



# Hampton Roads International Montessori School



## November 2021 Dates to Remember

Thursday and Friday, Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>: Parent Conferences

Thursday, Nov. 11<sup>th</sup>: Veteran's Day

Wednesday - Friday, Nov. 24-25<sup>th</sup>: Thanksgiving Break

Planning Ahead: Winter Break: December 20<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>

Dear HRIMS Families,

In a season of life when stress runs high from the long-term impacts of Covid, we are more grateful than ever to have you as a part of our HRIMS community. Thank you to all of our parents and guardians who have signed up for conferences and filled out our preconference survey. I want to especially thank those who wrote comments about their child's classroom and teachers at the end of the survey. The expression of gratitude for the staff and the time and care taken with your children has a tremendous impact on our staff, especially at this time.

We know that we have all been affected by the pandemic and have additional stresses in our lives because of it. In the news this week, even specifically in our area, public schools have begun changing their schedules to include a week off, regular early dismissals, etc. to respond to teacher burnout. Burnout is real, and effects our staff just as much if not more, due to our independent school operational requirements, and the individualized planning they do for each student.

Our staff is present and attuned to our students all day long, leaving few moments for "mental breaks" that those in other working professions are able to take. Our staff continuously monitors students in the classroom to ensure safety, to help them navigate social situations, to help them work through the social-emotional needs created by the mandates from the pandemic. Even though they have a half an hour break for lunch each day, many forego this break choosing to eat with the children to teach the grace and courtesy social skills for mealtimes.

This quality of teaching and holistic care creates both bodily and mental stress for teachers, making those who serve in this role even under normal life conditions susceptible to burnout. The added stresses of these past two years with Covid, including implementing mandates needed to keep your children and themselves safe, the fear of and sometimes reality of Covid illness for themselves and loved ones, and other personal hardships, has taken a toll on the resiliency of teachers. Although other schools are adjusting hours, we understand that our families need their children in our care, and we remain here for you with regular operational hours.

We recognize that reliance can be restored in multiple ways, and we are working together as a community to realize this. This past in-service day, Addilynn Holloman with Life Maestro, conducted an activity with our staff that helped to rejuvenate them. They shared why they choose to work at HRIMS and work with your children. Our staff shared; they cried; they supported and affirmed each other. The focus of that time together relieved some stress and built even deeper camaraderie for continuing the work we do to make a difference in the children's lives.

Those of you who wrote comments on your survey supporting our staff are also helping to ease stress and restore resiliency. Those explaining the growth you have seen in your child since the beginning of the year have affirmed what they do each day. Those who have thanked them for the time, patience, and effort they put in every day to ensure your child feels safe and loved and is learning and growing helped affirm that they are in the right position to make a difference in your child's life.

Those who have spoken about the programs Ms. Lindsey has worked to become part of, such as the military's Childcare Aware Program and the VA Subsidy Program, have shown her that her time and great efforts are making a difference in our families' lives. Those who shared comments about how our small office staff have worked diligently over the past year to ensure the smooth integration of all the necessary paperwork and requirements of the new standards and regulations implemented in October by the Department of Education and managed the addition of the new school building and additional staff have helped Janet, Lindsey, Jane and Addison realize that the many hours spent at night and on the weekends were worth the time spent away from their families.

I personally thank you for appreciating our staff. Your comments made them smile, made them cry in school, and made them share the comments with others to affirm all the people who help make HRIMS what it is to your children and to you. You have no idea of how big of an impact your few sentences have, acknowledging their work and the difference our teachers and staff are making in the lives of the children. Thank you for being a part of our HRIMS community, restoring resiliency, and reducing burnout by being there for our staff with your comments, affirmations, and words of encouragement so that we in turn can continue to be here for you and your children, with smiles, hugs, and learning.

