Oh, the glorious days of Winter!

Yesterday, 50* and sunny...today 8* and 5 inches of snow, tomorrow... who knows! Such is winter in Happy Valley! While it drives most adults (and teachers) crazy, the children seem to enjoy the excitement of the changes. What will tomorrow bring? A question that we as adults meet with trepidation, young children greet with anticipation! Their eagerness to explore, engage, and experience whatever we (you, us, or mother nature) have to offer is our inspiration! These winter months are the most productive months of the school year. In this newsletter, we hope to share all of the wonderful happenings of our school with you.

Enrollment for the 2017/18 School Year & Summer Sessions has begun!

It is hard to believe that the time has come to think about summer classes and enrollment for next year!!! Summer Sessions 2017 flyers were forwarded to families via email and can be submitted at any time. This summer, we will offer 9 weeks of summer fun!

Registration for the 2017/18 School Year is in full swing, with several classes nearing full enrollment. The In-House and Waiting List priority enrollment periods have passed and enrollment opens to the public on February 15.

If you have any questions of concerns regarding your child’s placement for next year, please let us know.
Classroom 1

One wonderful aspect of our Montessori environments is the variety of activities available for our children to explore on a daily basis. Opportunities for learning in Classroom 1 have recently included introductions to the peoples and cultures of Asia. We learned about different foods, some kinds of celebrations and cooked fried rice. Next we will explore the varied land forms that are part of the Asian continent.

We have begun our unit on The Human Body, and the children are most intrigued by that skeleton we can’t see, but holds us up. We are going to find out what will keep our bodies healthy, and make some tasty healthy snacks to help us do that. The Art area is a favored choice for many children. Doing art keeps our minds healthy! It is wonderful to see the children’s skills grow throughout the year. We are looking forward to trying some still life and portrait projects. We have explored color mixing, and are beginning to experiment with tints and shades of colors. The children are able to use this new knowledge when creating their art. They are blossoming before our eyes. We are busy, learning and happy in Classroom 1.

Classroom 2

Classroom 2 has welcomed the new year by studying Asia and Chinese New Year traditions! We did a dragon dance, dragon art project, tried dumplings, ate oranges, and received a red envelope with a treat inside. We plan to have our good fortune continue into February and March, as we travel to the continent of Antarctica to learn more about penguins and then venture into the oceans to study fish. During these months we will also dive into our feelings and emotions and learn how to express ourselves through art. The physical sciences will be introduced with magnet works and sink/float experiments. We are also busy working with the Montessori materials in language, math, sensorial and practical life, where our confidence is growing and our skills are improving every day.
Classroom 3

Ms. Sarah & Ms. Alison

Some big words have been heard in our classroom lately: Invertebrates! Metamorphosis! The children love to wrap their mouths around these words and are so proud of themselves when they use them correctly. We’ve been digging deep into the world of back-boneless animals and are looking forward to expanding our science vocabulary in the coming months when we introduce underwater invertebrates and spiders. After we have explored this vast world, we will turn to vertebrates- starting with humans! While we talk about the science of the human body, we will also discuss how to keep our bodies healthy through good nutrition and staying active. During these long winters it is important to include gross-motor activity in every day, but not always an easy thing to do. We are hoping to have an area yoga company come in to do some sessions with us, and we will be learning some new active dance songs. In geography this winter, Europe is the place to be. The children are becoming adept at finding their favorite continents on the globe and locating landmarks and cities on maps. We have so much fun when we go on “adventures” together to far away places! We look forward to guest visits to hear about your own family travels. After Europe, we are heading to the continent of Asia. While the weather outside of our windows has had a hard time deciding how it feels (although I think it has favored bleak), our friends inside Classroom 3 have been working hard to learn about their feelings. This month we’ve been talking about our emotions: how to respectfully and safely share them with others, and how to listen and respond to others’ sharing. Our classroom community continues to grow in kindness, inclusion, and self-direction...what a great place to be.

