



# ALPINE MONTESSORI

*"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled"*  
— Plutarch

## Notes From 908

### DATES TO REMEMBER

**April 1**

*Parties, all classrooms*

**April 2**

*School closed*

**April 5-9**

*Primary PT  
Conferences*

**April 12-16**

*Iowa Test of Basic  
Skills (ITBS),  
elementary only*

**April 19-23**

*Elementary PT  
Conferences*



The frosts of a few weeks since seem like a long time ago as the trees are bursting into bloom and spring has arrived in one big blustery breath! When classes resume after spring break, and the days are warming up, there's always a feeling of being on the downhill slope to summer. It's natural that eyes look to the long summer break and the freedoms it affords us all. Now that April has arrived, it is time to hold our yearly testing session of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in the elementary classrooms. You may remember that we tested the students at the beginning of this year as a make-up after the closure of the school during lock-down. This will be the only time we have ever tested twice in one school year! We strive to keep testing week as stress free as possible. Indeed, most of the children seem to look forward to it! It's a nice change of routine, and we like to organize special snacks for them through the week. If you're interested in providing a healthy protein rich brain snack for the kids, keep your eye out for the email to join our list soon! The results of the ITBS tests serve primarily to inform teachers and parents of academic weaknesses and strengths in comparison to the general population in the US. Find more about testing week in the following pages. Parent/teacher conferences follow soon after, and we will schedule convenient time slots for them through a sign up sheet nearby the drop-off/pick-up areas outside.



*"O wind, a-blowing all day long, O wind, that sings so  
loud a song!"* —Robert Louis Stevenson

It's also time to start planning for the summer and next school year! An email will be going out soon detailing what the summer program will look like this year. In regard to the pandemic, class size will necessarily be modest, and enrollment will be on a first come first serve basis.

# The Primary Side



In conjunction with the lovely spring weather we have been enjoying, the primary class has been working on plenty of spring themed botany, which the children love! Necklace making has also been quite popular of late, as you may have noticed by the number of colorful beads coming home! If you find you have too many and would like to “recycle” your necklace, we would be happy to discreetly accept beads for reuse. Thank you!



## ITBS

Elementary students are gearing up for the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) to begin this month. In order for your child to do their very best it is important that they are prepared for testing week both physically and mentally. Below are some answers to frequently asked questions to help give you an idea of what to expect.

**Why ITBS?** ITBS is a nationally standardized achievement test for grades K-12 students. It is used by some states and a large number of private schools to measure grade-level performance in key academic areas. Testing begins in 1st grade at AMS.

**Why does AMS administer the test?** These tests are given as a tool for teachers and parents in order to help detect academic strengths and weaknesses in comparison to the general population of students in this country. Because we do not give graded assignments in Montessori, the ITBS scores are the only concrete measure we can offer public schools when a student transitions out of AMS. However, we never share the scores with any entity without consent of the parents. We also believe that it is a good idea to familiarize the students with test-taking, a skill many will need in the future.

**Will the test scores be available to parents?** Yes. Testing takes place just before parent/teacher conferences so that your child's teachers can discuss the tests with you. ITBS equips the school with scoring conversions and interpretation guides. Your child's teacher is familiar with these texts and will clearly explain the results to you at conference.

**How should I help my child prepare?** We cannot stress enough how important it is that the children arrive at school well rested and well fed every day during testing week. We will also have nutritious snacks to share with the students during breaks. Each child should bring a bottle of water to be kept at the school and refilled every morning.

**What if my child is sick and misses a day of testing?** While it is preferable to test the children together, we will offer make-up tests the following week. Please be sure to let the school know if your child is unable to attend school on any days during the testing week. *Students that arrive late will not be allowed into the classroom until testing is finished for the day.*

# Lower Elementary Lines



As we move into Spring, the lower el has been busy with their next round of country reports. This time, Africa, with it's wide variety of cultures and traditions, provides a perspective of place to the children. Heather Rickleff, who spent time in Mauritania, came and gave a wonderful presentation to the classes detailing her experience there with the Peace Corps, including clothing and textiles, as well as lots of fascinating images and stories. The classes loved it! Many thanks to Heather for sharing with us! Other areas of study lately include non-Newtonian liquids, animals, and the core studies of language and math. Ms. Joyce has had some really engaging science experiments prepared for the students, so lots of fun happening! We are also preparing for Iowa testing April 12-16th. Test taking for first graders can be a bit of a mystery, but 1st and 2nd graders have the majority of the test read to them, and we take the road very gently. We spread the testing out throughout the week so that there is lots of time for fun crafts, extra play, and fun nutrient-rich snacking. As always, please make sure your child has a water bottle with them at school that week, and most of all, that they arrive well-rested and fed, in order for them to feel their very best!

*We get by with a **LOT** of help from our friends. We would like to thank the following people and businesses for their contributions to our school.*

**WE THANK YOU!**

*Heather Rickleff, for the wonderful Africa talk she presented to the classes!*

# From the Upper El



While the spring in West Texas can be unseasonably warm, we are still experiencing quite chilly mornings! We'd like to gently remind parents that children need to be dressed warmly to work in and out of doors, so layers are best! Thank you so much!

Students in the upper elementary have been busy brushing up on some of the skills that are expected to appear in the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Also in lessons lately, platonic solids, electricity, and botany! The warm sun of late has drawn the students into the garden as well, so the pleasure of scrape and dig, turn and plant has been a favorite too! The children have been in the process of transplanting tender plants into the ground in the hopes of seeing them come to some fruition before we break for the summer. After the monochrome of winter, the green garden beckons!

Believe it or not, the students really look forward to testing week in the elementary. While Montessori operates on such a different plane than that of graded assignments, we believe that the opportunity to experience test-taking is a good one to offer the children. In order to soothe any anxiety created by the change of atmosphere, the teachers do a wonderful job keeping the mood light and festive. Throughout the week, the children will be enjoying protein-rich snacks, work on fun craft projects, and spend extra time on the playground too! As it turns out, we always seem to have fun with testing week! Test results are never shared with any entity except the parents, and really serve to shed light on where the kids stand academically compared to other students in the United States. In a pandemic year, this test will be a valuable tool to illuminate areas that we need to brush up on after the interruptions we have experienced. Lots of thoughtful work has already been done in making up the lost ground, thanks to the tireless work of our teachers. Test results will be presented to parents very soon during parent/teacher conferences April 19-23rd. We cannot stress enough how important it is that the students arrive well rested and fed during IOWA testing, in order for them to do their very best. A water bottle is also essential. Many thanks for your help in making testing week smooth for the students!

