

Children's Circle Montessori

Established 1981

130 Skyway Rd - Primary I

Primary I: 402-489-0872

121 Skyway Rd - Primary II

Primary II: 402-489-0878

E-mail: andrea_kvas@yahoo.com

www.ChildrensCircleMontessori.org

NOTES OF INTEREST AND IMPORTANCE!!

Tuition Tax Report: If you would like a report listing your tuition payments for 2009, you must request one. Please send a note or email—if you simply tell me I will likely forget.

Primary 2--Pickup Time: As it gets colder, please wait in your vehicle as your child gets their belongings together to go home. When you see them come out the door of the school, you can greet them at the gate. We ask parents not to come into the school when you pick up your child. It slows down the children as they get distracted by your presence and we simply don't have a good place for you to wait! Please help us make departure smooth by waiting outside. If you are in a hurry, please call ahead and ask us to have your child ready.

Primary 1: Please send boots and snow pants for your child to wear outside. We don't go outside every day, but we will go out occasionally in the snow. We would like you to have a pair of boots and snow pants that could stay at the school during the week (if needed take them home on the weekend but don't forget to bring them back!).

Please contact me: As you have read (or will read), I took ownership of Children's Circle Montessori on January 1. While I have always wanted to know your concerns, I am in the position to do more about them now—especially if changes need to be made. So—please—contact me if you ever have any concerns about your child's day, their safety, or the environment.

MEET MARLENE FINCH!

Hi! I am currently volunteering at Children's Circle in order to become familiar with the practical experience of working and interacting with children in a Montessori environment. I received my Montessori diploma for working with this age group in December 2008. My plans are to start a Montessori school in Sioux City, IA, as there are currently no Montessori schools in the area. My previous background was nursing education, prenatal clinics and community health.

I live in Sioux City, IA with my husband, Norm, of 39 years. We have a daughter, Heather, who lives in Sioux City, and a son, Brad, who lives here in Lincoln (where I am staying).

I am currently working in the Primary 1 community and after becoming familiar with the routine and children there, I would like to gain some experience in the Primary 2 community, too.

(Diane and I are very happy to help Marlene. Marlene will fill in as a substitute in the classroom when needed. Please introduce yourself to her!)

MARK YOUR CALENDERS!

Monday, February 16th:

SCHOOL CLOSED—Staff in-service

Please remember that if Lincoln Public Schools close due to snow, Children's Circle will also be closed.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

January:

Neko Rowan	8 th	4 th Birthday
Nora Turner	10 th	4 th Birthday
Eiden Srisa-an	10 th	3 rd Birthday
Camden Carmichael	14 th	6 th Birthday

Congratulations to you all! Birthdays are such fun!!

Ask the staff for suggestions for a birthday book for your child to present to the school in honor of their birthday. Put a picture of your child in the front or back of the book with the date given. When we read the book in the future we will all be reminded of him/her!

WELCOME!

Primary 1:

...to Catherine Parry, 18 month old daughter of Scott and Shannon Parry (and the sister of former student, Maxine!) has joined our Primary I community

Primary 2:

...to Eiden Srisan-an who will begin his transition to the Primary 2 community this month

...to Molly MacLane, 3 year old daughter of Andy and Stacy MacLane

...to Gillian Ferguson, 4 year old daughter of Andy and Marcie Ferguson

Creativity: Essential to learning

One of the most misunderstood parts of the Montessori method is why we do not have a 'dress-up' area or other pretend areas in our environments. How then do we spark a child's imagination and creativity? I can tell you from my experiences watching your children that we have some very creative children. Watching them work with the materials at the school I am often awed and inspired by their work—whether it be in art, working with design tiles or blocks, or in their writing—and I often wonder how they will use this creativity in the future. (At Christmas I often receive updates about former students and what they are doing—I love these letters! Please add the school to your Christmas card list for receiving letters updating us about your families.)

This article is one of the best descriptions about creativity and imagination concerning the Montessori environment that I have read. I hope it helps you understand our philosophy better and why it works so well! I must give credit to Montessori Services for the explanation.

"Open-ended"—who really understands it?

We know it involves creative expression and the imagination. It's relatively easy to understand how art and music activities or pretend play qualify as creative, open-ended experiences. We've all seen young children doing any number of imaginative things with wooden blocks: building a toy animal corral or a parking lot for cars, or a doll's cradle. What makes block play open-ended, after all?

