## **School Talk**

## **November 16, 2018**

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**A NOTE FROM OUR PRINCIPAL**

Thanksgiving is a time of reflection on all the wonderful things that we’ve had the pleasure of receiving the past year. One of the things I am really grateful for this year is the positive experience it has been for me, so far, piloting our first year as a Montessori program. I have always had faith in the program and in our teachers and staff, so I expected that things would run successfully. But what is making this experience all the more wonderful is the renewed energy that has manifested itself within all of us. Students, parents, teachers and staff have been tremendously positive about building up our Montessori community. The enthusiasm spreads throughout during staff meetings, class meetings and PTA events where brainstorming sessions happen. The input has been forthcoming and positive, and many new hands and faces have joined the old to help with projects, planning and team building.

To our teachers and staff: I am grateful for the energy you put forth in your daily work, and the energy you continue to put into your work after hours and on weekends, always thinking about ways to improve the classroom experience for your students. The familial way you all think of each other and come up with ideas on how to make work a comfortable and safe space create an atmosphere of positivity. To our assistants, I am very grateful for the way you have adjusted to an adapting schedule while providing continual support for your students and the teachers you are helping.

To our students: You all have accustomed yourselves to the changes that have caused us to be creative with your schedule and assistants, and how you have accepted some compromises without skipping a beat in your goals to succeed and be educated. Your resiliency is noted by your teachers, parents and those of us in administration, and for that we are all grateful.

Finally, to our parents: A transition year is a rough year for many, especially to those of you who have been with us for a while. The changes, the loss of familiar routines, faces and courses are all reasons you could be frustrated about. However, instead of irritation and frustration, we have gotten encouragement, a rise in volunteerism and a definite boon in school spirit. It is tremendous to be on the receiving end of such support. The formation of a new, Montessori-dedicated PTA; the many folks who turned in volunteer applications and chaperone applications in effort to aid our teachers and students; your desire to learn more on how to instill the use of Montessori methods in the home – all that is motivation for us to keep moving, not forward, but upward, because your enthusiasm lifts us. We here in the Arlington County Montessori Program are ALL grateful for you.

I am so very much looking forward to what the future holds. The rest of this year, the move in the summer, the opening of our first standalone school. And I am grateful that you will all be there to experience it with me.

From both Ms. Nashid and I, we wish you all a happy and bountiful Thanksgiving surrounded by all the things that make you feel warm and happy. Have a great holiday!

Sincerely,

Catharina Genove, Principal

**PROGRAM NEWS**

**Amazon is coming to Arlington!** By now most of you have heard that Amazon will be opening a headquarters in the area to be named National Landing in Crystal City. A list of the benefits to Amazon’s partnership with Arlington County can be found here. School growth is addressed in the document.

**APS Employees – Fight the Holiday gain!** Arlington EAP has introduced a Health & Wellness challenge for all APS Employees called Health for the Holidays. It’s a challenge to help prevent the dreaded holiday weight gain and to help us jumpstart our wellness goals now rather than make promises on January 1 (only to break them on January 2!) Registration opens November 19th. Do it individually or form a team with your co-workers. https://aps.healthfortheholidays.com

**TEACHERS CORNER**

**5th Grade Upper Elementary Parents – Save the date!** The 5th grade overnight field trip has been scheduled. Following tradition, our 5th graders will be going to the **4-H Nature Center** in Front Royal, Virginia for a team building experience in the natural setting of the Shenandoah mountains. This trip has often been named by 5th graders leaving Drew as the highlight of their school experience. The tentative cost for this trip is **$131**. That includes the travel/transportation costs, lodging, all the meals and activities fees. While we are sharing with you the full price of this overnight so that you may be prepared to pay in March, when we collect payments, we are hoping this price may go down by then if we can secure funds to pay for the transportation. The children will also host various fundraising activities to help out those that this price may pose a hardship for, as they’ve always done in the past.

Parents will also be invited to chaperone this trip at the same cost, and since space will be limited on the bus, it will be first come, first served or you’ll have to drive to the center yourself. Keep an eye out here and in backpack mail in the new year for more information.

**ARLINGTON-AACHEN EXCHANGE PROGRAM**

Did you know there is a German/American Exchange Program in Arlington? Two fifth grade students, who happen to both be named Oliver, are participating this year in the Arlington-Aachen Exchange Program--now in its 25th year! The exchange is between fifth-grade students at ATS, Discovery, Nottingham, and Tuckahoe (as well as Arlington Montessori!) elementary schools in Arlington, VA, and German students in the city of Aachen as part of the International Sister Cities program.  The family of each American student is paired with a matching German partner family.  Boys are matched with boys, and girls with girls.  The pairings are made with the help of questionnaires filled out by all.  Once the families are paired, they receive each other’s e-mail addresses and begin corresponding by email, Skype, and phone. Each child is accompanied by one of his or her parents when they travel overseas to spend about a week with their partner families.  The German children travel to Arlington in the fall; the American children travel to Aachen during spring break. The application deadline for this program is generally in June. For more information, or to learn more, contact aachenexchange@gmail.com.

**Oliver Kiker hosted Rafael. Some words from Oliver about his experience:** The Aachen, Germany exchange program was really fun because I met new people and I liked playing with the person that came, Rafael. I liked it because the people who live across the street were doing the German exchange, too, and we got together to play basketball and the German kids spoke in German together and also spoke with us in English. I liked learning about my exchange student, and how he was alike and different from me. We both like sports a lot, but he was taller, faster and older than me. He's also an only child and I have two younger sisters, a dog and two cats -- he only has one cat. He thought our house was a little busy! I'm looking forward to going to Aachen because it seems like it is a nice city and it's really close to Belgium, France, and other places that are also cool. I really like this program.



