



## Hello Everyone!



**Mrs. Muñoz**

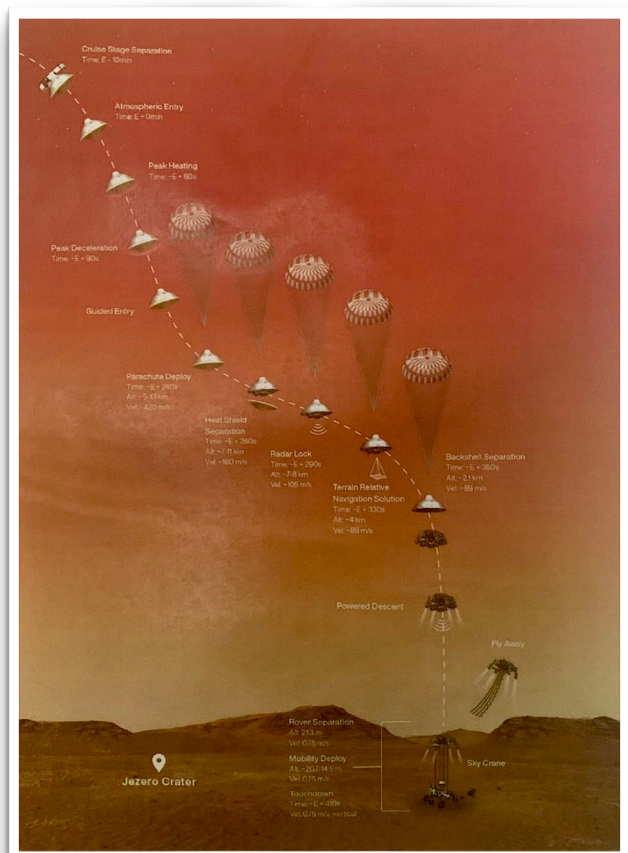
I hope this newsletter finds everyone safe and healthy. At the time of writing this newsletter, several of our staff members have either had their first

Covid-19 vaccine or

are scheduled for it. We bear an enormous responsibility with the care of your most precious ones and are doing everything in our power to have a safe environment for your children to come to every day.

I am so happy with the longer hours of daylight. Being able to spend more time outside in the sunshine is so important to our mental and physical well being and I know for a fact that it really helps me. I hope that you all are taking advantage of the warmer days and more sunshine time for family walks and park visits. Those activities are deemed safe by the health department, as long as all recommended safety measures are in place and they are such a mood booster.

On February 18, the Elementary children viewed the exciting landing of the Rover



Perseverance on Mars. They had been prepared the day before with some information that was available through the NASA website for students. They came in the morning of the landing excited with anticipation. The children were able to watch the NASA viewing while eating their lunch. There were anxious moments and the children were really into the descriptions and emotions from the scientists. It was amazing

to hear the groups break out into a loud cheer when the Rover landed safely. They were clapping and expressing how happy they were that it was successful. It was good for the children to see such a diverse group of NASA scientists. Hopefully someone in the group was inspired and I will see them one day as a NASA team member on some future exciting mission.

The children's garden is happy and thriving. The daffodils are on full display and the veggies and herbs are growing. The Elementary children love taking care of their garden and Mrs. Gonzalez does such a wonderful job is teaching and guiding them in their work.

If you know anyone that is interested in Meher and would like more information or to schedule a FaceTime tour please have them contact me.

Peace and love to you all,  
Adela Muñoz  
Director

## A Report From Mrs. Rivera



**Mrs. Rivera**

**H**ello dear parents, here we are again for our monthly newsletter. As always, I'm glad to inform you of the exciting events, activities and learning the children have in this month! February is colorful and exciting, for

it is the month of "Love" and its famous colors are red and pink. We saw this love continuously flowing into our classroom and school as a whole. Our children are always hankering to learn new lessons and look forward to the arts and crafts which are introduced by Ms. Mills. These projects become our classroom decorations. Each child shows off their skills in making their own designs and comes up with a unique finished product! Everything in February will

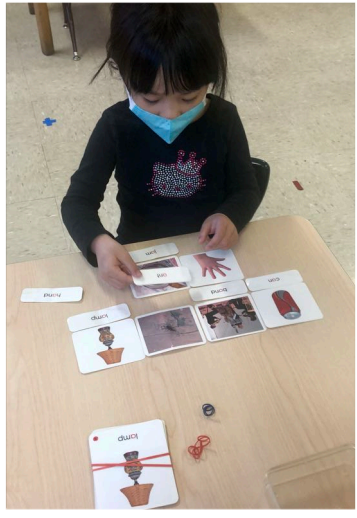
proceed quickly because it is the shortest month.

This month we had two important holidays: Abraham Lincoln's Birthday and Presidents' Day (George Washington)! I have spent quality time reading to the children about their lives and accomplishments before and after being the President of the United States of America. What were their strong and weak characteristics and why are they loved and honored by the people? There were a few questions raised by the children that showed their hunger and interest for the history side of these two great men.

