



HIMIS

Monthly News

ARTICLES, EVENTS, PHOTOS, & MORE!

February 2023



Day in the Life

It was just a few days before we were driving our youngest back to college. It was a busy week and I hadn't been home much, I felt bad about not spending enough time with him. I came home late one evening and plopped down on the couch with a sigh. Max turned to me and said "So, what exactly do you do all day?" *Was he serious?!* "So much"! I replied. "Every day is different," I went on. But to articulate a typical day? Well that was harder than I thought. What *do* I do all day anyway? If you've ever peeked in my window and wondered the same, here's a little snippet into a day in the life.

5:00 My pets start their relentless routine in trying to wake me up. It usually works. I'll start my day by shuffling downstairs and feeding my two dogs and two cats, and as they eat I scan my email and texts while still fantasizing about getting more sleep. Some days the inbox is light and the text screen is dark and on those days, I crawl back into bed for a quick snooze. I'm a firm believer in the power of sleep.

6:15 Now I'm really up. I'll go through my morning routine which involves showering, playing a few quick games while I wake up—Wordle, Worldle, Statele, Nerdle— I usually do some social texting with my friends who are up early and I might read another round of emails (if there's time I'll respond, otherwise I'll star them for later). And, it is not uncommon for me to have several conversations via text with the admin team before even leaving the house.

7:45 On most days, if I'm able to get out the door before 8:00 I'll treat myself to a stop at a coffee shop for a hot drink—usually a London Fog. I love heading to small businesses like Revive in Port Orchard or Kimball Coffeehouse and the Harbor General Store in Gig Harbor. On my Tracyton days a stop at Corvo Coffee is a treat, but I've also been known to head to Starbucks! And frankly, I've had many a mornings when I'm not out the door in time for a stop! My commute to work is about thirty minutes regardless of which campus I'm visiting, and I either use this time to think about the day ahead, listen to a podcast, or call my mom!

8:30 Today I'm headed to Gig Harbor (I am usually in GH 4.5 days and Tracyton a half day). I arrive at school and am greeted by our parking lot drop off team. Their warm smiles and friendly hellos are a great way to start my day. Unless a teacher needs to meet with me before class starts, Brittany tries not to schedule anything for me before 9:00. I use this first thirty minutes to get settled in and get a lay of the land for the day.

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9:00 Each day is different and this morning I have an hour blocked off without any meetings. With progress reports right around the corner I put on my reading glasses and start reviewing the reports. I am the second set of eyes that looks for typos, makes sure the content is clear, and it also allows me another glimpse into every classroom. This year I have some help from Carrie, our EC Program Director and Lisa, our Tracyton Site Director. With over 200 reports, it's good to have the support! Today I'm looking at the toddler reports and I can practically hear the busy, joyful noises of those classrooms. I'm always impressed with how well our teachers know each individual student. We really do nurture the whole child at HMS!

10:30 I get up, stretch my legs, catch up for a bit with Brittany, Nikki, and Rachel at the front desk, and then return to my office. Sometimes someone will pop in with a quick question or to say hello, but usually I have some work time which can feature a variety of things, maybe it's returning emails, or following up on a request from a teacher. It might be drafting a newsletter article or an announcement. It could be working with Nikki on enrollment or Adena on something finance related. On this particular morning Rachel just popped in for an impromptu meeting and to ask my opinion on a few things for Summer program. (Yes! She is already planning for summer!).

11:45 I have a few minutes of quiet and I look at my to-do list and see I still have to send a few thank you emails to send to the state representatives who took the time to meet with those of us on the WFIS board. One rep is Michelle Caldier who is our rep here in Gig Harbor. I make sure to extend an invitation for her to tour the school next time she's in town.

12:00 Two students come up to talk with me. They have been designing a T-shirt for our third year leadership group and want to show me their draft. Third year leaders meet twice a month and I'm honored to be the facilitator of that group. Not only do we engage in conversations and characteristics about being a leader, but we build some fun activities into every meeting as well.

