

# Cornerstone Monthly Newsletter

November 2023

## Toddler Community

Toddlers at Work on a November Morning!



## Children's House 1

One of the most exciting things in the past month was the arrival of our new sandbox! Digging the new sandbox began in October and the children got to observe the process unfold over the course of a couple weeks (hole being dug, lining it with stumps, etc.). They were very eagerly awaiting

this new addition! We had many conversations around what they thought happening next and what we thought the final product would look like. On the last day, the older children got to watch as the workers finally brought the sand and filled the empty space at last! We went outside later that afternoon and the children enjoyed walking around the perimeter, balancing on the stumps, more than playing in the actual sand!



## Children's House 2

One thing I've really enjoyed in the past few weeks is playing cooperative board games with the children. Young children are learning to accept consequences and games that involve a winner often feel hurtful. Cooperative games help children learn to work together, take turns and focus on common goals. Three games we have in Children's House 2 are: Hoot, Owl, Hoot; Lion in my Way; and The Secret Door. The Secret Door is a game from the 90's that I had as a child and recently found at Goodwill. It's a memory matching game with the added thrill of solving the mystery of the three treasures hidden behind the secret door. In Hoot, Owl, Hoot we work together to fly all the owls back to the nest before the sun rises. Lion in my Way is a fun game to explore possible ways of overcoming obstacles - I love hearing children think of creative solutions and exploring problem solving. If you have cooperative board games that you like to play- please share them with us! In other news- we want to highlight the great time we had mixing up pumpkin soup this month - see photo!





## Lower Elementary Garden



There is so much happening in the Garden community! We are busy researching cephalopods, learning long division, classifying the states of matter, writing creative stories, and so much more. It has been an exciting month as more and more big work projects are being created. If you want to know about interesting and unique animals, Garden is the place to be! We are also thrilled to have started “Challenge Fridays” this month. Each Friday the children are invited to participate in a small group challenge. These STEM challenges not only help them with problem solving, but their collaboration, negotiation, and teamwork skills. It is such a joy to observe

this great work. The first challenge was building a tower of cups without touching the cups with their hands.



## Lower Elementary Pond

Pond has had a busy November. We started the month off with preparing for conferences. A few of the children were able to participate in a going out to visit a local animation studio after doing research on animation and they got to see the behind the scenes of the process. There were a few bald eagles flying near the school and the children were fascinated in observing them; some of them even started researching bald eagles and are hoping to build a model of one! Another exciting



thing we have done these last few weeks is we started an activity Friday afternoon and each child was able to participate in a different group: some children did some cooking in the classroom, some of us learned/practiced some rhythm games, some painted or made braided bracelets, and some children did some leaf rubbings. We have also been reading a few Roald Dahl books. We read *Fantastic Mr. Fox* and are currently reading *James and the Giant Peach* and they are invested in the antics of these creatures on the peach and the adventures they are going on. They are getting so frustrated when we stop on a cliffhanger and having to wait until the next day to finish it!



## Upper Elementary Forest

Between earth and space science lessons, conference reflections and preparation, and lots of excitement around various areas of math, November just flew by! Fall conferences were a “turning point” for many of the 4th Years whose independence and confidence levels have grown noticeably in recent weeks. Forest “hums” daily with the sound and energy of peaceful



collaborative work. It is a beautiful thing to observe and I hope that you have the opportunity this year to witness the engagement and joy that comes with learning and growing in a Montessori environment.

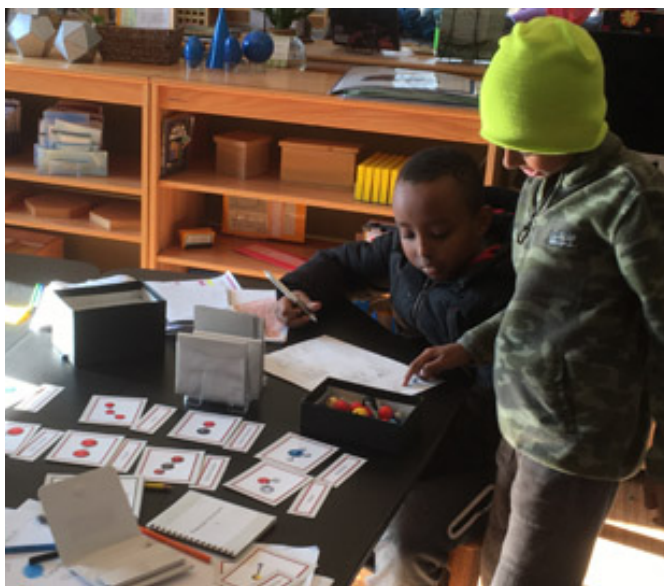
A group of Forest & Marsh 6th Years wrote persuasive essays in order to be included in a “going out” planned by Safi K., a Forest 6th Year student, to the University of Minnesota’s Interactive Visualization Lab on Thursday, November 30th. These students will present their learning at Cornerstone Cafe in the new year.

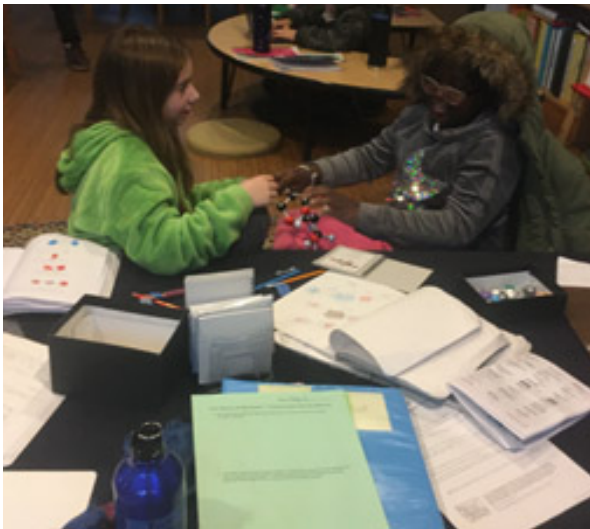
Some of the “big” work that is/will be happening in Forest through Winter Break includes: The Story of My Name research and essay, the Timeline of My Life autobiographical storytelling project, and a student-initiated/led Bird



Identification project. Forest children have also started their Fall/Winter Phenology Journals, which includes morning and afternoon measurements and observations of temperature, winds, clouds, precipitation, sun and moon cycles, and animal activity in order to develop their “toolkit” of scientific thinking skills.

Forest children came back from their holiday break refreshed and ready to work, and we’re excited for what December will bring!





## Upper Elementary Marsh

Like all the classrooms, Marsh has been busy in November! Children completed their Story of My Name essays and were able to share them at conferences. Conference prep took time in the beginning of the month, and children were well-prepared to share work, reflections, and goals. It was fantastic to see every family in Marsh during conference week!

Baking and juicing work have continued, all kinds of science and math work are keeping us busy, square root work is out every day, and some children can't get enough perplexor puzzles. We had a special presentation from the Family Tree Clinic about Health Relationships and have been lucky enough to zoom weekly with a classmate who is currently in Cote d'Ivoire visiting family! Questions from our class about life in West Africa and from her family about life in Minnesota have made for fascinating conversation - and yes, we do talk about the weather every week!

We just finished our read aloud book, *The Windeby Puzzle* by Lois Lowry, which was a great read. It combined the real history of an ancient body found in a bog in Germany and interspersed that with the author's imagining of what events might have led to the death of that young person. Lowry also shared some about her process of researching, planning, and writing, and the book plants seeds of curiosity for continued work about ancient peoples, cultural rituals, and history in general.





