



The River Current

February 2015

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear River Montessori Families,

February already? It's hard to believe but somehow we are looking toward the later events in the year already. We've got a big spring lined up, launched by a giant Montessori celebration, the culminating academic work inherent in the second half of a school year, student trips, parent events, and of course, in-house and state assessments before the end of the year. (Please watch for details on each of these in our newsletters and future emails!)

Be sure to join us for festivities of *International Montessori Education Week!* As a member of the Montessori Community we take the responsibility of demonstrating authentic Montessori very seriously. This year we are hoping to increase the opportunities of Montessori through:

City of Petaluma Proclamation, February 23rd, 7:00 p.m.
Public Open House, February 24th, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.
Tours and Observations, February 26th, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m.
Student Watch Me Work! (lower elementary) February 27th, 9:45 - 11:45 a.m.
Two-Day Parent University Workshop: *The Montessori Journey*, February 27th and 28th

We are so proud to be a model school for public implementation of Montessori education. We receive regular calls from fellow schools and petitioning charter groups alike eager to see how well Montessori flourishes in a public setting and are honored by the acclaim.



We thank you, dear RMCS families, for

being such an integral part of our school community! Together, we make it happen every day and we couldn't do it without all of your support, encouragement, and participation! In this, we make a difference for the children we have and love right now as well as the future that they will bring to all of us as independent, global-thinking, creative, compassionate, brilliant adults!

Peace, peace,
Kelly

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February

- 3rd **Prospective Parent Meeting** 6 p.m.
- 6th **RMF Playdate in the Park** 12:30 -3:30 p.m.
- 12th **Community Conversation:** 6-7 p.m.
- 13th **School Closed. River Crew open.**
- 16th **Presidents Day (School closed. River Crew closed.)**
- 17th **Prospective Parent Meeting (Spanish)** 6:00 p.m.
- 20th **RMF Morning Coffee** River Crew 8:15 a.m.
Walk-a-thon 12:30 – 3 p.m.
- 23rd -27th **Montessori Education Week**
- 23rd **City of Petaluma Proclamation, City Council** 7 p.m.
- 24th **Open House, 5:30-7:30 p.m.**
- 25th **Six Flags Read to Succeed** log due to RMF
- 27th **Watch Me Work** (Lower Elementary 9:45 – 11:45a.m.)
Parent University: Silent Journey Part 1 6-8 p.m.
- 28th **Silent Journey Part 2** 8a.m. – 1p.m.

March

- 7th **Spring Auction** - 5:30 - 11 p.m.
- 9th **Prospective Parent Meeting** 6 p.m.
- 10th **Board of Directors** 5:30 p.m.
- 12th & 13th **Parent/Guide conferences & Volunteer Appreciation** (School closed. River Crew open.)
- 16th - 27th **Spring Break** (School closed. River Crew open.)
- 31st **Community Conversation** 6 - 7 p.m.

PROSPECTIVE PARENT MEETINGS

Thank you for sharing with others the benefits of an authentic Montessori Education at RMCS! We have heard that we are the best kept secret in town and want everyone to know about how much our children love their school and their learning. Please help us spread the word!

Prospective Parent Meeting Schedule

February 17, 2015 (Spanish)	6:00 p.m.
March 9, 2015	6:00 p.m.

MONTESSORI MATTERS

You Can Enjoy Hard Things

By Dawn Cowan | Montessori Blog

I began my research by asking my son, “What inspires you to keep working, even when the work is difficult?” His quick reply was, “I keep working by choosing the most challenging thing I’ve had a lesson on. Then it’s interesting to figure out.” I pressed, “But what if you encounter a problem you cannot solve or have trouble finding a solution even with a lot of effort?” He answered, “Then I find a friend and ask them for advice or see if they have a good idea.”

When we believe we can do hard things and have faith in our abilities and the support around us, when we know we can handle failure, then fear and insecurity are kept in check. An amazing thing happens: We relish taking on new challenges.