Michelle D'Antonio



# Toddler Community

The community has grown in such little time. Normalization is starting to happen in each community. Normalization is when children are able to work freely and in harmony in the Montessori environment. However, Dr. Montessori was quick to point out that every child is different, so not every child is normalized at the same time, and that is okay. It means they are in a different stage of their development and personal journey. It will happen soon but be patient. This year especially we need to be patient with our children and with ourselves. Our toddlers have grown up in a different world, unlike the “different worlds” experienced by generations before theirs. This group of toddlers has spent the majority of their lives in a pandemic, closed off from family and friends, playgrounds, and seeing faces. These experiences have affected their personalities, independence, willingness to explore, behavior, and ability to separate from their families. However, children are resilient, and we are seeing the progress they are making every day. Maybe normalization is taking a little longer this year, but the amount of love, caring, and support our toddlers need is the priority, and we see it making a difference in just the short time since they have started with us.



Children in the toddler community are starting to separate from their parents/guardians at the drop off circle and walk in the classroom without crying. They are excited to be at school. They are happy to see and greet their teachers and friends. The most exciting part is that they are eager to learn. Friends are coming in and independently putting their belongings away without any reminders. They can even take off and put on their shoes without any help.

We even have our older friends helping our younger friends. It is amazing to watch the patience, care and support they give them. Our older friends are bursting with pride and confidence in themselves, so excited that they showed a friend how to do something. “I taught them, Ms. Laura!”

During the work cycle, friends know how to roll/unroll mat or rug to get their area ready for a work or a lesson. They are noticing which works are floor work and which are table work. The children are starting to show respect for the work and for each other. They are beginning to work with others, rather than next to them. For example, friends will ask if they can join another friend. Now we are also learning that a friend can say no, and that’s a hard concept to understand and respond to. Learning to know that the choice does not mean that they do not like you is one that is important. Being comfortable saying no is also another lifelong skill. These are important social skills taught at a young age.

They now know where each piece of work goes in the environment, and why it is important to place items back where they belong. For snack and lunch, they are getting what they need for setup. This includes a placemat, plate, cup, and napkin. Our older friends help the younger friends who need help. They are learning grace and courtesy at the table. During this time, they are learning how to hold silverware and how to use it. They are washing their own dishes.



This is only the beginning of the school year. Imagine how much your child is going to accomplish throughout the year. These are only a few examples there are many more, and I am sure you are seeing them at home. If you have any questions, please contact your guide who can help you.





# Children's House

Beautiful fall weather is finally here!

The leaves are changing, the temperature is getting cooler and the children are learning how to put on their sweaters and jackets. By placing their sweater or jacket opened up on the floor, the child stands at the tag looking at it upside down, slides their arms through the sleeves, and flips it over their head. Voila! Yeah! The jacket is on and they did it all by themselves! Next, they zip, snap or button it up, and away they go. By providing the children opportunities and the extra time to do tasks independently, they are given a sense of self-confidence and pride that they can do it all by themselves. By providing them the time and patience for it to happen, we will offer them the priceless opportunity to become successful citizens of our society.

Ms. Asma, Ms. Kathrin, Ms. Kim, and I thank you for attending or joining us via Zoom to hear our Parent Education Meeting: Let's Talk about Practical Life! What a great way to learn about how your child participates in daily activities at school and how you can have your child participate in daily activities at home. Another way you can learn about Practical Life is to observe a Children's House classroom. You will see the students engaged in the numerous purposeful activities within a Montessori classroom environment. Call to make an appointment to observe today!

As the leaves fall, the students are amazed by the variety of shapes and colors. They explore the different shapes of leaves using the botany cabinet, matching them to corresponding shape cards. Many older students use the leaf classification activity to classify leaves according to their particular leaf type, leaf vein, and leaf margin. By understanding how to classify leaves, the students illustrate a particular leaf and write descriptive words to describe the leaf. The students can do further explorations by determining what type of tree it comes from.



Just as leaves are each different, we discussed our various feelings and emotions we experience and how to use these descriptive words to verbally express our emotions to others. By identifying various facial features, you can identify if a person is happy, sad, angry, upset, or disappointed to name a few. We can tell how someone is feeling in the eyes, too. The children are learning to express their feelings into words if someone is not kind with their hands rather than by physically reacting. We use a Peace rose, a tool to help two children take turns in the classroom to share feelings with another by engaging in a conversation that results in a conflict resolution. By understanding others' feelings, we gain a greater understanding of one another which leads to peaceful community culture.

