



**Boundary Bay
Montessori House**

Operated by MIND

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**From the Academic Director,
Pam Ferguson**

Teaching Team Changes for 2008-2009 School Year

At the end of this school year, two members of the BBMH teaching team will be moving on to new stages of their professional lives. We would like to share this information about the impending changes with BBMH families.

After 16 years at BBMH, Cathy Goss has made the decision to pursue her retirement. Cathy has loved her work with the children and their families at our school, and has given a lot of thought to her decision. Her memories of BBMH are very dear to her heart and she is grateful for her work experience with us. Her plans include continuing to speak about the benefits of Montessori education publicly, work with the Virtues Project, and to travel. We wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank Cathy for her incredible energy, commitment and passion for teaching – so many of our children have been touched by her dedication to the field of Montessori education and her patient, nurturing ways in the classroom. We celebrate her decision with her, but will also miss her enthusiasm, support and high standards for all that she undertakes. We wish her a relaxing and fulfilling retirement, and hope she will visit us often.

In the preschool, Christina Davey has made the decision to increase her focus on her Montessori studies, and therefore, will not be returning next year as Preschool Directress. We appreciate all of Christina's contributions to the BBMH team over the past three years, which includes her work in the administration office, preschool, lunchtime supervision, substituting in the elementary school and co-producing the year-end concert. We wish her every success and support her decision to expand her knowledge and experience in this area. We hope that she will continue to be an active part of the BBMH Teaching Team through substituting and completing her practicum work in our classrooms.

In the coming weeks, we will be posting job openings in the BBMH Teaching Team for the 2008-2009 school year. Please pass the word on if you know any qualified, Montessori-trained teachers, and ask them to contact Pam Ferguson for further information.

Focus on Language

In this issue, we would like to provide information on the Language curriculum in the Montessori classroom for each plane of development. At each level, the spiral curriculum is evident as students have the opportunity to start with basic letter recognition and sounds, move to reading and formulating single words, to naming, labeling and learning parts of speech, to sentence analysis, to spelling, to etymology, to research, to writing, to story and novel analysis, and finally, to exposure to language in a variety of media. I hope you will enjoy this brief overview of the language curriculum and materials from Preschool to Year Seven.

DATES OF INTEREST

Sunday, May 4, 12-4 pm
Family Fun Fair & Picnic
Ladner Harbour Park
Hope to see you there!

Monday, May 19
Victoria Day—school is closed

Sunday, May 25
Ladner Days Parade
Join us on our BBMH Float!
Watch the Weekly Email for details.

“A child’s different inner sensibilities enable him to choose from his complex environment what is suitable and necessary for his growth. They make the child sensitive to some things, but leave him indifferent to others. When a particular sensitiveness is aroused in a child, it is like a light that shines on some objects but not on others, making of them his whole world.”

**Maria Montessori,
The Secret of
Childhood**



Language Work in the Preschool/Kindergarten Years

A Preschool student begins her language work through sensorially experiencing and mastering her letter sounds. This leads to initial word building, and eventually progresses to reading simple words. At this time, the child will be introduced to the *Reading Game*. This game uses a miniature farm and animals to encourage the child to practice her reading. It can also introduce the parts of speech such as a noun, an article or an adjective.

Our classroom's *Reading Game* is a beautiful mat created to look like a farmyard, complete with paddock, pasture/field, stony path and pond. We have a barn, a fence, a bunny hutch and all the animals to match, including Mr. and Mrs. Farmer.

In a small box we have many labels with the names (nouns) of all the objects we can find on the farm. It is the child's work to lay out the farm with all the buildings and animals, then to read each label and match it to the corresponding object. When a child is ready, the next step is to begin to examine the structure of language. This work is done together with the directress by playing the *Article Game* and the *Reading Adjective Game*.

When playing the *Article Game*, the learning outcome is to create awareness in the child of the use of articles before nouns, such as "a", "an" or "the". The directress may say to the child "I am thinking of something we only have one of?" The child may then point to the cat and the directress would say, "Yes, I was thinking of **the** cat. Can you find the word for cat? I will put the words **the cat** together. Now I am thinking of something we have many of?" (The child may then point to the rabbits.) "Yes, I was thinking of **a** rabbit. Can you find the word for rabbit? I will put the words **a rabbit** together." Through this exploration, the child develops the awareness of the use of articles through aural and printed language.

