019 Newsletter

Guided by the principles and spirit of Dr. Maria Montessori, the Orcas Montessori School offers a creative learning community for preschool and kindergarten children and nurtures each child's unique gifts, love of learning, independence, and compassion for others.

It is surprising to notice that even from the earliest age, man finds the greatest satisfaction in feeling independent. The exalting feeling of being sufficient to oneself comes as a revelation. -Maria Montessori



Happy Spring!

The class is busy with explorations of Africa, the plains and watching the garden grow and the trees flower. We are enjoying our new grassy hill, thanks to Chris Sanders. It is great to climb and then run or roll down.

For the older children, it has been a big leap into the more advanced math and literacy shelves. For our younger students, they are beginning to put their hands on the more complex practical life and sensorial materials.

We are getting ready for the second round of parent observations followed by parent/teacher conferences, so please look for the sign-in sheets! Lastly, while it not too wintry anymore, we still love seeing an extra layer for outdoors! Looking forward to a great Spring!

Cheers!

Tom Rubottom

School Calendar

April 13: Spring Open House

April 22-26: Spring Break

May 4: Carnivale!

May 18: Parent's Open House

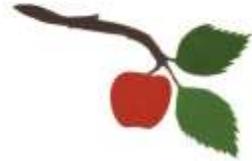
May 27: No School Memorial Day

May 31 : End of Year Celebration

Special Thanks...

To our hardworking Carnivale committee as we prepare for that important event!

To Doe Bay Café for their generous donation of proceeds from Open Mic Night for the month of March



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School Garden

It's time to start planting our vegetable garden! The peas are in, and radishes are on the way. Since school is out for the summer we are planning to focus on some hearty crops for the children's lunches in the fall – carrots, potatoes and broccoli are top of the list. If you have any spare seeds or starts please let us know – or just drop them by!

Open House for Prospective Students Saturday April 13 from 10-12:30

We will be hosting an open house for families who are interested in finding out more about our school and perhaps enrolling their child in the fall. Please spread the word and the invitation to any friends or acquaintances.

Carnivale! May 4 5:30pm to 8:30pm

Get ready for the Montessori School's Carnivale on Saturday, May 4 at 5:30-8:30 at the Oddfellows Hall! We will need everyone's help to put on this big party and major fundraiser.



There will be Carnivale booths and games, food entertainment and silent and live auctions. We have a lot of money to raise this year for our auction both to keep the school open and towards our expansion project – so the more people we can have join us for this

celebration, the better. We will begin in earnest now that we are back from break. Please invite your friends and anyone you know who would like to support early education.

Parent's Open House Saturday May 18

Save the date for this sweet morning at the

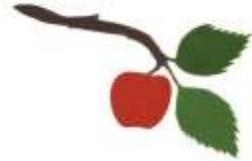


school when your child will show you the work he or she enjoys doing here. There is a sign-up sheet available so you can sign up for a 20 minute slot. We stagger the visits throughout the morning so that the work is

available and there are not too many distractions during your visit. If possible, do not bring siblings, so that your child has your undivided attention.

Upcoming Classroom Observations and Parent Conferences

Please watch for the sign-up sheets on the clipboard for our spring classroom observations. These are about twenty minute time slots to give you an opportunity to observe the children's classroom activities and how their community has developed since the fall. Parent /Teacher conferences will be scheduled during the month of May, so watch for the sign up sheet. We will talk about your child's progress and your plans for fall.



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Message from OMS Board President Liz Guerry

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the OMS Board to you. Their dedication and efforts support the Staff and are key to keep the school running smoothly. Most of this support happens behind the scenes and the impact is not always directly visible.

The Board supports and provides oversight of the staff to ensure we maintain our non-profit status. Furthermore, they also play an active role with strategic planning, fundraising, maintenance of our school building, the apartment, garden and school grounds, and community outreach.

We are fortunate to have a strong Board, consisting of both OMS parents and community members:

Liz Guerry (Ryan) – President
Jeanne Morris – Secretary, Facilities
Mary Anne Owen – Board Development
Krista Hance (Macey) - Treasurer
Maggie Vinson (Lincoln) Fundraising
Arthur de Haan- Expansion project,
Madie Murray

Please join me in thanking our Board members for all their hard work and contributions to the school – you make a big difference in the lives of our kids.

Summertime!

