



NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2023

The Albrook Almanac

Kindergarteners Visit Elementary

In November, the kindergarten children made a special visit to the lower elementary classrooms to learn all about electricity. The children attended lessons in small groups in either the Kandinsky or the Yeats rooms. Lower elementary teachers were there to teach them all about electricity, including how a battery works, what makes a conductor and an insulator, and how a current flows through a circuit.



The children were excellent listeners, and they absorbed the lessons well. Then, it was time to apply what they had learned. Each child had the chance to build a simple circuit, a circuit with a switch, a circuit with a rotating spiral, and a circuit with a rotating disk. Seeing the children's focus and concentration was amazing as they put the circuits together to cause the light bulbs to illuminate or the disks to spin. We saw excellent cooperation as the children helped each other and waited patiently for their turn. What pride they felt when everyone successfully built all four circuits!

In the end, the children learned about static electricity and had the chance to experience a charge of attraction with a balloon .

Overall, it was an enjoyable afternoon, and we enjoyed giving the kindergarteners a taste of the lower elementary science curriculum. More images can be seen on

the next page.

(Continued on page 2)

Upcoming Events

January 5
Elementary Dance

January 8
Winter Club Session Begins

January 13
Open House – 9-11am

January 15 In-service Day
Early Dismissal & Spirit Day

January 18
Pre-K 2 Night

February 1 & 2 School Closed
Parent/Teacher Conferences
Expanded Care in Session
No Stepping Stones Plus

February 9
International Day

February 19-21 School Closed
Winter Recess
Expanded Care/Stepping Stones Plus
in Session

February 22
Registration Opens to New Families



The Albrook School

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Kindergarteners Visit the Elementary

Charitable Giving at Albrook

“Never doubt that a small thoughtful group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead

This quote from Margaret Mead truly exemplifies the generosity and thoughtfulness of The Albrook School community over the past few months. Below is a summary and some pictures highlighting these events and clearly showing the loving, giving spirit of Albrook students, parents, and staff. Our students are actively involved and learn about the different charities, instilling empathy and compassion for less fortunate people.

The Giving Tree

The Albrook community partnered with Holiday Hope, a local charity in Basking Ridge whose mission is to spread love and kindness to children in need. Forty children had the opportunity to request three gifts - a need, a want, and a toy. One hundred twenty gifts were collected in total. We also partnered with the Bernards Township Toy Drive, which delivers toys to deserving children in the surrounding areas.

The Albrook community donated fifty coats to One Warm Coat. This national organization aims to provide free coats to children and adults in need while promoting volunteerism and environmental sustainability.

Coat Drive

The Albrook community donated nearly two hundred pounds of canned goods and ready-to-eat foods to the Food Bank Network of Somerset County. Somerset County Food Bank serves over 24,000 families annually, and our contribution is greatly appreciated.

Food Drive

In October, the Albrook Staff donated \$845 to the American Cancer Society. The funds will specifically go towards mammograms for women who can’t afford to get one and breast cancer research. The staff raised this money by selling a delicious homemade lunch and the fun opportunity to wear a uniform of blue jeans and pink tops.

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer

On November 16, the Albrook staff observed and acknowledged Children’s Grief Awareness Day. We wore blue and joined hundreds of other supporters by posting a group photo on the Good Grief Website. Good Grief is a non-profit organization in Morristown and Princeton that supports grieving children and their families.

Children’s Grief Awareness Day

The Albrook community donated fifty coats to One Warm Coat. This national organization aims to provide free coats to children and adults in need while promoting volunteerism and environmental sustainability.



(Continued on page 3)

Hear and Now: The Van Gogh Class

The Preschool classes use the Mind-up curriculum this year to extend our Social Emotional Learning lessons to reinforce learning. "Mind-up is dedicated to the belief that the child who learns to monitor their senses and feelings becomes more aware and better understands how to respond to the world reflectively instead of reflexively."

The Van Gogh class has been learning about the five senses while increasing their awareness of the sensorial works in the classroom that foster and strengthen them. The children enjoy this area and can further develop their senses by repeating the work with a blindfold. The food prep work in the classroom heightens their senses and provides an outlet for the children to try new foods while learning to cut, chop, spread, and return the material to the shelf.

