



## Westside Montessori School February 2012 Newsletter



### Dear WMS Parents,

February will be another busy month at Westside. We celebrate our Valentine's Party on Tuesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. Our Annual Open House will be held on Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>. Observations for prospective parents will be held the following week. We will keep disruptions to a minimum so as not to interrupt the children's work cycle.

### February Theme: Mercury and Venus

We have had a fantastic start to our study of the Solar System. The children were introduced to the bright star that is the center of our universe - the sun, as well other stars and constellations. Ask your child to teach you the Solar System song, which lists the planets in order from their distance from the sun!



During the month of February, we begin the study of the two planets closest to the sun - Mercury and Venus.

### February Composer/Artist



Our composer study this month will focus on **Ludwig Van Beethoven**. We have added this fantastic collection of 'Little Thinker' dolls to our artist and composer resources. The composer dolls play music and the artist dolls have memorable details. They enrich our art and music appreciation units, making the people we study more memorable and relatable.

This month we will be discovering the artist **Edgard Degas**. He was a French artist famous for his work in painting, sculpture, printmaking and drawing. He is regarded as one of the founders of *Impressionism* although he rejected the term, and preferred to be called a *realist*.

### Parent Evening ~ Enrichment

Thank you to all the parents who were able to attend the Enrichment Parent Information Evening on Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Special thanks to our panel of parents, **Adriana Chen (Alexis' Mom)**, **Sheila Barnes (Hannah Barnes' Mom)** and **David Steinson (Ashwin's Dad)** who were kind enough to share their insights and stories about the 4 year-old and Kindergarten Years at WMS.

### Pre-registration for September 2012

We have had a great response to our pre - registration, which ended last Thursday, January 26<sup>th</sup>. Please let interested family and friends know about our drop-in Open House on the 9<sup>th</sup> of this month (6pm - 8pm).

### Parent Volunteers for the Open House

We are looking a few enthusiastic parents who are willing to spend 1 - 2 hours at our upcoming Open House. We would like to provide prospective families with a comprehensive view of our school, which includes insights from parents of current students.





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### WMS Annual Open House

The school is having an OPEN HOUSE for new families who would like to register their children for September 2012. Our Open House will be held on:



Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
from 6pm - 8pm

### Mid-Term Break: No Classes

There is no school on Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup> or Monday, February 13<sup>th</sup>.

### Valentine's Day Party - Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>

We celebrate this day each year with a party. The children are invited to wear red/pink and our special Valentine's bags will be available outside the classrooms for the children to post cards. We will email current name lists to help with card writing.

For our Special Snack that day we have our school's traditional Valentine's Day Boxed Snack Exchange. Letters will go out by February 2<sup>nd</sup>, explaining how this works and what is involved.



### Mark Your Calendars ...

Thurs, Feb 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Scholastic Due Groundhog Day
Thurs, Feb 9 <sup>th</sup>	Open House for New Families to WMS 6 to 8pm
Fri, 10 <sup>th</sup> & Mon, 13 <sup>th</sup>	Midterm Break: No Classes

Tues, Feb 14 <sup>th</sup>	Valentine's Celebration
Thurs, Feb 16 <sup>th</sup>	Eye Exams for 3 and 5 year olds
Tues, Feb 21 <sup>st</sup>	Shrove Tuesday (Pancake Day)

### March 2012

Thurs, March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Scholastic Due
Mon, March 5 <sup>th</sup>	Field Trip to HR MacMillan Space Centre
Thurs, March 15 <sup>th</sup>	St. Patrick's Day Celebration
Mon, March 21 <sup>st</sup> to Fri, March 30 <sup>th</sup>	Spring Break (no classes)

### April 2012

Mon, April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	First Day of Spring Term
Thurs, April 5 <sup>th</sup>	Scholastic Due
Fri, April 6 <sup>th</sup>	Good Friday (school closed)
Mon. April 9 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Monday (school closed)
Mon, April 16 <sup>th</sup> - 19 <sup>th</sup>	Observation Week
Mon, Apr 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Progress Reports
Tues, April 24 <sup>th</sup>	P/T Conferences
Wed, April 25 <sup>th</sup>	Field Trip: 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Eric Carle Favourites'
Thurs, April 26 <sup>th</sup>	P/T Conferences





## Liberty and Discipline in the Montessori Classroom

Liberty and discipline sound like such heavy, important topics. When I think of Montessori my mind always goes to the beautiful materials. But the basis, the foundation of it all, is the balance of liberty with discipline.