Merriam-Webster's definition of open-ended, applied:

- *"not rigorously fixed"*: the outcome of the child's activity is not predictable; the process of using the material (rather than the result) is the point
- *"adaptable to the developing needs of a situation"*: the activity allows many opportunities for the child to solve problems and adapt to the unfolding experience
- *"designed to permit spontaneous and unguided responses"*: practically a description of a Montessori classroom activity!



Building a tall tower with wooden blocks requires imagining an idea, implementing it, discovering the limits of the materials, and adapting to the successes and hindrances of the task. Completing this open-ended process requires a level of order, concentration, competence, and independence that Montessorians hold dear for the child. Children find incredible personal satisfaction from such absorbing labors.

Children become completely engaged with the process of an open-ended activity. They guide their own paths to discovery. All areas of development are brought into action; the child interacts with his or her world cognitively, socially, physically, and emotionally. This is important and beautiful work in the developing child.

Open-ended is an utterly Montessori idea

While it is true you aren't likely to find a dress-up or fantasy area in a Montessori classroom, children enjoy daily opportunities for creativity in all areas of development, both in thought and expression. As soon as a lesson is introduced, children can use the work to conduct or "experiment" in their own way, to be a catalyst for their own epiphanies, and to absorb knowledge.

When we see the children in action, absorbed in activities of their own choosing, we see their amazing capacities for invention and perceive the scope and unlimited potential of their developing brains. Open-ended work, self-correction, and freedom of choice provide the trifecta of child development and the cornerstone of learning. A learning environment filled with open-ended inquiry and self-direction is so satisfying for children and integral to real learning!



Why is creativity in the Montessori classroom so often misunderstood?

Montessorians understand the importance of giving children a solid foundation in real things, a "base" in reality, if you will. When we bring a miniature dog into the classroom for the children to use as a language object, it looks like a real dog because it represents a real dog. Books with photographs and life-like illustrations are favored over those with cartoon depictions of things. Does "showing the child a real tree" squash creativity?

Of course not. Although people often equate creativity only with the arts and imagination only with fantasy play, creativity and imagination go hand-in-hand with all kinds of learning.

Imagination and creativity surely have a comfortable home in academics! When we consider that open-ended activities are about the whole experience, it's easier to see how they are represented in the classroom.

Children's ingenuity prompts them to build walls and towers with their wooden blocks, thus experiencing geometry and testing the limits of physics. It is creativity that inspires a child to fit colored tiles together to make a design, tiles whose dimensions express numeric patterns small fingers "remember" with their muscular memory.

Sparkling the young child's capacity for creativity is essential to learning.

Imagination powers the awesome ability to comprehend abstractions of every kind—to see something in one's mind that one cannot see in person or touch with the hands. We ask the elementary child, for example, to imagine other planets and, ultimately, the whole universe!

By exploring the world they can see and touch first, children develop a strong foundation from which to launch their imaginations. Comfort and success with a whole range of creative, open-ended activities unleashes the neurological potential of the child in ways that are simply not addressed by so many of the bright, flashing, single-purpose toys being marketed to children today. In a perfect world, open-ended activities would be the overwhelming majority of "things" we provide for our children.



Spotlight on Andrea Kvasnicka

I grew up: on a farm south of Lincoln. We had dairy cows (which I helped milk) and pigs along with lots of cats and always a dog. Which probably explains why my husband and I have always had a cat and a dog as our pets.

My family: I have been married to my husband, Jim for 31 years January 8th! We have two children—most of you know Melissa. My son, Kyle, 28, lives near Laguna Beach, CA and is a college volleyball coach.



My hobbies: I love to read and almost always have to read before going to bed at night. I also like to scrapbook when I have time (which hasn't been often lately). Something most of you don't know is that I love volleyball. I played it in college and for a long time after my college years. Now I enjoy refereeing high school and college games. I often see former students on the volleyball court!

How I came to Children's Circle: After finishing my elementary education degree at Nebraska Wesleyan I looked for a part time job and found Montessori. That was 27 years ago! On January 1st, 2009, I officially became the owner of Children's Circle Montessori School as John and Maria Schoch transferred the business to me on that date. I do not own the buildings at this time, but my husband and I are working at purchasing them. It is another new challenge for me, but not much will change as essentially I have been running the school the last 15 years.