This time of year, we experience many feelings, such as being frightful, scared, happy, sad, and even SPOOKED! BOO! The students had an opportunity to show feelings with paint and construction paper in a creative way. By drawing shapes, cutting construction paper, and mixing red and yellow paint to make orange, the students made their own pumpkin faces.



We extended our exploration of the pumpkin by taking a closer look using a magnifying glass. The students learned about the life cycle of a pumpkin: seed, sprout, plant, flower, green pumpkin, and orange pumpkin. We conducted a science experiment to learn how a plant absorbs water through the roots and stem. We poured water into two jars and dropped red food coloring in one and blue food coloring in the other. We added a celery stalk into each jar and saw the next day what happened. The colored water traveled up inside each stalk showing both the blue and red color at the top of the stalk. We continued our sensory exploration of a pumpkin by cutting it in half and naming each part of the pumpkin. Finally, the students gathered ingredients to bake and taste homemade pumpkin bars. Yummy!

May you and your family enjoy the fall foliage colors and the many memorable moments during this autumn time.

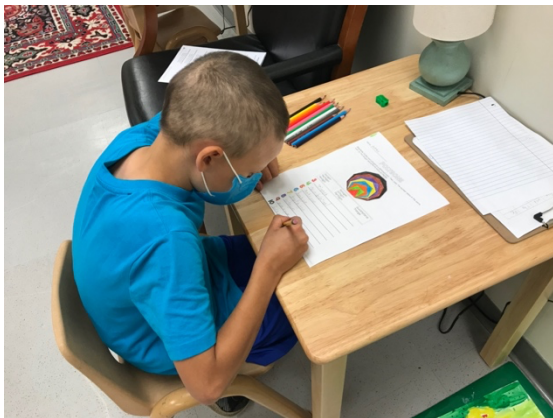


# Lower Elementary

By the age of six, children have gone through great transformations, both physically and mentally. These children are ready to reach beyond what they can learn with their senses and can now start to learn with their imagination. Geography is impressive to children because of the physical size of the universe.

Teachers at both campuses, began telling the children about the universe by presenting the First Great Lesson. This lesson peaks the children's curiosity and encourages their further exploration of astronomy, meteorology, chemistry, physics, geology and geography. The First Great Lesson is a key part to the Lower Elementary curriculum. It is designed to both introduce children to large concepts and illustrate how smaller ideas and elements are a part of the whole. It provides an overview of history from the beginning of time to the developments, discoveries and achievements of mankind. These exciting lessons inspire a sense of wonder in children and encourage a clearer understanding of their purpose on Earth.

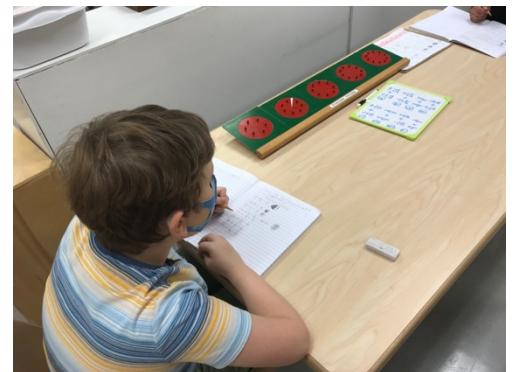
Our children enjoyed working on lessons about volcanoes, types of clouds, the water cycle and the layers of the Earth. Reading comprehension was incorporated into each lesson, along with nomenclature to expand their vocabulary. Upcoming lessons will include the solar system, types of rocks and the relationship between the sun and the Earth.



Aside from lessons pertaining to the coming of the universe, children were also introduced to the origin of Halloween. They were shocked to hear about its start and how much it has changed over the years. Accompanying this topic, children studied the different types of bats and their parts.

In math, children continued their work in the geometric cabinet by learning about regular polygons. They also examined different types of triangles that are classified according to their sides and angles. Fractions, rounded out this subject and were introduced by tracing the metal insets. They later explored equivalent fractions and learned how to add fractions with like denominators.

