

# Cornerstone Monthly Newsletter

May 2025

## Dear Families,

Here we are, early June, the last newsletter of the school year. I'm writing this on a beautiful Saturday afternoon, a few hours away from the Montessori Center's annual All-Stars event, where we are always so grateful for the generosity of the larger community coming together to make our work possible at CMS. This past week, thanks to All-Stars, I have had the opportunity to spend a little extra time with children than I normally do, helping our volunteers practice sharing their work with the attendees and singing *Peace Like a River* on the big stage. Seeing the children's enthusiasm for something comparatively so small (being in a tent! Getting a special dessert!) reminds me of how lucky I am to spend my days with young people. There is so much joy here.

Earlier this week a series of unexpected events led to me doing Read Aloud in Garden. I have often, silently, wondered if the guides' dedication to Read Aloud is a good use of their energy. Watching from afar, it seems like most of the children are daydreaming. When I turned the page, though, and (spoiler alert) Enoch Chalk descends into the dungeon, there was a classroom-wide reverberation of shock. I've never heard so many children exclaim "what?!" at the same time before. We had to pause for the children to consider this plot twist, and then they begged me to continue, assuring me that we could go "all the way until 2:10. Really." It was an astonishing moment for me to see the reasons our guides refuse to give up Read Aloud, no matter what incentive is offered to change the schedule. You can read more about Garden's Read Aloud book below, in Dannika's monthly write-up...



Everywhere we look at Cornerstone, these days, there is some glimmer of delight. From the Forest children baking cinnamon rolls to celebrate the last days of Math Club to two Marsh children heading out into the rain for a Going Out to learn about (that is, eat) potstickers, to the Toddlers gleefully putting outdoor toys on their heads and calling them hats, just as a start, there is so much to celebrate. As we wrap up this school year, and start looking at summer for our CMS children and the fall for the elementary, I can't wait to see what joy awaits us in these last 9 days of school and what we have to look forward to in the months to come.

I hope to see each and every one of you at one of our final events – the ice cream social, Fly-Up, and/or the 6<sup>th</sup> Year Honoring Ceremony. Each is special in its own way and is a snapshot of all the



work, and joy, our children demonstrate on a daily basis.  
Thank you for a fantastic year and have a fantastic summer.

With gratitude,  
Alyssa



## Toddler Community

With the arrival of warmer weather, our toddlers are spending much more time outdoors! Whenever the weather allows, we enjoy our meals (breakfast and lunch) outside and take longer walks to the front yard and pond.



The children have lots of opportunities for large motor activities, such as jumping on the trampoline, riding bikes, climbing, and kicking or throwing balls. We also play games like *hide and seek*, *follow the leader*, and *stop and go*. Repeating these games helps toddlers practice important social-emotional skills like taking turns, imitation, and impulse control.

Our garden is blooming, and the toddlers are busy learning picking dandelions, watering the plants, and helping sweep the patio. There's so much joy in their hands on explorations!

To help your child enjoy outdoor play comfortably, please remember:

- On rainy days: send a raincoat and rain boots.
- On warm days: send closed-toe sandals and shorts.
- Apply sunscreen in the morning before drop-off.
- Please also send extra summer clothes to replace the winter ones in your child's cubby.

Thank you for support!





## Children's House 1



It's hard to believe June is just around the corner! As we wrap up this wonderful school year, our hearts are full of gratitude and a touch of bittersweetness. We've shared so many beautiful memories, grown together, and worked hard as a community.

I'm thrilled for the children who will be "flying up" to their next adventure, though they will surely be missed. At the same time, I'm looking forward to a joyful summer with our younger children.

environment (including a surprise label for the cameraman who visited us last month.) The children have also taken great pride in their end of day jobs, showing a growing sense of responsibility and care for their

environment. It's been a joy to witness how much they've grown not just individually, but as a supportive, connected community.

Thank you for entrusting us with your children. It's an honor to be part of their journey.

Wishing you all a safe, restful, and joyful summer!

Claudia





## Children's House 2

We've started conversations about the end of the school year and fly up. With so many kindergarteners new to our school, fly up is a bit of a mystery. I get emotional every year, and I'm sure I will be a mess as I watch my own daughter run down the hall from Children's House to elementary. I love how they are greeted by an elementary friend and given a rock to symbolize the cosmic education that is waiting for them in elementary. And I especially love that the whole school eats watermelon. 🍉 Not all together, but at the same time. Families with their kindergarteners, elementary in their gardens, and Children's House on our patio or dining tables.

Everything is bigger in elementary: the tables, chairs, and dishes, but also the work. The paper is bigger; children make posters and dioramas. I can't wait to see the beautifully expressive tiny books the children make in Children's House turn into giant posters with giant ideas and research. In honor of what's to come I'd like to highlight our fantastic kindergartners from this year.





## Lower Elementary Garden

*"May is the month of expectation, the month of wishes, the month of hope." - Emily Bronte*

As we come to the end of the school year, children continue to find passion and joy in their work. Garden first years have warmly hosted a dozen of kindergarten visitors over these last few weeks. It was such a delight observing children show their younger peers how to do follow-on work, give tours around the classroom, and talk about the vibrant life in the elementary classroom! Third years also had an experience visiting the upper elementary environments and were equally excited to do some hands-on experiments with their future classmates.



There have been some beautiful examples of group work this month. Some children have been discovering rocks in our outside environment and brought them in to learn more using resources on the shelves. Many children have been able to get their hands on the special river model outside to explore how the river carves the land, carries things as it moves, and deposits into other bodies of water. Another group of children have done extensive research on snakes and finally had the opportunity to go out and discover more reptiles in the community. They came back with a vision to create a life-size papier-mâché snake, which led to an exciting afternoon rolling and coiling 15 feet of aluminum foil! Other children heard a

story about the amazing Olmec people in southern Mexico, inspiring them to sculpt and paint their own colossal heads out of clay.