1:00 I eat a quick lunch and then head to junior high for a scheduled visit. The junior high classroom is busy as students are working on their committees. Committees include fundraising, finance, Cedar Market, and service learning. There are several interesting conversations happening, many specifically related to their committees, but some are more social. The eighth graders are talking more and more about high school—where they've applied, acceptances they've received, what they've heard from others and so on.

2:00 Just as every morning is different, every afternoon is, too, though I try to build some consistency into my week. On Tuesday afternoons I attend meetings with other Heads of School in our area. It's nice to check in with colleagues and to make sure we are informed on what's going on in the region and state. These meetings were especially helpful during the pandemic. Since things have quieted down on the Covid front, conversations have shifted to other topics such as school safety, concerns around social and emotional development of children, and teacher burn-out.

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3:00 I try to reserve time Monday, Thursday, and Friday from 3:00-4:30 for our teachers. This is also the time of day that I do my best creative thinking. If I'm not meeting with a teacher, this is the time I will dig into a bigger project. Oh, and, sometimes Kelsey's son Teddy will stop by to play "robots" with me. And, how can I turn down the opportunity to play with a three-year-old? Today, however, Carrie and I have a meeting with a parent and then a meeting with some of our childcare team. We are looking forward to both!

4:30 If I have an evening meeting, this is the time I will dash out for a snack or to get some fresh air. If there's nothing on my calendar for the evening, I'll often book time with my trainer and work at HMS until it's time to head to the gym. Today is the latter so I jump back into reading progress reports, stopping briefly to chat with Gail, our Upper EI teacher, who is regularly here until around 6:00.

6:00 Gym and then the commute home. Mike has been working out with me, so sometimes instead of going straight home we will get a bite to eat. We try to be good and not undo all of our hard work, but sometimes we do indulge!

9:30 I've been trying hard not to work in the evenings and often I'm successful, but sometimes I may hop on the computer for a little bit. Tonight, for instance, I'm finishing up this article so Brittany can get it out in time!

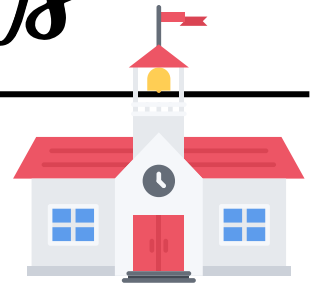
One of my favorite things about my job is that every day is different. There are so many unknowns held loosely together by the outline of a structured routine. While not every surprise is a pleasant one, I can promise you, I'm never bored! I am grateful for all of the people I interact with every day, for the support I get from teachers, admin, board, and parents. Most of all, I'm grateful for any and all moments I get to spend with our students!

Warmly,
Aimee



Upcoming Events

February 15th Student-Led Parent Ed Jr. High Night



February 16th

Noon Dismissal - All Classes - Conferences
(Infant & Toddler regular schedule, EC-Jr. High Unlimited Childcare Only)

February 17th

School Closed - Conferences
(Infant & Toddler regular schedule, EC-Jr High Unlimited Childcare Only)

February 20th

School Closed - President's Day



**February 24th
& 25th**

Upper Elementary 3rd Years Zoo Overnight



March 1st

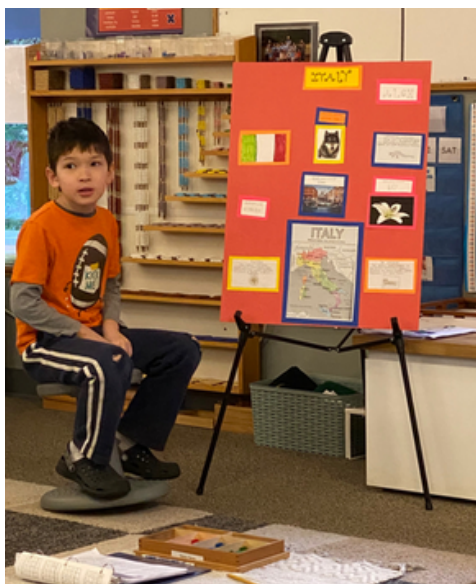
Infant/ Toddler Development Night

March 2nd

Student & Parent Upper Elementary Night



Around Campus



Technology Use During Childhood & Adolescence

By Ann Marie Leichsenring, Cedar Head Teacher



Do you ever wonder how to best support your child or adolescent in learning how to use technology responsibly? What does that even mean for them? What does that mean for your family? What choices and discussions will best support your family?

