

DRAGONFLY DIGEST

August 19, 2011

Year 6, Volume 2

Online at www.DixonMontessori.org

DMCS Office 678-8953

WEDNESDAY IN OUR GARDEN

Look what I picked!

Can I eat these?

Is that a pumpkin?



DMCS students had a great time harvesting, tasting and watering with Master Gardener and parent, Lauren Peters. The harvest included tomatoes, carrots, beets, and melon. Our Extended Day Students cared for the garden during the summer and have grown a bumper crop!



A look at Montessori education as it "grows up"... our new Middle School program!

It is hard to believe that the very first Dixon Montessori Charter School Kindergarten class from 2005 entered in to middle school this year. Wow! And as these kiddos march their way through the grades, we continue to build our amazing community and school.

There have been some questions regarding the type of upper grade programs and philosophy that guides our upper/middle school programs, and so we thought it would be a good idea to offer a bit of information.

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DMCS Events

Tuesday, August 23

DMCS Governing Board Meeting
Room 1

Friday, August 26

DMCS Spirit Day
Retro Day - a blast from the past!
Wear something from a different time period



Thursday, September 1

Back to School Night
6:30 pm

Monday, September 5

Labor Day
School is Closed

Saturday, September 10

School Beautification Day
8:30 to 11:30 am
Bring brooms, shovels, rakes and other tools to spruce up our school yard.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. George would like to acknowledge Frank Young for helping him transport big tables. I would not have done it faster without him volunteering his muscles. Thanks Frank! You're awesome!

Ms. Patty would like to acknowledge the first graders from room 11 for being great role models to their kindergarten friends. Also, thank you to all the parents who helped get the school ready this year.

Ms. Robin would like to acknowledge Emma Barlow and Haley Duncan for welcoming and supporting students into the class community that were feeling uneasy on their first day. She would also like to acknowledge Ms. Leslie's K-1 class for a wonderful first day of school...all of the children were brave and strong on their first day of school and those returning did a fantastic job with helping those in need.

The office staff would like to acknowledge Jeff Turley for his tremendous help this past week in organizing and relocating many things in the office. Thanks Jeff!

Ms. Danielle would like to acknowledge Mrs. Rigor for doing a wonderful job assessing her students and giving them cool bookmarks!

Ms. Kim's students would like to thank Ms. Carolyn and Ms. Jen for everything they do in the office. Her students would also like to announce the coming arrival of their new class pet - a bunny. Thank you so much to everyone who is helping make this possible!

Ms. Carolyn would like to acknowledge T.J. Moody and Kaylee Hubbard for helping an injured student on the playground. She would like to acknowledge Mr. Andrew for his hospitality and kindness sharing his classroom during afternoon electives.

HERBICIDE SPRAYING

Dixon Montessori Charter School may periodically use the herbicide Round Up for weed abatement on our school grounds.

Spraying will be done by individuals trained to apply Round Up. It will occur during non school hours and will be announced in advance by signs posted on our campus.

REQUESTS

The Staff at Dixon Montessori is hoping for donations of the following items:

- Unused musical instruments - clarinets, flutes, trumpets, saxophones, snare drums
- Books for classroom libraries
- Music stands, soprano recorders or song flutes
- Rugs - small and large
- Cuttings of succulent plants, pots, scrap lumber, chicken wire, room dividers, paint, easels and wooden or metal objects suitable for making a garden sculpture
- Air Compressor
- Measuring wheel
- Ball Pump

CHOIR ANNOUNCEMENT

The Dixon Montessori Charter School Choir will soon be practicing again and we need volunteers willing to help during rehearsals and performances. Please contact Ms. Lisa at perchaz@sbcglobal.net if you are willing to help with this endeavor. Volunteers who work with students must have TB clearance on file in the school office. Volunteers are also needed to help sort and organize choir paperwork.

A NOTE FROM MS. KELLY

DMCS Parents,

I will soon be needing parent volunteers to help with lunchtime activities. Activities for the upper grades currently consist of hockey, football, and soccer (but I am willing to expand if there is a demand for it). For lower grades, we have been doing parachute activities. Any parents who would be willing to volunteer to help monitor the upper grade games on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 11:45 to 12:05 please let me know as soon as possible. Any parents interested in volunteering on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 12:05 to 12:30 to help run some activities for the lower grades, please let me know. Thank you.

Ms. Kelly
(707) 678-8953 ext. 155

At DMCS, our Mission Statement is as follows:

“The mission of Dixon Montessori Charter School (DMCS) is to achieve academic excellence for all students by blending Montessori education with California State Standards. DMCS supports its mission through low teacher-to-student ratios, family participation, multi-aged classrooms, a diverse curriculum and individualized learning for each student. DMCS is a tuition-free public school committed to developing socially responsible, life-long learners”.

