

CHILDREN'S HOUSE—ALPHA/BETA/OMEGA

"Draw near to the Lord and He will draw near to you."

James 4:8a

We begin our year in the Children's House thinking about what lies ahead and we know that we must draw near to the Lord to accomplish what we desire, namely knowing Him. We think about the future a lot in the Children's House, and not just because we work with young children. So much is riding on our shoulders when we consider raising up these little ones to know our Savior.

In a recent discussion with my sister on parenting, she reminded me again of a theme she has adapted in parenting. "Begin as you mean to go." This is our constant goal in Montessori as well as we come out of a week of phasing in and attempting to begin the children in the way which we want them to go. Having your direction and goal in mind when you begin will motivate and encourage you in your efforts to reach your goal.

One important aspect of your child's education and development includes the skill of handwriting. A recent article from the St. Paul Pioneer Press highlighted some fascinating studies that confirm just how important this skill is and will be for your child. In our young classroom where we are introducing this important skill we absolutely must "begin as we mean to go". We show children as they begin experimenting with crayons and markers how to use three fingers for their grasp and eventually how to form their letters and numbers correctly so that they will best be able to write in the future.

"Handwriting can change how children learn and their brains develop."¹ Julie Deardorff lists multiple ways in which handwriting benefits the development of a child's brain, far more than typing on a keyboard or tapping away at a text. "Handwriting increases brain activity, hones fine motor skills... For children, handwriting is extremely important. Not how well they do it, but that they do it and practice it... Handwriting aids memory... Handwriting proficiency inspires confidence. The more we practice a skill such as handwriting, the stronger the motor pathways become until the skill becomes automatic. Once it's mastered, children can move on to focus on the subject, rather than worry about how to form their letters."²



^{1&2}Handwriting makes its mark on child brain development; Julie Deardorff. St. Paul Pioneer Press

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We find this to be the case as we watch the children under our care develop this all important skill. The more they do it and become proficient at it the more they love it. Some of the ways that we suggest parents support and encourage their children in this endeavor are the following:

- ✎ Observe your child coloring, writing, any time they use a writing utensil. What is their grasp like? Do they use their whole fist, 4 fingers, or the 3 finger grasp?
- ✎ Model for your child the correct way to write. Even if you don't normally use the correct pencil grasp, do when you model for your child. You are your child's best teacher and they will want to do what you do.
- ✎ If you see an incorrect pencil grasp stop yourself! Do not stop or correct your child in the middle of their work. This will only serve to discourage and defeat the child who is working so hard. Only once they are finished should you approach them and suggest a better way to hold their pencil/crayon/marker etc. We say, "May I show you a better way to... (hold your pencil)".
- ✎ Do not take their hand to do it for them. Stay away from sending the message that only Mommy or Daddy can do it right. Get your own paper and pencil to show them, avoid invading their space by marking up their paper. This will encourage them to be confident in their own work.

We are so excited to have the amazing opportunity to be your child's guide this year in their discovery of learning. We are enjoying so many special time in our children's house rooms already. Please remember that we have important things planned for your children, some of which begin right at the start of their day. Some of the children take part in life celebrations, library or Bible story discussions first thing in the morning so it important for them to be at school right at 9:00am so they don't miss out on anything.

Thank you so much for all you do to help our school year be successful!

This photo shows a wonder moment in the Alpha room viewing a caterpillar that has just then turned into chrysalis.
We watched it zip up!

