

Toddler and Primary – March 8, 2019



Being Present through Presence

The gift of a handshake... each child begins and ends our school day with the gift of a simple handshake. Even the youngest of children naturally grasp the relevance of this time-honored tradition as we mark the importance of human connection and being present for one another through this small act. A powerful message is conveyed, and relationships are nurtured, when the teacher and child pause together and celebrate the beginning and end of each remarkable day. All over the world, Montessori schools practice and value the importance of greeting each student through personal connection. Depending on the culture, one may honor and respect the presence of another through rituals such as a handshake, a gentle bow, a kiss on each cheek, or palms together in "Namaste." *I see you. I value you. I respect you.*

Being present for one another is of great value and one that is celebrated at The Montessori School; such mindfulness is an important aspect of the Montessori philosophy and is put into practice in a multitude of ways every day. In the classroom, being present is incorporated into the fabric of each day—attention for one another and the work at hand is supported and nurtured. How can we nurture the skill of attention without being fully present? The teacher offers each child her undivided attention through individual lessons. *I see you. I value you. I respect you.* The intimate exchange of information through personal attention allows brain synapses to connect and neurons to fire more rapidly. The brain does not separate emotional learning from intellectual learning—in fact, they go hand in hand. When children receive individualized attention and love through learning, they are better able to strengthen and lengthen their own ability to be present and attentive.

As adults, we are also present for each other through our meaningful connections. Whether passing in the hallway, attending a meeting, or gathering for an event, we take the time to pause in each other's presence and connect. We keep cell phones tucked away, we look in each other's eyes, and we find common ground. *I see you. I value you. I respect you.* We might ask, how are we able to be most present for others in the many spaces of our school? As an intentional community, we put our attention on the importance of relationships, shared values, and learning together.

What a gift it is for our children to experience this commitment to one another. Finding ways to pause and give each other our full attention is increasingly important during this modern age of technology and such mindfulness is a valuable tool that our children need and deserve. *I see you. I value you. I respect you.*

We hope your family has many opportunities to be present in each moment and celebrate the very gift of one another's presence!

Wishing you peaceful days,

Ashley and the Toddler/Primary Team