



Everyday Matters

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The Joys of Community Service

by Tracey Lynne Jeffrey - Daphne

The holiday season is upon us and as the end of this year draws near we reflect upon last year, the coming New Year, and all of our desires, goals, needs and wants. As parents and teachers at the top of our lists is our children. We want them to feel safe, secure and happy. We want them to have empathy and compassion for others. We want to offer them activities, challenges, experiences and opportunities that will expand their horizons and shape who they will be when they grow up. We want them to be caring, compassionate, generous, gentle, giving, helpful, kind and respectful. We struggle with our own ideas of how we can best support our children in the development of these characteristics and qualities against a modern backdrop that includes mysterious, devastating and deadly diseases, selfishness, terrorism, violent crimes and war. One important step we can take is to help our children to become aware of the needs of others and to engage our children in caring, giving, serving and sharing with others through community service projects.



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At the core of our Montessori approach and philosophy is respect. Our activities and lessons each day encourage and promote the development of respect for the environment, respect for self and respect for others including adults, children, pets and wildlife. Our Montessori classrooms provide the ideal carefully, controlled environment to lay the foundations for the development of these skills. The caring and nurturing environment of the Montessori classroom works to build a strong foundation in philanthropy or the love of mankind. Feelings of safety and trust allow children to expand beyond their own needs and to begin to see, understand and appreciate the needs of others.

Community service projects allow us to extend the safety of our controlled learning environment into the community and to provide unique learning opportunities. Children are eager and willing helpers by nature.

Community service gives children the opportunity to nurture their natural sense of compassion and to experience the joys of giving. Children learn to appreciate and to integrate this compassion and joy into their character and being. Becoming aware of the needs of others and that their own presence can make a difference in someone's day or even someone's life is an important part of the education of the whole child.

The development of the whole child and of our community service program is a

See "Community Service" on back page

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Kids in the Kitchen

by Stephanie Satterfield and
Tia Graves - Bay Minette

Time is the most important thing we can share with our children. What better way to bond than with an activity that is not only fun, but educational. Turn your kitchen into a learning lab! Help your child develop math concepts by measuring and pouring, science by watching changes in mass (for example, butter melting and juice freezing), reading by taking "picture walks" and following recipes and even social studies by experiencing food from other cultures. Not only can they learn these lessons, but they can learn culinary and independence skills as well. Even picky eaters will take pride in sampling creations they have helped make.

When you are ready to discover the joy of cooking with your children consider these tips.

Prepare ahead. The key to effective time management is organization. Gather all of your supplies and read over the recipe with your child to ensure you are both aware of the plan. Be sure to clear your work space and delegate skills your child can safely manage.

Wash your hands. Take this time to discuss proper hygiene with your child.

Teach safety rules. Make sure your child is aware of safety rules that go along with cooking. Avoiding hot surfaces and sharp tools is important.

For a great recipe to get you started, turn to the back page!

Practical Life Skills

by Babs Gamez and Tara Sellers
Tillman's Corner

We all have a busy life, yet we want the most for our children. In our fast paced society it is tempting to buy the perfect toy which will teach children while overlooking the many opportunities and tools which exist within our home and communities.

We need to provide activities and opportunities which are simple yet challenging and which help to develop the child's life skills.



Every child by instinct wants to learn and grow to the limit of his or her abilities. To support the child's needs we must carefully prepare the physical and social environment and provide the tools that enable the child to work to create himself. Children at very young developmental stages learn by doing. They need to initiate their own task and to explore independently.

As parents, we are able to convey important messages to our children. Adding high, but reasonable expectations will help children understand that the harder they try the more successful they may be. Explain to them that it is acceptable to make mistakes and use them as teachable moments. This will allow them to learn from an "oops."

Positive reinforcement will help your child feel valued. If your child has high self-esteem, he or she will likely be motivated to try new things. Learning skills and concepts may also be easier for the more confident child. A healthy and positive attitude may make activities more enjoyable for both you and your child.

Children naturally want to sort things by color, shape, and size. Watching a child at play, you will see this tendency in action as they try and make sense of the world around them. They sort cars by color and their blocks into size groups. Watch a child with a handful of candy, and they will often separate the candy into the different shapes they see.

Parents may not realize it, but sorting is a prerequisite for math. Also, repetition and more repetition create the necessary condition for the beginning of experimentation. Practical life skills are something we continually develop during our life. Driving a car is certainly a practical life skill that a child and parent will go through, just not in pre-school.

Remember that children watch us carefully. If you want them to read books, let them see your reading a book. And what better way for that to happen than you reading to them. Your child is going to imitate what you say and do so that makes you your child's first and best teacher.