### Making good choices

My sister now has her daughter, who is almost 3, in a Montessori class. She's heard me talk about Montessori for years, so she had a pretty good idea going in what it was going to be about. But I don't know if she had ever really seen a Montessori class up close. After her first visit to her daughter's new school, she called me and said, "I understand now about how they can have so much freedom. It's okay to let them make their own choices if every choice is a good one."

So many people think that in Montessori education, children can just run wild. Unfortunately, there probably have been some classrooms where that happens on a regular basis. The key is to control the environment. If, as my sister said, every available choice is a good one, it will be much easier for the child to make good decisions.

### Helping the child manage freedom

Still, there is always room for disobedience. We may call it "non-peaceful behavior" because that sounds a little nicer, but the truth is that many children have difficulty handling the freedom that comes with the world of Montessori.

This is where observation becomes so important. Each child may differ in their ability to make correct choices. Some may need rules or controls that another child doesn't. Others may repeatedly test guidelines that their peers leave alone.

There are many different ways to balance liberty and discipline. Establishing clear guidelines (perhaps in the form of ground rules) is a great first step. Children become frustrated when they don't know what the expectations are for their behavior.

### The journey from infancy to adulthood

When a child is born, they are initially completely cared for by their parents. They have no freedoms, no responsibility. The goal for this baby - far off in the distance - is for them to become a mature, independent adult. How do you go from one point to the other?

The key is to increase their liberty - freedom - gradually over time. Baby steps, as it were. A six-year-old can handle a certain amount of freedom; a 10-year-old can handle quite a bit more. The important thing is that the 10-year-old was given some freedom as a 6-year-old, 7-year-old, eight-year-old, etc. so that by the time they are 10, they can handle making good choices.

It's different for each child. In my elementary training I was taught to use workplans for the children. That's a control for them, in terms of helping them make good choices and keep track of their work. But sometimes even the workplan was too much for a child to handle.





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In that case, rather than a monthly workplan, we gave the child a daily workplan with several choices - some made by the teacher, some made by the student. A few weeks of using this method and the student was usually ready to move to a monthly workplan. The key was to observe where the student was at and how much freedom they could handle.

### Logical & consistent consequences

A second "must" to balance liberty and discipline is to keep the consequences of misbehavior consistent. I've found that letting the child choose the consequences, before the misbehavior takes place, is extremely effective. They will often choose something even more severe than the teacher or parent would have chosen. The key is to enforce the consequence consistently, and to try to have the consequence be a logical result of the child's behavior.

This quote from Maria Montessori is especially helpful: *"It is clear therefore that the discipline which reveals itself in the Montessori class is something which comes more from within than without. But this self-discipline has not come into existence in a day, or a week, or even a month. It is the result of a long inner growth, an achievement won through months of training."* (The Absorbent Mind).

### A long-term process

It helps enormously to keep in mind that the process of balancing liberty with discipline is a long one. It's not something that is perfected in a day, a week, or a month. Seeing the long-term goal puts into focus the day-to-day choices; just as we as adults are continually growing and changing, still even more are children are a work in progress.

Another important concept to keep in mind is balance. A child can be just as hurt by over-permissiveness as by excessive strictness. With my own children, I have a sense (if I am really paying attention) of the time when I move from loving, wise boundaries to being overly strict. I try to say "yes" as often as possible, and even more so, make all their available choices good ones so that my "yes" isn't even needed.

The end goal - that of a child who is a mature, independent adult - will be characterized by innate discipline. Most people will follow rules when being observed or graded. These external controls are often false, and disappear once you are left on your own. The true test of character is what a child does when left alone. When a child can make good choices when no one is looking, you can know that the combination of liberty and discipline is in perfect alignment.

By: Lori Bourne, Montessori for Everyone

