



JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2023

The Albrook Almanac

Spirit Day at Albrook

By Mrs. Vazaios

On Monday, January 16, the entire Albrook community came together for the greater good. Embracing the notion of a day of service in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., we met in Albers Hall to celebrate how much food we collected for the Somerset Backpack Program and see the difference one person can make. We are proud to share that 365 lbs. of food was collected. Thank you to all the families who generously donated food to this worthy cause. The Somerset Food Bank serves over 17,000 people and over 700 students benefit from receiving food at school through The Backpack Program. The Upper Elementary students also helped to raise awareness of various Civil Rights leaders with all students by sharing interesting facts and a memorable quote.



Upcoming Events

Friday, March 3

NJMAC Conference

School Closed

No Expanded Care or Stepping Stones Plus

Thursday, March 9

Family Science Night

6-7pm

Friday, March 17

In-service Day

Expanded Care and Stepping Stones Plus in session

Saturday, March 25

Open House

9-11am

Friday, March 31

Spring Event

7-11pm



The Albrook School

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Montessori in a Changing World

Miro

By Elaine Dignam

Children work independently and cooperatively in a Montessori classroom. The constant in a Montessori classroom is that despite the advances in technology and convenience, a Montessori classroom contains materials that have spanned generations. Many of the works in our current classrooms were developed by Maria Montessori over 100 years ago. Those works are designed to refine the senses, develop fine motor skills, and internalize a concept. Our children dive into the shelves daily and choose their path with guidance and oversight from their teachers.

We are fortunate. We can supplement our teaching with technology. When we teach the children about Colonial America, we sometimes refer to the computer for examples beyond our books. When we describe the Monarch butterflies overwintering in the fir trees of Mexico, the picture is much more vivid when the children see thousands of butterflies attached to the trees. Additionally, in computers, kindergarteners learn how to navigate Google Classroom.

We appreciate the help of technology, but we must be judicious with it. The children get great joy and satisfaction when they work with focus. A benefit of the Montessori classroom is that the work is on the shelf for the children to explore. This encourages repetition when children go about their day, and it refines the senses and builds concentration. We employ technology to help clarify and explain. Yet, we love our materials, inspiring our children to work with focus, purpose, and peace.

Monet

By Maria McCusker

When we think of 21st Century learning, the two concepts that most come to mind are technology and diversity. These two concepts are important parts of our mission statement at Albrook and we have worked hard to incorporate them into our Stepping Stones class curriculum. In many cases these two concepts have tied beautifully together.

We have always honored and celebrated different cultural holidays in the Monet classroom. It plays a significant role in our curriculum. Parents came to the class and shared some wonderful Diwali, Hanukkah, and Chinese New Year presentations. We look forward to exploring and learning about some people who played significant roles in Black History, Holi, St. Patrick's Day, Easter, and Orthodox Easter. The highlight of the celebrations for the children and teachers alike is tasting the different foods and having a 'Dance Party' to the very different styles of music. Technology has helped us



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enhance these wonderful experiences by being able to access the dance music instantly on the Web. In addition, we have captured these precious moments by taking photos and our parent presenters have shared a little information and photos via School Speak with our class community.

We are also delighted to have the opportunity to integrate diversity into our project for the Spring Event fundraiser. We have chosen the book *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein. With the expert guidance of Yara's mom, Mrs. Patel, we will be painting shades of skin colored handprints on a green planter.

In a world that is changing so quickly with technology, we are most grateful for the Montessori philosophy and the concrete, hands-on materials. They help the children stay grounded, develop grace and courtesy and learn to wait in a world where instant gratification is favored. We believe the skills will help them greatly now, and later in life, to navigate our ever changing world.



Van Gogh

By Cheryl Fritsch

In this ever-changing world, children are integral to our planet's health for future generations.

Composting is an important lesson to teach children; it helps the earth by reducing the amount of trash in landfills. Compost is a natural way to help plants grow without fertilizers and pesticides.



The Vangogh class children put their peelings and plant waste into the classroom bucket. The children take turns emptying it into one of the three composters that Albroom has around campus. In the fall, the children collect leaves on the playground to mix with vegetable peelings and scraps. The children enjoy composting in the classroom and are happy they are helping to make our planet a better place to live.

The Albroom DJ Night, From the View of Two Students

By Theodore and Tommaso

DJ night was on Friday, January 6th. It was meant to gather all of the elementary students. It consisted of snacks, water, hot chocolate, and an amazing DJ. Students had fun doing dances to songs and hula hoop games/contests. They enjoyed picking

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The Albrook DJ Night



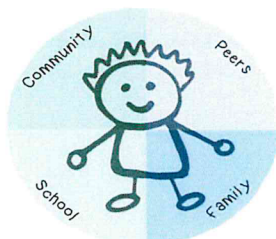


December 12, 2022

Dear The Albrook School,

We are so grateful for your support of Good Grief. Together, we have been able to support more kids than ever! Thank you for making a difference in the lives of children. Every child deserves to have the support they need to face adversity, particularly grieving children who have already lost a major piece of their support network.