Addressing technology use as a family can have its ups and downs. There are times when you all might be on the same page, and other times when there is disagreement. This is all normal and expected. At HMS, we encourage families to discuss what responsible technology looks like as a family, and create a set of family guidelines around technology use. This helps create opportunities for open-ended questions, honest dialogue, and hearing everyone's perspectives. It also helps create clarity about your family values and expectations of one another.

One way that HMS supports students' technology education is through a program called #WinAtSocial, which is a partnership with [The Social Institute](#) (TSI). TSI equips students to make positive, healthy, and high-character choices that fuel their health, happiness, and future success. Our school has adopted TSI's comprehensive program, called #WinAtSocial, which promotes character, empathy, teamwork, and other important life skills. We provide this learning opportunity for students in grades 4-8, and parents have access to a [Parent Toolkit](#). This toolkit provides resources for families about technology use, social media platforms, and more.

The Social Institute provides another resource for HMS, called Insights. This resource helps us understand our students' views on technology use, what types of technology and social media they use, and their thoughts regarding specific technology-related prompts. Below is data that we've gathered from the first part of this school year, listed in order of use (the first items listed are used the most):

	Grades 4-6	Grades 7-8	HMS Overall
Our students' most used apps	Texting, FaceTime, video/music streaming, gaming, YouTube	YouTube, email, video/music streaming, FaceTime, texting	YouTube, texting, FaceTime, video/music streaming
Our students' most used devices	School-issued devices, television, smartphones, gaming devices, personal tablets	School-issued devices, television, smartphones, personal tablets	School-issued devices, television, smartphones



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One of the reasons we decided to partner with The Social Institute is because we saw an urgent need for our older students to learn and explore responsible technology use. This includes, but is not limited to, respectful and kind texting, gaming, commenting on online videos, using online chat platforms, how to use technology appropriately in general, the impact technology has on mental health, and more. The discussions during the #WinAtSocial lessons are tailored to specific age groups, and provide students and teachers a guided space for discussing all of these concerns. Furthermore, there are “family huddles” that we can send out to our families after the classroom lessons. These give families an option to continue these conversations at home.

Whatever your family's views on technology use is for children and adolescents, we are here to support you. Some families have set rules, some have open discussions, some create guidelines together, and many families experience a combination of all of these. In addition, this [NYT article, “How and When to Limit Kids' Tech Use,”](#) may be a helpful guide or starting point. This article has research-based information that is separated into specific age groups, from under 2 years old to teenagers.

If you'd like more support or information about technology use with children and adolescents, please reach out.



Focusing, Meditation, and Physiology. How they are all connected.

By Mason Ward



The joy of a focused moment

To be focused is to be in the “zone.” Your mind and body are unified towards an object, activity, or thought and you enter a ubiquitous state of all things working together in harmony. Just when you recognize the state you're in it begins to diminish. You feel your concentration wander, and your mind becomes attuned to the rest of the environment. You try to hold onto it but the moment vanishes and you're back to your normal state. It can feel awful

to lose this focus, but what I wish for you to consider is that the end of being in the zone is just as great as being in the zone itself.

Understanding Focus

Focusing is an act of concentration and clarity. This requires heavy amounts of resources in order to maintain. To get to a state of concentration requires energy as well as cooperation from your body and environment. Focus isn't just something that happens even though it feels that way. It is actually a series of small physiological shifts working together in order to bring clear and present awareness to the very moment you're in.

Everything can be a focus. Working on a report with every word perfectly presenting itself is focus. Forgetting to eat while engaging in work is focus. Playing with your child as you watch them discover the bounds of their body is focus. Meditating quietly is focus. Smiling deeply as you watch your child take their first steps or say their first words. That is focus.

Focus is also synonymous with Meditation. After all, the purpose of meditation is to build focus and to remove barriers from reaching concentrated states. More will follow but for now I need to paint a picture.