**Oliver Pradez hosted Niklas. Some words from Oliver about his experience:** Among all the things I did with my guest, Niklas Frolich, my most favorite was inviting him to spend a day with my class at Drew.  I think it was his favorite part too.  The day before his visit, we made a welcome poster that said "Welcome to Class 314/Willkommen in der class 314" and it had both the German and the American flag. Niklas does not go to a Montessori school so he was it very new to him.  The first thing we showed him was the checkerboard.  Unfortunately we ran out of time to show him the racks and tubes.  His mom, Heike, is a teacher in Germany. Niklas and Heike told my class about school and life in Aachen, Germany.  One question we asked them was how fast can you drive in Germany?  The answer was "in some places, as fast as your car can go!" Niklas taught me some words and phrases in German like *wasser*, which is "water"; and *ich mag das*, which means "I like it."  I am trying to learn some more German before I go to visit him in April.  This was Niklas' first trip to the United States of America.  When I go in April, it will be my first trip to Germany.  It is nice to have a friend there already.



*Both Olivers will be visiting their new friends in Aachen this Spring 2019.*

**PTA NEWS**

**Montessori PTA Fundraiser at Lost Dog TOMORROW!** Please don’t forget to participate in the PTA’s fundraiser at the Lost Dog Café on Columbia Pike. It’s all day long, from 11AM to 10PM. They have an great menu full of pizzas and sandwiches/subs plus more. Dine in or carry out, just be sure to mention that you are purchasing for the Montessori fundraiser. People who make a purchase are eligible to enter their names into a raffle drawing for 3 great prizes:

* A $25 gift certificate to Lost Dog; or
* one of two $25 gift certificates + a growler to The Brew Shop.

Simply write your name & contact details clearly on the back of your receipt (as your proof of purchase) and drop in the box next to the cashier that reads “ACMPTA Raffle”. Only entries written on a Lost Dog receipt dated 11/17 will qualify.

Don’t cook at all tomorrow! Lunch and dinner could be made easy at Lost Dog!

**UPCOMING DATES:**

* Monday, November 19th: APS Employees register for Health for the Holidays
* Tuesday, November 20th: Last day of school for the week.
* Wednesday, November 21st -23rd: Thanksgiving Break

**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/>.

**A MONTESSORI MOMENT**

**Thanksgiving is a holiday where people look back on the year and express gratefulness for the bounties it brought. The following is an article on how Montessori values teach graciousness and gratitude, a part of the peace education the children are taught in class, and how you, too, can teach them at home using similar methods. Happy Thanksgiving!**

**Teaching Gratitude - A Look at Montessori Values During the Holidays**

*From the North American Montessori Center*

While the approaching holiday season is full of hustle and bustle, it is also a perfect time to step back and reflect on the many people that contribute to making our lives happier, better, and easier. Showing gratitude is an important part of who we are as humans. It strengthens our relationships and our connection to our community, and studies show that expressing appreciation makes us happier and more compassionate people.

In the Montessori environment, gratitude is a key component of peace education, grace and courtesy exercises, and the concept of cosmic education. Dr. Montessori understood implicitly the value in fostering a grateful nature in children and helping them become compassionate citizens of the planet.

**Teaching Gratitude - Helping Develop Peaceful Montessori Citizens**

Although adults understand the worth in expressing gratitude, young children find it more difficult. Gratitude involves being sensitive and empathetic to others, and truly appreciating what others do for you. While children can quickly learn to say please and thank you, it takes time and guidance to help them truly learn to be grateful.

Young children, by their very nature, are self-absorbed. In fact, Jean Piaget described children from ages 2–7 as being egocentric, or unable to see a situation from another person's point of view. According to Piaget, young children primarily think and communicate about themselves. They automatically assume that the experiences and thoughts that they have are shared by others. Even in this egocentric phase, however, children can begin to understand gratitude when they are offered repeated opportunities to experience being grateful.

Here are a few ways you can teach children about gratitude:

* Develop the habit of vocalizing good things that happen. Comment as events are happening, such as “I appreciate you helping put the silverware away.” Or talk about events after they occur, on a bigger, family scale like at dinner or bed time.
* Model appreciation of others. After you leave the park, for example, discuss what you observed. “Wasn’t it nice when that teenager helped you cross the monkey bars?” “Did you see that man help catch the dog that ran away? I’ll bet that family is very thankful.”
* Invite children to help with daily tasks. Even very young children can help set the table, fold towels, or help feed the pet. The more they help, the more children understand and appreciate the efforts of others.
* Encourage children to help others in the community. Together, go through the children’s clothing and toys to find gently used items to donate to those in need. Invite children to help deliver the items to the thrift store or donation site.
* Write thank you notes together. Expressing gratitude in writing helps children think about and communicate why they are thankful. Young children may draw a picture and dictate their letter. Older children may enjoy writing their letter on beautiful stationery or they may prefer email.
* Don’t be afraid to say no. Giving in to constant requests for treats can make children feel entitled, not grateful. Be upfront about what you are going to do ahead of time: “Today, we are going to the grocery store to buy a gallon of milk and some bread. We are not buying candy or toys.” Then, make sure you follow through.
* Involve children in selecting gifts for others. During the holidays, ask children to make gift lists, thinking about what other people would like to receive. Invite them to shop for and wrap the presents, and then to give the presents to the recipients.

Teaching children to be grateful and show appreciation takes patience. Gratitude is a quality that needs cultivating over time. But encouraging children to be grateful and modeling its importance is well worth the effort as it lays the foundation for children to develop a positive, optimistic outlook on life.