

# April



## Upcoming Events

- School Pictures
  - Newport News
    - April 12 - Toddler and Elementary
    - April 13 - Children's House
  - Hampton
    - April 14 - All Classes
- April 16 - Spring Fair 10:30 - 1:30

Thank you to all of our families for working with us to navigate our new online admissions, enrollment, and billing portal. We are enjoying the efficiency and the ease with which our families can access information. We are excited to say that we are almost at capacity for enrollment for next year, and are already full with a waitlist at multiple levels for both campuses. We appreciate your timeliness with your re-enrollment, which allowed us to stay on schedule with admitting new students. March was a very busy month, and we truly appreciated your patience with the process.

Our Board is excited about the future of our school! Our strategic plan has remained on course, and we have progressed successfully through it over the past 4 years, in spite of the pandemic. The vision that was made by parents, staff, community members, and Board Members four years ago led us to where we are! We are an accredited school of over 170 students with two campuses, led by a Board of parents and community members, in partnerships with a multitude of community organizations. These goals came to fruition over the past 4 years with much planning, effort, and hard work by our staff, Board, and committees. Our Board is now planning our next Vision Meeting, led by Brennan Smith. It will be occurring this spring, and the date will be announced shortly. We would love for the staff and adult family members to attend and share their vision for HRI Montessori for the next 5, 10, and 20 years! If we can dream it, we can do it!

I can't wait to see your vision and be a part of it

-Ms. Michelle

Dear HRIMS Families,

We are all excited about all that spring is bringing with it! Our community partnerships, spring fair, and our vision event are all coming up soon!

We are grateful and inspired to have 16 gentlemen volunteering from Peninsula Catholic High School to help with the edging and mulching for our new playground equipment at the Hampton Campus! Thank you to Ms. Lindsey for securing the new equipment and installation with a grant that has allowed us to put in some more natural playscape structures for our elementary program. Ms. Lindsey has recently applied for another grant for additional play structures for the Hampton Campus, and we hope to hear good news regarding that grant soon! Thank you, again, to our volunteers from Peninsula Catholic!

Ms. Janet has taken the lead on all things Spring Fair! Thank you to the parents and staff who have helped to put together craft items and games! A special thank you to Ms. Candice Porter for coordinating the bounce houses and STEM trailer for us with the MWR! We appreciate our community engagement! Ms. Janet has a great time in-store at the Hampton Campus for all of our families!

We were hoping by now that we would be past our Covid outbreaks and that the possibility of class closures would be a thing of the past. However, we had a positive case in Children's House last week. Although we hope to go mask optional as soon as we are able, the local health department would still require our unvaccinated students to quarantine for 5 days and mask for an additional 5 days in the event there is a positive case (newest update as of March 11th). As a large number of our students/classrooms are not eligible for vaccinations, our Board has decided to continue our masking policy in order to ensure our classrooms remain open and our students remain in school. We continue to actively monitor the health department and the cases in our schools in determining our course of action. We will update you as soon as possible.

# Toddlers

*"THERE MUST BE PROVISION FOR THE CHILD TO HAVE CONTACT WITH NATURE, TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE ORDER, THE HARMONY, AND THE BEAUTY IN NATURE." -MARIA MONTESSORI*

The many shapes of leaves, the bright and varied colors of flowers, the texture and use of sand and dirt, the sensation of water in puddles and lakes. These are only some of the beautiful teaching tools that toddlers can find in nature, if we help to facilitate their discoveries. "Let the children be free; encourage them; let them run outside when it is raining; let them remove their shoes when they find a puddle of water; and when the grass of the meadows is wet with dew, let them run on it and trample it with their bare feet; let them rest peacefully when a tree invites them to sleep beneath its shade; let them shout and laugh when the sun wakes them in the morning." -Maria Montessori



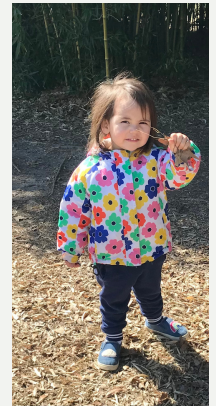
Here at HRIMS, our Toddler Community enjoys walks in the rain, building sandcastles, splashing and stomping in muddy puddles, eating and exploring fresh fruits and vegetables, and experiencing the world with all of our senses. Even if clothes get wet or muddy, there is discovery and hard work in taking them off and putting on clean and dry clothes.

