

# THE MONTESSORI REVIEW

News from the Montessori Teacher Education Graduate Program at Oklahoma City University

JANUARY 2015

VOLUME 2, NO.3

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HAPPY NEW YEAR AND HAPPY  
VALENTINE'S DAY



## IDEAL MONTESSORI SCHOOL IN TAIWAN

By Shannon Li

Ideal Montessori School is located in Taipei, Taiwan. There are six AMI trained teachers and two assistant teachers here. Each class has about 30 students and there are two classes. Like other Montessori schools, children with mixed ages (from 3 – 6 year old) work in the same classroom that includes Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, Music and Cultural areas. Children at Ideal Montessori School are also exposed to rich Taiwanese cultural activities and experiences provided by the environment.

The owner of the school, Ms. Wu (who is also AMI trained) has a strong belief in “inclusion”. Children with special needs are always welcomed by Ideal Montessori School. Like other children, these children also work on the materials from different areas that are appropriate for them. Ms. Wu believes that these children can benefit from the individualized materials and prepared environment in a Montessori classroom. They can work at their own pace, and discover their interests and confidence. Nevertheless, other children at Ideal Montessori School also have the opportunities to work, help or even look after these children with learning differences. No one is excluded or discouraged.

Moreover, the school puts a strong emphasis on children’s cultural and hands-on experiences. For example, the children always write postcards to the school when they go on holiday with their family. Therefore, there are a lot of postcards from different cities and countries all over the world in the classroom. The children really enjoy looking at the postcards and reading the notes on them. Also, for different Western and Eastern holidays, the teachers will prepare class activities and stories for the children so that they have a chance to understand more about the holidays. Children will also help decorate the classroom.

At Ideal Montessori School, all the children, parents and teachers are like a big family. The children have a close relationship with each other and also with the teachers. The parents and teachers work together to provide what’s best for the children’s development.



A 4-year-old girl  
works on Zhu Yin (top)

An overall view  
of the classroom (right)

Two 3-year-old children work  
on sewing materials from  
the Practical Area (right)



This year the Montessori Pre-K classroom participated in a community service project, Mrs. B's classroom began a popcorn stand, the children became the salesmen and money collectors for the project selling popcorn and raising money to give to the Heifer International, the were able to purchase \$500 for classroom supplies for children in Uganda. It was a wonderful learning experience for all involved!



## SAINT ANTHONY SCHOOL OF DALHART TEXAS

By: Shay Batenhorst

St. Anthony School continues to be staffed by the School Sisters of St. Francis in combination with a dedicated lay staff, which offers the unique advantage of integrating religious truths and values with instruction in knowledge and basic skills. Students are provided the opportunity for frequent Mass, daily prayer, and Benediction on first Fridays.

The school has a strong basic curriculum with a phonetically based advanced reading program. The textbooks are up-to-date, as are the supplemental materials.

We also offer the latest technological advances in learning with a central library; a state-of-the-art computer lab; internet access networked to each classroom; printers in every classroom; and "smart boards".

Students at St. Anthony are dedicated to following in Christ's footsteps. Each student is actively involved in a service ministry. All students, faculty and staff participate in annual projects shared not only with the parish, but also with the community. Thus the educational program at St. Anthony is carried out within an environment of Christian values. At St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School, we believe in the inherent dignity and intrinsic worth of each individual child. We believe that only in an atmosphere of love and acceptance can each child grow and develop into their divinely-ordained potential.

We aim to pass on the treasures of our Roman Catholic faith and heritage. For those children who are not of our faith tradition, we endeavor to develop in them a strong sense of Christian morals and an openness to the concept of loving Christian service.

In partnership with parents, we aim to provide a well-rounded educational background, strong morals, a genuine appreciation of the family structure, and most of all, student who can bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ by word and example. Our 50+ years of academic excellence continues to thrive. Following the guidelines set forth by the Diocese of Amarillo, the state of Texas, and the Texas Catholic Conference Education Department, St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School is approved by the Texas Education Agency and is an accredited school.

Offering Montessori Pre-K and Kindergarten through Sixth Grade elementary classrooms, we welcome Catholic children as well as children of other faith backgrounds.

Mrs. B and Ms. Virginia are the teachers in the Montessori Pre-K classroom. The room holds 15 children from the ages of 3 to 5 years old. Mrs. B uses authentic Montessori tasks and principles along with mixing traditional curriculum in to their everyday life.



The students covered Tres and said goodbye. (left)

In Casady Primary's courtyard kindergarteners found a spot for Tres to rest in peace. (right)



### PETS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN A CHILD'S LIFE

By: Mandy Russ

During this school year at Casady Primary there have been two classroom pets passing away. This can be difficult for some children to understand, but I believe having pets in the classroom is a great way to introduce to children the circle of life. The stance that Casady takes about how important pets are, gives students a nice grasp of life and death.