As many of you know, we are a State Board Authorized Charter School. This new authorization began last year, and previously we were a District Authorized Charter. One of the greatest benefits of being a charter school is the flexibility to create and grow our own programs and policies. However, we are still held accountable to State Standards via tests and reporting procedures. So the combination of both Montessori and State Standards has been- and continues to be- the underlying base upon which our programs are developed.

It has always been the focus when developing the upper grades that we hold true to the fidelity of our Montessori "components" in which our students greatly benefit from in those early formative years (grades K-3). The ultimate goal, in a nutshell, for students at DMCS is to benefit from a seamless blend of Montessori philosophy at the earlier grades and a project based learning environment in the upper grades. It could be looked at somewhat like an immersion program, in which Montessori is heaviest at grades K-3, then a natural transition begins and by grades 4-8 the students are learning in a more abstract methodology, but drawing from and utilizing much of what they acquired along their Montessori-inspired journey.

Keep in mind our definition of the word "blended" in our mission statement:

CORE COMPONENTS OF BLENDED: (these all occur across the grade levels but may look slightly different at each grade.)

1. Individualized Learning Plans: Each child has an annual learning plan that reflects their target for the year, i.e. how far they will progress during the year, based upon their ability. This annual learning plan is documented electronically in a format that is consistent throughout the school; however, the format may differ somewhat between lower and upper grades. This annual plan is monitored and tracked electronically through assessments, classroom work, report cards, and observations. Each child also has a weekly work plan that is academically challenging to each individual and drives the student toward accomplishing their annual plan. Weekly work plans are required, but the format is left to each individual teacher.

2. Collaborative Learning Environment/ Peer modeling/ Multi-age classroom. Student independence within classroom environment.

3. Low student: teacher ratio

4. Project-Based upper grade structure: a comprehensive effort which places strong emphasis on interdisciplinary studies and real-world applications of academic content and community service. This includes use of technology integration with curriculum and computers in classrooms. Independent work projects focused on individual student interests, teacher facilitation but not direction, cooperative learning, explicit educational goals, and incorporation of adult skills are all cornerstones of PBL.

5. **Professional Development:** Comprised of a skilled staff who consistently seek to further their expertise and remain innovative in their capacity via workshops, credentialing, and other avenues of professional training. Upper grades need working knowledge of Montessori; annually the teacher and director agree on the training/courses that will be completed. Lower grades need working knowledge of the continuum which will lead to a project-based learning environment using more abstract methods of the Montessori program.

6. **Instruction is focused on individual and small group instruction;** however, some portion of the upper grade curriculum may need direct teaching.

Each of the above components *really does need to continue* through the grades to provide the best transition into a successful project based learning environment. DMCS was founded on the philosophy that each individual child deserves to learn in an environment which not only supports the whole child but prepares them to be life long learners. Montessori concepts naturally foster all of the above attributes, and keeping a strong Montessori learning environment is a fundamentally important part of what makes DMCS a unique and desirable place to learn. That being said, it was learned early on that due to our charter status, *DMCS could not be exclusively Montessori* because of the state reporting and testing requirements. However, as a community we are dedicated to creating a hybrid environment that **blends** both Montessori principles with California State Standards. Additionally, one of the most exciting characteristics of Project-Based Learning is that once we really look into and learn more about the process and philosophy itself, it really does naturally mirror much of what Montessori is all about, ***just in a more "grown up" way***. Remember, the goal of our upper grades/middle school educational program is to provide a program which prepares students for 21st century skills and knowledge for beyond 8th grade, which means we naturally do have to detach from some of the more elementary aspects of Montessori.

That being said, we are all well aware that this new middle school program is the beginning of something even greater. As with all new ventures comes the opportunity to learn and continually improve upon the processes. We at DMCS are extremely fortunate to have on staff some of the hardest working, innovative, and well respected team members, in essence still helping build this ship as we continue to sail it. And by all accounts, we are sailing very smoothly so far. Preliminary school performance reports are very promising, so stay tuned for the official announcement of our API scores in the upcoming weeks.

Finally, we would encourage all families to learn more about both Montessori **and** Project Based Learning. For more information on Project Based Learning, visit <http://www.bie.org/> The Buck Institute for learning, and for Montessori information you can visit: <http://www.montessori-ami.org/research/research.htm>

VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

DMCS relies on help from many family and community volunteers. We are looking for people to improve the appearance of the upper grades playground, assist with the choir, and help with noon supervision in the cafeteria and playground.

The text of the school's volunteer policy can be found at <http://www.dixonmontessori.org/policies/>. Please note that there are many opportunities to assist at our school and not all of them require TB or Live Scan Clearance.

Live Scan Clearance is required for all individuals who work with students in any capacity that is not directly under the supervision of a DMCS staff member. Volunteers who work with students in the presence of staff members are only required to furnish proof once every four years that they do not have active tuberculosis.