



# HIMS

## Monthly News

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**ARTICLES, EVENTS, PHOTOS, & MORE!**

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**January 2023**

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Happy  
New  
Year

# Celebrating 2023

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Happy New Year! Welcome 2023! In the school world we often think of the New Year being in September, and so January is a bonus—a second opportunity to reset and create goals to be our best selves in the classrooms and in our personal lives, as well. Admittedly, I am one who has latched onto the trend of choosing a word of intention for the new year rather than a list of resolutions. In 2022, my word was generosity, the year before that integrity, and frankly, if I picked a word for 2020, it's now, like everything else from 2020, an absolute blur. This year I went back and forth on my word, my husband recommended moderation (as in stop volunteering for things), and even before his suggestion I considered picking something that reflected slowing down a bit, but I was afraid the universe might misunderstand and I'd wind up with a broken leg. I kept coming back to the word *celebrate*, but for the life of me couldn't figure out how that might make me a better person. While it's true that 2023 is the year of both a milestone anniversary and a milestone birthday for me, I'm still not sure how celebrating might be a noble choice. However, since that word kept nagging at me, I decided to roll with it. I'm going to commit to the intention of celebrating, but where will that lead me?

The word celebrate obviously brings to mind parties and events. So one of the first things that I think about celebrating in 2023 is the HMS premier of *Maria Montessori the Musical*. This May, the elementary and junior high students will be putting on this production. Our enrichment teachers and admin team are working together to coordinate everything and this winter is when the magical preparations begin! Students will be working on theater games in their enrichment classes, as well as learning many of the songs in music class. Mrs. Purdue will be working on set design with upper el and junior high students, too. In March students will audition for the musical (there's a part for everyone!) and then rehearsals will happen during enrichment classes (art, music, dance) throughout the spring. I'm excited to celebrate the story of Maria Montessori's life and to put on the largest production we've done in the last fifteen years!

And of course another event on the horizon is the annual auction this spring. The auction is always a lot of fun and I'm excited about this year's theme—Lights, Camera, Auction! But what I'm especially proud of is the collaboration between our Tracyton and Gig Harbor communities. The auction committee is comprised of people from both locations! It's not too late to join the committee and help us have fun and raise funds for the school.

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These events illustrate my typical understanding of the word celebrate, but I want to go beyond that initial notion of events to find ways to focus my intention. One thing I can always celebrate is the good work happening here at HMS. We have an amazing staff and faculty and while I'm often in awe of the people around me, I could be more explicit in my appreciation. When I think of celebrating the HMS staff, it doesn't have to be a party or even a noisy declaration. It can be about communicating my appreciation not just to them, but to you, as well. I know you'd love to hear more about the people who are caring for, guiding, and learning from your children every day.

And when it comes to our students there's so much to celebrate! With their various interests, personalities, levels of development, and more, we have 172 interesting young people here to be acknowledged and celebrated! Whether it's a child putting sounds together to learn to read or an upper el student writing their first persuasive essay and getting a response or even the excitement that happens when a new material is introduced. We see children do kind and generous things for each other every day. We see them help younger students with their coats, mediate an argument between two peers, and practice unsolicited kindness all the time. Just as we value interconnectedness in our Montessori curriculum, I see how celebrate can apply to our school theme of the year—awe and wonder, as well. I intend to be attentive to the small bits of magic that happen on our campus every day.

As I work through this newsletter article, I'm getting more and more excited about the possibilities of my word of intention for the year. Even just thinking about the many positive things to come at HMS lifts my spirit and connects me even more to this place that I love so much. I can't wait to see what 2023 has in store for us. I know it will be worthy of celebration!

Warmly,  
*Aimee*





# Upcoming Events

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**January 5th**      Why Kindergarten Parent Night

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**January 12th**      Why Lower Elementary Parent Night

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**January 16th**      School Closed - M.L.K. Jr Day

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**January 17th**      School Closed - Teacher In-Service Day

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**January 19th**      Why Upper Elementary Parent Night

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**January 26th**      Why Jr. High Parent Night

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**Drop Off Loop Volunteer Sign Up:** [CLICK HERE](#)



# Around Campus



# Why Montessori?

By Nazzy Fardi, Aspen Head Teacher



The Montessori method of education has always been a radical idea: an approach to education that focuses on each child and respects each student's questions, interests, and stage of development. It's an education characterized by multi-age classrooms, unique learning materials, long uninterrupted blocks of learning time, a collaborative environment with student mentors, and individual or small group instruction, which dedicates attention to social and academic skills.