At the beginning of the year, the entire school had an animal blessing ceremony where students brought their pets to Chapel. This Anglican tradition occurs around the Feast of St Francis, who is noted for his love of animals and God's creation. It recognizes that God loves us through our relationships with our animals, and gives God praise. Casady's two chaplains run the ceremony and bless all the pets showing the community how much animals mean to us.

The first animal that passed away in Primary was a 20 year old spider named Spikette. The primary teacher, Pat Czerwinski, held a ceremony to bury the tarantula in the back of the school. Father Blizzard came to the ceremony and blessed Spikette's grave and the children were able to say a few words. In the New Year, another pet in Primary passed away, Tres the hamster. Casady also have a service of remembrance for Tres. Each child had the opportunity to say something about Tres. Some quotes from the children were, "the cutest hamster I ever saw," "he was very kind and compassionate," and "I will miss him."

Due to these ceremonies, the children were introduced to the idea of life and death. Some of these children have had to deal with this concept already in their lives and may have not been able to grieve or accept this reality. I know these ceremonies will not fully resolve their questions and concerns, but it may give them an outlet or opportunity to discuss their feelings. One child during Tres' remembrance ceremony raised his hand and said that his little brother passed away when he was a baby. He just had one sentence about this memory, but this could have enabled him reflect a bit and it gave him an opportunity to talk it out. You never know how these subjects affect young children, but in my opinion the more exposure they have to new subjects the more opportunity they have to process unfamiliar, difficult subjects.

### A PEEK AT UNDERCROFT PRIMARY IN TULSA

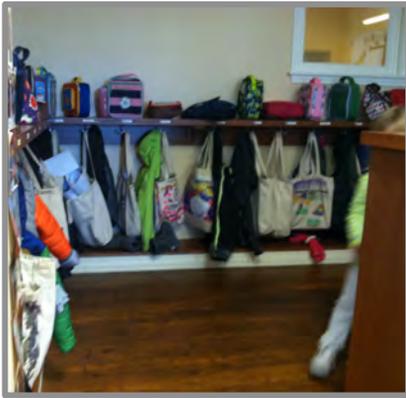
By: Mandy Russ

I had the privilege this year of visiting a Montessori school in Tulsa called Undercroft. At this school they have the multi-age, self-contained, child-directed classroom of twenty-one 3-6 year old children. Children are able to work on any Montessori work they want for about 2.5 hours in the morning I observed. This means a child can work on a Practical Life work, a Math work, a Sensorial work, and a Language work all at his leisure throughout the time period. The children had freedom within limits that Montessori always talks about.

*Continued on page 4*

Undercroft's self-contained, child-centered, and multi-age classroom: 3-6 year olds





Nook for all 21 students jackets, lunch, and bag. (left)

This is the Undercroft Primary's sandbox. It is one of the largest sandboxes in North America! (right)



I loved the culture of the classroom at Undercroft as well. If a child needed help from a teacher, the child would come up to the teacher, tap her shoulder and then step back and wait. When the teacher was completely finished with the first child, she would make eye contact and give the next child her full attention. This lesson is the *first* and *most important* part of the this classroom. If the child can wait and give respect to the first child he will be able to ask the question to the teacher. However, the majority of students who tapped and waited, left before asking their questions. This I think is a great way to keep order in the classroom and give the child a way to solve his own problems. Children sometimes just need time to process how to do something and the method to get the teacher's attention is a perfect way to give the child this time. I asked the teacher how she was able to instill this delayed gratification in the culture of the room and she said that if a child is unable to wait, then she asks the child to leave. Because disruptive actions didn't result in an answer, the next time he may wait patiently.

Transitions were a very important part of their classroom, so an extended amount of time was given to the children for transitions. When releasing the children, the teacher called on quiet students first but only two at a time and then waited. I think this shows the students that just because the story is over does not mean respect and procedures ends. The lunch release time was 30 minutes long! Children were released two at a time and again there were long breaks between names called. Some children ate by themselves while others were sitting two by two. I think this is a good way to allow the child to concentrate on eating and make a connection with one person.

The last concept I want to add about my observation the volume of the classroom. There were 21 students ranging from 3-6 years old in one room for over 2.5 hours of complete individual work time. However, the volume of the room was quiet, peaceful, and most of the noise was the materials being used appropriately. I noticed that when the teachers' interacted with the children their voice volume was extremely quiet. The tone of their voices were also soft, nurturing, and always calm. Even if there was a small problem in the room, the teacher just walked over and calmly helped if needed. I believe the volume can also be contributed to the set up of the room. The majority of the tables had one chair meaning the child would be working alone. All the work was individual work! Only when a child asked for a lesson from another child was there a child working with another child. I think this idea helped with not only the volume in the room but also how well the children were able to stay engaged with their work. I would strongly recommend all Montessori teachers to visit Undercroft sometime to witness the harmony and engagement students can have in a 3-6 year old classroom.

The classroom I observed has one animal from every animal kingdom.



## ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

This publication serves as a platform for current students and alumni to communicate ideas, share experiences and stay in touch with colleagues. If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please write to us at:

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