

December 1, 2006

Dear Parents,

We hope the long Thanksgiving weekend gave you and your families an opportunity for rest and relaxation, cooking, and lots of down time for reflection and rejuvenation. As we move on to the coldest and darkest time of year, join with us in the celebration of The Festivals of Light:

St Nicholas (Netherlands) - Reflection room

St Lucia (Sweden) - Garden room

Hanukkah (Jewish) - Wind Song room

Los Posados (Mexico) - River room

Christmas (Christian) - Shell room

Kwanzaa (African-American) - Peace room

New Year's (All cultures) - Nest room

The Nutcracker (Russian) - School age room

La Befana (Italy) - Sun room

We welcome any and all of our MMS families to share their special cultural Festival of Light with us during this time of year. There are many celebrations around the world that are not included in this short list. Please help us make this list longer and richer. Call Sandy Burwell, if you would like to share more with the children.

Each classroom will plan and lead one of these special celebrations. The times and schedule will be on the poster by the front door. We begin this Wednesday with a visit from St Nicholas. Please join us during these next few

weeks to dispel the darkness and bring light and joy into our midst.

In October, Amelia Gambetti came to our school to work with all the teachers to evaluate where we are and develop goals for the coming year for our integration of the Reggio Emilia philosophy in our program. After meeting all together on Saturday, October 14th the staff left energized and inspired to continue our commitment to co-creating a caring and creative school of learning and exploration.

One of the goals we chose with Amelia's provocation was to further develop the general areas in our school:

Studio

Outdoor Areas

Community Room

Shadow Screen Area

Kaleidoscope Room

Building Area (west landing)

Music Area (east landing)

Sensory Area (top west landing)

The teachers formed committees to evaluate each area and make creative changes that will stimulate learning and exploration. Each committee will send you a report and requests for parent involvement. Join us to make these deeper changes in our environment.

HOLIDAY PROGRAM - Thursday, December 21st

From 1986 to 1997 the children of MacDonald Montessori held two programs a year for their parents -

Grandparent's Day and a Holiday Program in December. We returned to our Grandparent's Day tradition in 2004 and we are embracing our tradition this year to prepare for you a Holiday program on December 21st.

The Community room prior to 1997 was one large room - an easy setting for an indoors program. Once we divided the room and added the Wind Song room- holding a program indoors in December became difficult. We are planning a creative schedule to make this program possible as the Community room will not hold all our parents and relatives at one time.

- All the classrooms will participate including infants and will perform twice - once from 9-10:15am and again from 10:30-11:45am. Each classroom will sing one song and then the Shell, Sun, River & Reflection will return to sing 3 songs for the Finale.
- We are asking the parents of the Wind Song, Garden, Sun & River room to attend the 9:00 performance and the Peace, Nest, Shell & Reflection room parents to attend the program starting at 10:30am. Please help us by following this schedule so all the parents and grandparents will have chairs in the audience.
- We will be serving refreshments of Coffee, Tea and Holiday bars and cookies at 8:30 and 10:00am. Please

send your holiday treats to share, a sign up sheet will be by the front door.

- A Pizza lunch for the children will be provided free of charge by MMS to ease the pressure on parents and teachers on Thursday. Our regular pizza lunch will also be on Wednesdays.
- Our music committee of Sarah B., Joanna, and Jessica will be contacting our parent musicians (we know who you are) and asking for your musical participation during our program.
- We will be recording the program for a DVD for parents and relatives. Relax and enjoy the show.

JOURNEY BOOKS

The Reggio philosophy encourages the collection of children's conversations, visual expressions and photos. Several years ago we set up a system of Journey books to collect children's work. The Journey books are labor-intensive and after seeing other school's approaches to this idea we have decided to use portfolios for each child to collect their visual expressions and documentation. All the photos and classroom experiences will be collected and each classroom will produce a year book for parents and relatives each June. The portfolio of your child's work will be reviewed at conference times and send home in June also. You may take home your child's Journey book this week to keep as a memento. We are very excited about this more personalized yearbook idea in which each child

will have his own page. We always welcome any parent who has skills in this area to help with this new endeavor.

DAILY JOURNALS ON THE WEBSITE

For a time we put the daily journals from nine classrooms on the school's website. This was an overwhelming task and one that was not kept current. We suspended the concept which was parent- password protected when we researched the legal ramifications. Any child's picture displayed on our website needs to have written permission from the parent or guardian. The daily journals are available in each classroom everyday.

We look forward to seeing you all at the Festivals of Lights celebrations and our Holiday Program. As we look towards the New Year, our hope is that the world will be supported in it's search for peace, for friendship and love between all peoples, and that we will save the Earth for our children and grandchildren.

Sincerely,

Beth MacDonald & the MMS Staff