For more than 100 years, the Montessori method of education has been popular in many countries. Today, there are more than 20,000 Montessori schools worldwide, with more than 5,000 schools in the United States, including 570 public schools.

Montessori learning always starts with the child and seeks to engage the child. The child's curious mind about the world motivates them to ask questions and ultimately leads to discovering the many possible answers. We have seen that when children drive their own learning, their understanding grows richer and more sophisticated.

Science tells us brains thrive on "aha!" moments. To learn it for yourself, by yourself allows for a richer, more vivid and meaningful learning experience. The best learning takes place in an active, challenging, engaging environment, where you move your body as you learn, when you observe, construct, and share what you've learned, when you create and experience new knowledge yourself.



**The 8 Executive Functions**

<b>Self-Control</b> The ability to stop and think before acting	<b>Self-Monitor</b> The ability to view and evaluate oneself
<b>Emotional Control</b> The ability to manage feelings to achieve goals and complete tasks	<b>Flexibility</b> The ability to adapt to changing conditions by revising plans or changing strategies
<b>Task Initiation</b> The ability to start and finish tasks without procrastinating	<b>Organization</b> The ability to develop and use systems to keep track of materials and information
<b>Working Memory</b> The ability to use information held in memory to complete a task	<b>Planning &amp; Time Management</b> The ability to create steps to reach a goal

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Science also tells us that empowering children to make choices, to ask their own questions, and to take ownership of their learning enhances executive function, self-regulation, and focus. In addition, sensory and self-directed learning have a positive effect on children's enjoyment of learning. Hundreds of studies have shown enjoyment improves learning, recall, and understanding and contributes to confidence and motivation.

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Step inside a Montessori classroom and you will see and feel how this “aha” moment takes shape. The Montessori classroom just looks and feels different. The design and flow of the classrooms create a learning environment that accommodates choice. There are spaces suited to group activity, and areas where a student can settle in alone. Parts of the room are open and spacious, allowing a student to lay out strands of beads for counting, or ponder a 10-foot-long Timeline of Life.



Montessori classrooms are also mixed-aged—students learn from and observe each other. They care for and teach each other, and through these relationships, they develop strong social and leadership skills. As they grow older, these roles become more formal as they take on larger community and leadership roles with confidence.

The role of the teacher and their relationship with their students is quite inspiring. Montessori teachers pay close attention to the needs and interests of each child. The teacher encourages children to take ownership of their education and soon enough students learn to see the correlation between their work and their accomplishments.

Meanwhile the child is given the responsibility to plan and manage their everyday schedule. The learning in a Montessori environment comes from the child working with the materials over time. Repetition is how children learn. When they have mastered a skill, they will move on. The hope and aim is for students to feel confident meeting new challenges and exploring areas of new interests as they grow into adolescence.

At Harbor Montessori we recognize the importance of those “aha” moments. Our goal is to empower children to be curious, become independent and motivated to take on new challenges. learn by doing, create and inspire others, be kind, supportive and understanding to our own needs and the needs of our community. We hope that confidence and curiosity will stay with them—and inspire them—for a lifetime.



# Around Campus





# Fostering Peace

By Cheyenne Holland, Maple Head Teacher



"Avoiding war is the work of politics, establishing peace is the work of education" -Maria Montessori

The holiday season is filled with joy, harmony, and the gift of giving throughout communities across the globe. With that, I saw it only fitting to talk about peace education. I am sure that many of you know Maria Montessori was a passionate advocate for peace and it shaped her educational philosophy. She strongly believed that the education of children is significant in fostering a foundation for future peace. Her enthusiasm in this realm of childhood education was especially notable because of the state the world was in at the time. War overcame much of the world, and yet, it revealed powerful insight for those who strived for peace within humanity.

Peace Education refers to the presence of peace within the classroom. It is the process of gaining the knowledge, attitude, skills, values, and behaviors necessary to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural world around us. It is nurturing the spirit within each individual and recognizing the differences among us. While we bring attention to the differences, we celebrate them and agree that they do not set us apart, but rather bring us together as a society when peace and kindness are at the forefront. It is important that education acknowledges and is inspired by the meaning and virtues of life, because without it, heavy symptoms will arise. Peace education is key to a healthy and functioning society for all.