The children have earmarked important events that transpired during the men's time like the wars they fought: Civil and Revolutionary wars. They learned about their childhood life, studies and what they stood for in life. For example, Abraham Lincoln had the character trait of *"always speaking or sounding out what is in his mind and speaking for others."* He emphasized the importance of reading books and continuously attending school to learn and attain your goals in life. He was the 16th President, a statesman and lawyer, known too as the "Log Cabin President." George Washington was the 1st President of the United States; he was a statesman and







soldier. He loved dogs and animals in general. At the end of these stories, most of the children wanted to be President! They learned too that being a president isn't a bed of roses; they had to strive hard to learn more, be patient and calm but

smart and knowledgeable too about the constitution of one's country. With these stories, the children counted their blessings and were grateful for these Presidents!

Our parties in the classroom were all a success and have been well-planned with the generosity and support of our parents. Our Valentine's snack party was fun and the children were filled with special food. The children went home happily bringing their goody bags filled with good stuff shared by the children with their classmates. Books about Valentine's Day and the celebration of the Chinese and Lunar New Year were read to the children to help them understand the reasons for celebrating them. The type and quantity of food for the children to feast upon was just right! Thank you so very much our dearest parents for your continuous support and generosity to our class and the school as a whole. May the virtue of love and kindness bloom forever in your hearts.

We have been very busy in our classroom this month. All our children are taking great leaps forward while working at their own pace. A few of our older children are now reading three to four letter words and writing them onto lined paper. They love to write their cursive letters everyday to better their penmanship and spelling of words. They continue to write their numbers in an orderly manner from any number they wish to start

with till a hundred or more. They are into the addition and subtraction charts now, and are able to add on their own.

The younger children are coming along with their learning of phonics, numbers from 1 to 20, and rug works in the Sensorial, Math and Language areas. These children in general are not only learning their academics with fun and diligence, but are showing signs of being helpful to all in the classroom. They are able to pick up any trash they see in class and have the habit of drying the counter sink after washing their hands. Some of the older children take the initiative now to see what they must do when materials in the classroom are not in their proper places. A few minutes before our class

ends in the afternoon some of them volunteer to straighten the materials on the shelves. With these simple actions, the younger children learn to follow them. These are a few of the many simple things I am proud of in our children.

As always, I am indebted to my two lovely, patient and passionate classroom assistants, Ms. Mills and Ms. Martinez. They both work hand in hand in making our classroom a happy, orderly and clean prepared environment. They are very keen too to the needs of the children at the same time instilling proper order and discipline



during class hours. With their help the children have accomplished the following projects: a Chinese lantern and coloring of a picture of an Ox for this year's animal. They have punched cupids and hearts too. To you ladies, a round of applause and salute for all your time and dedication.

Reminders: next month will have St. Patrick's Day and Easter celebrations. An email and a flyer will be sent to all our parents about celebrating these events. Everyday we have "Show and Tell." Please allow your child to share something in class; it may be their favorite book, pictures (one or two) of places they have seen or travelled, projects done by the children with the help of the family, or art projects to mention a few. In this way children are not limited to the books that we have in our classroom for their "Show and Tell."

*"If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter."* President George Washington

Happy Valentine's Day and a Happy Chinese and Lunar New Year to one and all! Be safe and well always.

Love always – Mrs. Rivera, Ms. Mills and Ms. Martinez

One of the songs the children love to sing: The Mitten Song (tune to the wheels on the bus): *The mittens on my hands, keep me warm 3x. The mittens on my hand, keep me warm, all winter long. Note: scarf, boots, beanie, jacket.*



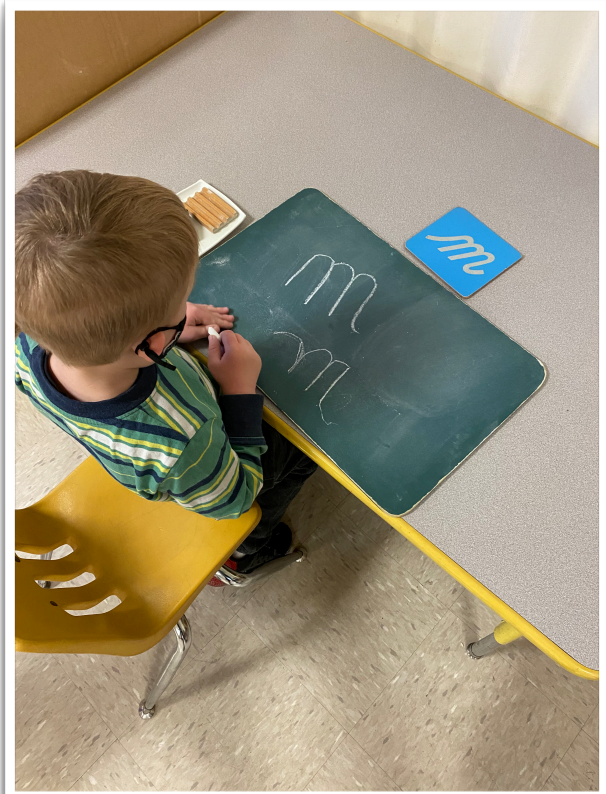
**Ms. Lopez**

## A Report From Ms. Lopez

**H**appy February everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful Valentine's and Lunar New Year weekend. The children enjoyed these festivities with a pizza party for lunch and passing out goody bags

