

Cornerstone Monthly Newsletter

December 2023

Toddler Community

Dear Toddler Families,

Wishing you all a joyful and relaxing winter break filled with warmth and festive cheer!

As the school takes a pause, it's essential to remember that our toddlers thrive on routines, and the winter break stops their usual school routines. Over the next two weeks, consider providing opportunities for your one and two-year old ones to continue practicing mealtime setup and cleanup, maintain regular toilet intervals, and encourage the habit of putting away toys before exploring new ones.

You've likely seen the delightful video Alyssa shared, featuring our rendition of "Jingle Bells" that the children have absolutely loved! If your child has favorite songs that bring them joy, and you're willing to share, please send the song names to Lourdes. She'll happily add them to our playlist.

Wishing you all a Happy Winter Break filled with precious moments and festive melodies!
Warm regards,

The Toddler Community Team (Laurie, Jannette, Angela and Lourdes)

Children's House 1

CH1 has been busy in December! We've tried new foods, we've enjoyed the unseasonably mild weather, we've collaborated, we've baked, we've leaned into snowflake crafts, and we've enjoyed everything in between. Claudia brought in plantains for our community to try and WOW. Who knew plantains were so big? Children compared them to bananas and prepared them to eat by cooking them in the oven. What a delicious morning snack! We've enjoyed our upper elementary helpers - they are truly a highlight of our day, whether it's helping with handwriting, reading aloud a chapter book, or building with materials. A staple in our room is also the *A Little Spot of Emotion* book series by Diane Alber. The children love to read about Scribble Spot whose emotions are all mixed up inside as well as learning how to identify and support our other spots of emotions. These books



are great for developing emotional awareness as well as tools for emotional regulation. They are a crowd favorite and heavily requested in our environment!

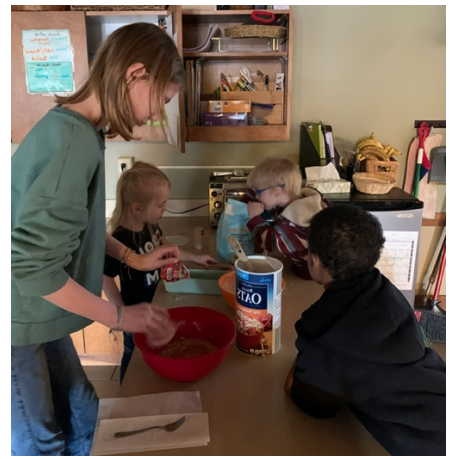


Children's House 2



Children's House 2 is buzzing with reading lately. We can't seem to keep up with the demand for more decodable books and more opportunities to practice reading and writing. Today, on the last day before a two-week break, we had a few special opportunities. Kristin prepared a small pinch pot craft with moldable clay that dries over a few days. I organized our bi-annual "Scrubfest" event and Emma G took out musical instruments. In the afternoon we borrowed a collection of legos and everyone had some quiet time to build by themselves. We were delighted, however, when children requested to put away their legos in order to work with me and our reading specialist, Megan, on a word chaining activity. It always feels good to see children choose to feed their brain in multiple ways when presented with the option.

We've also been enjoying the help of a few of the Montessori trainees from the training center this week. Wen and Madina started their winter break earlier than us, and we've enjoyed their company in Children's House 2. We've also been very lucky to have some fabulous support from a few upper elementary helpers this season. We love the contributions all these guests bring to our space.



Lower Elementary Garden

We have been working hard in the Garden community! Our Friday challenges continue to be a great learning opportunity and a chance to use our brains in new ways. This month one of the favorite challenges was creating a marble maze out of paper and tape. We also had a wonderful learning opportunity when one of our challenges was very difficult and none of the groups were able to have much success. After struggling with the challenge we met together and had a conversation about how failure helps us to learn. I shared with the children that I hope that they all fail sometimes, because that gives them a chance to try again and get better. After we all failed we had a "failure party" and danced together to celebrate how we had all





failed and learned something new! This month we have also been practicing using the “power of yet.” When we use this magic word we can change the way we think and realize there is room to keep growing, learning, and getting better. So when we think, “I don’t know how to multiply.” We can change our thought to “I don’t know how to multiply, yet!” We are wishing everyone a happy and healthy winter break and look forward to seeing everyone in the new year ready for more adventures together!



