



WATERDOWN MONTESSORI SCHOOL  
1921 SNAKE ROAD,  
[www.waterdownmontessori.com](http://www.waterdownmontessori.com)

# NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2012

## From the Principal's Desk

Happy New Year, and welcome back to school! The January newsletter is a short one, but there are several important events that need mentioning. Details may be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

We ended the year full of good cheer. Once again we were overwhelmed by the generosity of our school community. This year we supported two families on behalf of Children's Aid, whose Christmases will all have been much brighter thanks to you. There were positive comments about our concert, and the Festive Food Fair brought in **\$353.00** for the school.

And speaking of fundraising, the Pancake Breakfast with Santa raised a grand total of **\$990!** I would like to thank everyone who worked hard to make this event a success. Special thanks goes to **Steve Elms**, our photographer, **Lucy Coulter English**, who assisted both him and Santa, and **Katia Gustafson**, who provided the wonderful assortment of ceramics to paint (not to mention the set up, clean up, and firing of the pieces). And let's not forget Santa himself, who squeezed in a visit to our school!

We received a second cheque from Mabel's Labels this month; remember that you can order labels all year! Magazine orders can also be placed throughout the year; speak to Mrs. Ann if you are interested. We do not have an exact total but to date that fundraiser has earned approximately **\$600** for the school.

In December we offered ice cream with one of our hot lunches, and earned enough money for one bedkit for Sleeping Children Around the World! Unbelievably, there is still enough ice cream left for two more lunches, so we will do this again. This month families may choose to order **ice cream** for children staying for lunch on our **January 26 pizza day** (casa and elementary children only, please). Who knew that 11.4 litres of ice cream meant that many servings?! Thanks, Janice!

Mark your calendars for **Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>**, when we will be holding our annual **ELEMENTARY AND CASA OPEN HOUSE** from 6:30-7:30 pm. All elementary students and third year casa students (those in their last year of the Casa program) will be invited to participate. All families are urged to attend!

The next big event is, of course, our **VALENTINE'S FAMILY PARTY**, which will take place on **Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup>** this year. This is our largest fundraiser – watch for sign up sheets and more information in the days and weeks to come!

The second planning meeting will be held this **TUESDAY, JANUARY 17** at 9:30a.m. in the French room. Details follow later in the newsletter.

This week marks our first lunch from the **Pita Pit**. We have had a good response so far and are looking forward to Tuesday!

Several parents mentioned last week that they weren't sure which "hot lunch" day it was. For those who are interested, all hot lunch dates are posted on our website, [www.waterdownmontessori.com](http://www.waterdownmontessori.com). Click on any Thursday on the calendar (the number should be in green) and it will take you to the "hot lunch" page, where you will find the schedule for the rest of the year.

**REGISTRATION** for the fall will begin in the next week or two. Packages will be sent home to each family. We will be calling people on our waiting list soon afterwards. **Remember, if you are considering the elementary class for your child, we urge you to speak to Mrs. Barbara and to arrange to observe in her class.** The next page addresses a question that often arises when considering the elementary class.

This year you will be able to download your registration forms from our website! Go to **NEW!** "Fee Schedule" on the home page and there will be a link to "Registration Forms".

If you have any questions about next year, please speak to your child's teacher or to myself.

*Sue Reid-Kulpa*  
Principal

*Rather than sending home an order sheet for one serving of ice cream, please send a loonie to the office with your child's name if you wish to participate on January 26. Let's buy another bedkit for SCAW!*

## The Elementary Years: Class Size and Social Interaction

As you are well aware, each year our 5 year olds move out of casa. We know a number of casa students will be moving up to the elementary class. We know that others will be leaving the school, and we are aware that some of you remain unsure of next year's plans. While there are many reasons for the different choices you make with regard to your children's elementary years, I would like to offer you my thoughts on one particular concern that is often raised, that of social interaction.

One of the reasons parents may choose a private school education for their children is the fact that many private schools offer smaller classes, a fact that is seen as an advantage to learning. Our class size is comparable to those of other local private schools.