Hear and Now: The Kandinsky Class

In thinking about this year's school goal of "Hear and Now" in the Kandinsky classroom, we have tried to encourage positive and thoughtful communication between people and within oneself.

This fall, we began a new aspect of our S.E.L. curriculum, focusing on a "growth mindset." Students were introduced to positive self-talk, understanding that just like the voices of one's peers or teachers, one's inner voice can also communicate positively and negatively. Through literature, activities, and group discussions, we discussed the difference between having a fixed mindset, or "brick brain" and a growth mindset, or "bubblegum brain." We introduced two jars in the classroom, one for growth mindset and one for fixed mindset. In the hope of bringing greater awareness to one's inner voice, we asked the children to place a stone in one of the jars whenever they recognized one of these within themselves. The children have been very responsive to this activity.

In addition to discussing positive mindset, we have also worked with the children to manage interpersonal communication better. We have had lessons and discussions on active listening, being thoughtful and intentional about the things we say, and using "I statements" to express feelings to a friend, particularly in times of conflict. We hope that these lessons and discussions will help develop effective interpersonal communication and intrapersonal awareness.

2023 Club Program

Our Fall 2023 club sessions have just wrapped up a wonderful season. Our club participants have studied fresh topics and explored new horizons; many of our younger students taking part for the very first time! Ages 3 and up are welcome to join our Dance Caravan, which is a wonderful introduction to Albrook's spectacular history of performances on our stage in Albers Hall. From age 4, their world expands to Baking with Mrs. Fritsch, Art of Many Colors with Peggy Davo, Sky Tae Kwon Do, and our Kickers Soccer program. Our Elementary students will have a



(Continued on page 4)

new program to add to their Chess Club offering in our upcoming Winter Session. We are introducing Mandarin with our own Ms. Cheng for our Kindergarten and Elementary students. Albrook is thrilled to be able to offer our new language program and hope that the students enjoy discovering a new way to express themselves.

We look forward to the new and exciting experiences to come in the new year!

The Elementary Classes Visit Lakota Wolf Preserve



In October, the elementary classes went on a field trip to the Lakota Wolf Preserve in Columbia, NJ. The children participated in a half-mile nature walk to the preserve, where we were met by guides who care for the wolves, bobcats, and foxes at the site. We learned about the family structure of wolf packs, their eating habits, and interactions, and we had the chance to observe the wolves in their natural surroundings. A highlight was when the wolves howled in response to the call of one of their caregivers.



Following our presentation about the wolves, we learned about the red foxes, bobcats, and lynx. We were entertained by many stories about how smart the red foxes are, and how they can outwit most other animals they encounter. The bobcats were similarly impressive, and we learned how these animals survive in areas like ours as well in more mountainous regions. All in all it was a fantastic way to learn about some amazing animals and to observe their behaviors up close.

Kindergarten Swim

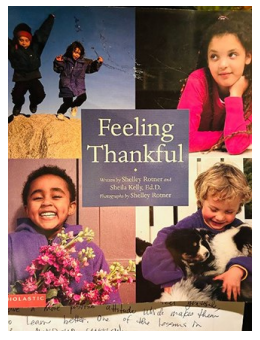
During the fall, the kindergarteners enjoyed their weekly trips on the school bus to swim lessons. The children practiced at their different levels: for some it was putting their faces in the water, while others practiced their strokes.



Gratitude

By Cheryl Fritsch

GratITUDE has many wonderful effects on our bodies. Thinking of others actually calms our bodies and our feelings. Feeling grateful produces a more even heart rhythm. Studies have shown children who feel grateful have a more positive attitude which helps them to learn better. One of the lessons in the MIND-UP curriculum was to read the book, *Feeling Thankful*, by Shelley Rotner and Sheila Kelly, Ed.D. The book has pictures of children being thankful for many different things. The Van Gogh class was then asked what they were grate-



ful for and this is what they said.