Read-aloud has been a highlight this year as we discover so many different characters in different stories together! This month, we have been enjoying *The Lost Fairy Tales*, the second book of the Pages & Co. series by Anna James. We continue following Tilly and Oskar's journey into bookwandering and find out that it is much more complex than we thought. After the disappearance of the infamous fictional foe, Enoch Chalk, a change in leadership causes chaos within the British Underlibrary. While on a trip to Paris, Tilly and Oskar



find themselves back in the storybook world and realize just how wild and unpredictable fairy tales can be...along with the power and importance of friendship and book magic.



## Lower Elementary Pond

While the end of the year can certainly be hectic, it's also a good time to take stock and reflect on all the growth that's happened throughout the year. The entire year has been a story of "who's stepping up this week," as students took turns finding their footing and showing off immense growth as problem solvers, scholars, and leaders. Even in these last waning weeks of school students have still been finding time to build and share new skills with each other.

It's also a good time for gratitude. We see how families support children in so many ways at school: helping students build their emotional regulation skills; reading together; processing tricky situations; supporting regular bedtimes and a full night of sleep; donating bikes, biome maps, and other materials to the school; and most of all providing a safe and loving home. As we approach the end of the year please know that we are deeply grateful for all the ways you make school a better place.





## Upper Elementary Marsh

The big excitement in Marsh in May was, of course, the Upper Elementary trip to Camp Ihduhapi! It was a drizzly day, but we were still able to canoe, shoot arrows, and work on building shelters in the woods. The fourth and fifth years came home tired and damp (and late!), but happy. The sixth years enjoyed two more days at camp, with improved weather and increased challenges, including a high ropes course. It was a really lovely trip. And we were all glad for the three-day weekend to recover.



With only two weeks left in school, there is plenty to do. Among other work, children are preparing for graduation, wrapping up Minnesota state research, completing story club reading and writing, and making sure their fraction knowledge is solid. We have really enjoyed nature observations as spring is in full swing - we've seen turtles, frogs, ducks, and even a green heron at our pond. Some children went to a noodle shop as part of their China research; others are headed to a nature center in June as the culminating experience for the Bird by Bird program. Thanks so much for your support to keep children in school and their regular routines until our last day - it helps our whole community!



## Upper Elementary Forest

This month, I have been reflecting on the power of shared experiences in building strong and healthy relationships, and in strengthening our community. Rituals and rites of passage have been integral to human culture for thousands of years.

Over the past decade, we have created many special rituals like Peace Day, Stone Soup, and Children Teach Parents, as well as the way we celebrate birthdays and hold our class meetings. These rituals serve as the glue that binds us together.



One of the Upper Elementary children's most important traditions is our annual day camp experience, where the children learn new skills, develop independence, strengthen friendships, and overcome fears. The cool and rainy weather (as well as the bus schedule difficulties) seriously challenged the children's adaptability, stamina, and resilience. I was impressed by the children's PMA (Positive Mental Attitude) and their natural tendency to 'make lemonade from lemons,' as my grandma used to say. As I checked in with Forest children throughout the day, they were all having a great time just being with each other, playing, and working together to achieve shared goals like building an emergency shelter in the woods, steering a canoe, and learning to manipulate a bow and arrow. (The ability to actually hit a target was an entirely different level of challenge! 😊)



The following 48 hours at camp with just the 6th Years working and playing together were also such a joy to be a part of. They were/are very conscious of the fact that their time in this precious community is quickly coming to an end, so they had lots of fun and just enjoyed being together during their structured activities and free time.

It is hard to put into words just how much these shared formative experiences mean to your child. I know that many of our graduates are still close friends, and in regular contact several years after leaving CMES.

In just under two weeks, we will honor and celebrate the 6th Years' rite of passage from Childhood to Adolescence. The 6th Year graduation is a very special ceremony, one that I encourage all CMS and CMES parents to attend because it reflects the unique opportunities for personal growth in a loving and supportive community that you are unlikely to find anywhere else!





## 1611 Ames Ave Spotlight – Maggie Skelly

This month we highlight Maggie Skelly, one of our Early Childhood jack-of-all-trades!

I first met Maggie almost 3 years ago, when I was looking for childcare for Ellie. She immediately ingratiated herself to Ellie by singing, reading lots of books, and going on walks for coffee. When Ellie started at Cornerstone, Maggie followed, supporting in Children's House 2. Then, when Sadie was born, Maggie watched her, too, until she was ready for school. Since August, Maggie has overseen Children's House after-care, been our in-house Toddler substitute and recess/lunch transition support adult, and managed CMS' county and state funding streams.



Maggie is a Montessori child, having started at Seward Montessori in Minneapolis when she was 3. She will be continuing her Montessori journey this summer at MCM's Assistants to Infancy training in the Chicago area! We are so excited to see her embark on this career path. In Maggie's spare time, she reads a lot (she's in two book clubs!) and spends time at home with her brother and parents. Maggie is also an incredible photographer and took most of the photos you've seen this year of our Early Childhood classes. She also crochets and, fun fact, has 50 stuffed moose from all around the country.



I'm biased, of course, since Maggie spent so much time with my girls as babies, but I feel very lucky that we have Maggie's care and skills at Cornerstone now. My only hesitation with hiring her is that now I can't use her to babysit! But her willingness to step in wherever needed, her love of our youngest children, and her surprising acumen for writing on the chalkboard are incredible assets to our community.