

March 5, 2012

Volume 5, Issue 27

March 2012

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Upcoming Events

Mar. 7	OFPO Meeting 8:30-10:30 AM Victorian Farmhouse
Mar. 8	Parent Education Event : Dr. Joe Dunn 7 PM Victorian Farmhouse RSVP to Lisa for Event and Childcare
Mar. 9	Infant and Toddler Classrooms Closed
Mar. 13	Middle School Graduate Panel <i>Transitioning to High School</i> 6 - 7 PM Middle School RSVP to Lisa for Event and Childcare
Mar. 14	Primary Cook Day

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	27	28	29	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Headlines from Oak Farm Montessori School

Our mission is to provide a Montessori environment that inspires children to reach their potential through meaningful work.

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FROM JUDITH CUNNINGHAM, HEAD OF SCHOOL

Error and Learning

Does frustration or failure have a place in learning?

Thomas Hoerr, Head of New City School in St. Louis, writes in *Educational Leadership's* March journal,

As important as scholastic preparation is (and it is important), it is only part of what students need to succeed in life. Howard Gardner's personal intelligences, Daniel Goldman's emotional intelligence, and Carol Dweck's mind-sets all reflect the fact that our attitudes are even more important than our skills.

We know and understand some of this, of course. We work to help our students have a positive attitude about school, be good citizens, and accept others. Every teacher values student effort and responsibility. Yet an overlooked quality—one that is crucial in achieving success in the real world—is grit.

Hoerr is responding to the *New York Times* article by Paul Tough titled "What If the Secret to Success Is Failure?"¹ Tough argues that success in life requires more than academic knowledge. Knowing how to respond to frustration and failure is critical to success.

Hoerr continues:

As educators, part of our job is to ensure that

every child finds success, and an important part of finding success is knowing how to respond to failure. As soccer star Mia Hamm said, "Failure happens all the time. It happens every day in practice. What makes you better is how you react to it." People who have not learned to respond well to frustration and failure are likely to choose paths without much risk or challenge and thus destine themselves to a life of predictability, safety, and mediocrity.

Researcher Angela Duckworth, cited in Tough's article, showed what a predictor grit is for success in any setting, from elementary school to West Point Academy. She says that grit "entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress."² Indeed, within a group of equally talented students, athletes, or artists, the level of grit may be the single best predictor for success. Hillary Clinton, Steve Jobs, Michael Jordan, and Maya Lin might not have had much in common to discuss over dinner, but they are each known for having an extraordinary amount of grit. (You can see Duckworth talking about grit in a TED presentation at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qaeFnxFsC4.)

Montessori also recognized the power of error for the child. She designed the Montessori materials to

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FROM JUDITH CUNNINGHAM, HEAD OF SCHOOL

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provide instant feedback as the child works, allowing her to recognize, correct, and learn from her mistakes without adult assistance. Putting control of the activity in the child's hands strengthens his self-esteem and self-motivation as well as his learning. Control of error is an essential aspect of auto-education

Furthermore, Montessori saw mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. She believed that when children work with materials, they will naturally make mistakes and often those mistakes are a critical part of the learning process. Through the repetition of the activity and staying with the experience the child gains mastery and develops competence.

Our children inspire us to get beyond our comfort zone and learn something that may lead to error or frustration. Every day they do this as they come to school open to new learning and new mistakes.

Endnotes

1 Tough, P. (2011, September 14). What if the secret to success is failure? *The New York Times*. Retrieved from www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/magazine/what-if-the-secret-to-success-is-failure.html

2 Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2004). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92, 1087–1101.

DR. JOE DUNN PRESENTS "HEALTHY FAMILIES" ON MARCH 8

Please join us for an interactive session about Healthy Families with Dr. Joe Dunn on Thursday at 7 PM in the Victorian Farmhouse.

Dr. Dunn is a licensed psychologist presently providing assessment and psychotherapy services to children, teens, adults and families on a part-time basis at his private practice, which he started 25 years ago. His background experiences include teaching special education and serving as a teacher/counselor on the Navajo Indian Reservation in New Mexico. He has served as a consultant to Head Start Centers, Child Protection Agencies in Allen and DeKalb Counties, Mental Health Centers, the Allen County Superior Court – Juvenile Probation and the Fort Wayne Public Schools.

Childcare will be provided for any Primary through Middle School-age student beginning at 6:45 PM in the Victorian Farmhouse. The cost is \$5 per child; please RSVP to Lisa for the presentation and for childcare on or before March 6.

BOX TOPS SUBMISSION TOTAL ANNOUNCED

By Tish Teel. BoxTops/Lables Coordinator

Thank you to all our families who have collected BoxTops this year. Our most recent submission totaled \$295 for our school. Our total for the 2011-2012 school year is \$562! Congratulations and thank you again. BoxTops will be collected again at the end of the school year so please keep collecting.

