



Welcome, FNS Families

Thank you to all those helping to bring forth our first school newsletter.

December 2024

Discover What's Inside

- Welcome Families: A Growing Community
 - Montessori Magic: Unveiling the Philosophy
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 - Classroom Chronicles: Dive into Our Themes and Topics with the Teachers
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WELCOME Nature School Community!

At FNS, our roots run deep in nurturing a love for learning and a deep connection to the natural world. Our school was founded with the mission to preserve childhood while offering children a holistic and meaningful educational experience. We remain steadfast in that commitment every day.

Our vision is to empower children to become kind, innovative, and critical thinkers—confident in themselves and their ability to make positive impacts in their communities and to humanity. We believe that education should be more than just academic achievement.

We also recognize that we are just one piece of the beautiful, complex puzzle that makes up a child's world. As partners in your child's education, we hope this newsletter will help bridge the gap between school and home, fostering meaningful communication and connection with families. Together, we can nurture the growth of curious minds, compassionate hearts, and confident young learners.

Thank you for being part of our community—we're excited to share this journey with you!

Calendar Reminders

- Dec 23 – Jan 3 Winter Break
- Jan 6 – 7 Teacher In-service
- Jan 20 MLK Jr Day
- Feb 17th Closed Presidents Day
- Mar 19 – 20 Parent Teacher Conf
- March 21 Teacher Inservice
- Mar 24-28 Spring Break

Why Montessori?

At our school, we believe a Montessori education is like planting the seeds for a lifelong love of learning. In a Montessori classroom, children embark on their own adventures of discovery, making choices that encourage deep concentration and cultivate self-discipline along the way.

Each Montessori activity is like a little treasure hunt, inviting children to unlock their own problem-solving superpowers. It's a magical path where curiosity leads the way, and learning becomes a joyous journey! Below are a some key comparisons.

MONTESSORI

Multi-age Grouping
Scientific Approach to Teaching
Reality-Based Learning
Internal Self-Discipline
Child-Centered Focus
Individualized Lessons
Concrete Learning Experiences
Respect for Individual Differences
Encouragement of Independence
Fostering a Love of Learning

TRADITIONAL

Same-Age Grouping
Non-Scientific Approach
Role-Play and Fantasy-Based Learning
External Discipline
Teacher-Centered
Group Lessons
Abstract Learning
Emphasis on Group Conformity
Mastering Core Curriculum Objectives
Adults Perform Tasks for Children

THANK YOU VOLUNTEER FAMILIES

A heartfelt thank you to all the families who volunteered their time, led activities, brought food, donated pumpkins, and created grab bags for our Fall Festival! The children had an amazing time—wild, wonderful, and full of fun. It was truly a memorable event!

A special shoutout goes to Erin Renollet for bringing her mobile Happy Little Booksters setup, which was a real treasure for everyone. We'd also like to thank the generous family who sponsored Happy Little Booksters, allowing each child to receive a book. We are so grateful for the kindness and community spirit that made this possible. For more information about Happy Little Booksters, visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/happylittlebooksters>



New Roots: Building Update

As we progress through the semester, many families have inquired about the status of construction at our home location. We're actively working on these plans, and I want to provide our families with an update. In Spring 2024, we successfully petitioned to rezone our property from CPZD to P1 Institutional, which allowed us to bypass the Large Scale Development process, streamlining permits and significantly reducing costs— or so we thought. Unfortunately, and to be expected with this type of project we've encountered some challenges:

- The Right of Way must be reduced to preserve the preschool parking lot, requiring approval from utilities and neighbors, a lengthy process.
- A staffing change in the city planning department led to a new team, which informed us that our plans needed to be redesigned to meet new building code requirements for educational institutions. This includes expanding the tornado shelter and making the building single-story (or adding sprinklers, which would exceed the budget)

We've nearly completed the redesign and the plans are currently with engineers. We're also working through the Right of Way reduction process and accepting new contractor bids. Our hope is to break ground in February and finish by August 2025, though these timelines are very optimistic. As a backup, we're in discussions with ONSC about a potential '25-'26 school year and exploring other location options around town.

