



Important Dates

April 19	Good Friday
April 21	Easter
April 22	Earth Day
April 22	AISD Holiday/Non-Academic
April 23	Earth Day Celebrations
April 23-26	Elementary Science Fair

Montessori Quote For the Month

“One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child.”

Easter Egg Hunt and Class Parties

Thursday, April 18th

Each classroom will be having an Easter Party and an Easter Egg Hunt. We are asking that each parent to bring 1dozen candy filled plastic Easter eggs for the children to hunt. Please remember **NO CANDY** with **NUTS** or **PEANUT BUTTER** and candy must be wrapped. Your child’s class will have a sign up sheet outside the door for you to choose what you would like to bring for the party.



We will have an Earth Day Celebration on Tuesday, April 23rd. Each class will have a picnic lunch that day. We will have a School wide clean up day. A certain area of the school grounds will be assigned for clean up and practice recycle and reuse items. Please see your child's teacher for additional information.

Happy Easter!

Annual Elementary Science Fair

We will have the annual Science Fair April 23rd through the 27th. This is mandatory for all Elementary students in 1st through 3rd Grade. Projects are due on Tuesday April 23rd and may be taken home on Friday, April 26th. Please ask your child's teacher for their requirements.



Montessori Corner

How Do Children Learn to Read?

The skill of reading is special - and often difficult to acquire. The fact that anyone learns how to read is something of a miracle. Learning to read is very different from learning to speak; in the development of human history, speaking precedes reading by thousands of years. Continued:



How does the brain process written words?

Reading is a difficult, multi-step task that must be actively taught and learned. Recent technological breakthroughs have helped to open up what was previously unknown to researchers in terms of how the brain learns to process reading. Beginning readers use one section of the brain to link the phonetic sounds to the appropriate letter, and a second section to turn them into words. It is a process that takes some time, which is why children who are learning to read often read very slowly. But then something interesting starts to happen- a third section of the brain begins to take over. This section helps the child build a permanent registry of familiar words that can be recognized on sight. This enables them to read by seeing the whole word instead of stopping to sound it out every time they see it. Reading eventually becomes effortless. Children with dyslexia or other learning disabilities are unable to make a smooth transition between seeing words as individual sounds and seeing them as a complete word. The different sections of the brain - the one that recognizes phonetic sounds, the one that sees them as words, and the one that remembers the words - do not work together fluidly.

Montessori philosophy and reading

Maria Montessori recognized that children as young as two had an interest in written letters. The "sandpaper letters" (letters cut out of sandpaper that can be traced) were developed to take advantage of this sensitive period. Montessori had an advantage when teaching in Italy-Italian is mostly phonetic. Once the basic phonetic sounds were learned, reading proceeded quite easily.

Montessori also observed that writing usually preceded reading. When a child writes, all they need to do is turn sounds into letters. When a child reads, they need to pull apart the letters, turn them into phonetic sounds, and put them back together to make a word. It's a more complicated process than writing. Children in Montessori classrooms often write stories with the movable alphabet long before they can read.

Different approaches to reading

Reading and writing in English provides different challenges. Many words in our language (commonly called "sight words") are not phonetic and must simply be learned. For a time, educators gravitated towards teaching reading only through a whole language approach - looking at context and focusing on meaning rather than learning phonetic sounds.

The latest research, from a study done by the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2001) concluded that straightforward phonetic instruction is more effective than embedded phonics (where a teacher only points out a phonetic sound in the context of a story). In the Montessori method, phonics is a primary emphasis, but there is also a focus on context, meaning, and comprehension. This blending of phonics and whole language has proven to be extremely effective.

In conclusion

It is important as educators and parents (and both), that we understand the mechanics behind the skill of learning a written language. The more we understand, the more prepared we will be when there are problems that need to be addressed. Remembering that each child will follow their own timetable can be very helpful. For some children, reading does come almost as naturally as speaking. For others, it is a struggle. Focusing on phonics, providing quality children's books, and increasing the kinds of words we use in spoken language, can all boost a child's reading power and confidence.

