

Cornerstone Monthly Newsletter

September 2023

Welcome to Cornerstone's new monthly newsletter, focused specifically on classroom environments! Inside, you'll get a glimpse of the children's work this past month and hear a little bit from each guide.

Enjoy!

Jess - (Acting Head of School during Alyssa's maternity leave. Baby Sadie was born on Wednesday 9/27! Alyssa and Sadie are both doing well.)

Toddlers

Welcome to the Toddler Community! In our mornings, we greet each other with warm wishes for a happy day, sing songs to celebrate each other's names, and share hugs with mutual consent. Some mornings may bring tears, while others flow seamlessly. As we embark on this new school year, we all miss our families and homes, but with time, we'll settle into our new routines and surroundings.

While the weather is still favorable, we enjoy extended breaks in our outdoor environment. And on occasion, we even have the opportunity to have breakfast outdoors!



Children's House 1

The big news in CH1 this week has been the HUGE sunflower head that Hazel's family donated. Children have loved using the tweezers to pluck seeds and watch their collection in the bowl grow.



Children's House 2

We loved seeing the collaboration in the sandbox today. Children were psyched for the opportunity to move around wet sand and create a channel system for the pooling water. The Children's House community has been working on ways to welcome messier play in the last school year (mud, some water use, etc). We see so much wonderful collaboration and cooperation during these opportunities because children are motivated to create together. In general, anytime we can have more moveable parts in our outdoor play space the better! In order to promote more productive play opportunities, we promise to help your children clean-up after these messy adventures and help them make time and learn the process.



In other news, Children's House 2 is happy to welcome Katte Maldonado as a para in our community. Katte is a former Cornerstone student who started in Children's House 1 and continued through 6th grade. It's been so fun to hear her reminisce about the things she remembers from Children's House, Cornerstone and a Montessori education. We hope to continue to shed light on what lifelong experiences come from being a Cornerstone Montessori student.

Lower Elementary Pond

The Pond children are exploring nouns this week, there are many noun books and posters being made and they love to tell anyone who will ask that "everything is a noun!" We have some large math work going on, some multiplication and divisibility work. We also have a lot of emerging readers discovering and relishing in the joy of reading, and sharing that joy with other children in the room by reading together.



Lower Elementary Garden

We have had a beautiful start to the school year in Garden! The children learned and performed *What a Wonderful World* for our UN International Peace Day celebration. It was such a fitting song for thinking about and celebrating peace. As we were learning the children shared some of their ideas about beautiful, peaceful things they see in the world. We spoke about how peace is not only about stopping fighting and violence. Peace is about creating the community and world we want by making it wonderful. We spent several days discussing what kind of community we want to have at school and what we need to do to create that kind of place. We are excited to create a classroom community where everyone is welcome, invited, safe, and can do their very best learning.



Upper Elementary Forest

The Back-to-School Transition from Mara, Forest Lead Guide

Coming back to school is a *huge* life experience for your child each year, and *especially* for the children who are transitioning to a new school and/or a new learning environment. Each and every day, your child is dedicating all of their energy toward learning how to live, learn, work, and operate in a community with 30 other students and several adults! Being “present” for all of the new social, emotional, and academic experiences requires a *lot* of mental and emotional energy. It is typical for Upper Elementary children to be especially wiped out and experiencing big emotions when they come home. Many children fall asleep in the classroom during our silent reading time as a result of working so hard! You and your child might find that going to bed a bit earlier and not being on electronics for at least an hour before bedtime is helpful.

How are people settling into the Forest Classroom? from Selected Students

Many students are feeling good, though some are nervous and others don't know how they feel. Fiona, a new-to-Forest student, said she was a little sad that she wasn't in her previous classroom with all of her friends, but she's settling in quite well and making new friends in Forest. Teachers, similar to students, are also getting back into their routine. A Forest teacher named Will said that getting back into the school routine was challenging. Another teacher, Tegan, said that they love the Forest classroom and enjoy the students' diverse ideas. Overall? "Everything is working beautifully," says Mara, the lead guide. We've gotten off to a great start to the year! (By Fatima F.)