Throughout the country there are millions of grieving children in need of support. In addition, 60% of all children will experience at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) such as divorce, abuse, and bullying before the age of 18, which puts them at risk for chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse. In fact, the CDC estimates that half of the leading causes of death are associated with ACEs. Early intervention can literally save lives; your support allows us to provide critical resources to kids where and when they need it most. Good Grief takes a comprehensive approach to help children build resilience to overcome loss and adversity at home, in school, and in the community.



The Whole Child INITIATIVE™

In 2015, Good Grief launched The Whole Child Initiative to proactively advocate for grieving children and families. Research identified four areas where children are most vulnerable: peer groups, family unit, school, and community-at-large. Through education and advocacy to targeted audiences with the most impact on grieving children, The Whole Child Initiative aggressively raises awareness and empowers communities to be more effective in providing support.

The research on ACEs and childhood bereavement shows the importance of preparing and empowering individuals, families, schools, and communities to be responsive to the complex social and emotional needs of children. Good Grief provides grief and trauma-informed education and resources and has been able to reach over 40,000 people each year. Together we can continue to change the lives of more kids, families, and communities.

With Gratitude,



Joanna Green, Director of Development
joanna@good-grief.org
 or (908) 522-1999 x 8010

Your Tax Receipt is Attached – Thank You for Your Support!

WWW.GOOD-GRIEF.ORG

some of the songs and dancing with former students and parents. Some of our favorite songs were “Dynamite,” “Macarena,” and “Cotton-Eyed Joe.”

At DJ night, the hot chocolate was amazing and so were the songs. The DJ was very energetic and enjoyed the children’s contributions to the dancing and the music. In conclusion, we think that everyone had a lot of fun. To see more photos, go to the next page!

January 14th Open House

The January 14 Open House was our largest thus far. There were prospective families at every level. The interest in Albrook’s Stepping Stones is continuing with an increased stride. Parents arrived in droves and were introduced to their tour guides. Our former Head of School, Ms. Hicks, and alumni Alexandra Timoney, were present to assist with tours. The halls and classrooms were filled with positive interest and energy. Observing the Albrook teachers sharing about the Montessori Method with passion and knowledge is heartwarming.

Our next Open House is on Saturday, March 25, from 9-11am. We will conduct school year and summer camp tours, so spread the word to family and friends.

Please Stay. Here’s Why

By P. Donohue Shortridge

So, let’s get real. You’ve loved the first two years of the Montessori Early Childhood program for your young child. Now, as you look ahead, you are facing a decision about the third, and final, year of the EC program—the capstone year, sometimes known as kindergarten.

What are your options? Well, your friends’ children attend a private school, and while it’s not Montessori, it does have the attraction of going all the way through high school. Or there is that non-Montessori public school in your neighborhood that your child could walk to, with the banner outside proclaiming its status as a 5-star school. Or the charter school that needs you to enroll now or your child won’t get a first-grade spot the year after next.

While tuition-free school is compelling, and maybe you even moved to your neighborhood because of their touted great schools, or you believe that charter when they tell you it’s now or never, please also consider staying with Montessori through the capstone year.

Two hallmarks of Montessori education are the mixed-age grouping and the 3-year cycle. Pulling your child out before he has completed the full 3-year cycle will deprive him of the following benefits.

- In her first year at Montessori, all those “big kids” seemed so, well, big. They could do amazing things. Your child was in awe of them—in fact, she may have mentioned an older child or children in the classroom, a 5- or 6-year-old she idolized. Just as in real life, children learn from their elders. Now, your child will get to be one of those “big kids.” The capstone year is also known as the leadership or consolidation year, in which your third-year child takes great pride in solidifying all she has learned over the past 2 years and assumes greater responsibilities in the classroom. This happens naturally, because it

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was modeled for her when she was younger. She will expect to be (and will be looking forward to being) in this new role of “big kid” in the classroom.