Classroom 4

Ms. Valerie & Ms. Pam

During January, Classroom 4 has enjoyed learning about the season of winter. We traced snowmen using the Geometric Cabinet, journaled about what we like about winter, studied Antarctica and animals that hibernate during winter. We made our own snowy days after reading The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats. For our music focus, we learned about different types of instruments and Ms. Valerie brought in her flute for our friends to explore. Our friends enjoyed learning about Claude Monet and impressionism. As we start the month of February, we will transition our general theme to community. We will explore self-esteem in our All About Me shelf. The class is looking forward to exploring reptiles and amphibians - we anticipate science being a favorite focus this month! Geography will find us learning about Africa. Thank you for your continued support of the class - we truly enjoy working with your children and seeing them learn and grow!
Older Toddlers  Ms. Leanne, Ms. Rebekah, & Ms. Hannah

We have been having such a wonderful year in the Older Toddler Room it is hard to believe it is January already. Since being back from winter break we have begun introducing some more Pre School skills that the children will find helpful for next year. As many of you know easel painting has been a hit. We have been enjoying watching them create their art with a different medium. Some other skills we have been working on include scissor cutting, folding, and self-serve snack. It comes as no surprise at how well everyone is doing with each of these skills already. In the weeks to come we will be discussing Healthy Foods with a fun Fruit Tasting experiment. In March we will have a Dr. Seuss week. It usually includes a cute footprint collage which the kids love to participate in. As always we will slowly incorporate more Montessori materials/works into our everyday. Water pouring, Sandpaper Numbers and Letters, as well as Knobless Cylinders are some of the materials we hope to start using very soon!

Younger Toddlers  Ms. Stephanie & Ms. Kristina

P3Y is looking forward to various fun activities that lead us right into the spring! In February, we start off by celebrating friendships and what makes each friend special, to include themes on our feelings. This will also be a special time to revisit our lessons on grace & courtesy as we reaffirm how to show care for others.

By March, we will be ready to imagine warmer weather with an ocean theme. It will be a fun time to explore water, sand, shells and other elements of the earth along with many interesting sea creatures.
Enrichment
Ms. Amanda, Ms. Robin, Ms. Kassie, & Ms. Pam

The Enrichment class has welcomed in the new year by beginning our study of folktales and fairytales by reading The Three Little Pigs, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, and Jack and the Beanstalk. We have joined these exciting tales with fun STEM projects such as constructing a house the “Big Bad Wolf” couldn’t blow down, using the Giant’s footprints to measure the classroom, and most recently, constructing and testing our own bridges.

In the next few months, we will take our exploration of folktales and fairytales across the globe by reading stories such as Mufaro’s Beautiful Daughters and Lon Po Po, to name a few. We will shift from using nonstandard units of measure to learning about inches and feet, incorporating these important concepts into some fun and engaging projects. We will be learning about coins and money too!

Explorers
Ms. Maggie, Ms. Sarah, & Ms. Jillian

The Explorers have adjusted to our new afternoon environment in the Big Room. Utilizing this space, we have been able to enjoy more small group projects, expand our shelf activities, and enjoy some gross motor activities. We continue to separate for resting, as some of us still ‘need’ to lay our bodies on cots. For the rest of us, we have a quiet and calming time with special resting activities. Our resting time is limited to just over 30 minutes at this point. We are very much looking forward to getting back outside for our explorations! We will be planning a few adventures, so keep your eye out for field trip notices!

We did enjoy a great field trip to Discovery Space last week!

We are greatly looking forward to expanding our learning experiences outdoors this spring! All of our Classrooms have expressed an interest in enjoying extended nature walks, trips to the duck pond on campus, visits to Schlow Library, Discovery Space, and The Makery, and field trips to Millbrook Marsh and The Palmer Museum of Art. Oh the places we will go and the fun we will have!!!
Our After School Program has had such a busy fall and winter! We continue to enjoy a wide variety of activities each week, with new projects and choices in regular rotation. Although the Big Room may look different from our traditional classrooms, it still offers many areas of learning and interest. Science, math, language, fine motor, and sensorial works are all available in addition to lots of creative/dramatic play and gross motor fun! The rhythm of our week includes new sensory table exploration Monday through Wednesday, Art or Craft projects mid-week, and games or special gross motor activities on Thursdays and Fridays. We strive to engage children so that they continue to expand their knowledge, develop their social skills, and grow their independence.

~ The best part? We have so much fun in the process! ~

**Office Updates**

- End-of-Year statements were emailed to all families for tax purposes. Please let us know if you would like it to be resent.
- OCC’s Federal Tax ID# 25-1815148
- Please remember that all children above the age of 2 years must submit an annual Health Assessment (including all updated vaccinations). Younger children are required to submit Health Assessments every 6 months. Note that all Health Assessments must be signed by a health care provider.
- Friendly reminder that all tuition payment plans for the 2016/17 School Year include a June payment. OCC does not prorate tuition based on days/month. June payments represent the 10th month in our yearly tuition payment plan.

