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K-8 Tuition-free Montessori School

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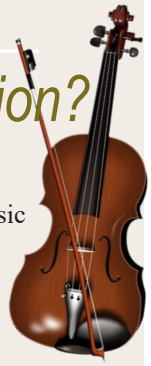
Is Quitting an Option?



Every year almost 100% of school students begin learning to play an instrument through their school's music program. Sadly, one or two years later, more than 50% of those same students quit; unable to enjoy all that music education has to offer for the rest of their K-12 schooling, if not beyond. The typical excuses include:

- I'm not musically talented
- I'm too busy with other activities.
- I hate practicing (or in the parents' case, "I'm not going to beg my child to practice."

However, the real reason is often beyond one's ability to understand or articulate. That's why teachers and parents must create *magical moments* during the year for students to want to continue playing their instruments.

Making music as important as other core subjects is key! The more parents treat it as "optional," the more students will quit. Much like any worthwhile venture, practicing is a family effort that has its ups and downs. Kids need to be reminded to practice — just like they are reminded to do other homework. And yes, sometimes parents are involved in homework, whether helping or just listening and encouraging. It's a balancing act where sometimes one needs a break and other times one needs to work harder. Trust us when we say, the temporary strife is well worth the effort. *All* children are capable of thriving if they put in the time and effort! Students will indeed thank their parents, (if not now, later) for believing in them and insisting they persevere.

Our Next Phase

Over the last few years, many parents, staff, community members, and board members have worked to lay the groundwork for the next phase of our facilities development. All that hard work is paying off. We now have approval from the city to move our covered playground across the bridge, allowing us to enclose the roofed play "pit" and turn it into our Performing Arts Classroom.

We also have approval for some enhancements we are planning down the road: a hard-court area for basketball, pickleball, and volleyball as well as fitness stations along our nature trail in the southwest corner of campus. Another facilities enhancement we are planning is to winterize the Kittredge patio.

We have raised more than $110,000 toward the Performing Arts Classroom project. With that money and a credit line from our mortgage lender, we are able to fund the playground move, Performing Arts Classroom construction, and one more urgently needed project: the installation of a new teacher house on campus.

On-campus housing has become critically important. Last summer, four teaching candidates passed on our offer of employment because they said they could not afford to live in Sedona. Workforce housing is becoming very difficult to find in our community. One of our teachers already lives on campus in the small cottage behind the log cabin. (One room of this cottage is also the current music room.) While this residence has increased staff stability, there remains a clear need for at least one more residence for our staff.

To that end, we are in the process of securing a stick-built "tiny home" for one of our lucky staff members. This home was built by students in a construction program at a Texas high school and was featured in the show Tiny Living Legally (part 2) on YouTube. You can view the actual house at the 9-minute mark in the video. Because current zoning permits only one residence on campus, we will need approval for a major amendment to the community plan. These approvals only happen in October—but we hope to move our very special tiny home onto campus soon after.

If you have skills or expertise to lend to any of these projects, please contact Alice Madar in the school office.

lower elementary >>>

A Walking Rainbow

Our little scientists in the Lower Elementary classroom are learning about capillary action and color mixing by combining art, science, math and technology to make Walking Rainbows. We have been learning about primary and secondary colors as well as studying the concepts of absorption and evaporation.

In our experiment, students were given six jars of equal height. They filled three jars ¾ full with water. The students then used food coloring to color their water in the three primary colors: red, yellow and blue. Each jar of colored water was placed next to an empty jar to form an alternating pattern. Students then rolled up six paper towels and folded them in half. The paper towel rolls were placed one side in a primary color and the other side in the empty jar next to it.

Students observed the water level drop in the primary colored jars and rise in the once empty ones as water traveled from jar to jar. It was so much fun watching the rainbow develop as the water was transferred through the paper. The children enjoyed watching the walking rainbow all week, commenting on the changing colors each day.