Our expansion timetable is still uncertain at this time, so we do not plan on having a summer program this year. We are disappointed not to be able to have this fun program this year and hope it will not be an inconvenience for you. We look forward to resuming it in the future.

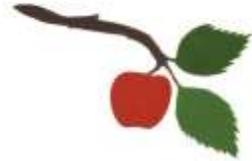
New Staff Member

Karen Meng is delighted to join the school as administrative assistant and lunchtime cook. She is a keen gardener and photographer who has been on the island since 2012 and lives in the Rosario neighborhood with her family and dogs. She's had a wonderful first few weeks getting to know our children. Please stop by the office to say hello and feel free to contact her anytime at karen@orcasmontessori.org



Expansion Update

Things are moving along very slowly on the expansion project. There has been a lot of time spent on necessary paperwork and finalizing the plans. They will be submitted very soon. Waiting for our permit and putting the project out to bid are next steps. We are not certain when the actual work will begin. If you know of a contractor who might like to learn more about our project, please have them call the school.



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The Art of Observation

(Excerpts from an article by Maren Schmidt, author of Kids Talk Workshops)



One of the key principles of Montessori philosophy is observing the child involved in a self-selected activity, which Dr. Montessori referred to as "work."

To observe, we should make sure that the children we are observing have something interesting and meaningful to do. Plus, we need to target specific behaviors. Montessori teachers are trained to observe the child involved in the activities in an age specific prepared learning environment....

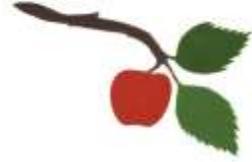
...As we observe as Montessori guides, the two most important qualities we are looking for are the children's displays of independence and concentration. The big lens through which we observe the children at work in their environment is focused on finding a child's concentration on a self-selected task, along with a child's ability to do that activity independently. We are looking for the child to grow bigger and bigger in these two qualities so that we, as the adult, can grow smaller and smaller.

As the Montessori adage goes: Any unnecessary help is a hindrance.

Observation also takes independence and concentration in the observer. To be effective in our watching, we need to be free of judgment, free of criticism, free of evaluation and free of psychoanalysis. When I begin an observation I bring to mind a favorite quote from Krishnamurti, "...the highest form of human intelligence is observing without evaluating."

It is not easy to sit and suspend judgment on what you perceive to be happening.

Egos have to be moved out of the way, again and again, as it is easy to slip into the pattern of thinking that a child's behavior is good or bad, productive or nonproductive, and on and on. We have to observe with the understanding that behaviors and emotions are need driven. Our



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observations become a search to help a child meet their developmental needs. Our watching is about the needs of the children, not about our adult needs or wishes. Our egos have no place in the observation equation. We observe to anticipate needs and respect the requests of the child to fulfill those needs...

...Observing in our Montessori classrooms—as either a teacher, or a parent—is not an activity to be taken lightly.

We need to be aware of the observer effect, that our presence can change the behavior of the children—especially our own child—as well as the classroom dynamics. We have to develop a cross-eyed technique of observation that makes us appear unobtrusive to the child. Does the child think we are looking at them or not? A slight glance can disturb the development of concentration and independence....

...As parents observing in a Montessori classroom, we should enter this children's house as a "humble servant" seeking to understand the true nature of the child and the developing human being.

As parents we need to know that learning to effectively observe requires a giving up of ego and evaluations. Observation requires practice, practice that can be done in nature, perhaps watching a spider build a web, or at home watching "cross-eyed" as your child chooses a morning of activities.

Sitting in a classroom watching children is not about the adults need to be amused, entertained, or occupied with problem solving. It is about understanding and serving the needs of children.

That's the art of observation.

AMAZON SHOPPING TIPS

Can't find it locally? Save yourself the expense of an off-island trip and help support Orcas Montessori School simply by doing your shopping through Amazon.

Go to our website:

orcasmontessori.org and click on the amazon box. You'll find a wide selection of merchandise and 6% of the proceeds will go to Orcas Montessori if you purchase items within 24 hours of adding the merchandise to your cart. But you must use the link – be sure to add a shortcut to your desktop or your favorites bar and replace your shortcut to Amazon. And make it a habit. Last year we earned \$2,000 for the school!

NOTE: This is a different program than Amazon Smile, which donates 0.5% of purchases instead of the 6% we get through the link above.