Learning to Read

by Maryann Byrne - Training Coordinator

We know how important your child is to you. You have shown us that by enrolling them in a Montessori School. We also value your children and want them to have all the benefits the school has to offer. Many times as a teacher in the pre-school classroom, parents would ask me "When will my child start reading"? Something I learned with my own children and that has been confirmed in my classes at South is that your child's education begins at birth, including learning how to read.

Children begin their literacy instruction at birth through meaningful contact with others in their everyday experiences in life. That is why our Infant room teachers are so important. Their interactions with your child, along with your own, help these young children grow in language development. Emergent literacy occurs first with learning that the sounds we produce as babies can become words which we communicate to others. Parents and caregivers support their children's literacy by reading many books to them until they can do it for themselves and interacting with them during the day. It is through these interactions with print and with

other people that children learn the relationship between speaking, reading, and writing; and develop the ability to communicate.

By reading (and yes, re-reading) many books to young children they learn many concepts. First they realize that their parent/caregiver values reading. They also see that the print carries a message, and that there is a relationship between words they read and the words they see in the book and in their environment.

Before learning to read children must develop phonological awareness. They gain this awareness by being exposed to language. The child becomes aware of the units of sound in words and sentences. This means we have to work as a team to help our children with learning to read. I am a parent of four children, who can all read on their own now, but my husband and I invested many hours during their childhood, reading books to them. Did it work? Absolutely, they love to read as do we. Enjoying reading is more than half the battle of doing well in school throughout their lives. (Of course, that early Montessori education helped a lot too!)

Activities for Improving Learning Skills

by Babs Gamez and Tara Sellers
Tillman's Center

Children watch us carefully. If you want them to read books, let them see you reading a book. And what better way for that to happen than you reading to them? Your child is going to imitate what you say and do so that makes you your child's first and best teacher.

Here is a collection of simple activities that will help your child improve their learning skills. Do them with your child in a casual, no pressure manner. Some of these activities can be done while driving in the car with your child.

1. Enjoy riddles together (animals, objects, etc.).
2. Name traffic signs and name fast food places.
3. Allow your child to spread butter, jam or peanut butter on bread or toast.
4. Guess who I am while I tell you about me.
5. Ask directions to your house (tell me where I turn now).
6. Help sort clean laundry, fold clothes or match socks.
7. Help set the table, load the dishwasher and sort the silverware.
8. Ask your child to spell his or her name.
9. Recite phone number and address repeatedly.
10. Allow your child to assist with simple cooking and cleaning procedures.
11. Encourage your child to read any print in sight.



Please do not underestimate the importance of conversational skills. Ask your child about his or her day at school. Tell them about your day as well. The dinner table is a wonderful place to have discussions. The more words you use, the better. Vocabulary will help your child in all subject areas, especially reading.

Creamy Berry Burritos

by Stephanie Satterfield and Tia Graves - Bay Minette

Here is a wonderful recipe for you and your child to enjoy.

- 1 cup cold milk
- 1 small box instant vanilla pudding
- 1 – 8 ounce Cool whip, thawed
- 1 pint (pt.) strawberries, chopped (or blueberries/raspberries)
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon (TBSP) cinnamon
- 10 flour tortillas (small – med)
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine

Melt the butter in a microwave safe bowl. Heat for 30 seconds and check, heat for another 30 seconds if necessary. Set aside. Pour milk into mixing bowl. Add pudding mix. Whisk until well blended. Let stand for 5 minutes. Fold in 2 cups cool whip. Stir in the berries. Keep a few back to decorate the burritos. Mix the sugar and cinnamon together. Brush both sides of tortillas with butter. Sprinkle one side with sugar mixture. Bake tortillas on ungreased cookie sheet at 350° for 5 to 7 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes. Put a spoonful of the pudding mixture into center of the cooled tortilla. Roll up. Top with extra berries and whipped topping.



Community Service *continued from front page*

work in progress. We began by using our classrooms to lay the foundations to help our children become aware of the needs of others, exploring opportunities in the community for our students to do volunteer work and attempting to assist our children to make sense of these experiences. We are continuously amazed by the evidence of the positive effects that serving others has upon our children. The depths of a child's compassion are inspiring and it is always surprising to see how much community service means to even a very young child. Community service affects a child's growing self esteem. The child knows, without a doubt, that his or her work is important. Our classroom lessons that teach the importance of and respect for work are baby steps in preparation for the vast importance of these new works which have such positive effects on someone else's life. The child knows instinctively that this work is important. Their knowledge is reinforced by positive comments and words of thanksgiving for their work from other children and adults in the community. However, it is not the words of encouragement or the "thank yous", but the internal feelings of accomplishment, importance, self worth and value that mean so much in the development of this whole child.



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With locations in:

West Mobile
Midtown
Tillman's Corner
Daphne
Bay Minette