We observed that water traveled up each paper towel by a process called capillary action. The molecules in the water were attracted to the molecules in the paper causing the water to slowly move from jar to jar through the paper towels. This is how flowers and plants move water from the ground beneath them, up through their stems and into their petals and leaves.

Once the paper towels pull color from the base red, blue and yellow primary color jars, the resulting mixture creates the secondary colors of green, purple, and orange, completing the rainbow. The students learned science, absorption and evaporation, color theory, engineering skills in setting up the experiment and a little math with measuring, time estimation and comparing.

spelling bee >>>

Did You Know?

This year's classroom Spelling Bees will take place the week of February 26th. The schoolwide event will be on Friday, March 2 at 1:15 pm in Middle School. There will be five representatives from each class participating in this year's Spelling Bee.

The students will be given practice sheets to study for the big event. Parents of the finalists are welcome to cheer on their champion spellers on March 2nd. In the next newsletter, we will highlight the finalists and look forward to crowning the school-wide spelling champion.

upper elementary >>>

Muffin, Oreo or Snowball?

Many who have visited our classroom may have noticed our three non-human students: Muffin, Oreo, and Snowball, our three classroom pet rats. Why have rats as pets?

Rats actually make excellent pets, are quite intelligent and can be taught to perform tricks and solve puzzles. They each have distinct personalities which our students recognize when described. Muffin is the scrounger, always looking for snacks to bring back to the others. Oreo is the nester, gathering materials for the bedroom to keep them comfortable and warm. Snowball is the lazy observer just watching everything. All three show curiosity and interest in the classroom, seemingly greeting those who approach their cage and displaying joy if offered a treat.

Contrary to the stereotype of rats living in sewers, these animals are quite clean and don't have a foul smell. They groom themselves more frequently and diligently than cats. Students laugh and watch as they awaken, groom, and wait for some human attention. Our rats are also litter box trained which helps with cleanliness and odor.

During their independent work times, students may "checkout" a rat and take it to their table. The rats move about and explore on the table top as students do their work. They climb in and out of cubbies and sometimes climb on the students. It's quite interesting watching their interactions with one another.

There are many benefits of having classroom pets. Children build a sense of empathy as they become aware of the rats' feelings and needs. They often carry on one-sided conversations with them and build a sense of responsibility as they care for them. In addition, students gain awareness of how their actions affect the rats. We have noticed that our rats definitely favor some students over others--even over some of our teachers!

A study about pets in the classroom showed that children turn to pets for emotional well-being, choosing pet companionship when feeling down. Students also seek out pets when feeling tired, upset, scared or lonely, and 53% said they enjoy doing homework with pets nearby. Being around animals is extremely good for children, boosting morale, teaching them about relationships, making them aware of the needs of another living being, and transferring those lessons to caring for other people. Studies show caring for pets aids in improving school attendance.

If you haven't met Muffin, Oreo or Snowball, come on in and say hello. They might even give you a friendly kiss on the nose!

middle school >>>

Think Like a Proton: Always Positive

"We especially need imagination in science. It is not all mathematics, nor all logic, but it is somewhat beauty and poetry." — *Maria Montessori*

We are pleased to have Dee Calhoon joining us to teach science this semester. Dee is a career, state-certified science teacher, having taught science and physical education to high schoolers and middle schoolers in Australia, South Dakota, Iowa, California, and of course Arizona. She particularly enjoys hands-on science projects.

Dee taught at Sedona Charter School for 8 years, during which time our 8th graders scored very high in science standardized testing—among the highest passing and excelling rates in the state. Dee also initiated our tradition of an 8th grade science camp on Catalina Island, which with its night dives and other adventures has become a rite of passage for our students. She also started an archery club, yearbook club, cross-country team, and mountain biking elective, and sponsored our students in "Future Cities" and "Space Challenge" statewide competitions.

Dee retired in 2011 and has taken on a second career working at Jay's Bird Barn in Sedona. However, after devoting her life to sharing her passion for science with youngsters, she is excited about the opportunity to work for us part-time and share some of her lifetime of science educator knowledge with our students.