We're very grateful to ONSC for allowing us to use the Lake Fayetteville space. The trails and ONSC programming have provided wonderful opportunities for our students. We'll have access to this space through May 16, 2025, and are tentatively planning to hold the last two weeks of school at our afterschool site and in the farmyard at our home location.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us! We know the unknowns can be unsettling, and as a school, we promise to continue to provide the gentle and holistic, nature-focused education that supports children's development, regardless of our location.



Your Voice Matters

Parents are invited to submit their questions or inquiries to a centralized shared document, where the administrative staff will be regularly checking in to stay up to date on the concerns and requests from the community. This ensures that we can provide timely and relevant communication in response to your questions. You can also suggest topics you'd like to see in the next spring issue of the newsletter.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uwfs80Ee3lcGM5-Z_7JB7gGNAd8bB6lOC43lfgUsvCs/edit

This link will also be sent in a brightwheel message :)

Student projects
showcased at the
end of this newsletter



Nature Awaits: Discover the Wonders of Outdoor Education by Ms. Dominique

Turtles:

In our kindergarten outdoor education classes, we begin each session with a sharing circle, where we choose a topic to share about. This gives the children a chance to practice listening to one another and helps us build stronger connections as a group. I believe this time is also grounding, allowing us to center ourselves before heading outdoors.

Next, I read them a nature-themed book, which sets the stage for our outdoor activities. After the reading, we engage in a small game, hike, or activity designed to deepen their connection with nature. On our walks, we focus on using our five senses to heighten their awareness of the natural world around them. We take our time, slowing down to notice the details along the trail.

Occasionally, I introduce more complex topics, such as the food chain, shelter building, and fire safety. It's incredible to witness how deeply they already care for nature and are eager to protect it. Over the next few months, I'll be teaching them important survival skills, including fire building, shelter building, and compass use. We'll also continue practicing our hiking, sharpening our observation skills, and focusing on quietness and stillness in nature.

Rooted in Nature



My main goal is to help build their confidence in the outdoors. What truly amazes me is how much they already understand and appreciate the environment, and how they grasp the interconnectedness of nature and our impact on it. After our survival skills lessons, we will move into practicing stewardship, learning how to care for the earth. I am so proud of them and the incredible progress they've made!

Owls:

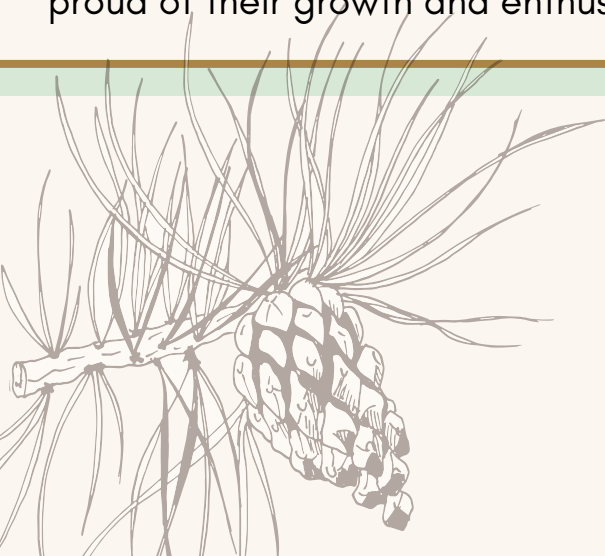
With the Owls students, we begin each class with a sharing circle, where we choose a topic, and each student has 20-30 seconds to share their thoughts. We use a talking stick, which helps ensure that only the person holding it is speaking. The goal of the sharing circle is twofold: to signal the start of our class and to give students the opportunity to practice active listening.

In the first few months of school, we focused on nature studies, exploring topics like trees, leaves, the food chain, and seeds. I also introduced nature journaling, and we'll continue to practice this throughout the year. Nature journaling encourages students to slow down and observe the natural world more closely, helping them develop a deeper connection to and appreciation for the environment.

Over the next few months, we'll shift our focus to survival skills. We've already covered the 10 essentials for hiking, the fire triangle, and the different materials needed to build a successful fire. We've also learned about the three types of fires that can be built. In the coming weeks, we'll dive into compass reading and map skills, followed by shelter building, Wilderness First Aid, and knot tying.

Once we've covered survival skills, we'll move on to practicing deeper environmental stewardship, teaching the students how to care for the natural world in a more intentional way.