to their friends at circle time. We read stories about the Lunar New Year and what it means to be born in the year of the Ox. The children and I looked up what animal we each belong to in the Chinese horoscope. The children enjoyed the stories, history, food, and decorations that came with our celebration.

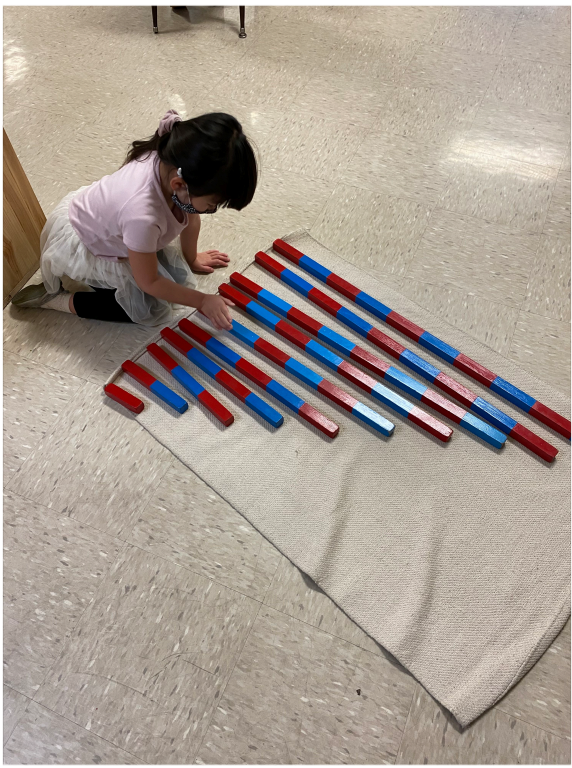
This month was filled with so many history lessons. We celebrated Presidents' Day on February 15th. We learned a little bit about all the presidents of the United States and read a book about George Washington. The exciting part for the children was when they got to see presidents faces on coins and bills. The month of February we also honored Black History Month. We read books on Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Jackie Robinson, and Harriet Tubman to name a few. We heard songs by Billie



Holiday and Louis Armstrong and heard by modern day poet Amanda Gorman. The children asked great questions about the books we read, which led to discussions about inclusion, respect, and acceptance.



I'm happy to announce that our classroom is growing! This month we welcomed Julianna Mannarelli. She's adjusting wonderfully to the classroom and receiving lots of lessons. She's already getting started in the Math and Language areas as well. Next month we will welcome 2 more children, putting our classroom at 13. On that note, parents please avoid having



your children bring big backpacks to school. We have limited shelf space for lunch bags, so it would be greatly appreciated if they could bring something on the small side.

The children have been enjoying practicing their reading and writing. The younger children write the sandpaper letters they have learned on chalkboard, the 2nd years are writing with the moveable alphabet and writing their names in between the lines, and the graduates are writing sentences. Currently, the graduates are observing caterpillars Mrs. Muñoz got for our classroom, and they are drawing and writing each day what they observe. All the children are intrigued and fascinated by our new class pets.

As always, thank you for your continuous support and trust in myself and Mrs. Suh in teaching and caring for your children.