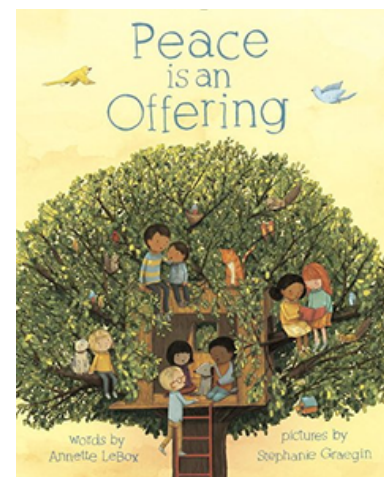
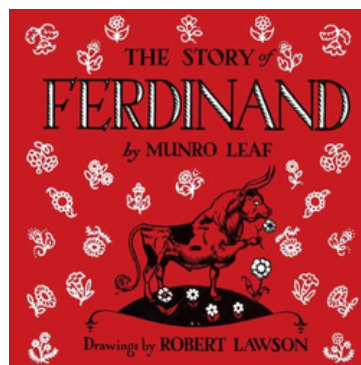
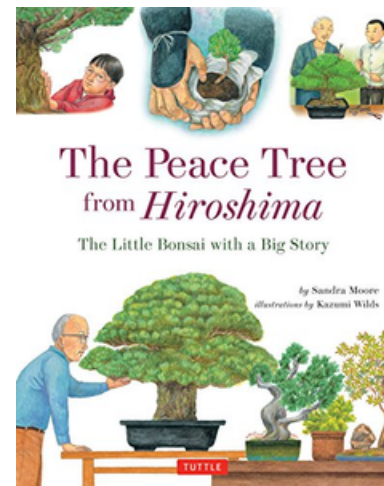
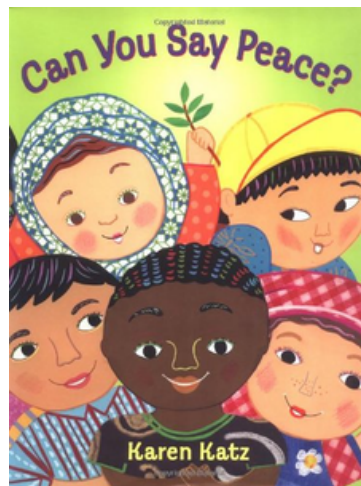
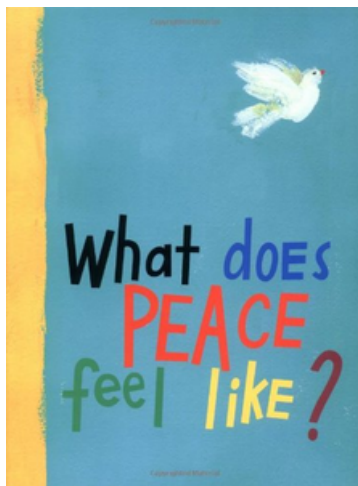
So the question you may wonder is, what does peace education look like in the classroom? I will speak mostly on what it looks like in the primary classrooms, however the values behind it are shared with all the different age groups. The first focus is on inner peace and bringing awareness to the self. Adults in the classroom should model what inner peace looks like and go about every interaction with a peace mindset. This is also done by having intentional discussions about what peace looks and feels like, and what it isn't. This is then supplemented by incorporating mindfulness practices throughout the day. Such as, taking long deep breaths together and individually, naming emotions, guided meditation, calm movement activities, using calming tools like a sensory bottle, listening to music, stress balls, and labyrinth puzzles.

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Lastly, peace is practiced through actions within the environment. Developing a sense of respect and care for the environment will in turn, create a more peaceful atmosphere. We teach young students how to care for the environment which serves them, as well as the living things within it, such as pets and plants. Beginning with these acts of care will guide them in serving their community too, and being a peacekeeper within it.

Maria Montessori's vision of peace is attainable through our education of the child! She once said, "'Peace is what every human being is craving for, and it can be brought about by humanity through the child.'" We all hope for peace for ourselves, those around us, and the generations to come. Thankfully, with Maria Montessori's insight, we are able to move in the right direction! One of my favorite ways to encourage peace within the classroom is by reading stories. Here are some wonderful books that can be incorporated at home too!