Right now, our students are working to strengthen their familiarity with scientific measurement and vocabulary. Soon they will begin preparing for a science fair that will focus on sustainability projects and emphasize the steps of the scientific process. We are pleased to have Dee as part of the Middle School teaching team, bringing students a positive attitude toward science! Dee is also researching science-related field trip possibilities. Stay tuned!

ask a teacher >>>

Q: What character trait do you most admire in your students?

A: There are many, but one that is often overlooked is punctuality, the art of being on time. I value punctuality because I feel it speaks volumes. Typically, those who are punctual are people of their word. Being on time shows they value keeping promises. A pattern of punctuality builds trust, while a pattern of being late may damage that trust.

Being on time shows that you value others. When you are late, teachers or classmates lose valuable time. Your punctuality shows that you do not wish others to sit idly by waiting for you. Being on time means more than scrambling through the door with one second to spare; it means being prepared before you leave home. Ideally, we should all enjoy our daily commute to school, breaking no traffic laws and arriving a few minutes early, calm and composed, ready to start the day.

By no means am I implying that people who are late are bad people. Sometimes things happen, like flat tires or ice on the windshields in Arizona! It's not too late to make a 2018 resolution to plan for the unexpected and ensure you are making a good first impression and maintaining that impression every day! *Harry Buedel*

Letter from the President

Hello everybody,

With spring just around the corner, teachers are preparing students for the AzMerit test. Standardized tests have long been a part of life for students at every grade level. These tests are used by schools solely because of the comparative information they provide. Until the day comes when students are judged by more that just a test score, we have to make sure our children have the skills they need to ace these standardized tests.

Reading comprehension is an area where test taking technique may be more important than subject matter. Typically, students read a short story consisting of an introduction, a middle paragraph or two, and a concluding paragraph followed by questions related to the passage just read. A good tip is to quickly scan the questions ***before*** reading the story. This allows student to highlight parts where the answers might be. Another tip is to recognize question patterns. If the question is about where or when the story takes place, the answer will most likely appear in the first paragraph. Answers about a problem in the story will usually be found in the middle. To answer a question on how the problem was resolved, the student should look in the concluding paragraph. These tips often save students valuable time.

Math: Here, knowledge of subject matter is important. But there are many students who have the knowledge yet still struggle answering questions in a standardized test format. Their biggest hurdle is often word problems. If you ask what 7 x 4 is, they answer with relative ease. However, if you tell them there are 7 bouquets of flowers consisting of 4 flowers each, it becomes a much tougher problem. It's important for students to be familiar with word problems. Asking your child to write their own word problems based on situations in the environment is an excellent way to help them master this concept. Estimation can also be extremely useful when taking standardized tests. If a question asks students to add 1,898 and 4,056, instead of adding the numerals directly, just round the numbers to 2,000 and 4,000. If there's only one answer choice close to 6,000, then you have your answer. When it comes to math, not all problems are created equal. There are difficult problems mixed in with simple, straightforward ones. When taking a timed test, it may be wise to skip a difficult problem until the other questions are answered.

At the end of the day, each child develops their own test taking techniques. As parents, support them though the process by making sure they get plenty of rest, a good protein filled breakfast and lots of encouragement!

Respectfully yours,

Steven Paley, President
Sedona Charter School Governing Council

staff >>>

Lower Elementary:	Bob and Terri Wentsch, Katarina Houser, Amy Tedrick, Dolores Biermann, Ana Hansen
Upper Elementary:	Suzi Ashley, Maija Alanen, Harry Buedel, Tim Smith, Jacquie Randall
Middle School:	Lauren Rondeau, Niel Pableo, Doreen Calhoun
Orchestral Strings:	Kristina Beachell
Administration:	Alice Madar, Lauren Hendler, Jannette Villalobos-Gil
Title I:	Ana Hansen, Deborah Williams
Special Education:	Lucy Schwill, Teri Lechowski