The difference here is that our elementary class is composed of different age groups. Parents wonder about their child's social development in such a setting. Is there a big enough "peer group"? Will they find a friend? Will they be able to adapt to a larger social group at some future date? What if there are fewer girls than boys, or vice versa?

Think back to your years in public school. Of the many children in your grade, how many did you count as your friends? How many did you interact with on a daily basis? How well did you interact with children from other classes, or other grades...and how many children did you *never* speak to?

Most of us had a few close friends our age, and perhaps a slightly larger circle we could interact with at recess, or for group work if necessary. The children in our elementary class *all* interact with *every other child*. The small number means that every single student will sit, work, play, chat, eat lunch, and learn with every other child at some time or other.

Over the course of a year each child learns to interact with both boys and girls, and with a wide variety of personalities and ages.

It is amazing to watch as the most seemingly unlikely combinations of students choose to work together, with wonderful results. With patience, encouragement and guidance from the teachers, tolerance and respect grow, and partnerships are formed as children recognize the particular strengths each classmate has to offer. Surely if anything, this makes them far *more* socially aware, more confident and more adaptable than their counterparts in larger classes. If you have any questions about this issue, I would be most happy to speak with you. If as a parent with a child in the elementary class, you would like to comment or to add to these thoughts, please do so.

Please remember also that Mrs. Barbara has extended an invitation to anyone interested in observing in her Elementary class. Please speak to her or to myself if you would like to sit in for awhile. There is more information about Parent Observations elsewhere in this newsletter.

Sue Reid-Kulpaka  
Principal

### JANUARY COFFE CLUB



Waterdown Montessori School

Presents

**Our Monthly Parent/Caregiver Coffee Club**  
**Wednesday, January 25, 2012**  
**9:00 a.m.**

Please join other parents/caregivers in the French room for some fresh hot coffee and treats, along with the opportunity to get to know one another, engage in some informal chat and discuss WMS current events and latest newsletter. You are welcome to bring your small children.

**Hope to see you there!**

## **DATES TO REMEMBER:**

- ✓ Tuesday January 17:  
9:30 – Valentines meeting
- ✓ Wednesday, January 18:  
After school Yoga starts(spots available)
- ✓ Tuesday, January 24:  
Elementary and Casa Open House  
6:30 – 7:30p.m.
- ✓ Thursday, January 26:  
Order ice cream with your pizza!
- ✓ Tuesday, February 7:  
Mad Science starts (spots available)

### Casa and Elementary Open House

**On Tuesday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, we will be holding a very special Open House, from 6:30 – 7:30 pm.** The Elementary children and the third year casa children (those who are finishing casa this year), will all be invited to participate.

The students have a chance to present some exercises, and adults have a glimpse of some of the work the children do each day. For those of you as yet unfamiliar with what the elementary programme has to offer, it is an eye-opening introduction. For parents of children participating, it is a joy to watch your child display their learning with pride and confidence.

We encourage *all* parents to attend, whether or not your child is presenting that evening. It is one of the best ways to learn a bit about the Montessori programme. Towards the end of the session, parents may have a chance to try the materials themselves. Are you up for the challenge?

### January Birthdays

Cameron Brindle turned 5 on January 3.  
Andrew Bunkowsky turned 3 on January 4.  
Nicholas Battye turned 4 on January 10.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL OF YOU!**

## Parent Observations

Curious about what your child does in the classroom each day? Now is your chance to find out. Parents have the opportunity to observe in their child's classroom for about half an hour.

Please add your name to the sign up sheet outside your child's classroom, or call the office to arrange an observation time. Parents in the elementary class are asked to speak to Mrs. Barbara to arrange a time.

When your turn comes, you will be asked to sit quietly in a designated area, and watch the activities in the classroom. Please note that this is NOT a time for discussion with teachers. They will continue as if it was a regular day. Of course, the very fact that there is a parent in the room means that it is not a regular day, but this is the closest we can come to letting you see how your child's classroom runs. It is very possible that you will have questions, comments and queries. You are welcome to jot down notes at the time to leave with the teacher, or to arrange a mutually convenient time to talk later.

