

Inspiring a Healthy Spirit, a Strong Character, and a Clear Intellect



BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

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What's Inside...

PTM News and Notes 2	Report from the Board 3	Parent-Infant Class to Start in April 7
Thank You to Parents	The Decision to Re-Enroll	School Calendar 8
Small increase in PTM dues for next year	Curriculum Matters 3	Early registration begins this month
Box Top Fridays successful!	Too Much Structure? Or Too Little?	Parent-Teacher Conferences
	MIR Scrapbook 4	
	Spring Gala: Auction items in progress	

Let Your Child Take You to School Parent/Child Night



Boy Brain/Girl Brain and Montessori

by MAURA JOYCE, HEAD OF SCHOOL

On Parent/Child Night, we invite you to follow your child as they guide you through the work they do each day, giving you lessons, answering questions, or showing off a favorite activity. Teachers will be on hand to answer questions or help as necessary.

Parent/Child Night will be held Thursday, March 8, 5–7 PM. If you have more than one child attending MIR, the schedule gives time to rotate classrooms and work with each child one-on-one.

While you may have ideas of work you want to see, your child will have his or her own agenda. We encourage you to let them lead you.

Need dinner on Thursday? Enjoy a delicious meal served by MIR's Upper Elementary students. You will also be contributing to a

(Continued on page 6)

"It is necessary, then, to give the child the possibility of developing according to the laws of his nature, so that he can become strong, and, having become strong, can do even more than we dared hope for him."—Maria Montessori

Last month, I traveled to Ft. Worth, Texas for the annual AMI Refresher Course and NAMTA Conference entitled *Engaging the Human Personality*. One of the offerings that I was lucky enough to attend was a 3-hour morning session with Michael Gurian, best selling author and co-founder of the Gurian Institute. Michael Gurian is hailed as a pioneer in the study of gender diversity and difference. He has written dozens of best-selling books about his work. Two titles of particular interest are *Nurture the Nature: Understanding and Supporting Your Child's Unique Core Personality* (for parents) and *Boys and Girls Learn Differently* (for educators). The work of the Gurian Institute is research-driven and science-

based and looks at how male and female brains work differently.

The research he shared, the stories he told, the videos and brain scans that he projected on the screen were all fascinating. I could never do them justice in my attempt to summarize that 3-hour morning with him, but I will share two points that stuck with me:

1) Between 5 weeks and 5 months *in utero*, once gender has been determined by the chromosomes, hormones rush in and activate the brain in both males and females alike. In the male, the system floods with testosterone and as it does this, it erases verbal centers on the right side of the brain. In its place, the male

(Continued on page 6)



A little bird told me...PTM News and Notes

Thank You to Parents by VANESSA LESLIE, PTM PRESIDENT

The PTM Board thanks all parents for your support. We could not sponsor all of the activities arranged for the benefit of MIR and its students without you. Here are some of the things PTM sponsors: Books for the Positive Discipline parenting class, staff appreciation breakfast, Spring Gala tickets for teachers, staff lunch in August, staff in-service, Fall Carnival, Spring Carnival, Back to School Night, and more! All of our families help to make MIR a fun and productive community.

PTM Dues Increasing for 2012/2013. As you are aware, all families contribute \$25 towards PTM dues at the beginning of each enrollment year as part of your annual fees. These dues help support the many events and benefits listed above as well as the purchase of particular items or funding for tools or resources to enhance the learning of your child. Due to increasing costs related to these, the PTM Executive Committee has voted an increase in dues, to \$30 for

the year. PTM dues have not been raised in many years, and this small increase will ensure PTM events and programs continue to be supported and subsidized for your children's enjoyment.

The Bard, Bluebird Style

Karina Brenchley of Emily and Teesie's class looks on as her class prepares to give their own twist to William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* at the February Bluebird assembly. The reworked play, written by Addison Wroolie, Skye Blee, and Anjali Carter-Rau depicted the tragic consequences of taking smart phone wars too far. iPhone or Android, that is the question!

Order from Innisbrook at Any Time

Low on wrapping paper? Need a gift? Order through Innisbrook and help support PTM. You can place orders online at innisbrook.com. Our school code is 102074.

Orders placed online will be shipped directly to your home. 40% of all purchases helps support PTM and its programs and events.