*Human nature can be self-centered, but each one of us depends on our community to survive; and today our community is the whole of humanity. If we want to look after ourselves, we also have to think about what our community needs. We have to take a practical view of the whole of humanity and this planet which is our only home. - Dalai Lama*

# Health. What Does It Mean?

By Mason Ward



## **Health is not a state of being, but a process**

What is health? Depending upon how this question is asked, and to whom, health can be interpreted in many ways. To a body builder it might mean high protein, lean meat, and lifting heavy weights. To a child it might mean eating a vegetable once a year. To a distance runner it might mean a lean body mass with efficient carbohydrate loading. To a doctor, it might mean low blood pressure, low carb diets, and good blood work levels. Why are there so many perceptions of health? In short, it's the functionality of daily activity.

Functionality is an important and sometimes overlooked part of our life and a lot of this is due to the comforts of modern life. Before modern time (post industrial) we spent more time in diverse landscapes moving in a more dynamic and fluid motion. Daily life was laborious and required great resilience with movement, load management, and efficiency of work. Now, in modern times, most people can't squat lower than toilet level. Try it out now, can you squat with toes forward, shoulder width apart, feet flat on the floor into a full squat and hang out there for 10 minutes? Can your child? Why is this difficult? Because daily life doesn't require us to be functional below that level. Range of motion has decreased and because of this our bodies become stagnant in previously dynamic and deeply worked areas.



In particular when you look at the development of children at HMS you'll notice that EC children maintain decent levels of mobility with great range of motion. They're currently in a healthy progression because their environment requires them to have diverse ranges of movement. Though all the Montessori classrooms allow for more movement than a traditional classroom setting, older students do spend more time in chairs than their EC counterparts. This means less time working through deeper ranges of motion which then halts their healthy progression and can diminish their range of motion. By upper elementary their baseline posture consists of a rolled spine, shoulders rolled forward with heads tilted towards the floor. They walk with toes out unable to balance on their feet. For Jr. High they become even more stagnant with tighter muscles and joints.

It's not a mystery when you observe the class and look at their movement. EC classroom layout has loads of floor space and little seating outside of lunch. While floor work and different seating options are still encouraged in lower elementary through jr high, many students will still gravitate toward tables and chairs. Once they move towards jr high there is a stark difference in students seeking out the floor space for work.

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## Why does this matter?

Because healthy functional bodies are resilient bodies. Resilient bodies are flexible, self healing, and dynamic in nature. Healthy bodies create enormous amounts of power and can endure enormous amounts of pressure. They have more efficient and relaxed breathing because of the movement. Easier and better quality breathing reduces oxidative stress, increases fluid circulation, and can even massage the body. This allows better processing and oxygen release so rational and complex thinking can happen. This is also important to understand when working through a tough emotional time with your child, spouse or self.

## Movement and Regulating

When we are in a state of fear, anxiety, or panic, breathing and movement becomes locked. While it's locked we become acidic, parts of our brain shut off connection because other resources are needed elsewhere. This is part of the reason why talking about emotions, while in a state of panic, may not work all the time. When approaching these tough situations, where people are not in a place of social engagement, I don't ask for words but for head nods or any other form of nonverbal communication. This is to get them moving as well as for them to access what is available during deep emotional distress. Eventually after movement and discharge of nerve tone and breathing coming back online you can begin to have a conversation with verbalized words. What is important to note is that movement assists in processing emotions and regulating the bodily state. This is also why taking deep breaths is more than getting oxygen, but to move the muscles that breathing requires.

Bodies that can move freely and breathe easier become resilient. The more resilient your body is the less damage physical, psychological, and emotional pressures cause. How can you start adding resilience training to your daily life comes next.

