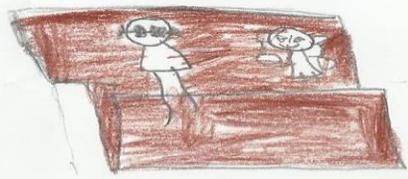


A Railway Station according to a five year old child.



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Unforgettable Toddlers

- By Deepa Ramesh

Some people come into our lives and leave quickly. Some people move our souls to dance. They awaken us to a new understanding with the passing whisper of their wisdom. They stay in our lives for a while, leave footprints in our hearts, and we are never ever the same again. The 'some people' mentioned above are my toddlers, ages two to two and a half whose company I have enjoyed during the past one year.

When I took charge of the toddler group in June 2013, I was filled with different emotions – a bit of fear mixed with excitement. This was because toddlers, unlike pre-primary children, cannot express their needs explicitly and a big question in my mind was if I would be able to understand them individually. After researching, reading books and talking to Dharini and Geetha about dealing with toddlers, I found that one simple way was to just love them all the time! And it worked wonders! I have had 13 children in my group since June 2013 and I feel blessed to be receiving their hugs, smiles, and their innocence.

The broken sentences that they speak relieve my stress and they fill me with positive energy. The first challenge for me was to make them understand school or in other ways to make them accept me as their aunty.

Every child was different even twins and I need to think of different strategies for each and every child. I realized that within a few days that most of the children have one common interest and that is cooking. I capitalized on it and we had fun preparing snacks, juices and chat. Any activity related to cooking was enjoyed every bit and their curiosity to taste made them participate and finish the activity faster.

As a parent, we tend to expect a little more from our loved ones, tend to neglect or take for granted our own children at times, but I sincerely feel being with young children will make you understand the importance of our own children. That is the power of being with young children as they teach you a lot by not talking but just by their actions. The toddlers have taught me so much that books, internet, or even my experiences have not taught me.

Importance of Practical Life Activities

– By Kavita Sriram

I often get the feeling while speaking about the Montessori class room, that generally people need to know more about the practical life activities. Too many times, it appears to be glossed over in parent discussion while topics of language and math materials generate more interest. I would like to share the beauty of this very crucial aspect of early learning.

Practical life exercises can be divided into 6 main categories. First and foremost are the preliminary exercises which assist the child to settle down in the environment and create the routine and order. They are also the prerequisite of the other activities. Rolling and unrolling a Mat, Carrying a small Chair and Opening and Closing a door, carrying a tray etc. are the examples of Preliminary exercises.

Practical life exercises also include certain fundamental skills such as pouring, spooning or use of tongs. As with all the lessons in the Montessori class room, these activities follow sequential orders and ideally each lesson builds upon the strengths of the last. Another category is care of self. Activities such as washing hands, buttoning or tying shoe laces assist the child to become physically independent. Care of the environment is the third category involving activities such as sweeping, watering, cleaning etc.,

Control of movement is an area of practical life which encompasses lessons such as walking on the line and the Silence Game. Additionally, social grace and courtesy lessons are introduced to the child.

When the children enter the Montessori environment at the age of 2 ½ Years, they are introduced to all the wonderful activities of this group. Exercise of Practical life teaches the children skills they need to survive in the real world. In addition to building self-esteem and confidence, these activities also help build concentration and nurture motor skills. The latter is a pre-requisite for developing writing skills. The Exercise of Practical Life provides a link between home and school. In the classroom, with child sized tools that really work the child is able to perform the same activities that he sees his parents do. The exercise of practical life activities acquaints the child to simple chores and movements such as carrying, folding, pouring etc.

Exercise of practical life activities in the Montessori class room ultimately provides the foundation for success in all areas of life.



Ages 2-3

- Put toys in toy box
- Stack books on shelf
- Place dirty clothes in laundry hamper
- Throw trash away
- Carry firewood
- Fold washcloths
- Set the table
- Fetch diapers & wipes
- Dust baseboards

Ages 4-5

- Feed pets
- Wipe up spills
- Put away toys
- Make the bed
- Straighten bedroom
- Water houseplants
- Sort clean silverware
- Prepare simple snacks
- Use hand-held vacuum
- Clear kitchen table
- Dry and put away dishes
- Disinfect doorknobs

Ages 6-7

- Gather trash
- Fold towels
- Dust mop floors
- Empty dishwasher
- Match clean socks
- Weed garden
- Rake leaves
- Peel potatoes or carrots
- Make salad
- Replace toilet paper roll

Extended Session Activities

- By Aditi Ponappa

During the course of the academic year our third year children, aptly referred as 'seniors', have been working hard at developing their many facets via mainly working with Montessori materials that are assisting them to apply concepts that they have absorbed through the previous years and consolidate them. They have also been given an opportunity to get accustomed to a traditional classroom scenario for an hour in the mornings. But the most exciting has been working on various projects that have been formulated to broaden their awareness of various topics and satisfy their curiosity about them. This year they have been taken through a journey about the birth of the universe, the vastness of the solar system, the formation of the continents amongst others.

Towards the latter half of the second term we gravitated towards inspiring them to become proud Indians. Introducing them to Amazing India via its vast and varied landscape, its flora and fauna, to the importance of the role of rivers, the name and locations of the States, the diversity in their cultures, recognition of some important monuments and awareness of some interesting Indians to generate a feeling of pride in being an Indian.

We drew their attention to the fact that our country is predominantly an agricultural one and while we live in well-developed cities or urban areas which are few in comparison to the rural areas the way of living in both the entities are so stark.

The children could relate easily to our hectic city life of traffic jams, crowded malls, apartment complexes, hospitals, hotels and a large number of people working in offices at various specialized jobs. They worked hands on creating a model of the rural area and realized the proximity of the villagers to nature. They appreciated how hard the farmer toils to provide for the betterment of the urbanites. It enabled them to understand how dependent these people are to the forces of nature. The feeling of a close-knit community and the interdependence of man and animals was made so clear to them. The contrast in the way of life was grasped by them very easily as they put together these models.

With the introduction to these various topics we are only assisting them in opening up their window of knowledge and enabling them to view and absorb what best interests them.



Rural Landscape Group Artwork



Urban Landscape Group Artwork



MAN'S homes – CAVE TO A HUT TO A BIG CITY



MONTESSORI METHOD AND THE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD

– By Rituparna

The Philosophy behind the Montessori Method places great importance on the development of the Child's independence and freedom. Both of these are cultivated in such a way that the Child also understands the responsibilities that come with this freedom. It fosters a sense of self-respect within the Child and also aids in wholesome social development.

A child with Special Needs is one who is deviated from the mainstream group with respect to developmental milestones, pace of learning, attention span, motor functioning, perceptual and sensory difficulties. The education system has to cater to these difficulties and tailor the lessons such as to ensure effective learning for them.

The Montessori Method of teaching provides a child friendly environment for learning. In this method, the children learn the concepts at their own pace, and by themselves. The method provides a variety of learning material for a single skill and the information and knowledge are linked with the child's interest and experiences; thereby learning is never boring rather it is challenging to the Child.

The child seeks to learn and not run away from it. All the independence and freedom are fostered in the child and yet he also understands what is wrong and right.

The child experiences hands on learning making it more conceptual. The child is exposed to various activities that a parent or caregiver might not allow at home, due to the intrinsic doubts associated with regard to children with special needs. But in the Montessori Method, the child explores the environment with the guidance of a trained teacher. The Montessori Method provides an opportunity for the child to learn about their strength and weaknesses and build a sense of self competence, confidence and respect.



Child's impression of
Deconomial Square