**Anyone who is interested in observing the elementary class is welcome to do so. Mrs. Barbara has extended an invitation to all parents in the school. Please speak to her or call the office if you are interested.**

### New Student

**Aidan Fisher** joined Mrs. Julie's class this week. We would like to welcome Aidan, and his family!

### New Arrival!

**Mila Breheret** was born at home at 7 p.m. on December 8, weighing 7 pounds 13 ounces. She was welcomed by her three big sisters, Cléo, Juliette, and Louison. Welcome, Mila, and félicitations à Madame Marlène and her husband Thomas! Mila made her debut appearance at our Christmas concert, and will be coming to work with her mother on Mondays and Wednesdays.

## Valentine's Day Family Party News

**Save the Date!!!**  
**Saturday, February 11,**  
**2012**

**Open Meeting to**  
**discuss coordination**  
**and scheduling:**  
**January 17<sup>th</sup>**  
**9:30 am in the French**  
**Room.**

My how time does fly! There are only 5 weeks (or so) until our BIGGEST community building and fundraising event of the year.

### **Fundraising made simple:**

We're hoping that everyone will participate by reaching out to your network of friends, family and business associates to ask for fundraising donations. Specifically, we are looking for donations of products/services or gift certificates for the Silent Auction and Wine basket raffles. If you have questions or ideas about who and what to ask for, please come to the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting or drop me an email.

We will also be collecting items in each classroom for the children to create a 'themed basket'. Teachers will decide on a theme soon and the list will be posted on the bulletin board and website. Please donate as best you can. We've found in the past that these baskets are very special to the kids; giving them a sense of excitement and ownership the evening of the party.

### **Dinner anyone?**

The food at this event will be a mix of potluck and vendor donations. We'll be talking specifically about this at the Jan 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, but here are a few ideas for you now.

### Potluck:

We'll be posting a list of items we would like to have on the buffet table toward the end of the month. If you have a favourite family recipe you'd like to make and share, just add it to the list when it goes up on the bulletin board.

### Donations:

Do you have a favourite restaurant, deli or pizza shop that you frequent? Maybe you can ask them to donate a dish or catering tray of your favourite item from their menu. If they do, we will be sure to list their donation in our program and table menu.

### No time to cook?

Don't ask your Aunt Millie to make her famous Tuna Casserole. We've got an easy solution for you. We're making arrangements with a few local restaurants for a bulk order of food. All you need to do is contribute a set fee to the kitty. We'll post more info about this along with the Pot Luck list towards the end of the month.

### **Fun and Games**

Our DJ and Calvin the Magician are booked and confirmed. We are also working on a few other activities and ideas to keep the evening flowing with fun.

- Kids Play zone
- Face painting
- Crafting table
- Kids Toonie Toss
- Kids Penny Sale & Children's Raffle



Of course we'll need parent volunteers to help run and supervise some of these activities.

## HOW CAN YOU GET IN ON THE FUN???

(Yes, that means volunteer time)  
Along with the kids activities we need help...

- setting up before hand
- cleaning up afterward
- keeping the buffet table clean and full during dinner
- selling raffle tickets
- collecting and coordinating auction lists and
- greeting guests at the registration table

Watch the bulletin board for the list of 'jobs' for both the night of party and during the weeks leading up to it. If there is something you have your heart set on doing, come to the January 17<sup>th</sup> meeting or send me an email.

### Ticket Sales

Tickets go on sale January 20<sup>th</sup>. A reminder and order form will be sent home with your child during that week.

If you have questions, suggestions or a burning desire to do a specific job, send me an email at [Mrspeacockslibrary@gmail.com](mailto:Mrspeacockslibrary@gmail.com)  
Thanks – Laura Jones (Ernest's Mom)



TICKETS GO ON SALE SOON:  
January 20<sup>th</sup>

### Magazine Orders

We sent home an order form for magazine subscriptions last fall. Since then, a few people have asked if these are still available. **You can order magazine subscriptions online all year.** If you would like more information, please ask at the office.