Take the Time to Save a Dime

Thank you to all the families who have collected and saved Box Tops and who participated in our February Box Top Fridays. And thank you to the Elementary students who collected the Box tops on Fridays. PTM anticipates receiving almost \$300 as a result. We hope to hold "Box Top Fridays" again in May but you can drop off the coupons any time in your child's classroom, at childcare, or at the office. For submissions made the last 6 months we have already received almost \$400!

For more information on the Box Tops for Education program, contact Annie Rumary (annie@onpressprinting.com) or Jen Burrows (jlynn05@me.com), or visit boxtops4education.com. Our school ID is 412743.

Bluebird T-Shirts On Sale

Due to printing issues with the previous vendor, the t-shirts have some very slight flaws. These t-shirts will be sold at a discounted price of \$8. Shirts are available in black



(Continued on page 6)

Report from the Board

The Decision to Re-Enroll

by DEAN SILLIMAN, SECRETARY

March is here already which will bring some interesting things: March Madness, the start of spring, even a 9.0+ earthquake predicted for March 22, 2012 caused by the planetary orbits. (Google it—but I make no guarantee of accuracy.)

Oh, and March is the time to decide whether to submit the re-enrollment packet for your children to attend MIR next year.

For some, the decision to keep their children at MIR may require almost no thought at all. For others, it may be a more difficult decision. I'd like to share my family's thought process on that issue.

For us, the decision to keep our daughters at MIR is about the education, setting, and people here. I may be an MIR parent and on the Board but I'm not an expert on Montessori education. What I have seen here over the last handful of years, however, leads me to believe that our kids would not receive the same nature and quality of education elsewhere. It's great to wander through classrooms without rows of desks and walls of white boards, and where there are interesting things all around. It's great to see the children engaged in a system where the lust for learning is the thing, not the next standardized test. And I know my daughters benefit greatly from an education system where they can work ahead on subjects that come more easily to them and linger upon subjects that do not. They would not get this education elsewhere.

The setting at MIR is also irreplaceable. Another parent recently told me that his family considers MIR to be their "home away from home." Part of this inviting nature undoubtedly is due to MIR's sprawling campus setting within the citrus groves. Part of it must be the sense of calm and care here. Perhaps part of it is even the structured flexibility of the class-

(Continued on page 7)



Curriculum Matters

By PETER DAVIDSON,
ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL

Too Much Structure? Or Too Little?

"We must support as much as possible the child's desires for activity; not wait on him, but educate him to be independent."—Maria Montessori

On a recent morning I had two sets of prospective parents scheduled to observe in the same primary class, a half hour apart. If you were a prospective parent yourself in the last three years, you'll recall that after your observation, you got a chance to meet with me to ask questions. I usually start the conversation by asking, "What did you see in the classroom? Did anything surprise you? What were your impressions?"

On this particular morning I was struck by the complete contrast in the impressions of the two couples, for while the first said it was too structured, the second said that it wasn't structured enough! How could two couples have such different impressions of the same classroom on the same day? I needed clarification, so I asked each couple some questions to try to better understand what they meant by structure.

To the first couple I asked, "Was there a teacher standing over the children making them all do the same activity at the same time?" "Oh, no," the couple responded. "Well then, were the children making individual choices of activity," I continued, "and did they seem to be engaged and enjoying the activities they chose?" "Oh, yes," they assured me, "but it was too calm and quiet." And so I had an opportunity to remind them that when people, whether children or adults, are engaged in activities that satisfy their inner need to grow and self-actualize, they don't run around and shriek and giggle. Instead they display a demeanor of self-assurance, satisfaction, and calm enjoyment, just like you saw in the Montessori classroom. Upon reflection, they conceded that I had a point, and that what they reacted to as too much structure was actually just the right

(Continued on page 7)

MIR Scrapbook: Spring Gala



Auction items in progress...



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The results of the auction will be reported in next month's issue. Suffice it to say it was a night that lived up to the theme!

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BOY BRAIN/GIRL BRAIN *(cont.)*

brain has an active spatial/visual/mechanical center.

2) Female brains are going through hormonal activation as well, but they retain the verbal centers on both the right and left side of the brain. These verbal centers are connected to emotions and sensorial input.

There are lots of conclusions that could be drawn from just this little bit of information and perhaps people are tempted to make judgments, “Girls are good at this, boys are good at that.” However, Gurian does not do that. Rather, he kept the discussion focused on how to nurture the nature of these brain differences and capitalize on it for both girls and boys.

His research concludes that most boys (although there are always exceptions) learn effectively by manipulating objects through space. Girls learn effectively verbally, which could mean reading, writing, and, most importantly, talking. As with boys, there are always exceptions, but much of what he said about both genders resonated with many of the teachers in the room.