Richard- dinosaurs

Sofia-playing on playground

Amal- my friends, cousins, and family

Rohm-my family

Lauren-my sister

Sydney-flowers

Claire-my family

Kaia-hugs

Amara-my mom

Emmie-candy and my family

Riaan-my dad, jumping in the ocean and going for big walks

Paxton-flowers

Arthur-my family and Olive, my dog

Benjamin-tow trucks

Bella-my mommy

Rishaan-Birthday parties

Ayden-traveling

The Albrook School Book Fair

By Mrs. Chabot

Our 2023 Albrook Book Fair was back in person this year and a smashing success. The students were able to visit the fair on Wednesday during school, and they were immensely excited to peruse the books on display and choose books for their wish lists. The volunteers couldn't write down their choices fast enough! We were also thrilled to welcome parents and loved ones to the fair during parent teacher conference days. We hope you and your families are enjoying all the books, puzzles, and toys that you picked out!

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated books to the classrooms off the teacher wish lists. Many of the classrooms had their wish lists completely fulfilled, and the teachers could not wait for their books to arrive to share them with their students. Thank you also to all the volunteers who helped make the book fair run smoothly, including Barak Shimon, Erica Lipani, Moira Genereux, Ya-Li Tsai, Amanda Kaufman, Karin Perrin, Natasha Patel, Kristen Lopez, Reshmi Morris, and Amy Strutt.

The Albrook School received 25% of the book fair sales, which came out to a grand total of \$2028, close to double what we were able to fundraise last year. We are so grateful for your support and generosity and we look forward to another great book fair next year!





Procedure and Criteria for Awarding Financial Aid/Scholarships:

A limited number of scholarships are offered each year to students in the Kindergarten and Elementary Programs. Applications must be submitted to FAST; it is Independent School Management's (ISM) FAST (tuition assistance for School Tuition) program. FAST provides a need-based tuition analysis service. A report is generated and supplied to The Albroom School indicating what a family should reasonably contribute toward tuition. **All applications must be submitted to FAST no later than March 4, 2024.** All information is kept strictly confidential.

The Administration and the Board Scholarship Committee review all the financial aid applicants and award scholarships based on the following criteria:

- The family's demonstrated commitment to Montessori Education
- Student's personal potential within the class and program
- Financial need based on expected family contribution (a measure of the family's ability to pay for the child's education)
- Academic merit

The dollar amount of scholarships awarded is affected by the total amount of money designated for scholarships for that school year and the number of applicants awarded scholarships.

The application process is self-guided. You may partially complete the application and save your work and then return back to it at a later time. FAST offers online email help and a 24/7 helpline is provided. **The non-refundable fee for the application is \$53.00** and is to be paid at the end of the session by the applicant using a credit card. VISA, MasterCard and AMEX are accepted. **After completing the online application, you will be required to mail or scan and email all of your 2023 tax documents for both state and federal taxes with all the schedules and W-2's to:**

Independent School Management
 Attn: FAST Processing
 2207 Concord Pike #417
 Wilmington, DE 19803

Write THE ALBROOM SCHOOL's name on the outside of the envelope to ensure quick processing of your application.

Please use the hyperlink below to submit your application:

[FAST](#)

(Application available in January, 2024)

All families submitting applications will be notified of the results before April 1, 2024.

(Continued on page 7)

The NJMAC Conference

Below are some of the highlights of the New Jersey Montessori Conference held on November 9th of this year.

Stepping Stones

The Stepping Stones staff had a great day at the teachers' conference. We all returned to school with fresh ideas that we were excited to try.

Mrs. Campanella attended the Tiny Chef workshop. Here, the presenters showed how to incorporate a cooking class to enhance a teaching theme. Ms. McCusker enjoyed the Keynote speaker, Elizabeth Spade, on the topic of how to build resilient Montessori schools. However, my favorite toddler workshop ideas came from a workshop attended by Ms. Behar and Mrs. Youn entitled "Neither Paper Nor Plastic." Mrs. Youn shared that the lesson was highly practical, offering creative ideas for maximizing the potential of art in the classroom. She particularly appreciated the emphasis on resourcefulness, as the instructor demonstrated how everyday materials, such as hard boards from cereal boxes or cookie boxes, could be repurposed for art activities. Ms. Behar loved the hands-on approach and the idea that the goal of art activities is to enjoy the process rather than emphasize the product.

These insights will significantly enrich our classroom resources, and we all appreciate the opportunity to have attended the event.