## Valentines Cards

Children are welcome to bring cards for their classmates should they wish to do so. You are encouraged to have your child write his or her name on each card, but please do *not* write the names of classmates on each one.

WHY NOT? Well, because... 20 children x 20 cards = **400 cards** for *each* casa teacher to sort and put into backpacks!

## Birthday Suggestions

The WMS Handbook suggests that parents donate a book to their child's classroom in honour of their birthday. This is a long-standing tradition in the school. Children enjoy presenting "their" book to the class, with its bookplate inscribed with their name and the date of the donation, and teachers appreciate having new books for the class.

At our December meeting, the board had another suggestion. They thought that teachers might like a new piece of Montessori material. Some new material is purchased each year, but we are all used to being very frugal with our spending. For example, all classrooms contain a number of materials that are still sound, but looking "tired"; it would be a treat to have a brand new replacement. Or there may be a material that a teacher would "like" but doesn't really "need". Some of these might be too costly for a single donation; parents might think of a group donation as an end-of-year gift.

Teachers will be asked to post "wish lists" on their bulletin boards; that way if someone would like to follow up on this idea, there will be some help as to what to choose.



Ceramic Bird – after school pottery

# HOW CHILDREN LEARN

By Paul Epstein, Ph.D.

From "Tomorrow's Child" magazine  
November 2011

*Curiously, we adults cannot personally know how young children learn. Even our best recollections and fondest memories are not those of children. It's not that we have forgotten, but we can only remember now as adults. When we recollect and interpret what once happened to us, we do so with our adult capacities.*

## Children must learn

Researchers now describe the human brain in terms of plasticity. Our brains are, in other words, designed for learning; the learning process shapes and forms the structures of our brains. The determination to learn is evident whenever a young child declares, "I can do it." Young children are determined to become independent, to become their own person. This is what they want to learn most. Montessori classroom guides and assistants take each child's quest for independence very seriously. They do not, however, tell them how to do things. Instead, each child is shown because young children understand a demonstration or a presentation more completely than they can comprehend a lengthy explanation. Too many words will just get in the way.

But it is also not enough to merely show. The demonstration must take into account what a child means by "I can do it". In other words, we must first ask ourselves what is the child ready to do?

If a child is to succeed, the classroom guide will first break complex tasks into smaller steps or exercises. The secret to how children learn is coordination. Until children develop personal control of their movements, they cannot become independent. They will be unable to do it and know it.

Each time the child uses the exercise, she or he develops coordination – the knowing how to. With repetition, the child comes to master the skill. We believe, then, that success in school is directly tied to the degree to which children experience themselves as capable and independent human beings.

Independence, however, is an accomplishment. Young children, for example, learn to tie their own shoes and our their own mile. With their first attempts, however, shoe laces turn into knots and milk finds its way to the floor. However, with practice, skills are mastered, coordination develops, and the child knows she or he can do it! With success comes confidence and a willingness to approach the next task.

## Children adore process

Adults orient around product. We engage in our activities and seek accomplishment and completion. We have a lot to do, and we don't always have enough time. Children are not oriented towards product; they adore process and repetition. A typical young child's mantra is, "Do it again!" Doing something over and over and over again is how children learn. Adults can reason and learn from the logical progression of ideas and concepts. Children cannot; they are not yet capable of logical analysis. Instead they require materials that represent the abstract ideas they need to learn.

Children naturally explore, and they naturally use objects over and over again, and this is how they develop their brain systems and neurological pathways. What matters, then, is what children do and how they do it. It also matters when they do it. We know there are specific, optimal learning windows that occur during certain childhood years. During those years, particular learning occurs more readily and easily than later in life. For example, speaking another language with a native accent is more readily acquired during early childhood than later in life.