Until next month,  
Ms. Lopez and Mrs. Suh

## A Report From Mr. Mindes



**Mr. Mindes**

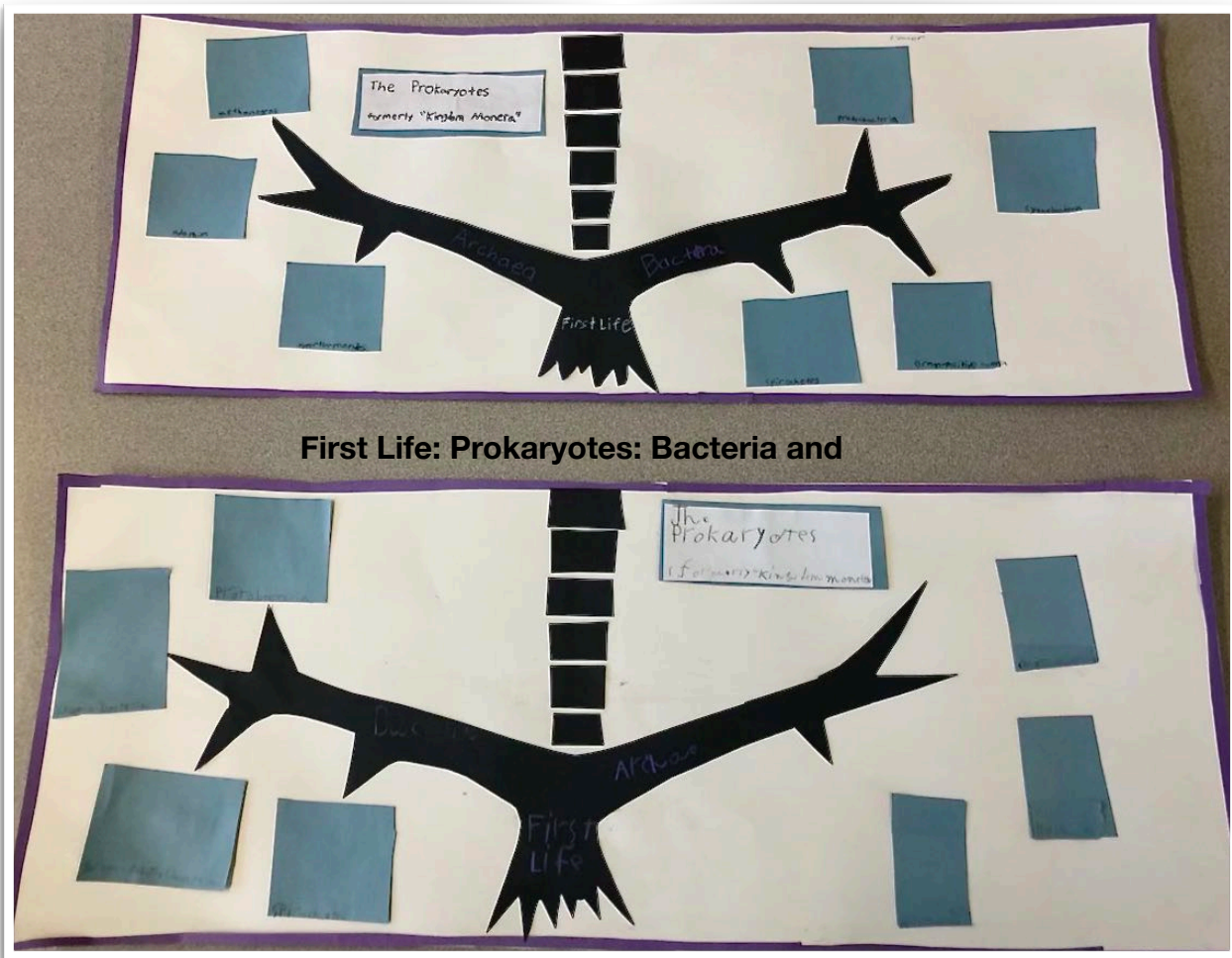
*"Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself... You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the*

*house of tomorrow..."*

*Khalil Gibran*

## Hello Meher Families

I hope February put everyone in good spirits, after all, it is the last full month of winter. The few, perhaps too few, cold and rainy days not only added a little variety to our many - thankfully - sunny days, but gave families a chance to hunker down together. Recently, a very busy parent told me that teachers spend more time with their kids than they do; this, of course is not the case if you consider that the average Meher classroom, with some 20 or so children, means that a teacher spends about 1/20 of an hour, or 3 minutes per hour, with each individual student. The good news is that Maria Montessori believed in a high student to teacher ratio for the elementary-aged child; she stressed instead the importance of the classroom environment: one that supports a child's natural desire to interact with their peers (albeit more challenging during these times!); one that encourages their newly discovered



**First Life: Prokaryotes: Bacteria and**

reasoning capacity; and one that supports movement towards their independence

### **Bacteria and Archaea**

With the foundation of modern taxonomy laid last month, the students began to look more closely at Prokaryotes, specifically, bacteria and archaea. In the Time Line of Life lesson that Mr. Page presented early in the year, he referenced an amorphous cloudy substance, which was thought to be the first life on earth; scientists believe this substance evolved into what we now call bacteria and archaea. As modern taxonomy focuses more on phylogeny, the history of the evolution of things, the older students worked on branching posters that diagram the evolution of Bacteria and Archea from this earliest known living substance.

### **Work of Air**

Another topic some of the students tackled this month was wind - where it comes from and what it is. On one of those

wildly windy days this month, a few students had wondered aloud to me about the wind, which created a natural segue for our work on air. First, we ran some experiments to introduce characteristics of air, such as, it



takes up space; it rises when heated; and colder air rushes in to fill the space left by hot air rising - that cold air rushing in to fill the space is wind!



## Reading an Analog Clock

Since an analog clock hangs in the back of our classroom, and I noticed that some students were unable to read it, I wanted to make sure everyone could read it by the end of the month. Teaching how to read a clock enabled me, in an offhand way, to review fractions and skip-counting by five.