Why does this feel so good? The answer lies in the components of intrinsic motivation: choice, challenge, curiosity, and collaboration. Choice is key, so that the goal is personally meaningful and we feel a sense of autonomy in pursuing the task. We are motivated by challenge when attaining the goal is possible but not necessarily certain—which presents the challenge—and we are able to register feedback about our progress. Curiosity breeds motivation when something grabs the individual’s attention and stimulates the person to want to learn more. Collaboration motivates us with its inherent satisfaction of helping others or contributing to a team. When these elements are in play, we feel a sense of

motivation to take on the challenge, and the work becomes an interesting journey rather than a chore.

We can all relate to the joy we feel when we master a new task. The joy is often directly related to the amount of effort required to gain the new skill. Children are uniquely driven to seek out challenge. Whether it’s a one-year-old who wants to repeatedly climb a staircase or an older child interested in creatively exploring the largest math problem they can imagine, human curiosity leads toward challenge. In the classrooms, the Guide and the environment are geared toward presenting and managing new challenges. It may be that a child needs help breaking down the large math problem into a series of manageable steps. At home, a parent may help a child understand how to approach a general task such as cleaning one’s room, which really involves many small

steps, by similarly dividing the larger job into smaller steps, “Let’s start by picking up all the books.” It takes time, but at the end of each challenge there is the reward of “I did this. I made this happen.”

Unnecessary rewards undermine our attraction to challenging tasks and carry hidden costs. They do work, in the short term. However, unless we are prepared to follow our children through life offering incentives, then

we are really working against supporting the development of the adult we hope they will become. It also sends the message that the child, on his or her own, is not able or willing to take on the challenge. In place of rewards, we can embrace collaboration with our children. Instead of “When you memorize your math facts, we will get pizza,” we can be more direct and more respectful, “The math facts need to be memorized, how shall we work together to make this happen over the next two weeks?” and stay firm in setting the goal while offering some choice about how to get there.

At the end of the work, there can be space for reflection and celebration of a job well done.

That proud moment when we

know ‘I did this hard thing’ feeds the appetite and confidence for the next moment of challenge.



A room in which all the children move about usefully, intelligently, and voluntarily, without committing any rough or rude act, would seem to me a classroom very well disciplined indeed.

~ Maria Montessori



River Montessori Foundation has just been selected for Whole Foods Nickels for Non-Profits program! Each time you bring in your own bag to use at Whole Foods Petaluma from 1/19/15 to 4/12/15, Whole Foods will donate 5 cents (which will be split between River and one other nonprofit). Just choose "donate" rather than "credit" when asked at check out. Help spread the word!

BOARD BANTER

Dear River Montessori Charter School Community:

Happy New Year to everyone. As the new chair of the governing board, I would certainly like to thank everyone for their dedication and commitment to teaching and learning using the Montessori principles as cornerstones to your child/ren's education and preparation for life.

As a major factor contributing to the role of the board is our River Montessori Charter School Strategic Plan: http://www.rivermontessoricharter.org/uploads/6/0/9/8/6/098388/rivermontessori_strategicplan_2013-2016_1.pdf It speaks to the "Community, Program, and Operations" of the organization. Please take an opportunity to view it and communicate with us in areas that you may share expertise, interest, and/or questions. Over the next month, the board will spend one full day, February 7 in retreat to review, communicate, consult, and make decisions about priorities affecting River Montessori Charter School. These priorities will be the road map for this next year as we begin preparing and planning for next year as well as finish this school year strong in our leadership of serving children to teach and learn along their developmental path.

As always, if you have questions, please direct them to our principal, Kelly Griffith Mannion, M.Ed., at kmannion@rivermontessoricharter.org or myself, nlorenz@rivermontessoricharter.org. Have a terrific month.

Cordially,

Dr. Norman Lorenz,
Governing Board, Chair



Does state testing have you curious? 'Heard the buzz about the new CAASPP assessments? Here's a useful overview from Sonoma County Office of Education. Please let us know if you have any questions!