The *Reading Adjective Game* is played in a similar manner, with the directress using labels with simple adjectives, such as those that describe size, colour or number. The student is asked to match the adjective label together with the label of the object on the farm that it describes.

All of these games provide young children with exposure to the elements of grammar and language structure, which continue to be explored throughout the spiral curriculum of the Primary and Intermediate years. By the end of Year Seven, most students become highly competent at parsing sentences and understanding the rules and usage of grammar. The children eagerly anticipate *The Reading Game* and its extension activities from an early age, as they see the farm materials waiting on the shelf. Our Kindergarten children are now happily engaged in using this material and the younger students are inspired to practice their Language work so that one day they may also use the farm.

By Christina

Fact-Finding in the Primary Class

The Primary Class is comprised of beginners and emergent readers, writers and spellers. We have numerous basic lessons that empower the children to develop strength in this learning. We rely on the outstanding Montessori language program and supplement it with complementary exercises that aid the learner to decode, to see connections and patterns and to memorize through repetition. In this newsletter we want to explain *Fact-finding*, which is the culmination of the basic lessons that set the student up for competency and success. As Directresses, we sought a process for children to successfully learn the skills associated with the research and report writing process, and found it through the Summer Institute for early literacy sponsored by SFU. We have adapted this for our students and it is an excellent writing process.

Fact-finding allows a child in Year 3 to write a seven-paragraph essay on a topic that has been recently studied. The process is simple and orderly, and the students are not aware, at the beginning, that the result will be a seven-paragraph essay. The first step is for the group to have a hands-on lesson that captures their curiosity and incorporates their previously built skill set.

In our class, each child in Year 3 makes a map of British Columbia that shows topography with a legend indicating elevation, cities and natural resources. The first layer map is a piece of poster board with the physical map and proceeds to a second layer made of tissue paper for the natural resources. The map-making process is familiar from Year 1 and 2, but the details of this map are new and fascinating to the students. They marvel at the way the land provides



products and jobs that are derived through tourism, forestry, mining, agriculture and fruit orchards. Once the children have set criteria for quality and finished their maps, they are conversant with their subject in an animated, joyful manner. The children's maps are like works of art since their skills are so well developed from three years of map-making in this class. We promote the philosophy that if you can talk about it, you can likely write about it!

From this premise, the children use their rough copy writing books to organize the topics they will use for fact-finding. Eight pages are set aside in their notebook, with the first page containing a legend similar to the map's legend. Subsequent pages contain titles that are listed as Introduction, Location, Rivers and Mountains, Cities, Natural Resources, and "My Opinion". The Directress gives the students a piece of paper that has been divided into rectangular boxes, which are designed to hold one fact each. Information is first gathered directly from the students' maps. Additional information is found in books at the child's level of reading. Concurrently, we teach about the elements of a non-fiction book, such as the table of contents, the index, highlighted headings, and photo captions. We read aloud and paraphrase what we have just read in a sentence. We look at copyright protection and learn to develop original phrasing rather than plagiarize.

At first, the children seek the facts in an organized manner, such as putting the location facts based on what is north, south, east or west of the province. The printing is done roughly and quickly, since there is a momentum with fact gathering because it is fun and relatively easy. Hunting for facts and sharing information is encouraged. In a short time, the first fact-finding sheet is full and a second one is requested. They are stored in a group folder and can be used whenever the child is free during class to do fact-finding. In the next lesson, we colour code each fact, distinguishing it as a fact about a city or a resource until each fact has been coded to match the outline. The children now engage in actual 'cutting and pasting' by using scissors and a glue stick to paste the facts under the heading. All location facts, for example, have been marked by the student with a specific colour and are pasted on the left side of their writing notebook. This orderly pattern is followed for all headings.

The group, with the Directress' guidance, learns how to create an introduction and on the following pages, students use the facts that have been cut and pasted on the left side of their notebooks and draft a corresponding paragraph on the right side utilizing the essential facts. Soon the students have nearly eight pages with a paragraph on each page. Now the students and their Directress work one-on-one to edit the work for *COPS*, which are capitals, omissions, punctuation and spelling.