## A Few Other Class Notes

Finally, it is very gratifying to see at this point in the year, students becoming more self-assured towards Math and Language - words and numbers! Younger students are more confidently identifying sentence parts, such as verbs, nouns, prepositions, even recently, adverbs. Students are calculating their math facts more quickly, writing and understanding fractions, and multiplying and dividing with increasing ease and certainty.

I look forward to speaking with parents in March!



**From Ms. Wildhaber,  
Director of our  
Altadena Campus  
School News**

**Altadena Campus**  
**W**ith re-enrollment just around the corner, this is a

**Mrs. Wildhaber** good time to ask your child's teacher what to expect if you decide to keep them at Meher for their kindergarten/graduate year. There are so many benefits to a child in completing the full Montessori program at the primary level. Developing leadership skills in the classroom, diving deeper into materials and moving to the abstract, as well as a sense of completion from your child, are just a few.

## Spring Break

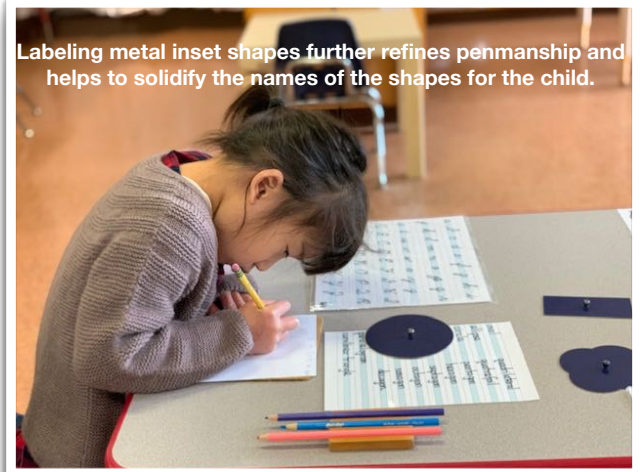
Spring Break will be April 5th - April 9th. The school will be closed during that time.

## Mrs. Wildhaber's Classroom

I have said it before, and I will say it again: our classroom has become a close-knit community. The children are working together, helping each other, supporting each other, and sharing compliments and words of encouragement. Our Montessori children have

always created a warm classroom community. With our group size so small due to covid guidelines, this year they have truly banded together to form a very tight community.

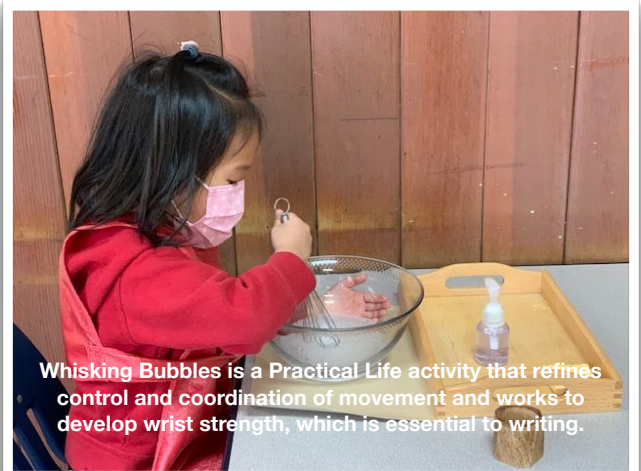
One of the things I love about a mixed-age, multi-year classroom is the varying abilities amongst the children. As more and more children are developing their reading skills, early



Labeling metal inset shapes further refines penmanship and helps to solidify the names of the shapes for the child.

readers are eager to listen to more proficient readers read books. Conversely, the fluent readers are more than happy to listen to their peers develop their reading skills with leveled phonetic reading cards, phonograms, or early reader books. With a wide range of materials to support readers at all levels, the children feel confident in their skills and are motivated to keep moving forward when they see what their more knowledgeable peers are capable of achieving.

While there are four main areas in a Montessori classroom: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, and Mathematics, there is plenty of overlap within the areas. The way some of the lessons and materials call back to other lessons



Whisking Bubbles is a Practical Life activity that refines control and coordination of movement and works to develop wrist strength, which is essential to writing.

and seamlessly flow into other areas, helps to provide the child with more rounded experiences in the classroom.

This month I would like to elaborate on the benefits and purposes of the water work activities I mentioned last month. Water work activities are considered practical life skills. But they are so much more than that. These activities also work to develop grip and wrist strength as the child carries the tray of materials from the shelf to the table and back again, which is essential for writing. They also help to



develop control and coordination within the child as they carry pitchers, buckets, and bowls full of water. As if that is not enough, the multistep water work activities, such as hand-washing or table washing, work to

develop a logical mind, which is essential to mathematical operations, as both must follow a logical sequence of events to yield the desired results. And for water work activities such as care of plants, or flower arranging, aesthetics and a sense of beauty are other areas nourished within the child. Who knew these practical life skills were so much more than just playing with water? Well, Maria Montessori certainly did!