Ready for Spring? Remember...

**OCC will be closed March 3-March 12 for Spring Break!**
Why do you Montessori?

With the wealth of choices available for child care and preschool, why choose Montessori?

Montessori experiences offer our children opportunities to develop their potential as they step out into the world as engaged, competent, responsible, and respectful citizens with an understanding and appreciation that learning is for life.

- **Each child is valued as a unique individual.** Montessori recognizes that children learn in different ways, and accommodates all learning styles. Students are also free to learn at their own pace, each advancing through the curriculum as he is ready, guided by the teacher and an individualized learning plan.

- **Beginning at an early age, Montessori students develop order, coordination, concentration, and independence.** Classroom design, materials, and daily routines support the individual's emerging “self-regulation” (ability to educate one’s self, and to think about what one is learning), toddlers through adolescents.

- **Students are part of a close, caring community.** The multi-age classroom—typically spanning 3 to 4 years—re-creates a family structure. Older students enjoy stature as mentors and role models; younger children feel supported and gain confidence about the challenges ahead. Teachers model respect, loving kindness, and a belief in peaceful conflict resolution.

- **Montessori children enjoy freedom within limits.** Working within parameters set by their teachers, children are active participants in deciding what their focus of learning will be. Montessorians understand that internal satisfaction drives the child’s curiosity and interest and results in joyous learning that is sustainable over a lifetime.

- **Children are supported in becoming active seekers of knowledge.** Teachers provide environments where students have the freedom and the tools to pursue answers to their own questions.

- **Self-correction and self-assessment are an integral part of the Montessori classroom approach.** As they mature, students learn to look critically at their work, and become adept at recognizing, correcting, and learning from their errors.

**So, why did you choose Montessori?**

We are interested hearing your answer to that question. Upon our return from Spring Break, we would like to gather parent testimonials, both written and filmed, to be used during our Centre Gives campaign. Please consider joining our efforts to spread the word about this wonderful early childhood opportunity ~ Montessori!
A Message from the Board of Directors

Hello from the OCC Board of Directors. We would again like to thank you for your continued participation in our strategic planning process. We appreciate that so many of you took time to respond to the SWOT survey. As the next step involves gathering further feedback from the OCC community, some current parent focus groups will be scheduled. If you’d like to participate, please contact us at janeadams22@gmail.com or elizabethjcase@hotmail.com.

The OCC Board recently welcomed several new members. Our directors include: Jane Adams and Elizabeth Case (Co-Presidents), Sarah Windish (Vice President), Joshua Potter (Treasurer), Melissa Poulsen (Secretary), Christine Clouse (Parent Ambassador), Kate Woodruff (Development Committee Chair), Farrah Brower, Brian Crosby, Jen Steigerwalt, Megan Stradtman, Melissa Walker, and Katey Wilber. Many members of the board and administration participated in a board development retreat on February 18th.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you if have any questions or suggestions.

Thank you, Jane and Elizabeth

Considering Kindergarten? Consider OCC Kindergarten!

Any Montessori is better than no Montessori. We believe this wholeheartedly, that a year or two is better than none, that we will offer great experiences to each child for as long as we have them. But there is a magic that happens that year they turn five. There are things a child just isn’t typically ready for before that five-year-old year. Materials that require extraordinarily long periods of concentration; thinking across subject areas to make connections; task persistence lasting longer than one equation; self-control that sometimes adults struggle with.

Unlike a traditional system, where curriculum for each grade is set and everyone is working with the same material, from Day One in a Montessori classroom, a child is provided with the material that is just right for her development in this moment. Just the right level of challenge, just the right invitation, just the right match. The curriculum is the materials on the shelf. Things are presented, mastered, repeated, used in different ways throughout the child’s time in the Primary classroom. Children stay in the primary classroom where they’ve been since they started, but with new abilities, roles, and responsibilities.

If you are considering Kindergarten for your child next year, we encourage you to consider Kindergarten at OCC! We would be happy to sit down with you to discuss your child’s development and the opportunities that Kindergarten at OCC will provide.

(See baandek.org for more information on the value of Montessori Kindergarten.)