In a Montessori classroom, you will find 'real' materials and experiences, such as metal utensils and glass cups, real potted plants and flower bouquets, fresh fruit and vegetables on work shelves to be explored and enjoyed, animals to be admired and nurtured. Nature provides us with the 'real' thing everyday, and it is with true joy and curiosity that a small child experiences it. A toddler sees the joy and wonder in small details that we as adults may not even think of, and it is our responsibility to make those opportunities available.

*"There is no description, no image in any book capable of replacing the sight of real trees, and all the life to be found around them in a real forest." -Maria Montessori*

Nature can truly be considered the world's classroom. Maria Montessori emphasized using outdoor space as both work and play spaces. Here are some examples of how to use nature with your toddler:

- collecting and sorting leaves/flowers/sticks by color, shape or size
- painting with sticks
- planting seeds/watering plants
- smelling flowers
- going on nature walks, either on a trail or in your own backyard or neighborhood
- collecting and sorting rocks
- visit the zoo or botanical garden
- build a bonfire
- walk in the rain with rain boots and umbrellas
- play with the family pet-let your child start to take responsibility for feeding, walking, etc.
- talk about the weather- "Mr. Sun" and "Rain Rain Go Away" are two favorite toddler songs that help bring awareness to what is happening in the world around them.
- going to the beach to swim and play in the sand
- wash or sort seashells
- explore fruits and vegetables, then use them to make art (apple/bell pepper stamping)
- listen to the birds and find nests
- use sand or dirt and objects such as rocks and leaves to make a sensory bin
- water activities-sink/float, transferring, pouring





# CHILDRENS' HOUSE

As Spring is a symbol of renewal and rebirth, the children are noticing many of these signs as one finds flowers from home and brings them to school or other shares a dandelion bloom on the playground or even those who observe the tiniest pink fragrant flowers open up each day near the stepstone path. One morning many children entered the classroom saying, "WOW! Look at the flower opening up!" The students were amazed by the blooming process of our Red Lion Amaryllis and counted the four blossoms. We were excited it grew a second stem of four more beautiful flowers. The older students received a still life lesson learning how to sketch and apply watercolor to create their own artwork. One student says, "This is fun I want to make another one!"

We learned about the holiday of St. Patrick's Day and all its symbols (shamrock, Irish flag, Ireland's shape and location, rainbows, the legend of the leprechaun) and sang songs On March 17th and Oh Rainbow, Oh Rainbow. The students had fun creating their own handprint leprechaun too!

The children see many events that we as adults take for granted with such "fresh eyes". They watch with great interest more birds seeking food from the feeders and their fall crop of spring onions perking up after the cold winter temperatures. I enjoy observing the children's natural curiosity noticing the simplest things and having an instinctive desire to care for their environment and their world.



Children have great interest in the details and we teach this through the many sequential lessons within our curriculums beginning with practical life for them to have the experience of practicing life skills. They learn many lessons that demonstrate grace and courtesy, refinement of gross and fine motor skills, care of self, and care of the environment. These four areas develop within your child over time and as they grow they will gain an understanding and care for the community, develop self-discipline, and the importance of caring for each other and caring for the Earth respectively.

As we care for the indoor and outdoor environments, the students wished to harvest the spring onions and prepare the garden beds for the spring planting season. As guides we follow the child, and this was the "seed" for me to foster and create a complex practical life activity that bloomed into fruition. First, the students harvested their fall plantings of green onions by using trowels and lifting up the soil to find the underground part of the plant and all its roots. They were amazed to find a few carrots too! After the harvest, they brought the onions indoors and washed them. Later, when all the behind-the-scenes planning was finished, I invited the older students to participate in a baking project.



Sounds easy? No! Being a guide takes spontaneity and planning from finding a recipe, gathering the ingredients, and guiding them through an experience. The students chopped the green onions, added them together with the other ingredients using measuring spoons and cups to create a dough, then placed it in the oven to bake, removed it to cool, and served it to the class for a snack the next day. This takes time and patience during this process, it's this process that is the most important part of learning. The older students were proud of this purposeful task and shared their experience, the ingredients they included, and the steps for preparing and serving the bread with their classmates. Yummy!

This renewal occurs with the students as well as with the teachers and their life work to provide practical life lessons that teach the child to become self-confident leaders and the self-sufficient citizens of tomorrow. We continue to seek renewal and rejuvenation with our career and recently, along with our colleagues, attended the American Montessori Society National Conference for 4 days. I sought out the basics of refreshing my mind about the purpose of practical life which is the keystone to the Montessori environment. I learned that complex practical living skills were happening in the classroom and brainstorming helped me to develop more ideas which I look forward to introducing to the children. I treasured returning back to the basics and refreshing my mind and filling it with new ideas, which will lead towards greater creativity for the betterment of your children.