Speaking of aesthetics and overlapping areas, I have been working with some of the children on lightness of touch when it comes to pencil work. A great lesson for this is shading a metal inset from light to dark. Many children struggle with this as it requires a subtle, progressive change in pressure. However, when I call back to the sensorial lesson of box three of the color tablets, where one color has seven shades varying from lightest to darkest, this visual helps the child to see the gradation. Even though one lesson is in the Sensorial area of the classroom and the other is in the language area, both materials work on aesthetics within the child and refining visual discrimination.

Next month I will find other areas in the classroom that complement and play off each other. Will it be cylinder blocks and puzzle

maps? Or will it be geometric solids and parts of speech? Or maybe some other less obvious connection between materials in different areas. Tune in again next month to find out.

### **School Shirt Day**

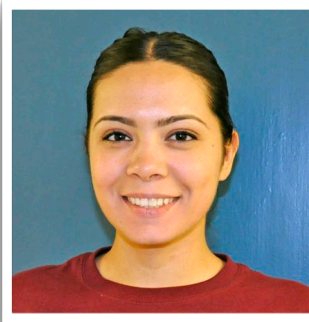
Friday, February 26th is this month's school shirt day. We have achieved 100% participation every month so far. Let's keep up the school spirit! Last month we took a break from making slime. Instead, as part of our Valentine's Day celebration, the kiddos frosted their own cookies. They seemed to really enjoy that. Therefore, we will frost cookies again in March, if keep our 100% streak going this month.

### **Coming Up Next Month**

March is Women's Month. I encourage children to bring in books that highlight strength, bravery, and independence in young girls and women in engaging stories.

March 2nd is also National Read Across America Day, so I welcome Dr. Seuss books as well. In particular, I would love it if someone had a copy of *Fox in Socks* to bring in for me to read. It is a tongue twister of a book and I love the challenge of reading it to the kiddos.

Until Next Month,  
Mrs. Wildhaber



**Ms. Tinajero**

## **A Report From Ms. Tinajero**

**W**<sup>e</sup> welcomed the month of

February with love and optimism. The children have definitely

immersed themselves in their work. As I sat and observed the children I realized a few of them were working on their phonetics but all in different stages. One child was working on tracing and sounding out his sandpaper letters while another was working on writing her sounds on the chalkboard, as I looked over I noticed yet another child was working on her moveable alphabet.

Each stage just as important as the next. When a child is given the lesson on the sandpaper letters they already have had exposure to some of these sounds from



lessons like the sound game, now the child is given the sound with the symbol and is able to make the association. While writing and phonetics are different subjects they are connected. In order for the child to start writing there are two important areas they



must obtain, the physical abilities of the hand and the mental abilities of the mind. The physical involves control and coordination of movement, lightness of touch, understanding of space and memorization of the shape of the letters. The mental includes having ample

vocabulary, the ability to isolate sounds within each word, to recognize and visualize the symbols that represent these sounds and forming words and sentences. While writing the letter the child is also making connections to the sound, when moving forward to the next lessons like the moveable alphabet the child creates the words given by the guide, putting together the symbol and sound the child creates a visible order of sounds and form a word.

#### Practical

Life in Montessori is an important area because it helps develop motor control and coordination, and develops independence, concentration, and a sense of responsibility. The exercises in Practical Life cover two main areas

of development: care of self, and care of the environment. Since the mornings have been cool and the afternoons have gotten warmer, the children have been taking off their jackets and have shown that sometimes it can be a bit challenging to button up or zip up their jackets. The children have been working on the dressing frames, more specifically the zipper frame, which encourages the children to dress independently. They can then zip up their sweaters and or pants, and similarly with the dressing frames, children learn how to tie bows which transitions into tying shoes. The children are indirectly advancing in fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.



The children enjoyed our Valentine's Day celebration, they were able to make cards and pass them out to their friends. They also had another picture exchange with Mrs. Wildhaber's classroom.

We had a lot of birthdays this month! Isabel and Pharo turned 5 and 4 on February 3rd. Our new friend

Wendy turned 4 February 10. Mrs. Fagundo's birthday was on February 19. Happy Birthday to you all!!

In February we celebrated Black History Month. Next month will be Women's Month and I would like the children to bring books recognizing heroic women of our time. School Shirt Day will be on March 26.



# Keeping schools closed hurts minority, low-income children the most, study finds

by Evie Fordham  
Fox News Education, 2/18/2021

A study of [San Francisco](#) students found that students of color and low-income students have suffered the most as the school district has stuck to virtual learning amid the [coronavirus](#) pandemic.

Assessments of the San Francisco students' [math](#) and [reading](#) abilities mirror



Gladys Alvarez, a fifth-grade teacher at Manchester Avenue Elementary School in South Los Angeles, in her empty classroom as she talks to her students in a Zoom class in August 2020.

(Los Angeles Times)

other studies that raise concerns about disadvantaged students falling behind. School district data from fall 2020 showed that low-income students have fallen further

behind that higher-income students, the [San Francisco Chronicle](#) reported.