My approach is to introduce each topic and then pair it with an activity or game that reinforces what they've learned. They're doing an amazing job, and I'm incredibly proud of their growth and enthusiasm.



Rooted in Nature



Kinder Classroom Chronicles

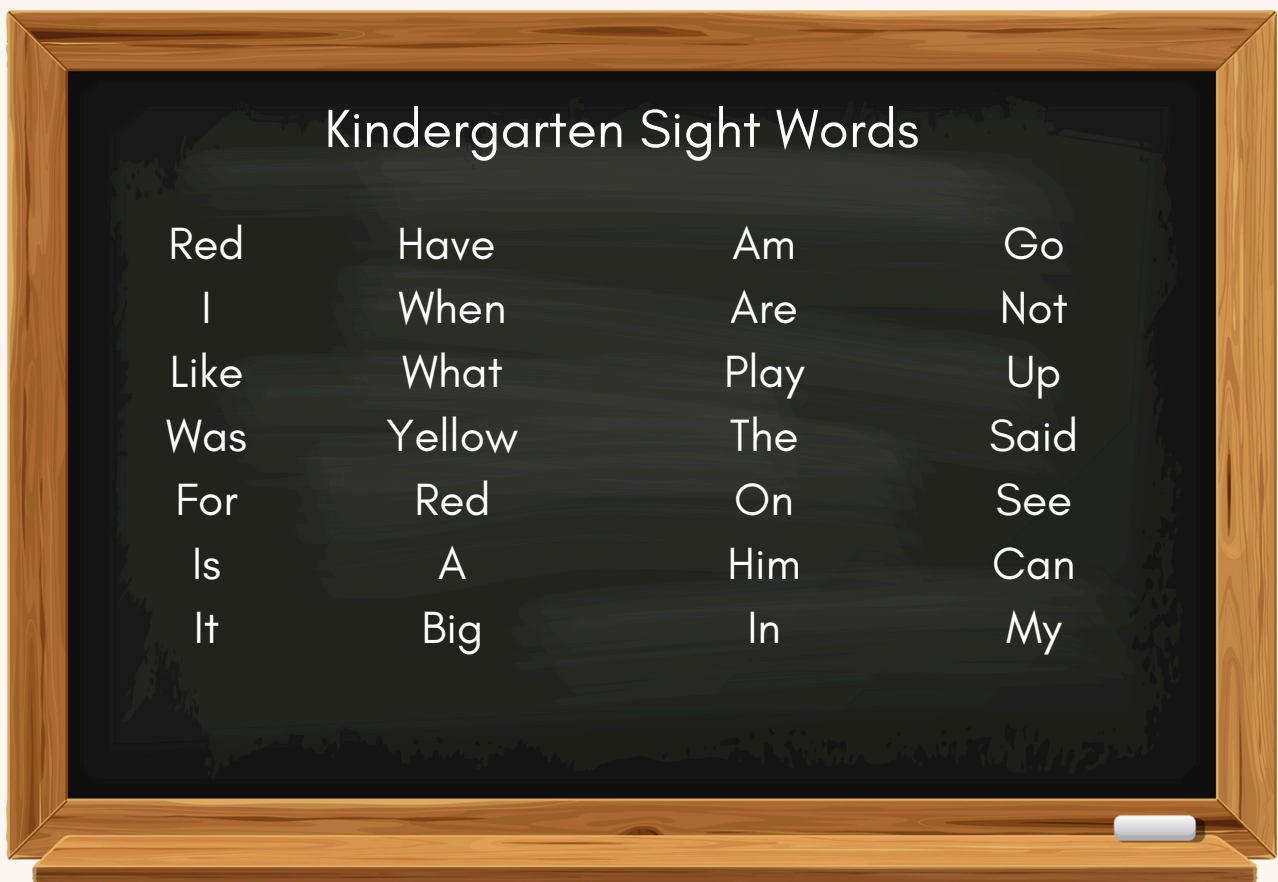
by Mrs Stormi

Kindergarten Literacy

Reading opens up new worlds and ideas for children. Our Language area is designed to develop essential reading skills and in this space, children learn the phonetic sounds of each letter. To support a wide range of interests and reading levels, we offer a variety of books throughout the classroom. Reading instruction combines phonetics with the memorization of no-phonetic words, helping children progress from simple texts to more complex ones. This development continues both at school with the teacher and at home with their families.