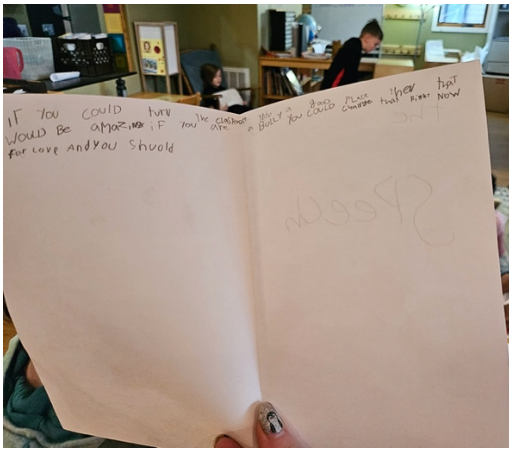
Lower Elementary Pond

Pond has been having a great time with our Friday activity days and some animal research projects going around. We recently acquired an ant farm and are in the process of getting new fish. The children are very excited and had a great time putting together the new fish tank! Last week we had a bit of an unexpected time, due to me being gone, but they really pulled through and worked well for the subs, even sending me photos during the day asking me to "guess the work" that they were working on.

We enjoyed pajama day on Friday and the children even had an impromptu meeting to decide a class president who will help make the classroom a better place. The candidates all created speeches and answered questions about how and why they wanted to make the classroom a better place. It was very sweet and the rest of the class got really into discussing who to vote for and who would make the better candidate.

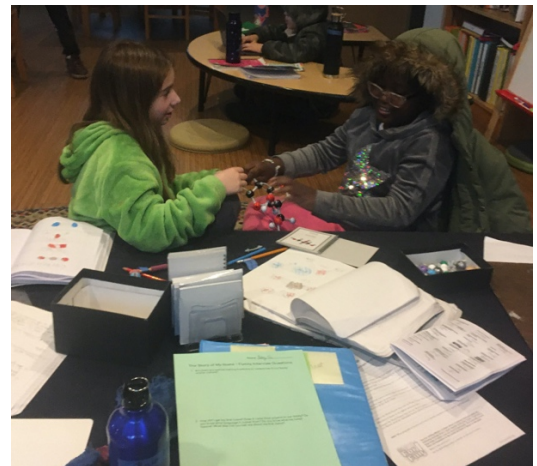
We also finished reading *Charlotte's Web* as a class and have been reading some *Magic Tree House* books right before break!





Upper Elementary Forest

We've been busy! The changing weather is always a topic for conversation. We continue to do regular observations and some children are doing big work learning identifying cloud types. Children have been working on all kinds of language work, including summarizing practice, thank you letters for the U of M going out, and comparative adjectives. Many children finished their Story of My Name.





Upper Elementary Marsh

Marsh has been humming with activity! We took on a reading genre challenge this week, looking over the records of books we've read and searching for something really different. Children took on historical fiction, non-fiction graphic novels, animal stories, fantasy, and science fiction! We did a major genre switch in read-aloud as well, moving from *The Windby Puzzle* by Lois Lowry to *Wedgie and Gizmo* by Suzanne Selfor. It's has been cause for many chuckles at the antics of the eager dog and the guinea pig who considers himself an Evil Genius!



December included huge square root problems, many lessons with a student teacher (thank you, Abby!), lots of needle felting, and continued work in so many different areas. A group learned about the solstice and was amazed at how little light some locations are getting right now - but excited that we are moving toward more light every day! I hope everyone has restful breaks and I look forward to more work together in 2024!