Helping Parents & Communities Understand California's New Assessments

Author: [Rick Phelan](#)

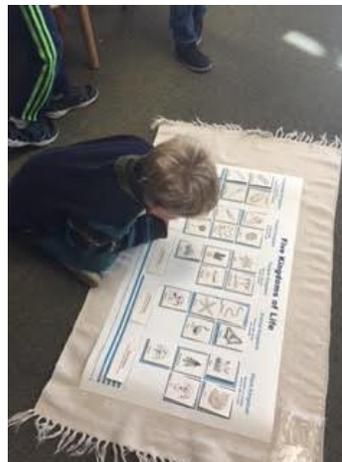
This year, California public schools are moving to new end-of-year assessments in English and mathematics, known as the Smarter Balanced Assessments. These assessments are focused on the Common Core State Standards and will be administered through a computerized testing system. In spring 2015, the state will report student achievement scores and aggregated school reports from the new assessment system.

These are computer-based assessments

Students in grades 3-8 and 11 will use computers or tablets to take the state assessments. Along with traditional multiple-choice responses, there are at least six other questions types, including constructed written responses. Computer testing with these types of response options are new for many students.

Test scores will be reported this spring

This is first year that public schools are being held accountable for fully implementing the Common Core Standards in English and mathematics—and the first time that scores from tests aligned to those standards will be reported. Over the past few years, educators have been working to develop knowledge, skills, and new teaching repertoires to support the standards.



Thinking will be measured in four domains

The new state assessment encourages thinking in four domains: 1) Recall and basic comprehension, 2) Application of concepts involving some mental processing, 3) Applications requiring more abstract thinking/reasoning and more complex inferences, and 4) Extended analysis that requires synthesis and

analysis across multiple contexts and non-routine applications



Questions that require abstract thinking, synthesis, and analysis will comprise 50-60% of the new state assessments. This is a

dramatic increase in rigor over past state assessments. In short, we are expecting students to think and process information differently than in the past.

Proficiency levels are set high

California has set high proficiency levels on the new state assessments. Joseph Willhoft, one of the test project directors, says that “because the new content standards set higher expectations for students and the new tests are designed to assess student performance against these higher expectations, the bar has been raised.”

Based on projections from the 2014 Smarter Balanced field tests conducted in California and 21 other states, it is likely that fewer students will score at the higher achievement levels on the new assessments, especially in the first few years. However, a drop in test scores doesn't mean students are sliding backwards or learning less. Rather, it gives us a more accurate measure of where students are on the path to success based on expectations that are designed to prepare them to compete nationally and globally. Educators and parents should see the results as a new start.

Results can't be compared to earlier state assessments

Assessment experts urge discretion when comparing performance on the new assessments with past California Standards Tests because the new assessments are measuring different content and skills. Deborah V.H. Sigman, Rocklin Unified School District deputy superintendent and a member of the executive committee for the new assessments, defended the new higher standards when she said, “We have an opportunity to change what assessment means

inside our classrooms, an opportunity to make it really be about improving teaching and learning.”

State assessments are just one measure

Parents, teachers, and schools will receive reports from the new tests in late spring, with student data reported in two significant ways. In order to comply with the federally required No Child Left Behind Act, California is required to provide both scale score results and achievement levels for students. These results should be looked at in context with other metrics—including local district assessments, report card grades, and portfolios of student work—to determine how well students are learning.



Test Construction & Reporting

With the Common Core Standards for English-language arts and mathematics, learning activities are organized and sequenced from grade to grade to build understanding for students. Success with standards at each grade level ensures that students are ready for the next grade, ultimately leading to readiness for college and careers. Smarter Balanced assessments are one tool that schools can use to gauge student learning relative to the Common Core Standards.

Each question on the new assessments is focused on one or more claims related to a student's understanding of English language arts or mathematics.

English Language Arts Claims

Claim 1 ~ Reading: Students can read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts.

Claim 2 ~ Writing: Students can produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range

of purposes and audiences.

Claim 3 ~ Speaking and Listening: Students can employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences.

Claim 4~ Research/Inquiry: Students can engage in research and inquiry to investigate topics, and to analyze,

integrate, and present information.



Here is an essential principal of education: to teach details is to bring confusion; to establish the relationship between things is to bring knowledge.

~Maria Montessori, *From Childhood to Adolescence*

Mathematics Claims

Claim 1 ~ Concepts and Procedures: Students can explain and apply mathematical concepts and interpret and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency.