Observing Your Child

When observing children in particular you'll notice that they tend to switch focus or become distracted quickly or easily. That's fair, after all they are children. In the classroom the appearance of “goofing off,” or “wandering,” or “wasting time,” is called false fatigue. Here is how **False Fatigue** would look in the morning. Class starts at nine in the morning and a period of greeting and settling will start. Thirty minutes of work might ensue, normally something easy and familiar, and then somewhere between ten to ten thirty the room begins to show signs of “chaos” especially to nonMontessori classrooms. After a few minutes the class will begin to settle and deeper levels of work will begin. This is where large growth and exploration will emerge. It's expected and recognized as part of the work process.

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However, a child who is wandering and not focusing is probably not doing it out of want, but need. Much like how we adults get up and work on non essential activities, even though we know we need to focus. We understand the importance of the task but can't quite seem to be able to focus enough. Why?

First, Focus is never meant to be a continuous state. It's a state that can be accessed given all manners of needs are met. It fluctuates and cycles depending upon the current accessibility and needs of the individual. Needs such as food, hydration, nervous system, circulation, chemistry, and safety are bare minimal needs to be met in order for focusing to occur for any purpose. This is part of the reason why we avoid certain work.

Second, focus simply shifts. The real difficulty is not being focused but being able to focus one hundred percent on something without the wandering mind, sounds, or bodily sensations. For a child, who is truly experiencing for the first time, everything is loud and sensory loaded. Sitting can feel like confinement, eating a pretzel can be invigorating, running can feel calming. These novel sensations make the child explore and adventure into themselves and into the world. Truly experiencing is one of the great things that children are gifted at. For most of us adults it's a lost art. Later, I'll share a way to experience life like a toddler again.

In the classroom there is much to explore. Much like us when we surf the web, gaze around our favorite restaurant or store. We have our own false fatigue at work. Some get up to get coffee, a snack, chat with a coworker, go for a walk, or just zone out. It's in our nature to cycle, shift, and move around. To me the name *False Fatigue* doesn't justify the full dynamic of what's happening in the class. To me it's a *Physiology Shift* from sympathetic to parasympathetic states as the body is trying to process the stress accumulated by sitting and learning.

Ever Changing Physiology

The human body is constantly shifting modes from healing physiology, digestive physiology, or stress physiology. As you might have guessed, stress has to do with excitement or fear. The body is aroused in a state where the body is in a mode of movement or stillness. For digestive it entails the entire process of eating. For healing it covers sleep, restoration, development, and a plethora of other restorative functions.

These modes cycle throughout the day and match our circadian rhythm. It's important to note that these three physiologies are not bad. What is bad about them is when they are out of sync with the present environment. Getting scared when a loud bang happens is good. It's saying hey we need to move. Moving around after sitting for an hour or so is a way for us to physically switch into gear. It isn't bad, but physiology.

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Providing Support During Physiology Shift

During the false fatigue stage it is important to allow children to explore and learn. Very few times is there an intervention. Teachers are aware that stepping back is the best step for the false fatigue stage. Usually it is only during an apparent risk or dangerous situation, which is seldom. The other time is when someone has difficulty appropriately switching between physiologies. This is where teachers and parents really shine is the modeling aspect of how to come back to focus.

We should by now have built up an array of regulation tactics that help us come back into focus. While we always learn more we as adults do have more experience than our children. Keeping that in mind it's important for us to model the appropriate ways to come back into focus. For example the children see me use a Lyapko Application Ball which promotes circulation and discharges built up stress. The curiosity of children gets the best of them and they come to investigate the mysterious tool during the false fatigue period. I demonstrate the use in myself and leave them to exploration. Some find it appealing, some do not. For some it is a great way to destress and come back to work quickly. Others tend to steer away while the other group becomes hyper fixated. What's important to note is that they noticed an immediate shift in how they feel. They process what their body needs to process and they carry on to their next task.