- Your child will have the same teacher for 3 years. The teacher truly knows your child. And you get to know the teacher over the longer cycle; the relationship between school and family builds on trust and mutual respect.
- The 3-year cycle allows your child to acquire skills and academic knowledge at his own pace. Perhaps reading came to him more quickly than math, or fine-motor skills seemed second nature while gross-motor skills took longer. The Montessor Early Childhood environment has no set timetable for mastery but instead offers him 3 full years to acquire capability. Not all 5 1/2-year-olds are expected to be fluent readers or understand multiplication. Would you be comfortable being held accountable for a skill simply because a statistical model or a test stated you “should know this by now”?
- The 5- to 6-year-old generally has more command over her body and is able to work longer, with more concentration, on academic subjects. To her delight, a work she may have struggled with last year is now manageable. She says to herself, Well, that was fun— what else can I now do that I couldn’t do last year?
- The social-emotional world of the 5- to 6-year-old evolves into more collaboration with peers: solving problems, working out conflicts, and coming to understand the other person. This happens naturally in Montessori because students have been together for all this time and know each other well—and they know this classroom, this environment.
- Because the 5- to 6-year-old is more confident in himself, he watches out for the younger children. Acts of benevolence toward the younger child not only endear that younger child to his older classmate, they allow that older child to open his heart to the needs of others. Most of the time, this all happens without the teacher saying a word. It’s inherent in the Montessori culture.

Over the years, we Montessorians have observed children who, having completed the full Early Childhood cycle, matriculate confidently into first grade in a non-Montessori program or into Lower Elementary in a Montessori school. There is research to back this up as well; see Suggested Reading below.

Consider this an appeal to offer the gift of time to your child.

P. DONOHUE SHORTRIDGE is a Montessori school consultant based in Littleton, CO. Visit her website at pdonohueshortridge.com.

Suggested Reading

Lillard, A. & Else-Quest, N. (2006, September 29). Evaluating Montessori education. *Science* 313(5795), 1893–1894. Retrieved from science.sciencemag.org/content/313/5795/1893. doi: 10.1126/science.1132362.

Marshall, C. (2017, October 27). Montessori education: A review of the evidence base. *NPJ Science of Learning* 2(11). Retrieved from nature.com/articles/s41539-017-0012-7. doi: 10.1038/s41539-017-0012-7.



Rockin’ Rocket Ride Field Trip



The Albrook School afternoon Pre K 2 students went to the Raritan Valley Community College on a field trip to attend the Rockin Rocket Ride show. The trip supported the students’ study of the planets. The pre-k students have been exploring and learning fun facts about the planets while creating their paper freeze to bring

home to share with their families. The children enjoyed the bus ride to the planetarium and the imaginary rocket ride into space. The bus ride to the planetarium was filled with excited voices, unlike the ride home where some of the children fell asleep. All in all, the Pre-K2 children enjoyed all aspects of the trip.



Pre-K 2 Night

Once again, we were delighted to host an in-person Pre-K2 Night on Thursday, January 19. It was the perfect opportunity for our PreK-2 students and parents to reconnect with friends and families by dining together and enjoying a fun conversation. Observing some of our young students display grace and courtesy while serving friends and parents cupcakes and hot chocolate was delightful.

After dinner, the students helped clear the tables, scraped off the plates, and gently stacked the china plates onto the trolley. They collaboratively wheeled the trolley into the kitchen and helped load the dishwasher. I am delighted to share that the students took such care; not one piece of china was broken. Collaboration at its best! Before the evening, the students had been given a lesson on Wassily Kandinsky, the first abstract artist in art history. Learning some fun facts about the artist and his work.

The students joined their preschool teachers in Albers Hall on the evening of the event. They worked on a Kandinsky-inspired art project, 'Squares and Concentric Circles' also known as 'Farbstudie quadrat,' produced by Wassily Kandinsky in 1913, led by Senora Zarate. The children were very proud of their Kandinsky-inspired "Concentric Circles" masterpieces. At the same time, the parents attended a Kindergarten presentation hosted by Mrs. Dignam and Mrs. Fritsch. Parents were introduced to various aspects of Albrook's Kindergarten curriculum. This included the units of study, the specials, the Montessori materials, and the intangible advantages of completing the three-year cycle's final year. We received positive feedback and compliments after the presentation.



Staff Workshop: Speech Pathologist Tama Hampton

Tama Hampton, a Speech Pathologist, provided a workshop to the Stepping Stones and preschool staff. Mrs. Hampton has worked with many families from Albrook. She focused her talk on age-appropriate milestones to help guide young children to be successful at effectively communicating with their peers and adults. She gave the teachers signs to determine if a child needs extra help or needs to be evaluated. Mrs. Hampton also provided the teachers with exercises to help with certain situations and answered follow up questions.



International Day

By Nina Marvi

The celebration known as International Day has long been a proud tradition at The Albrook School. On February 10, our school community joined together in this festival of food and song. This is indeed a high point in our calendar. So what's the idea behind it?

It is no secret that it is a crucial tenet of Montessori philosophy that students explore the world at large. Even our youngest students sing the 'Continent Song' and concretely develop impressions of our planet by studying points far and near. Our students learn to appreciate diversity and to study cultural differences and similarities with curiosity. They discover that the fundamental needs of all people across the globe are identical. At the same time, language, clothing, and customs- for example, vary. This process of bringing each child to an understanding that this planet is shared is part of what Maria Montessori called Education for Peace.