Gurian shared that there is much vulnerability for the boys in literacy. Statistically, they are falling behind in school as so much of traditional education relies on those verbal centers. “Boys have a lot of Huck Finn in them—they don’t, on average, learn as well as girls by sitting still, concentrating, multitasking, listening to words,” he has said. Studies and surveys he shared show huge fear among parents about their boys because more and more of them



hate school.

On the flip side, girls are vulnerable in the areas of math and science, and they continue to be behind in physics, geography, astronomy, and technology.

But then he cited strategies used by teachers to activate both male and female brains when faced with the same assignment. One example involved a writing assignment with middle school students. When asked to just “write,” girls tend to dive right in, as their verbal centers kick into gear. A large percentage of boys won’t be apt to just dive in if it is a straight writing assignment. Gurian suggested inviting the boys to spend an hour drawing their ideas in cartoon panels before writing anything, activating their spatial/mechanical centers. Similarly he shared stories of teachers who invited their girl students to engage in a discussion about a geometry concept before having to do their graphing assignment.

Most interesting to me was that Gurian, a father of two, sent his children to Montessori school through grade 6. (He stopped there because there was no middle school option available to him). He contends that Montessori has strategies that work with the nature of both male and female brains. Manipulating materials, open discussion, drawing, writing, reading, building projects—all give children multiple opportunities to learn, no matter what the nature of their brain.

PARENT/CHILD NIGHT *(cont.)*

(Continued from page 1)

great cause—this is a kick off fundraiser for the 2013 6th year trip. For \$5 you get a plate of spaghetti (plain, marinara, or meat sauce), salad (ranch or Italian dressing), and water or lemonade. Dinner will be served 5–7 PM in Margaretann’s classroom on the North Campus. Thank you for your support!

PTM NEWS AND NOTES *(cont.)*

(Continued from page 2)

or pink in various sizes. PTM is in the process of confirming a new vendor for t-shirts in future.

PTM Events

Our next meeting will be held Tuesday, March 27 at 6 PM. All parents are welcome!

The next Bluebird Day is Friday, March 23.

CURRICULUM MATTERS *(cont.)*

(Continued from page 3)

amount as it freed children to pursue their own interests and find engagement and satisfaction. I could tell that they left the school pondering a new insight into the nature of childhood, and were impressed despite themselves.

Then it was the second couple's turn. When they commented that, "There doesn't seem to be any structure!" I had to smile. I shared the comment of the couple before them and then asked, "Were there children running around shrieking and giggling, fighting and taking things from one another, crying or misbehaving?" "Oh, no," they assured me, "but they weren't all doing the same activity. In fact, there were 24 children doing 24 different things! It took us a few minutes to even find the teacher!" And so I described for them the underlying, nearly invisible structure of a Montessori classroom that combines freedom and responsibility, and calls forth self-direction, self-discipline and cooperation from these little beings. They too conceded that I had a point and went away equally thoughtful and impressed.

This is not an unusual occurrence, and it always makes me smile, because it occurs to me that as long as we continue to get both kinds of comments—to some parents it looks like too much structure and to others not enough—then we must be doing something very, very right indeed.

"The greatest sign of success for a teacher...is to be able to say, 'The children are now working as if I did not exist.'"—Maria Montessori

BOARD REPORT *(cont.)*

(Continued from page 3)

room setting as mentioned above. Whatever the source, the inviting MIR setting provides a place where we feel happy to have our children spend their time and where our children look forward to attending each day.

Finally, the people at MIR make continued involvement here an easy decision for us. I cannot imagine someone better to guide our children's education, and much of their daily lives, than the unbelievably wonderful teachers and staff at MIR. Also, our children get to enjoy other students who are lively and engaged and thoughtful. But it's not just about the kids. My wife and I have made friends with other parents here who have become very important to us and with whom we hope to be close forever. Even serving on the Board is a joy because of the quality of the people there. There's just something about the people who are drawn to MIR that in turn make MIR indispensable.

Assuming we survive the March 22 earthquake, we will all have another year of making decisions about where we want to spend limited resources including our money, time, and energy. Every family will prioritize differently. I hope that sharing my family's views about why we have prioritized MIR will provide some framework for your family's decision. We hope to see you here next year.

