## **School Talk**

## **September 14, 2018**

By now, you have all heard about the shooting incident that occurred within the vicinity of our school. Drew was notified of the occurrence very quickly by Arlington County police and the school staff moved swiftly to ensure that any children outside were brought in quickly and that shut down mode was enacted.

We have received notices from several parents saying that they did not received the e-mail. Whenever an unfortunate event like this occurs, all School Talk notices are sent out from the APS Central office, and they are sent out to the entire community. If you did not receive the e-mail, we suggest that you please check ParentVue and make sure that you are registered for School Talk with your preferred e-mail. If you are and you have checked your spam folder, please check with your email server to make sure that you e-mail address isn’t bouncing or blocking the School Talk e-mails.

We hope it never does, but should something like this happen again, the Montessori program will send out our own text to parents apprising them of the situation. Keep in mind we may not be as fast as ArlNow, but as soon as we know something we will let you know.

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**MONTESSORI CONFERENCE NEWS**

The Greater Washington Montessori Conference will be on Saturday, November 3rd at the Barrie School in Silver Spring, Maryland. It is a conference for both parents and educators alike. The cost is $100 per person (includes lunch), however if 10+ registrations are made in a bulk purchase, the cost drops down to $90 per person. You can also choose to skip the conference and only attend the keynote address for $20.

The session descriptions can be found in the link. <https://www.barrie.org/montessori-institute/gwmc2018>

**PROGRAM NEWS**

**Volunteer opportunity for a Montessori parent:** The APS Early Childhood Advisory Committee is seeking a parent to represent the Montessori community. This is a reporting year for the committee so the work this year will focus on budget and non-budget recommendations to the Advisory Committee on Instruction (ACI) who will report these recommendations to the School Board. You cannot apply if you are already a member on ACI.

They will also be focusing on priorities identified in the Early Childhood Evaluation completed in the Fall of 2016 and recommendations from our reporting year report in SY 16-17 and non-reporting year report in SY 17-18. The committee would meet at 6:30 PM monthly on these dates: 10/4, 10/18, 11/1 and 11/15. The report out to ACI is scheduled for 12/5. If you are interested, please e-mail Kia Haynes at [khaynes74@gmail.com](mailto:khaynes74@gmail.com). We need to fill this role as soon as possible.

**The Montessori Naming Committee begins their meetings in October.** The dates for the Montessori Naming Committee are October 2, October 17 and October 30. Meetings will be held in the Montessori Cottage at Drew at 6:30PM. These meetings are open to the public to watch, however there will be no public statements taken nor will you be able to vote on matters that occur during the committee meeting. That’s not to say your opinions won’t be taken into consideration. We will let you know how you can give community input soon. Members of this committee are from our program, several Primary Montessori satellite programs, civic associations and general community. They were chosen by APS and approved by the School Board. For meeting agenda information: <https://drew.apsva.us/post/montessori-naming-committee/>

**STEAM Under the Stars – Save the Date!** The whole school is invited to enjoy STEAM Under the Stars, on Wednesday, October 3 at 6PM. There will be interactive stations, stories on the field and a complimentary snack. This event was a big hit last year so you’ll definitely want to come on out. This event will be rain or shine. If you’d like to volunteer to help, please e-mail Rachel Denbo at [rachel.denbo@apsva.us](mailto:rachel.denbo@apsva.us)

**The Elementary School Honors Chorus has auditions coming up soon.** The Honors Chorus auditions are open to all APS 5th graders regardless of program. Auditions will be in October and held at Kenmore Middle School. For more information about the Honors Chorus and to register to audition, please direct your browser to <https://www.apsva.us/arts-education-overview/elementary-school-honors-chorus/>. Any questions? Contact Ms. Shakespeare at amie.shakespeare@apsva.us.