New to the Newport News campus is Ms. Linsky Arribas. Ms. Linsky is from Puerto Rico and will be assisting Ms. Nailah in the lower elementary classroom. Additionally, she is working in full day, by engaging the children in fun and interactive activities. She is a welcome addition to the HRIMS community!



# Upper Elementary



Upper EI has been hard at work!

While the children's house developmental stage is all about order, the elementary plane is characterized by disorder, in thoughts and in their physical space.

The elementary students are characterized as: energetic, daring, untidy, daydreamers, noise-makers, gigglers, having a strong sense of justice and injustice, have rapidly changing interests, tend to have messier handwriting than before, are quick to anger and quick to forgive, have increased ability to think abstractly, are moody and sensitive, argumentative, talk before thinking, are proud of achievements, wiggly, self-aware, like to debate and begin to see both sides of an argument, enjoy humor, tend toward sarcasm, are interested in pop culture, materialism, and current events.

Their minds are moving fast, moving from concrete representations to abstract thinking as they seek to bring order to the various disconnected facts and ideas they encounter in the world and in their creative minds. Montessori believed it is also a time of great moral development. They are no longer merely concerned with right and wrong, or good and bad, they now seek to understand the motivation behind behavior and choices. When confronted with moral issues, the students seek to imagine and develop possible solutions. They continuously ask, "Why?"

These developments take much effort to nurture. Help with organizational skills, staying on task, and being respectful to others as they try to make sense of the choices and expectations of others is no small task. Opportunities to experience success, for creativity, for interest and engagement, and for group work is important in creating an environment that is best suited to this age group.

The students have worked with Ms. Abby to create work that both engages and piques interest. Assignments and activities are incorporated with organizational structure to allow them to have a framework for ideas and facts to be shared in a methodical manner.

Their study of eras and fossils has taken them from studying vertebrates to studying cnidarians. They are studying biomes and animals, and thinking about modifications to animals that would allow them to be more effective or efficient in their lives. These studies consist of research, organizing their facts, imagination, and creating presentations that are neat, thought out and arranged to use space in a way that is pleasing to the eye. At the same time, they are working on graphing, fractions, and using context clues to increase skills and make order of the information they have. They have used fractions with recipes in order to tie the skills to daily life. Graphing gives them visual representations of data that they analyze use to make projections and assumptions.

As adults, we need to remember all that is going on inside our elementary students, allowing to form their adult personality, work ethic, and willingness to take risks. We need to be sure they have plenty of healthy food and rest, as their minds and bodies need both in this time of rapid growth. They are well on their way to becoming the confident, independent, productive citizens of the world we hope our children will be.



# Newport News and Hampton Campus Updates

## Important Department of Education Updates to Regulations:

The VA Department of Education enacted a multitude of regulation updates to be implemented in October. Two of these, in particular, have immediate impact on our families and require responses.

**The first is that all students who have an allergy listed on their physicals by their doctor MUST have a doctor's care plan on file and any necessary medication to respond to the allergy at the school in order to attend.**

If your child has an allergy on file, you should have received an email from the HRIMS office explaining what steps you need to take. This is IN ADDITION TO ANY FORMS YOU FILLED OUT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SCHOOL YEAR, AS IT WAS NOT IN PLACE IN SEPTEMBER.

*If you need a care plan form or have any questions, please contact the office.*

*As this is a regulation from the Department of Education for student health and safety, exemptions may not be made.*

**The second is that all volunteers are now required to have an FBI fingerprint clearance on file at HRIMS if they will be interacting with students.**

**We will be sending out an email with additional information on this regulation.**

*Again, as this is a regulation from the Department of Education for student health and safety, exemptions may not be made.*

## Student Fun Run and 5K updates:

Thus far, we have raised \$28,500 in sponsorships and donations! We have exceeded our goal of \$25,000 and thank our students for their hard work and efforts! Thank you to our parents and community for their support of our school, students and programming! Thank you also to Ms. Janet for all her hard work in making this fundraiser fun and a huge success!

Thank you to our sponsors for the 5K and student fun run!