The same disparity applied to Black, Latino and Asian students compared to White students, the San Francisco Chronicle reported. Data also showed that Black and Latino students were more likely to be absent for 60% of class time or more, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Similarly, a [study](#) of 18 California school districts published on Jan. 25 found that "certain student groups, especially low-income students and English language learners (ELLs), are falling behind more compared to others."

"Most California schools have been physically closed since Spring 2020, and students in these groups have been doubly disadvantaged by distance learning. Low-

income and rural students may not have reliable access to computers or Wi-Fi, making it difficult to access online instruction," the study's authors wrote. "Others do not have appropriate conditions for learning at home and struggle with food or housing insecurity or with limited adult support."

A McKinsey [analysis](#) released in December found that Black and Hispanic students in the U.S. are "more likely to remain

remote" but face a greater danger of falling behind their peers.

"[T]he cumulative learning loss could be substantial, especially in mathematics—with



students on average likely to lose five to nine months of learning by the end of this school year," McKinsey stated in the analysis. "Students of color could be six to 12 months behind, compared with four to eight months for [W]hite students. While all students are suffering, those who came into the pandemic with the fewest academic opportunities are on track to exit with the greatest learning loss."

Parents across the U.S. are [lobbying](#) for their children to return to learning from teachers in classrooms as some students face the possibility of completing an entire school year without entering a classroom in addition to the months they lost at the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

Meanwhile, the White House is facing scrutiny for shifting language around President Biden's 100-day push for students to return to classrooms.

[Biden](#) on Tuesday night distanced himself from previous comments by [White House](#) press secretary Jen Psaki that the administration's goal for its first 100 days was to have more than 50% of [schools](#) open at least one day per week.

That goal was criticized as unambitious as it had essentially already been met by school districts partially opening on their own before Biden came into office. There was also speculation that the White House was trying to avoid upsetting teachers unions, which are a major force in the Democratic Party and have in many cases strongly opposed school reopening efforts.

"What I'm talking about is I said opening the majority of schools in K-through-eighth grade because they're the easiest to open, the most needed to be opened, in terms of the impact on children and families having to stay home," Biden said.

"I think we'll be close to that at the end of the first hundred days," he said of elementary and middle schools.

## Op-Ed: Kids are suffering. Follow the science and reopen schools now

*Alice Kuo is a professor and the chief of medicine-pediatrics at UCLA. She is also an executive board member of the Southern California Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.*

*Feb 6, 2021 LA Times*

It's no secret that we're in the midst of a public health crisis in California. But public school children — more than 6 million students — are suffering through a silent crisis at home and they desperately need our help before it's too late.

For the last 10 months, most public schools in this state have shut their doors and opted for remote education. Kids have been forced to limit their social interactions to a Zoom square on their computer if they are lucky enough to have a stable internet connection. Playgrounds have been locked and spending time with friends and family isn't allowed.

To a child, this feels like an unbearable punishment that's lasting a lifetime. They feel alone, in the dark. Many lack the coping resources and connection to caring adults to help them make it through this difficult time.

I see it every day. The negative impacts of school closures are compounding and taking a toll on the emotional, physical and mental health of our kids.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently [reported](#) that compared with 2019, the proportion of mental health-related emergency department visits for children aged 5-11 and 12-17 increased approximately 24% and 31%, respectively.

In Northern California, [UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital Oakland](#) has seen an alarming 75% increase in the number of

children brought in for emergency mental health services that required immediate hospitalization.

Studies also show that the shutdowns are linked to [increased risk of obesity](#) among children and adolescents, and [higher rates of depression and anxiety](#) during and after isolation ends.

Even worse, [researchers from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health and the University of Washington](#) concluded that declining educational attainment due to school closures may be associated with a decrease in life expectancy in U.S. children.

These data are real, and a generation of kids is suffering.

At the same time, extensive research and data from across the globe show schools can be reopened safely for both students and teachers.

According to an [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) study, schools can reopen safely without causing larger community spread if proper mitigation measures such as masking, physical distancing and hand washing are in place. Studies from [Europe](#), the [United Kingdom](#), [Norway](#), [Spain](#) and other countries echo these findings that schools have not seen superspreader events.

And yet, public schools in California remain largely closed and millions of children are left behind. It's a tragedy.

This isn't a partisan issue. Our state and local leaders are failing to stand up for our children — their most vulnerable constituency — and do what's right. Listen to the science. Read the data. Follow the facts and reopen public schools now.

Earlier this week the Biden administration's new CDC director, Rochelle Walensky, told reporters in a [White House briefing](#) that "There is increasing data to suggest that schools can safely reopen, and that safe reopening does not suggest that teachers need to be vaccinated. Vaccinations of teachers is not a prerequisite for safely reopening schools."

And she's not alone. The nation's top infectious disease expert, Anthony Fauci, along with Gov. Gavin Newsom, have said that we can open schools safely.