Final copy paper is given to the student who is now ready, using his or her best penmanship, to write a polished, final copy. Any small errors are corrected and the final copy is then mounted and adhered to the back of the map. The end result is that the student has learned a valuable, organized process for writing and has gained an appreciation for content of a topic. Each child is proud of the work and is free to read the essay to other students or in circle time to the whole class.

by Cathy Goss

From the Intermediate Classroom. . .

Language in the intermediate classroom builds and expands on the foundation laid in preschool and primary. One of the cornerstones within the study of language is the study of grammar. An intermediate Montessori student explores grammar at the word, sentence and paragraph level. The function of the noun, adjective, article, verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, interjection, pronoun are introduced at the Primary level along with a symbol to identify each for practice. In the Intermediate classroom, these parts of speech are reviewed and then studied in detail. For example, nouns can be categorized as: common or proper, abstract or concrete, collective, and mass. Adjectives can enhance their nouns in various ways: numerical (one), descriptive (blue), ordinal (first), demonstrative (this or that), interrogative (which?) or even possessive (his or her). Verbs have moods and voices as well as tenses. Verbs have various functions such as linking an adjective or noun to its subject, as well as being transitive or intransitive. Grammar study is undertaken from Year Four to Seven and often goes beyond what is offered in public education. Our students get to be known as the "Grammar Kids" in high school.



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CALENDAR 2007-2008 TERM 3

May	11	Mother's Day
	19	Victoria Day
	20-23	Intermediate Camp
	30	Student Led Conferences
June	5	Sports Day
	6	Professional Development Day
	15	Father's Day
	17-19	Rehearsal
	19	Graduation and Year-end Concert
	20	School Picnic

Intermediate classroom continued. . .

Students also study, as part of the grammar program, sentence analysis, which is the role words take in a sentence something that is often not introduced, if at all, until upper grades in high school. The material for this study, including charts, arrows, and discs (that mimic the verb grammar symbol), is beautiful in its

simplicity and allows students to understand very complex concepts

in sentence analysis. Materials are used to demonstrate the importance of the verb, which in sentence analysis is called the predicate. This is the heart of the study of a sentence. Many students argue that the noun (subject) is also essential, but soon learn that although it is part of a simple sentence, it can also be implied rather than stated. Slowly the students are introduced to the direct and indirect object using specific questions to lead to the identification of these terms. Other parts of sentences are also evaluated, such as adverbials and attributes, and logical agreement between predicate and subject. The core of the Language curriculum still involves Montessori lessons in grammar and word study.

Word study involves what we call the "Skyscraper" materials, which teach prefixes, suffixes, homonyms, homophones, homographs, antonyms, synonyms, punctuation and dictionary usage. New this year is the etymology program, in which we are learning the Greek and Latin roots for words, which supports and builds on our spelling and word study.

The reading program in intermediate continues with the Junior Great Book series used during the primary years, which is an inquiry-based program that gives students many opportunities to interact with thought-provoking stories as they develop their reading, writing, oral communication and critical thinking skills. The program also expands to include novel study, and for the first time this year we have begun to use the process of Literature Circles! A Literature Circle is for a group of 4-6 students at any grade level, which fits in perfectly with the Montessori approach. Each member of a circle is assigned a role and helps guide the group through an assigned topic of discussion for that week. The guide for the week records the information shared. Literature Circles provide an opportunity for students to control their own learning, to share thoughts, concerns and their understanding of the events of the novel. Through this process, students have been able to read a variety of novels this year, such as the classic A Wrinkle in Time to the more recent Time Stop Stops for No Mouse. This process has allowed students to cover a variety of genres from science fiction to mystery and to be exposed to different writing styles. Students have managed to read three novels this year and we still have time for one more! They are excited about what they are reading and enjoy the opportunity to share it with their peers.

The writing program also builds on what has been started in the Primary classroom. The fact finding skills and paragraph mapping expand into report writing and creative writing stories in the Intermediate years. Students leave BBMH knowing how to write a formal report, including how to reference their sources and how to present an oral report with confidence. Students in the Intermediate classroom have also expanded their writing and multimedia skills to create amazing *Powerpoint* presentations. All in all, we have a very comprehensive and exciting language program in which all students can succeed, and develop language skills that will enhance and enrich their ability to do well wherever they continue their education.

By Eileen and Cathy V.