Elementary

For several lower elementary teachers, the highlight was a wonderful workshop about storytelling and folktales. The presenter was engaging and gave useful information and numerous resources for utilizing folktales and stories within the classroom. We left the workshop with ideas we could implement immediately.

Preschool

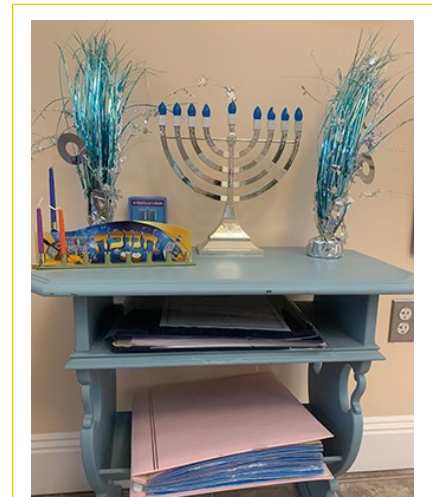
Sensorial: We were reminded of the perfection of the Montessori sensorial materials. We often think we need more stuff in the classroom, but the beauty of the sensorial materials is that they can be explored repeatedly and creatively by students, leading them to refine their senses.

Beyond Sandpaper Letters: Children must be exposed to rich language through stories. Additionally, spending time on phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and encoding words will build a solid foundation for future language skills.

The teachers all enjoyed attending the Montessori conference. They appreciated seeing other Montessori teachers from around the state, many of whom they have known for years. They were inspired by other Montessori teachers, workshop lecturers, and guest speakers. They were provided with ideas on how to change the classroom environment to stimulate positive learning, and they were presented with new and inventive ideas to implement in their classrooms.

Holiday Decorations

The decorating holiday elves provided a lift to The Albrook School décor this holiday season! Mrs. Patel, Mrs. Gujral, Mrs. Krawitz, and Mr. Shimon went to work sprucing up the decorations and hanging them in the reception area, doorways, and outside for all to enjoy. The holiday season is magical and we owe it all to our decorating committee for bringing that magic to Albrook. Thank you for all the behind the scenes work you do with each change of season. It brightens our school and our spirits!



Albrook's Staff Holiday Celebration 2023

By Ms. McNeill

The Albrook Staff Holiday Celebration was an acknowledgment of our forty-four years of service to our students and the community. We welcomed the holiday season and paid tribute to those staff members who had reached significant milestones in their respective careers at Albrook.

I had the privilege of opening the celebration by expressing and acknowledging our appreciation for all our staff and honoring them for all they do for our school community. Mrs. Ponzio congratulated Mrs. Smith, who reached an impressive milestone of ten years. Mrs. Ponzio likewise highlighted the many hats Mrs. Smith has worn over the years, supporting the preschool program, the elementary physical education program, and the elementary Expanded Care, her endless love and support of the Montessori philosophy, and her dedication to the greater Albrook community.

Ms. Hicks honored Mrs. Tarangul by acknowledging her impressive thirty-five years of love and dedication to the Montessori philosophy and teaching at Albrook. During this acknowledgment, she listed the many contributions that Mrs. Tarangul has made to the growth and development of our school. The staff echoed Ms. Hicks' sentiments and emphasized Mrs. Tarangul's generosity, her loving, giving spirit, and her endless creativity and positivity. Mrs. Tarangul truly deserved her standing ovation!

I had the unique honor of acknowledging the enormous contribution and dedication Ms. Hicks' 40 years of service to the Albrook community encompassing many roles, including—elementary teacher, music teacher, Camp creator and director, assistant Head of School, lifeguard, builder, Head of School, Small Water System license Operator, President of New Jersey MAC, President of the Board of Directors and not forgetting her passion, Reading Specialist, supporting students and helping to ignite a love of reading. In honor of her distinguished contribution to the Albrook community, the school library will now be named "The Jean Hicks Library."

In keeping with this year's school goal, "Be in the Hear and Now," this was the perfect opportunity to savor the remarkable impact these ladies have had on our students and school community over the years and to permit ourselves to be present and enjoy each other's company in a warm, relaxed atmosphere.



*Wishing you and yours
a very happy New Year!*