Forest has interacted with a lot of animals so far this year. There have been frogs the size of peanut M&M's, ducks in the outdoor lunch area, and even cats, too. In addition, Forest has had an encounter with an injured bird when it slammed into a window, THUNK! Then, our classroom assistant Tegan went out and gave the bird some water until it felt well enough to fly away. Returning to the cats, there was a kitten that some of the teachers found alone behind Prairie. After a few teachers worked hard to catch it, Tegan took the cat home to get it vet care and a loving home. Just the other day, there was a tired bumblebee on the back deck. A group of students placed water droplets nearby so it could get its energy back and fly away, which it did. Several students made houses for bugs (By Evan D.)

We've already had some really fun events this year. Peace Day, for me, is always really fun, but I get a little nervous and a lot of "what ifs" get stuck in my head. This year, the Peace Day celebration felt really short, which is different from past years. Each elementary class sang a song, presented Peace Quotes, or presented Peace Poems that they wrote. The Fall Festival is always very fun to me, especially this year because we got to play a lot of sports and there was pizza. After the festival,



a lot of people told me why they couldn't come, and their stories were interesting to hear. Picture Day this year was my favorite picture day, because almost everyone came. On picture day, I got to know more about the new incoming 4th years. (By Riley T.)

Even though it's still the beginning of the year, we have quite a few big projects. *Timeline of My Life* is one, which was a project carried over from last year. For this assignment, 5th and 6th years show photos from their life so far and write about each. Once they finish their timeline, they share the work on their birthday. Next, students of all grade levels have worked on an All About Me essay. This assignment is for Mara to get to know more about us. One student named Connor says that he has enjoyed this project because it helped him explain his feelings. A second big project, called *Story of the Universe*, ties into one of Forest's Read Aloud books about how the universe and all of its creatures were created through the Big Bang. For this project, 5th and 6th years look through a selected article plus the Read Aloud book and create a presentation about the story of the universe. During Read Aloud every afternoon, we hear stories that tell about the creation of the universe and the Earth from all different cultures. One student, Safi, has enjoyed this project

because of the science that goes along with it, “We’ll get to do some experiments!” Safi is also looking forward to a project the students will start later in the year called *Minnesota to the World*.

Hello and Thank You! from Tegan, Forest Assistant

Though many have heard already, I’m Forest’s new assistant teacher. The year so far has been exceptional thanks to the encouragement of Cornerstone students, staff, and parents. It’s been wonderful to see all of the students show off their strengths both inside and outside of the classroom (we have some amazing athletes in Forest that really shine at recess!!!). So, thank you for raising creative, kind, and motivated children. I look forward to the year ahead. :)

Upper Elementary Marsh

Children in Marsh have been settling in during this month, figuring out new routines, developing stamina for concentrated periods of work, and meeting new people. We are lucky to have Nou, Manda, and Norma with us every day. Now that Alyssa’s maternity leave has started (as of Wednesday 9/27), Jess will be in the classroom in the morning and Lindsay in the afternoon.

All the elementary children participated in Peace Day on September 21st in some way - making flags, writing poems, singing songs, and/or running the presentations. In addition to Peace Day work, children have been busy writing persuasive essays, getting ready to present the Story of the Universe, looking at pond water in the microscope, and learning all kinds of different math! As a community, we have taken on small group thinking challenges several times a week to build our logical and mathematical thinking skills, and these have been great fun - ask your child about these thinking challenges and see if they can stump you! As a whole group,



we’ve also had good conversations about fixed and growth mindsets, freedoms and responsibilities, and circles of control and influence. Our read-aloud book right now is *Restart* by Gordon Korman. We have been talking about inferences and predictions a lot as we make our way through this one.