Claim 2 ~ Problem Solving: Students can solve a range of complex well-posed problems in pure and applied mathematics, making productive use of knowledge and problem solving strategies.

Claim 3 ~ Communicating Reasoning: Students can clearly and precisely construct viable arguments to support their own reasoning and to critique the reasoning of others.

Claim 4 ~ Modeling and Data Analysis: Students can analyze complex, real-world scenarios and can construct and use mathematical models to interpret and solve problems.

Performance Relative to the Claims

Reports for teachers and parents will contain information on student performance relative to each of the English language arts and mathematics claims. Student performance will be reported as:

- Below standard
- At or near standard
- Above standard

Overall Score Reports

In addition, the reports will provide an overall score for student progress in English Language Arts and mathematics. This overall score will indicate the student's level of understanding in each content area.

- Level 1 ~ Student demonstrates minimal understanding
- Level 2 ~ Student demonstrates partial understanding
- Level 3 ~ Student demonstrates adequate understanding
- Level 4 ~ Student demonstrates thorough understanding



Test officials encourage examination of these metrics in combination with other student performance information such as progress reports, local curriculum-based measures, and

portfolios. Tony Alpert, an official from the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium, says that

“...instructional decisions should not be exclusively based on end-of-year Smarter Balanced Consortium tests.”



Get more information about ALL IN:
www.allinforhealth.org
(916) 844-2413
A PROJECT OF THE CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP



ALL YEAR 2014-2015

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE HEALTH COVERAGE.

- If eligible, **enroll in Medi-Cal anytime.**
- If you **lost your health coverage**, find out if you qualify for Special Enrollment in Covered California anytime.
- If you **don't have health coverage and don't qualify for Medi-Cal**, enroll during Covered California's open enrollment between November 15, 2014, and February 15, 2015.

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEALTH COVERAGE.

- **Renew Medi-Cal coverage every year.** Look for a letter from your local county social service department requesting information. Complete and return.
- **Renew or change your Covered California health coverage** between October 1 and December 15, 2014. Covered California will contact you to make sure you keep your coverage.

For more information about Covered California and Medi-Cal enrollment, contact 1 (800) 300-1506 OR visit www.coveredca.com. For Medi-Cal assistance, contact your county social service department or dial 211.

ALL IN is a Campaign to equip education leaders with the tools they need to educate families and individuals in the school, early learning, and after-school communities about health coverage opportunities and connect uninsured children, parents, and employees to health coverage. Our anchor partners are:



HEALTH INSURANCE NOTICE

Kaiser Permanente is offering the opportunity to children under the age of 19 to receive insurance for \$0 to \$20 a month per child. There are specific qualifications for this program, which are outlined at this website:
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/14b5042515b860cb?projector=1>.

Note: US citizenship is not an eligibility requirement for the Kaiser Permanente subsidy; a foreign birth certificate may be supplied to meet eligibility requirements.



ROWING WITH RIVER CREW...

River Crew will be open over Spring Break from March 12th through the 27th. Join us for gardening, science, and game making.

Registration forms and payments are due on or before March 4th. Pre-registration is required in order to make sure we have all necessary supplies on hand and for staffing purposes.

We look forward to seeing you all here!

PARENT UNIVERSITY

Join us for an invaluable parent series this year! We have tailored this list based on feedback from parents and look forward to working together and learning more about how to best serve our children in their growth!

February 27-28, 2015 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. Friday
8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Saturday

*Special Two Day Workshop Experience!**

**The Montessori Journey: Tour Transitional
kindergarten through Upper elementary
through the Eyes of a Student**

(*Space is limited; registration required.)

\$25/ person* \$35/couple

*Scholarships available

April 9, 2015 5:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Cell phones, video games, and labels:

What Does a Child Really Need?



RIVER MONTESSORI FOUNDATION NEWS

Thank you to all who were able to attend our Annual Pancake Breakfast this year, it earned \$1,000! A special thank you to all the children & parents who helped make the event run smoothly. Much gratitude to Becky Kreutz for organizing the Breakfast this year...