**Don’t forget!** Our new main number is 703-228-8871. Our Attendance Hotline is now 703-228-2037, with an outgoing message so that you will know you have reached the right number! And **all** checks and money orders written to the school (for classroom/snack fees, fieldtrips, etc…) should be made out to Arlington County Montessori unless otherwise specified. Do NOT make them out to Drew Model School any longer. **Please remember to write your child’s name and teacher in the memo section.**

**TEACHERS CORNER**

The United Nations General Assembly designated September 21st as the International Day of Peace http://www.un.org/en/events/peaceday/background.shtml back in 1981. For the past seven years the Primary Montessori at Drew has observed this day, in solidarity with other Montessori schools across the world, by taking a moment to sing Light a Candle for Peace at approximately 11:00AM. This year all our teachers came together to make this a moment that all our Montessori students can be a part of.

At 10:45AM this morning, all the Montessori students made a human chain right out of their classrooms. It started upstairs with Ms. Lopatkiewicz class on the 3rd floor and continued all the way to the main floor. Our principal, Ms. Genove, and Assistant Principal, Ms. Nashid, also participated by being the first and the last person in our chain. Once linked, Primary Montessori teacher Ms. Mendolia began the song and once people heard her they joined in.

The song can be found here. <https://youtu.be/lazbjWMWHzc> Do ask your children about this beautiful moment.

**LIBRARIAN’S CORNER**

Ms. Black, our school librarian, would like parents to note their child’s “Library Day”. These are the days they should also return their books so that they may check out more.

* Mondays:  Alcorn, Bruno, Kalkus, Oakes, Ross, & Wilmore
* Tuesday: Habuki, O’Donnell, Pirro, & Stork
* Wednesday:  Arnal, Kozakhova, Lawot, Lopatkiewicz, & Rubilotta
* Thurs:  Hernandez, Mendolia, Morgan, Yamashita
* Fri:  Maheshwari

**Grandparents and Grand Friends Day,** September 28, 8AM - 8:50AM in the Library

All Grandparents and Grand Friends are welcome to join us in the library for an early morning reading session.

**PTA NEWS**

We are happy to report that we have **100%** of our Montessori teachers registered as PTA members!

The Enrichment Survey closed today at noon. We should have an answer for everyone by Monday’s newsletter. Thank you for your patience.

Our first general meeting as a PTA will be held October 17th at 7PM at the Clarendon United Methodist Church located at [606 N. Irving Street, Arlington, VA 22201](https://www.bing.com/local?lid=YN873x13947326219885667182&id=YN873x13947326219885667182&q=Clarendon+United+Methodist+Church&name=Clarendon+United+Methodist+Church&cp=38.8801879882812%7e-77.0971603393555&ppois=38.8801879882812_-77.0971603393555_Clarendon+United+Methodist+Church&FORM=SNAPST). We will meet in the Praise Room. Please note that the PTA is not affiliated with the church, nor will there be any religious programming.

**UPCOMING DATES:**

* Wednesday, September 26: Getting Started, the Elementary Boundary Process. 7PM-8:30PM at Kenmore Middle School.
* Tuesday, October 2: Montessori Naming Committee Meeting #1
* Wednesday, October 3: STEAM Under the Stars 6PM – 7PM at Drew Model School

**LINKS**

* Arlington Montessori Program on APS: <https://drew.apsva.us/the-montessori-program/>
* Principal Genove on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CSGenove>
* Engage with APS https://www.apsva.us/engage/
* Lunch Menus: https://apsva.nutrislice.com/menus-eula-splash
* Arlington Montessori PTA: <https://acmpta.com/>.

**\*\*NEW FEATURE\*\* A MONTESSORI MOMENT**

Starting this week, we will include an informational Montessori article or link in our weekly School Talk. We hope our families will enjoy learning more about the Montessori pedagogy through this feature.