UPPER ELEMENTARY STUDENTS SEND THREE ECUADORIAN CHILDREN TO SCHOOL FOR A YEAR

By Josh Shanklin, Upper Elementary Teacher

“If help and salvation are to come, they can only come from the children, for the children are the makers of men.” - Maria Montessori

Since the first day of school, Upper Elementary students have wrestled with the term World Changer. We’ve shared with them that it means having valor and being a life-long learner, a citizen, and a leader. They’ve heard stories, chosen a personal goal to work toward, and even been acknowledged for showing World Changer characteristics. But last Thursday night, all of the Upper students had a World Changing experience that not only caused them to grow, but also changed the lives of three children from Ecuador.

Last Thursday night, the Upper Elementary hosted the first of three sessions of “The World Changer Café.” The purpose of the Café is to share stories of World Changers from history, and raise money for a charity. The fifth-year students planned the menu and purchased and prepared the food and drinks. The fourth-year students hosted the evening by decorating the Green Farm House, greeting the guests, and serving as waiters and waitresses. The sixth-year students researched and presented the stories of different World Changers. But as of last Tuesday, the students didn’t know which charity they wanted to support.

Last Tuesday, the Green Farmhouse hosted David Radcliff, founder of The New Community Project. David travels around the world to gather stories of people being oppressed and nature being destroyed. While in America, David shares these stories in an attempt to educate us on how our choices impact others around the world and inspire us to participate in making the world a better place. One of the stories David shared was the fact that for many children around the world, education is not a choice their parents can afford. In countries like Ecuador, Sudan, and Nepal, it only costs \$60 to send a child to school for a year. But the extreme poverty these children live in makes that impossible. It didn’t take long for our students to decide what charity they wanted to donate their café money too.

As teachers in Upper, we were proud of the students for the way they rose to the occasion. Seeing students take on a challenge is always encouraging. Seeing the students take on a challenge in order to help someone else, someone they don’t even know, is inspiring.

The story doesn’t end here. The students came back to school on Friday, excited to reflect and evaluate their first Café, so they could begin making preparations for the next one. From our perspective, the students did wonderfully. But so many of them weren’t satisfied and wanted to talk about how they could do better. They also shared the satisfaction they received from doing something that seemed difficult at first. The students celebrated the fact that they were able to send three children to school for a year. But for them, that isn’t enough.

World Changers indeed.

You can learn more about the New Community Project by going to www.newcommunityproject.org.

Fifth-year students will be presenting at the World Changer Café on March 21. Fourth-year students will be presenting at the World Changer Café on April 12. Follow the Upper Elementary on our blog:

www.thegreenfarmhouse.blogspot.com



Fifth-year students prepare empanadas for the Café.



Lydia and Ethan, fourth-year students, MC the first World Changers Café.



Alejandro chose his father, Eric, a Captain in the Indiana National Guard, as a World Changer.

MIDDLE SCHOOL TO HOST GRADUATE PANEL ON MARCH 13

Parents of eighth-grade students are invited to attend a graduate panel at the middle school on Tuesday, March 13, from 6 - 7 PM. Several Oak Farm graduates will give updates about themselves and answer questions concerning their experiences in and transitions to high school. Eighth-year students are encouraged to attend with their parents.

Although the program is designed for eighth-year students and their parents, anyone who is interested is welcome to attend. Childcare will be provided for any Primary through Upper-Elementary-age student beginning at 5:45 PM in the Victorian Farmhouse. The cost is \$5 per child; please RSVP to Lisa for the presentation and for childcare on or before March 9.

CROSSING THE BRIDGE . . . IN AN EXPLORATION OF SELF AND OTHERS

By Elizabeth Smith-Meyer, Middle School Teacher



David Radcliff explains the situation for many girl children around the world as Ian, Nolan, and Caleb listen.

Last week, David Radcliff visited the Middle School. David is a family friend of Hope's, so her father was instrumental in arranging the visit. David visited us last year to speak of the environment and how important our stewardship of it is. This year, in accordance with several of our topics for MMUN (*Montessori Model United Nations*), David spoke of the dire situation of the girl child around the world. His organization, New Community Project, orchestrates trips into other countries to help girls who are struggling to find means for education. He showed us pictures of girls who sometimes walk as many as 500 miles for an education. Other girls are not so fortunate; he explained that in some cultures girls are not as valued as boys and are looked upon mainly as chattel to work as much as possible and then perhaps sell into human trafficking or an arranged marriage. Afterward, the students spoke about the visit and began thinking of ways they can help, possibly by partnering with David in his work.



Matthew searches to find the eggs laid by wooden chickens.

Also, last week, the creative-writing expression went to Fort Wayne and toured both the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception and the Foellinger-Freimann Botanical Conservatory for inspiration. The Conservatory is currently hosting a farm exhibition, and although the activities were arranged for much younger children, the students were able to glean ideas from the activities as they work toward their own program of hosting their schoolmates from primary and elementary. The students then wandered around the various gardens, looking for places to write their poetry for the week. As A.J. said, "The beauty of this place is really inspiring." We are currently revising the poems they wrote and hope to have them available for publication next week.