Yes, we are doing purposeful work as well as the children. As we guide your child to the materials that spark interest, concentration, and the joy of learning, may it continue to foster our creativity, innovation, and the thinking “outside the box” as adults that we need and spread it amongst ourselves to reminding us to renew and foster our inner spirit. This year, the in-person and virtual event was hosted in Nashville, TN which inspired and refreshed our minds to seek the common good, push us out of our comfort zone to brainstorm, and helped us to continue to provide an enriched learning experience for our children. We thank you for sending your children into our care where they not only enrich their minds but our minds as well and inspire us to be our best selves. Thank you, Ms. Michelle and the Board for providing us this opportunity.

# Lower Elementary

March was a month of spring coming near.

It is always a time of rebirth, and many Montessori lessons focus on the topic of life cycles. We use all areas of the classroom and many different ways for the students to engage with the concept and be creative with it.

Students were excited to plant seeds. They researched what was needed to take care of them, as different plants have different needs. They watered them daily and waited with anticipation to see whose seed would be the first plant to emerge.

The parts of the plants were identified by the students, as well as the role of each. Roots and stems were introduced and the story of the flower was told. Our students loved making beautifully detailed books, drawing the parts of a leaf, flower, and tree labeling the parts. Their creativity and detail were shown in their drawings, and their attention and focus were drawn to the activity.



The students were shown various ways to design life cycles and then created their own. This was a tremendous success. We have beautiful displays throughout the classroom.

Our students began to design and make booklets to present to their friends, displaying beautiful handwriting skills and correct punctuation. They have shown much enthusiasm in completing these books and continue to use innovative ideas to help our classrooms.



The elementary level is focused on social skills and community. During our community sessions in the mornings, we speak daily of the importance of kind words and displaying acts of kindness to each other. We also read fable stories daily focusing on the lessons they teach and how we can apply those lessons in our own lives. The students have enjoyed listening to these stories, and it has led to them creating stories of their own.

The students continue to be engaged in their research projects and enjoy the opportunity to present what they have learned to their peers. Becoming an expert on a topic, they develop confidence in themselves which fuels both a desire to learn more and a desire to help inspire others. It is amazing to watch their excitement, and how their projects develop.

There is always so much growth in the spring, both in nature and in the students themselves. Their love of learning is rejuvenated and reenergized with the season. We can't wait to see what the spring brings to our class research projects and activities.

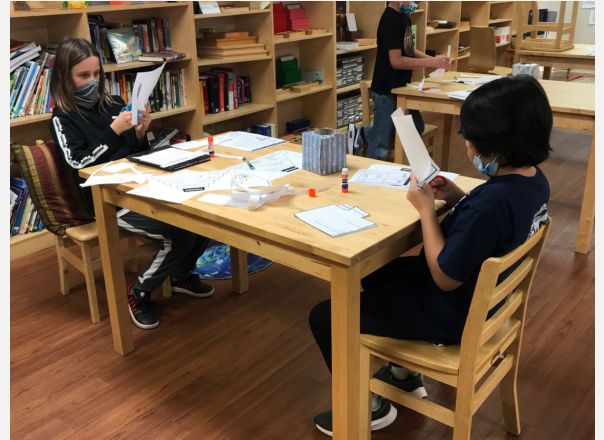




# Upper Elementary

In the Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori described what it is like for students in the second plane of development in which "an inner change has taken place, but nature is quite logical in arousing now in the child not only a hunger for knowledge and understanding, but a claim to mental independence, a desire to distinguish good from evil by his own powers, and to resent limitation by arbitrary authority. In the field of morality, the child now stands in need of his own inner light."

This is found true in our Upper Elementary classroom. The students are constantly trying to establish their thoughts and opinions about the world around them, especially as they grow more aware of the current events in the news. We have been closely examining and studying the Fundamental Needs of Mankind and how fulfilling these needs have shaped the creation and development of civilizations around the world since the beginning of time.



We have looked at the very first civilizations of Mesopotamia and look how their contributions led to the development of the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and several other early civilizations that have become important contributors to our modern day societies. We will then use this new found knowledge and understanding to do a fully subversive cross curricular learning project.

These lessons have led to amazing discussions and moments of reflection. As

Marcus Garvey once said, "A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin, and culture is like a tree without roots".