I constantly bring tools in the classroom to model ways to process that false fatigue efficiently and fully so it does not linger. After all, we don't all have time to sit in a salt bath for an hour, get a two hour massage, and go to yoga all in the same day. Modeling different types of accessible processing skills is vital to the development of healthy children and adults.

How to Come Into Focus, Noting

"It's okay to start again. Start again with acknowledging breath."

Being able to focus is a developed skill that is supported by physiology. It is also taxing on the nervous system. Think of focusing as a rep of a push-up or squat. The amount of times, and the length you stay focused, exercise our focusing muscles. Children haven't had enough "reps" of focus to be able to access that state at will. They also aren't fully developed which makes it difficult to pull themselves back to focus. When they are focused it is normally by the loudest, or most apparent sight, sound, or sensation. That's why they have you.

When dealing with the taxing load from the focusing event the child has the time to explore what they need to do in order to process the stress. This is work of itself. This is great work because even as of now I'm in and out of focus. But it's important to remember that this exercise needs some guidance and the best place to start coming back into focus is to start **Noting and Noting Gone**. Below is an example as to how to note.

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As I was writing this I started on the couch for ten minutes. I started by **noticing** my breath. I then **noticed** my body was imbalanced and my back was a little tight, so I laid down. I then **noticed** that my leg was beginning to tighten so I had to take care of that by changing my posture and went to the floor. I **noticed** I came back to focus. I could feel my muscles opening up and warming. My muscles stretched and I could feel the circulation. **Noted.** I **noticed** my leg tightness was **Gone**. After laying down on my belly for twenty minutes I **noticed** my neck began to show signs of taxing. I could feel the muscles quiver, the acidity building up, and I **noticed** my comfort was **gone**. I got up and sat on my legs with my feet under my butt. As I sat up I **noticed** the sound of the washing machine. I **noticed** my attention was **gone** from my neck pain. **Noted.** I then **noticed** the pain coming back. **Noted.**

It's important to start with noting your breath. I'll talk more about breath in a future article but just know that your breath is extremely powerful. Note how all of my break times were not wasted time from work. They were proactive. Rest is proactive. Leisure is proactive. It was a proactive shift from focusing on this article to focusing on something else and back to focusing on the article. Sometimes I need to drink more water, sometimes I need to take some minerals, or take a walk. What matters is that I have developed a set of tools that has helped me come back to focus. I treat every shifting moment with equanimity. It allows all aspects of the day to become enjoyable for you.

Taking ten to fifteen minutes can really change the outlook of an individual. Being able to sit quietly within one's self despite what's happening is an invaluable skill.

What's the Real Benefit of Noting

This is at first difficult and overwhelming but by doing ten minutes of noting while sitting quietly can begin to open your mind to old experiences that feel new. Do it while walking and you will begin to feel like a child again. You'll note every experience as new because it is new. Every breath will become new. The step you take now is not the one you took a minute ago. Your body and mind will shift towards the mind of the child. You'll communicate and understand deeply as to why children act the way they do. You'll become more intimate with your physiology and you'll be able to see the beauty of your child in a whole new way.

You'll become the child with the focusing reps of an adult. You'll model in ways that the child will want to follow. Your clarity of every moment will become as delectable as chocolate melting on the tongue. Your movements will be connected as you feel every intention of your body, breath, and mind move at one speed, one tone, and one direction. Anxiety can become clearer for you to identify. You become more acquainted and can talk to yourself clearer. After all, most anxiety has a past or present attachment. By focusing on the now anxiety begins to shift. Life will become two to three times larger. Things that used to upset you might become an enjoyable experience.

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For your children they might discover more about themselves in a clearer perception. They'll be more intuned with themselves and the environment. They'll feel a part of it instead of apart. By recognizing their states they'll identify others quickly. They'll walk around differently with more of themselves. They'll feel bigger despite not having them grow into a new size.