*The Importance of a Simple Environment* by Olynda Smith

Think about how you feel when your home is a mess—unmade beds, toys strewn everywhere, dust on the floors, grimy dishes in the sink. Compare that to when your home is clean and tidy, with everything in its place. Does one scenario bring on stressful feelings, while the other makes you feel calm and settled? Even if we don’t consciously realize it, our environments affect us. Children are no exception and are in fact more sensitive to what’s around them than adults.

We Montessorians take this to heart, believing that the student, the teacher, and the environment all work together to form a “learning triangle.” We believe that when an environment is set up appropriately, it can help a child develop independence, coordination, concentration, and an internal sense of order, as well as support well-being and social and academic achievement. Montessori teachers take great care in the preparation of their classroom environments, guided in large part by the idea of simplicity. Everything in the classroom has a purpose and a place where it rests when it is not in use. There is an intuitive sense of order that makes it easy for the children to navigate the space and to clean up after themselves successfully. Teachers keep the environment fresh and engaging by observing how children respond to the environment and changing things as needed.

Children don’t stop being sensitive to their environment when they leave the classroom. At home, parents can create a similarly supportive space by also using simplicity as a touchstone. A sim­ple home environment can support your child’s concentration, curiosity, and sense of calm. Simplifying also invites connection between family members, which may help decrease conflict and increase cooperation.

Here are a few guidelines to help you create a simplified home environment.

**Less is more:** Children have a chance to enjoy what they have when there is less of it around. When you tuck away 30%–50% of most children’s toys (in a closet, garage, or other storage system), you may find they actually become more interested in what is on their shelves. This leads to longer periods of concentration, easier cleanup, greater independence, and less tension among family members about messy spaces. Think about quality rather than quantity.

**Practice letting go:** Paring down may be easier than you think. Regularly throw away toys that break and donate gently used items that your child has truly outgrown. If you do this with your own belongings in your child’s presence, you can model nonat­tachment. Practice this on a regular basis with your child; you may find that letting go becomes normal behavior.

**Rotate:** What to do with the half of your children’s possessions you’ve tucked away? One way to delight your children while also simplifying is to create a toy rotation system. Every few weeks, rotate the toys that are “out” in the space, replacing them with the ones you put in storage. This creates a burst of new interest in the things that are available, even when they have been in your child’s possession for years. Follow your child’s cues to know when it is time to switch. When you notice your child losing interest in or get­ting restless with the “new” toys, it’s time to rotate again. Once you get into a rotating routine, your child will likely let you know when she wants to rotate for some fresh items! Your child will let you know if a certain toy or activity needs to be available all the time.

**Choose toys mindfully:** Choose toys that will engage rather than entertain. If we want our children to develop concentration, we need to surround them with things that encourage concentra­tion. In general, anything with batteries or a screen is grabbing your child’s passive attention. He can play with these things all day and still not develop one iota of concentration (Palladino, 2015, pp. 18–42). Even toys with batteries that claim to be educational will do far less for your child’s academic success than some good old-fashioned analog toys and activities. Seek out toys, games, and activities that are open-ended and invite curiosity, creativity, voluntary attention, and problem solving. Blocks, puzzles, water works, pegboards, books, puppets, and natural objects that can be counted and sorted are a few options.

**Focus on beauty and order:** Think about how lovely it is when you enter a place that is simple, orderly, and beautiful. Something in you relaxes. Adults seek out these kinds of places to help them access creative flow and spiritual insights, or to rest and rejuvenate. Bring a little of that wonderful energy into your home by displaying toys and activities in a way that is enticing and has a clear sense of order. Your children will respond to this simple beauty, just as they do in their classrooms.

*OLYNDA SMITH is a Montessori Early Childhood teacher, yoga instructor, Simplicity Parenting Family Life Coach, writer, and mother. Visit her website at olyndasmith.com.*

**References**

Montessori, M. (1995). *The absorbent mind*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

Palladino, L. (2015). *Parenting in the age of attention snatchers*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.

Payne, K. (2009). *Simplicity parenting.* New York: Ballantine Books.