Kindergarten Math

In Kindergarten, children begin with the fundamentals of numbers 1-10, learning to recognize both the quantity and the symbol for each, first independently and then together. As they master these concepts, they eagerly move on to the decimal system, where their fascination with larger numbers—like 9999—makes the progression both natural and exciting.



Owls Classroom Chronicles

by Mrs Jitka

This fall, our group of Owls has been busy diving into the world of Montessori learning. We began our studies with a broad exploration of the universe's origins, the emergence of simple life, and various cultural perspectives on these processes—ultimately leading to the coming of humans. This all-encompassing introduction provides a foundation for our future studies, offering a point of reference for every subject we explore in the elementary classroom.

Our students have also been introduced to various land and water forms through the beautiful Waseca landform mat, puzzle maps, and in-depth studies of Oceania. As part of this project, the children practiced independent research, structured their writing, and presented their findings to the youngest members of our school, as well as to parents.

In math, individualized small group lessons are a regular part of our routine, with each student progressing at their own skillset pace. Using Montessori materials like the colored bead bars, square and cube chains, stamp game, checkerboard, test tube division materials, and the divided fractional circle, the students are being exposed to important mathematical concepts to master.

Our literacy work has been equally engaging. Students have been progressing through Waseca reading boxes and grammar boxes, and they have been writing in a variety of creative ways. They've written poetry, kept journals, and completed reports. Our oldest Owls are honing their skills in opinion writing. Through word study lessons, figurative language practice, reading comprehension exercises, and daily silent reading, students continue to enrich their active vocabulary. Our weekly read-aloud of George's Secret Key to the Universe has quickly become a favorite, and it's amazing to see how much progress each child has made in such a short time!

As we move further into the school year, there are many ways you can support your child's learning at home. Involve them in baking or cooking projects that require measurements, read aloud to them (regardless of their reading proficiency), and for an extra challenge, practice "mental math" with addition and subtraction within 20 for younger students, within 100 for older students, and multiplication/division facts for the upper elementary students.

Rooted in Nature



Looking ahead, we'll be studying the next three biomes of Oceania in December, and we'll begin learning about the biomes of South America or Africa in January. Our next writing project will focus on informative writing, where students will research and write about a variety of topics.

Thank you for supporting your child's Montessori journey!



Creative Corner: Travel Inside Art Classes by Ms Natali

This fall, we've been introducing children to a variety of art mediums, unlocking exciting opportunities for creativity and self-expression. Through hands-on exploration with materials like paint, clay, charcoal, and more, students are discovering which forms of art resonate with their unique styles and interests.

Experimenting with different mediums not only enhances their technical skills but also sparks problem-solving, imagination, and a deeper understanding of the creative process. As they build confidence in their abilities, children learn that art is a personal journey—one full of endless possibilities.



Rooted in Nature



SCHOOL NEEDS

ALL:

40 cup hot water urn

Playground Balls

Small world play zone

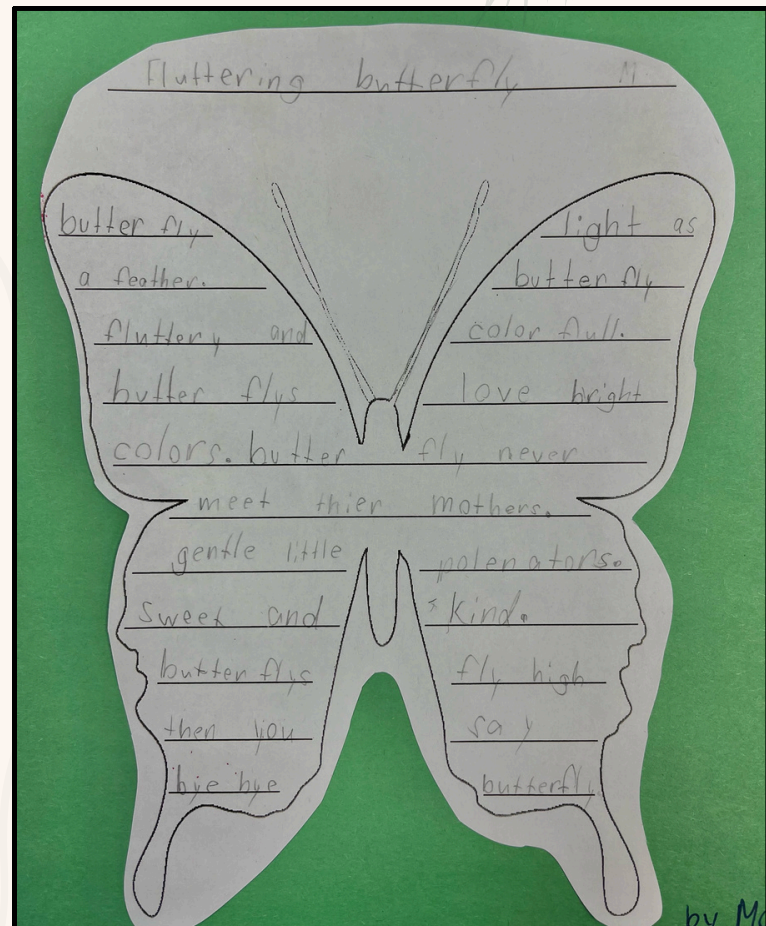
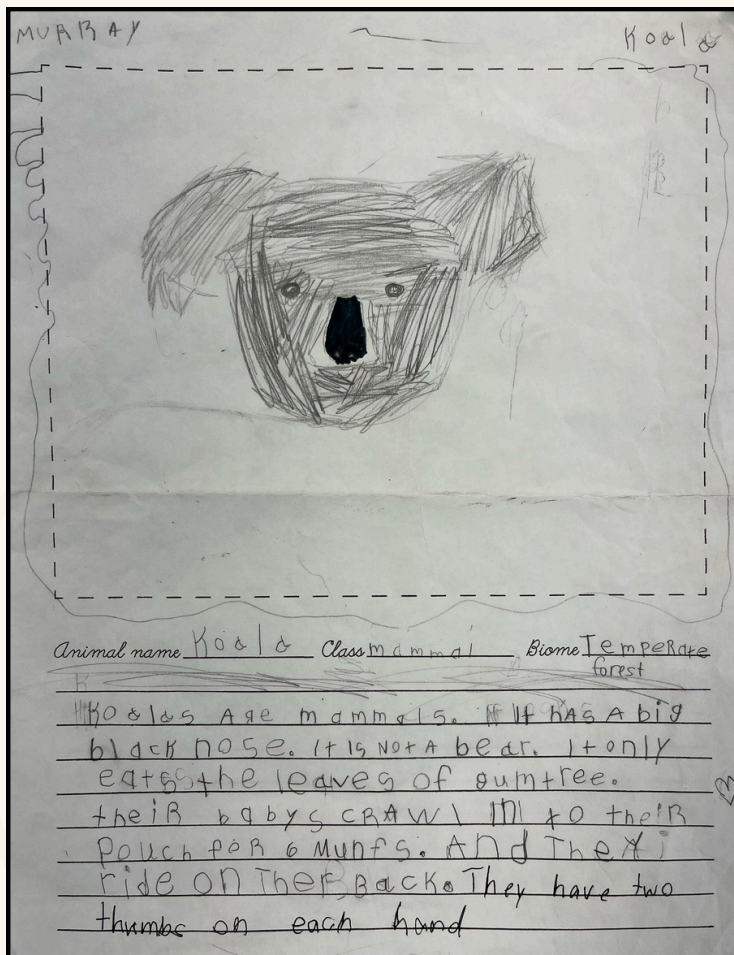
SCHOOL NEEDS

OWLS:

Pegboard for square root

Bohr board - atoms model

Creative Corner: Showcasing Classroom Projects



My smudged book

I read a good book, but the words were all smudged so I did all I could to read it. Though it was smudged, it seemed quite interesting so I still tried to read that book.

Roslyn

Emma

corroboree frog



corroboree frog
Animal name corroboree frog Class amphibian Biome Oceania
This animal is a frog it is
poisonous it has black stripes
all over its yellow body it
sleeps under logs it is only
one inch
long it is endangered

May your family have a beautiful winter and we'll see you for our next issue - spring of 2025

Rooted in Nature