Parent-Infant Class to Start in April

MIR will host a 4-week Parent –Infant Class for children from six weeks to 17 months and their parents. The goal of the class is to assist with the child's development through



small-group interaction. Parents will learn how to observe, support, and encourage the child's natural development.

Special materials and furniture provided for the class will aid the infant with movement, hand/eye coordination, and the development of the senses. The teacher acts as the link between the prepared environment and the children, helping to provide experiences within the environment. These experiences are designed to require enough effort from the child to be interested and to allow the child to feel successful.

The class concludes with a "parent only" discussion group, which will deepen your appreciation and understanding of your child's stages of development. The discussion also covers nutrition, the child's environment, and discipline.

The class will be taught by MIR infant and toddler trained teacher Liana McCall. Liana has taught in the MIR Toddler program for 13 years.

The class is open to the public. It will be held at MIR on Wednesdays, 4–5:15 PM, April 4, 11, 18, and 25. The discussion group will meet on Friday, April 27, 4–5 PM. The cost is \$50. Families must RSVP at 909-793-6989.

BIRTHDAYS



students

Jaxon Harp	3/1
Taj Hoo	3/1
Felix Balbo	3/4
Catherine Mikhailova	3/4
Eric Chue	3/5
Calder Ray-Fearon	3/6
Nathan Law	3/7
Sarah Najjar	3/8
Matthew Mikhailov	3/10
Chloe Pang	3/13
Madeline Tilton	3/13
Citlali Salas	3/15
Kaleigh Stanfield	3/15
Asher Scholz	3/17
Julia Martin	3/18
Jacob Wickstrom	3/19
Adrian Balarezo	3/20
Jayden Gill	3/20
Sunny Hudson	3/21
Simon Owen	3/22
Blake Rice	3/26
Everett Smart	3/28
Thomas Van Esch	3/29
Ayaan Chandak	3/30
Anja Eldevik	3/31

staff

Nikki Delgado	3/5
Sara-Frances Clemens	3/10
Peter Dow	3/13
Rick Campa	3/26
Jody Pighin	3/26

Schedule Your Parent-Teacher Conference(s)

Parent-Teacher conferences offer important time with your child's teacher. Conferences will be held March 29 and 30 and allow you to learn about your child's progress and the work that they do each day. You will receive a progress report for your child and be able to discuss each academic and social/emotional area one-on-one with your child's teachers. **Sign up in the office for a time slot. If you are unavailable at these times, please arrange an alternate time with your child's teacher.**

Early Registration Begins in March

Take advantage of early registration for the 2012-2013 school year, which is open only to current families in March. Families who re-enroll by March 30 receive a discount on the registration fees.

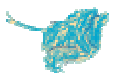
Early registration allows you to secure a space for your child. We have had a waiting pool for many of our programs this year and anticipate full classes again next year. After April 2, we will accept registration of new students. Delays in registration may result in the lack of an available space for your child.

Enrollment packets have been mailed to all families. Please read your enrollment packet carefully. There are changes to the tuition rates for next year. If you have questions about the changes, feel free to bring them to the Board of Trustees Open Forum to be held on Monday, March 5 at 6:30 PM.

Thank you for being part of the Montessori in Redlands community and allowing us the privilege to partner with you in educating your children!

MARCH 2012

27	28 Lango classes Emily/Teesie Upper EI trip to Bowers Museum Positive Discipline class, 6:30-8:30	29 Kara and Dorama's class trip to the LA Zoo Soccer clinics	1 Lango classes Early Registration begins Choir	2/3 Childcare reservation deadline for Spring Break MIR Spring Gala
5 Board Open Forum, 6:30 PM	6 Lango classes Positive Discipline class, 6:30-8:30	7 Nikki's and Margaretann/Nicole's trip to Sturges Center Soccer clinics	8 Principal for a Day: Jasper Mueller School closes at 5 PM Spaghetti Dinner PARENT/CHILD NIGHT Choir	9 Staff in-service day. No school; no childcare.
12	13	14	15	16
Spring Break. No school; childcare by reservation.				
19 Childcare reservation deadline for Parent-Teacher Conferences	20 Lango classes Positive Discipline class, 6:30-8:30	21	22 Marie & Sara's trip to Kid Space Museum Lango classes Choir	23 Bluebird assembly, 9:15 AM
26	27 Lango classes PTM Meeting, 6 PM Positive Discipline class, 6:30-8:30	28	29	30 Early Registration ends Parent-Teacher Conferences. No school; childcare by reservation.



TWEET: twitter.com/mirmatters