## The Amazing Montessori Materials

The Montessori materials enable children's development of coordination and concepts. The Montessori materials in the Children's House classrooms are categorized as Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics Language, and the Cultural Subjects (geography, history, and science). Each child receives a demonstration of lessons from the guide. The purpose of the lesson is to communicate a key idea contained in the material and to show the child how to use the materials.

The child's learning begins when she or he comes back to the materials, and explores them again and again. Then, they will stop once they have mastered how to do it.

**Each material offers several essential experiences which occur simultaneously.**

The objects that make up the material form a complete set. Everything needed to complete the exercise is contained. The concept of set is an essential aspect of reasoning, reading, mathematics, writing, and more.

The materials are project-like. Children learn that activities have a beginning, middle, and end. There occur, in other words, a sequence or procedure. The "project" begins when a child takes the materials from the shelf and brings it to a table or to a small rug on the floor. The idea of sequence or procedure is also essential knowledge for children.

The materials offer lessons in respect and courtesy. When children complete their work with the materials, they return them to the shelf, readied for the next child. This show of respect is further assisted by the act that the classroom does not offer duplicate copies of the materials. When children share, when children take turns, they learn to value on another's cooperation.

The materials are made for exploration and discovery. The design invites repetition. Children develop coordination from repetition, and it is the growth of coordination that satisfies their desires to be independent and self-reliant.

The materials also enable concentration. When children concentrate, they attend, absorb, and learn. When children concentrate, they notice and find out everything there is to know about the materials. When children concentrated, they also develop self-discipline. Discipline in the Montessori context refers to achievement and accomplishment. The child becomes independent; she or he really can do it!

The materials are designed to control error. The control of error enables investigation and discovery. A cylinder block, for example, contains ten cylinders. The child pulls cylinders from the block and notices they have the same lengths. The child may attempt to return the cylinders in any order to the block, but their diameters differ, and a cylinder can only fit in

one place. The guide does not correct the child; rather, the child learns how to learn through experimentation. A joy in learning how to learn is a final word in becoming independent.

Since children learn when they explore and investigate materials, the key is to carefully design those materials. Montessori materials invite a child's interest, and when interested, children become motivated; they naturally want to find out.

Each exercise engages children in a sequenced set of skills to master. Each exercise is learned through investigation, exploration, and repetition. Each requires children to develop persistent determination, focus, and concentration. Each offers problems that require generating a creative or innovative solution. Once mastered, a child will proudly proclaim, "I can do it!" The material, designed to promote the development of coordination and concentration, satisfy a child's natural tendency to become self-reliant.

**Paul Epstein, Ph.D.** is a frequent school consultant, speaker at conference, and author of articles appearing in Montessori journals. His consulting work has taken him to schools throughout the United States and also to Canada, Sweden, Mexico, Russia, Brazil, China, Australia, Poland, and Nepal. He is also the co-author, with Tim Seldin, of The Montessori Way, a definitive work on the Montessori experience. His new book, An Observer's Notebook is now available through the Montessori Foundation ([www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org)).



"Trees" by the elementary class

# January

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> Back to School Elementary Pottery starts 1:00 – 2:30	<b>10</b> Wyn with yoga 6:00 – 7:30 (adult class)	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Pasta Day Wyn with yoga 5:30-7:00 (adult class)	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Wyn with yoga 8:30-10:00 (adult class)
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Elementary Pottery	 <b>17</b> Valentines meeting 9:30 Pita Lunch Wyn with yoga	 <b>18</b> After school yoga starts	<b>19</b> Hot Dog Day Wyn with yoga	<b>20</b> Journey to Discovery 7 - 8:30pm (invitation only)	<b>21</b> Journey to Discovery 9 – 11:30am (invitation only)
<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> Elementary Pottery	<b>24</b> Elementary / Casa Open House 6:30 – 7:30 Wyn with yoga	<b>25</b> Coffee Club 9:00 After school Yoga	<b>26</b> Pizza Day and <b>ICE CREAM!</b>  Wyn with yoga	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Wyn with yoga
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Elementary Pottery	<b>31</b>				

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