All River families are invited to join us for our next Foundation Board Meeting on Friday, February 6 at 8:20a in the River Crew Room.



Play Date in the Park will also be held on Friday, February 6 at 12:30p. Watch the "I Am River" Chalkboard for this month's location!



Join us for our monthly Morning Coffee Social hosted this month by San Lorenzo on Friday,

February 20 at 8:15a. Then from 12:30 to 3:00p you are invited to join the children for RMFs Annual Walkathon. This incredible & inspirational event is a child led fundraiser. Prior to the day of the event students are asked to garner pledges from family, friends & neighbors - donations can be made per lap or as a flat dollar amount.

Fun for the whole family the event is complete with a snack shack, fun activities & prizes! So get your groove & walking shoes on, as we "Rock the Walk"! Missing your "Rock the Walk" Walkathon paper work? Visit the RMF table at the front office.

Six Flags Read to Succeed program forms went home with children on January 30. Read to Succeed is a free educational program sponsored by Six Flags Theme Parks. The program encourages students in grades K through 6 to engage in recreational reading. Students who complete six hours of recreational, non-school-related reading are eligible to earn a free admission ticket to Six Flags Theme Park in Vallejo! Simply have your child input their reading on to the Read to Succeed form & hand it back in at school by Wednesday, February 25th... Need a form? Visit the RMF table at the front office.



SAVE THE DATE River of Dreams Dinner & Auction is right around the corner! Once again the 3rd annual Fundraiser will be held on Saturday, March 7 from 5:30 - 11:00pm. Optional childcare for the evening will be available for any child currently enrolled at RMCS through Redwood Empire Gymnastics (REG). Are you interested in helping with this event? Maybe you have or have access to a wonderful auction item? Contact Nancy Feldstein & Eden Belov at: vice chair@rivermontessorifoundation.org



WITH GRATITUDE...

Thank you for all who donated making our Schoola Fundraiser a great success.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who donated their time and energy to host another successful Pancake Breakfast.

Many thanks to the **Petaluma Seed Bank** for their generous donation for the garden.

Thank you to the **Petaluma Arts Association** for their generous grant to the San Lorenzo classroom.

Dana Adams, Erin Ayers, Rupali Babu, Joshua Barnett, Lisa Baird, Catherine Campbell, Lorena Fernandez, Jen Friesen, Ping Flynn, Aja Gianolla Norris, Megin Hallinan, Renee Hamley, Elizabeth Huang, Amy Loh, Rama Mejia, Jen Oryn, Liz Rantissi, Maria Rodriguez, Selma Santorineos, Ember Teijero, Paulina Telderer, Deb Thomas, Karin Turner, Steve Twyman, Deb Volat, and Courtney Wolfe for volunteering during the month of January.

Jessica Holten, Jen Friesen, Laura Hidalgo, Melissa Franks, and Lacey Currie for participating in the For Small Hands fundraiser through Montessori Services.

Lisa Baird for creating a wonderful slide show to use at our Prospective Parent meetings.

Eden Belov for maintaining the communication signs for the car-line.

Dee and Tristan Christiansen McElroy for donating gluten free treats, animal supplies, and cleaning materials.

Elizabeth Berkowitz, Ginny Hautau, Sylvia Gonzalez, Marie Lehman, and Shamitri Perera for inspiring our budding upper elementary artists.

Jennifer Jensen from the Petaluma Music Festival for joining Friday's morning gathering to present River with a wonderful donation of \$840.

Becky Kreutz for organizing the Pancake Breakfast fundraiser.

Jeff Mangahas for repairing the garbage enclosure.

Jane Mills Campbell for her wonderful and greatly appreciated donations from Montessori Services.

River Montessori Foundation for their tireless efforts in support of RMCS.

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN...

Charter school families are required by law to state their intent to re-enroll for the following year. Please watch for the **Returning Student and Sibling Enrollment Assessment** form in your student's Friday folder. Please complete and return before March 9th. *Late or incomplete paperwork may result in being placed on the waitlist for next year.* Siblings require a complete application packet (due before noon on April 2, 2015) and receive priority enrollment status.