We can't afford one more mental health breakdown, one more suicide or one more unnoticed child abuse case. Or even one more student falling behind.

The data show that the damage done to children is widespread and will be long-lasting. Our kids are suffering and it's time to reopen public schools, which we can do safely.

## Covid-19 Is Causing Children to Gain Weight, Doctors Warn

by Kate King, 2/14/2021

Wall Street Journal

Pediatricians are warning that [the coronavirus pandemic](#)'s protracted disruption of in-person schooling, sports and other activities is leading to weight gain that could have long-lasting impacts on children's health.

Students are snacking more and exercising less, and nutritionists and doctors who study obesity worry the pandemic is putting children at greater risk for type-two diabetes and asthma, among other health concerns.

"We're seeing a lot of elementary school-aged kids who are gaining 20 to 30 pounds in a year," said Hai Cao, a pediatrician and owner of South Slope Pediatrics in Brooklyn, N.Y.

**More snacking, less exercise puts them at greater risk for diabetes, other health concerns**

Brittany Wilson, a physician assistant with Island Kids Pediatrics on Staten Island, N.Y., said the pandemic seems to have accelerated weight gain among patients who



were already overweight. Children 6 to 12 years old seem to be gaining the most.

“Even kids in grammar school [are getting depressed](#),” Ms. Wilson said. “They miss their friends. A lot of them aren’t doing as well academically. With depression also comes weight gain. They’re bored, and I think they’re comfort-eating.”

Studies have shown that being in the classroom helps keep students’ weights in check, especially children who live in low-income neighborhoods. The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 resulted in new federal nutrition standards for school meals, including serving more fruits and vegetables.

Students who attend schools offering more-nutritious foods have healthier weights, according to research by Michael Yedidia of Rutgers University and Punam Ohri-Vachaspati of Arizona State University, who have been tracking the heights and weights of tens of thousands of New Jersey children who live in low-income communities since 2008.

Children are also more active during the school year, when they are walking to and from school, moving between classrooms and participating in activities such as sports and gym class, Dr. Yedidia said.

“There are all these different elements associated with being in school that are healthy for children, and then Covid happens and all that is taken away,” he said.

The pandemic also led many cities and towns to close public playgrounds for months and cancel organized sports.

Before the pandemic, researchers found children gained weight faster during summer break than during the school year. While the rate of weight gain slowed when back in

school, children didn’t lose the pounds they gained during the summer. This means a prolonged hiatus from in-person learning could lead to a substantial cumulative weight gain, Dr. Ohri-Vachaspati said.

“We hypothesize that

when the children come back from this ‘extended summer,’ as we’ve been calling it, that they will be heavier or they’ll have a higher likelihood of being overweight or obese,” she said.

For some adolescents and teenagers, the added anxiety is contributing to an uptick in eating disorders, Dr. Cao said. He believes children who are susceptible to anxiety may be restricting their eating as a way of feeling in control during a chaotic time.

“This is a result of a very crazy year that we’ve had,” Dr. Cao said. “This is in no way a judgmental reflection on parents.”

Dr. Cao recommended that parents take small steps to improve nutrition and exercise, including buying healthy snacks like carrots and hummus instead of bags of chips.

Encouraging children to take walks outside and reducing screen time before bed to improve sleep will also help lower their risk for weight gain, he said.

The pandemic and resulting economic downturn have worsened food insecurity, meaning many families lack access to nutritionally adequate food, often because they can’t afford it, said Sandra Hassink, a pediatrician and the medical director of the American Academy of Pediatrics Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight. Food insecurity

**The pandemic seems to have accelerated weight gain among patients who were already overweight. Children 6 to 12 years old seem to be gaining the most.**

**Encourage children to take walks outside and reducing screen time before bed to improve sleep will also help lower their risk for weight gain**

is associated with higher rates of obesity, since less-nutritious foods such as fast food and processed snacks are cheaper and easier to prepare than healthy meals, Dr. Hassink said.

“I sometimes think of this as the footprint that Covid will leave on our population—increased obesity, food insecurity and chronic disease,” Dr. Hassink said.

In New York City, a 2020 report by the Mayor’s Office of Food Policy found that more than 1 million residents, or nearly 13% of the total population, lacked access to nutritionally adequate food. The borough of the Bronx had the highest rate of food insecurity, at about 17.5% of its 1.4 million residents.

“These communities don’t have enough access to healthy food,” said Dina Brown, program director of middle school after-school programming at the nonprofit social-services organization BronxWorks. “The healthier you eat, the more money it’s going to cost.”

Bronx resident Sabrina Bryant said her 13-year-old son played basketball, football and lacrosse before the pandemic. This year, he has gained a few pounds because he is stuck at home all day, learning remotely and ordering fast food for meals while she is at work.

“My son is a playful boy. He likes to run, play with his friends,” she said. “Once he starts going back to school and they start doing sports and kids can play in the gym and with each other, he will go back to normal.”