## A Short Daily Exercise You Can Do In Bed

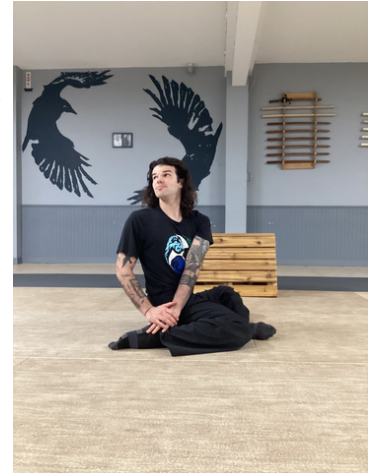


Everyone can benefit from movement. For a lot of the students we have worked on relaxing the body by extending our range of motion. Any exercise with the intent of extending the range of motion is beneficial for circulation and nerve tone. For today all we're going to talk about are joint circles. When should you do these and where? Once you're up in the morning or before bed try making circles with all of your joints three times in both directions for three sets. While doing this focus on extending the moving limb past your fingers and joint. If you're rotating your ankle, focus on your toes making the circle while your ankle is the rotational point. If it's your knee then your foot is making the circle. If you're working your hip then your knee is making the circle. Take it slow and take it easy. You'll hear pops, feel angry joints, but the thing to remember is that you're making progress. You might only need to do two circles and be done. Respect where you are at and don't push it. Do it with your child and imagine like your body parts are long lasers to get them engaged. Make it silly and get them to use mental images to help build focus. Even if the idea is cartoonish it helps making a picture and projecting it out. You might be surprised by the range of motion after you picture something cartoonish while doing these exercises. The joints to focus on are wrists, elbows, shoulders, hips, knees, and ankles. For necks be careful as those can cause some problems off the back.

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## A Short Mobility Play on the Floor

Playing on the floor is a great way to increase circulation, increase flexibility, and restore toddler level mobility. Playing on the floor is a great way to build memories and support a dynamic lifestyle you and your family won't forget. Sitting on the floor is a great alternative to the couches and chairs we're used to sitting in. Sit on your feet and shins, sit crisscross, and sit like the picture below. There is no one way. Rotate through movements. Lastly, roll around. Roll sideways, forward, or backwards. Try to pick up items with your feet and pass them around. Try exploring the the floor by rolling around and playing a game of Rollie Polly Tag. Either way just get on the floor and roll. It can help massage muscles, promote circulation, and develop gross motor neurons and cross body coordination.



## Final Thoughts

So what is health? To me health is about being able to live life with little limitations, to know your body intimately, and to be able to spend more time living in a positive manner. I hope you all have a fun time exploring and rediscovering the limits, hesitations, and power of your body. Remember, you are where you are and judgment does not help. You are not who you were in high school, you are not who you were before children, you are not who you were yesterday. You are who you are right now. Small habits make big changes. Treat yourself with love like you do your children.

To end with a quote from, at one point in time, the wisest man.

“No man has the right to be an amateur in the matter of physical training. It is a shame for a man to grow old without seeing the beauty and strength of which his body is capable.”

— Socrates

And from Dr. Maria Montessori

“When there is motor and physical activity, you can see a more important kind of education, a kind of education that takes the force of life into account. This education is not driven by its own wisdom, but by another superior wisdom which lays down the law that, if we do not take the vital force into account, we miss the best part of education.”

Maria Montessori, The 1946 London Lectures, p. 77

# Board Corner

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Hi!

My name is Nina Rish-Brown. I joined the Board last January and am currently serving as Treasurer. My boys Jackson and Jacob are in Aspen. It's our third year at HMS. We moved to Gig Harbor in July of 2020. HMS is actually the reason we chose Gig Harbor. The boys had been in a Montessori program since they were toddlers. One non-negotiable of our move to Washington was to find a great Montessori school, and so we began to search. We toured schools in Bellevue, Renton, Bothell, and Redmond but when we sat in on morning circle in Aspen we knew we had found the right place for our boys. We were so impressed with the agency and self-confidence the children had and the gentle and kind guidance Carrie and Nazy provided. Our family is so happy to be a part of the HMS community.

In between running to school drop off and pick up, I'm the Director of Human Resources Compliance and Employee Relations at Premier, Inc. a healthcare improvement company headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina. I've worked there for nearly ten years but have been in Human Resources for over 20 years. Any free time I have is dedicated to reading, lattes, puzzles, salsa dancing and spending time with my family.

Happy New Year!



**Nina Rish-Brown**  
**Board Treasurer**

*Lights! Camera!  
Auction!*

SAVE THE DATE

APRIL 22, 2023

MCCORMICK WOODS