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our mission... *Our Montessori school challenges each child to achieve excellence through an individualized program, which includes a schoolwide musical strings program. We inspire a passion for learning, instill a sense of personal responsibility, and cultivate a respect for the environment and involvement in the community.*

looking ahead >>>

March 2018

Classroom Happenings

Ask A Teacher

Field Trip Updates

Playground Move Progress

Volunteer Opportunities

Montessori Standards >>>

AZ K-12 Standards vs. Common Core

No doubt, you have heard a lot about Common Core in recent years. Is it good? Is it bad? Does anyone really know? You'd be surprised! Here are the top five ways that Arizona's educational standards differ from Common Core. These standards were created with input from more than 200 Arizona educators and thousands of comments from the parents and people of Arizona.

Montessori methods, like AZ standards go beyond memorization or basic understanding. We require the child to apply his/her knowledge to solve problems. Montessori has always been an avenue for gaining more in-depth knowledge. Students experience each new skill using hands-on materials. Our evaluation of mastery goes beyond guessing the right answer on a test; we insist that a child can truly show us the skill.

In Montessori, we teach concepts over multiple years using various materials. Practice is our anthem, and we provide every opportunity to practice until each concept is mastered. Skills becomes so familiar, so natural, that they can be applied wherever necessary.

Montessori gives us the freedom to teach in our own way with just the right amount of emphasis, following each child's interests. There isn't a skill or topic in the world we would ever present to students as "unimportant." Montessori creates fertile ground for a child's interests to develop and for their horizons to expand.

When our 8th grade students transition to a traditional high school, we can say with confidence they are prepared and were well taught.

Common Core

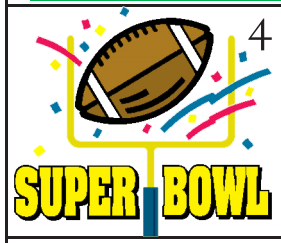
1. Common Core Standards are owned and copyrighted by an organization in Washington, DC and cannot be changed without their permission.
2. Common Core has lists of recommended reading materials, some of which are questionable in their age appropriateness.
3. Common Core does not emphasize students learning about time and money in the early grades.
4. Common Core does not require students learn to read and write cursive.
5. Common Core not only requires math students to get a certain answer, but insists they show that they obtained that answer in the Common Core way.

Arizona Standards

1. Arizona Standards are owned by Arizona and can only be changed by Arizona.
2. Arizona Standards allow school districts and charter schools to select their own curriculum and resources. This is what allows us to choose the Montessori model (which by the way, was developed way before anyone even thought up Common Core!)
3. Arizona Mathematics Standards have students learning about time and money in first through fourth grades.
4. Arizona now requires students to learn cursive by 5th grade. Arizona is the only state with standards that lead to writing cursive.
5. Arizona students and teachers can now use a variety of differing methods (including Montessori manipulatives) to solve mathematical equations and get the correct math answer.

Sedona Charter School

FEBRUARY 2018

Keeping parents informed

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Looking Ahead: Mar 4— Odyssey of the Mind Regionals Mar 7— Early Release Wednesday Mar 12-18—No School—Have a safe and enjoyable Spring Break! Mar 21-28 — APEX Fun Run Activities Mar 29—APEX FUN RUN EVENT!				1 3:30 pm—Basketball	2 1:15 pm	3
4	5 3:30 pm— Orchestra	6 6 pm - Parent Education Workshop	7 7:30 am— Orchestra & MMUN	8	9	10
11	12 3:30 pm— Orchestra	13	14 7:30 am— Orchestra & MMUN	15	16 No School Teacher Work Day No School	17
18 President's Holiday	19	20 MONTESSORI MODEL UNITED NATIONS 3:45 pm—Governing Council Meeting	21 7:30 am— Orchestra 6 pm— LE Potluck	22	23	24
25 TRIP	26 3:30 pm— Orchestra	27	28 7:30 am— Orchestra