Final Thoughts

Start with noting and really experience every image/sight, internal talk/sound, and bodily sensation. Ten minutes a day can have drastic changes. Allow your child to teach you how to enjoy the moment and how to regulate yourself by moving with them. Teach them how to identify their drifting of focus and that it's okay to start again by noting and breathing. Meditate together in the car, while going for a walk, or sitting and enjoying a meal. Make every note of your sensations and share. Let go of the shame, embarrassment, and expectations. Expect to be vulnerable and expect to start over again. Finally, be kind to yourself and respect the boundaries of where you are at. Rediscover the power of you and encourage your child to discover theirs.

"We do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard."

- John F. Kennedy

Reading/Resources

The Circadian Code

Nurturing Resilience

Lyapko Applicator Ball



HMS Annual Auction

Lights! Camera! Auction!

4/22/2023

McCormick Woods

5pm–11pm

Tickets on sale soon!

Board Corner

Hi!

My name is Faye Bulaon-Siek. I am serving my first year as HMS Board Secretary. Previously, I served with Parent Grove for 5 years. I am Mom to Peter (2nd grade, Aspen) and Emily (Kindergarten, Magnolia). Both Peter and Emily started in the Infant program (9 mos, and 4 mos, respectively). Eight years ago, as new parents, and both full-time working physicians, we scoured for a childcare that took infants. HMS was the 2nd to last place of 7 we looked into. Having known nothing about Montessori at the time, I was blown away with what I saw. The toddlers were using glass cups, wiping the tables, and sweeping floors. They also played with what appeared to be "toys" called "works." In the classrooms, I sensed a quiet yet humming energy. Children were free to move about, yet everything felt calm and orderly. I was fascinated and wanted to learn more.

What started as, "I think I like this place, grew to I LOVE this community." Over the years, I observed how Peter and Emily were individually nurtured and treated with so much respect and encouragement, allowing them to grow at their own pace to discover who they are, where and how they fit in this great big universe. I myself, have deepened my own journey and discovery of who my children are through the added lenses of Peter and Emily's teachers over the years. My own learning on how to best support my children has also been guided by the keen observations of their teachers.

HMS hasn't been just a school for my kids, it's been our village. When my father-in-law died in 2019, Aimee helped us with books and resources on how to approach dying for my then 5 and 3 year old kids. During the height of the pandemic, HMS staff and teachers did incredible work to support their students, and essential working families. As stressed healthcare workers ourselves, we felt supported during a time when support was scarce and hardest to find. Furthermore, we were able to maintain as much normalcy for Peter and Emily, who (luckily due to their age group) were both able to attend in-person class with their friends and teachers whom they have known practically their whole lives. This was huge.

My children are happy, beautiful, emerging little stars. They are energetic and vocal with their thoughts, ideas, needs, and interests. Our journey (thus far) as parents have been enriched by being part of the HMS community. It has been, and continues to be a great, happy and meaningful ride! I hope to connect with many more parents and families in our HMS community. I am excited and look forward to another great year!



Faye Bulaon-Siek
Board Secretary

Board Corner

Hi HMS Families

Did you know January was National Board Recognition Month? Well neither did I until about a week ago. So, I want to give a huge shoutout to our HMS Board Extraordinaires: Brint, who keeps us on the up & up with his knowledge of Robert's Rules. Nina, our HR guru and treasurer.

Faye, our secretary who asks the right questions. Danielle, who stuck it out with us through the thick and thin of Covid. Brandon, our cheerful finance alum. Sarah, our fun-loving Tracyton trustee and this year's auction co-chair. Bill, our alum who attributes success in his life to HMS. Nancy, our newest trustee with a Montessori & HMS background. Welcome Nancy! And last but not least; Aimee, Lisa, and Brittany, who take on many roles at HMS to help the school and the Board to succeed. So, if you see any of these trustees around HMS, please give them a big smile and a "thank you"! We are lucky to have them in our corner.

*If anyone has an interest in serving on the HMS Board of Trustees, please reach out to me at boardchair@harbormontessori.org

*Tracyton Families – we are coming out your way to hold our February Board meeting. Please feel free to join us on Tuesday, February 21 @ 5:30pm. Our open session lasts about 30 minutes. See you then.

My wish to you all - may your February bring you love, happiness, and lots of chocolate!



With a grateful heart,
Wendy Holt
HMS Board Chair

Around Campus