Peace, in Montessori's view, was the ultimate goal of education. We, as Montessorians, embrace this ideal. Our hope for the future is that each child; as they develop their potential as individuals, may realize their place in this planet's brilliant tapestry. International Day serves as a vehicle for these lofty ideals.

We prepare for International Day in a variety of ways. Our musical component is studied and practiced weekly during music classes and Group Sing. The children sing songs in various languages and learn about the countries. The songs originate from maps, flags, food, and customs and are often the order of the day as we gear up for the big event. The Kindergarten children rehearse announcing the International Day songs on stage and prepare to don national costumes and attire. Even our Stepping Stones students rehearse their part on the stage. This is truly a program that encompasses the whole of the Albrook student population and one that speaks to the core of who we truly are.



Seven Things Every Child Needs to Hear

I love you.
I'm proud of you.
I'm sorry.
I forgive you.
I'm listening.

**This is your responsibility.
You have what it takes to succeed.**

From toddlers to Upper Elementary students, all have their part to play. We are indeed proud of the focus and discipline – not to mention the enjoyment that was in evidence.

The ceremonies opened with words of welcome from Ms. Mac Neill. The Peace Candle was lit by Ms. Petrova and Marko, who also recited the Albrook School’s Peace Pledge. After the performance students and parents alike were treated to delicious examples of treats from around the world. No celebration would be complete without food after all.

We are most grateful to all who joined with us to make the International Day program such a great success. We are already looking forward to next year!



Albrook Summer Camp 2023

Sunshine, Swimming, Running, Playing Soccer, Exploring the Wonders of the World, Experimenting, Building, Estimating, Designing, Cooking..... Albrook Summer camp offers all of this and so much more.

The Albrook Summer Camp has a variety of exciting programs to tap into creative, curious young minds and ignite the excitement to learn while having fun. Enjoy all of our outdoor activities and a wide range of playgrounds. Students will also take part in daily swim lessons. There will be plenty of opportunities to build fond memories of experiencing free time in the pool with friends. The camp has beautiful air-conditioned classrooms and two in-ground swimming pools. A water confidence pool for the younger student where their feet can touch the bottom and develop water confidence while learning to float and swim. The second is a deeper pool for older children to learn and refine various swim strokes and diving techniques.

Our staff has designed unique programs for ages ranging from 3years (for current families) and 4 - 9 years for community children to engage their imagination while, at the same time, building confidence.



Explore the World session allow the older camper to have fun while exploring the countries and cultures and the unique biomes of South America. The students will use beautiful map materials and research diverse cultures. Projects and multi-media computers will enhance their study of each country.

Cooking around the World invites students to explore and learn about foods from countries and cultures around the World through hands-on chopping, mixing, kneading, and tasting.

The Wonders of Nature invites your child to put on their naturalist hat and explore the wonders of nature while learning how to respect, embrace, and understand the natural World around them. Each session will have fun, engaging themes to explore and guide hands-on learning and projects. This year's themes include Finding hidden animals and plants in ponds and streams, Spiders - Hanging by a Thread, the Wisdom of Wings, Insect Architects and so much more.

Fun with Soccer will help the young student to master the fundamental soccer skills: of dribbling, passing, and shooting while still developing teamwork and sportsmanship while building friendships.

STEAM: Engineering Program invites our future entrepreneurs and scientists to have fun while learning. In this camp, children will be presented with a fun, whimsical scenario involving a key problem to solve each day. They will then work as individuals and teams to invent and create, finding solutions to the daily challenge. During the first week, the focus will be on Physical Science. Students will explore density, magnetism, and sound as they have fun with glow sticks, mazes, ice cream, and so much more! During week 2, the focus will be on Engineering as students try designing anything from a bridge or vehicle to a football helmet!

Digital Art Your child will have a fantastic time with our Digital Art program. Art comes in all forms, and Digital Art has emerged out of the computer age. It is a new way of seeing things and composing a picture. This process expands the artist's creative horizons and develops computer skills. In addition to the Computer Lab, our young artists will explore different hands-on art mediums in the classroom.

The Drama program allows your budding actors and actresses to enjoy and express themselves on stage. In this two-week camp, students will be immersed in all aspects of theater as they rehearse and perform an original play. In addition to acting, students will gain experience in playwriting, costume design, prop creation, and scenery construction. Campers will explore other theater elements such as dance and choreography, costume and prop making, and scenery design in the afternoons. This camp culminates in a final performance for family, friends, and fellow Albrook campers

Learning should be fun!. We believe our campers' experiences will gain from all the challenging pro-

Feel the Love at Albrook



Lower & Upper Elementary Performances

