



CASCADE
Family Learning Services

We Montessori

B6/2, 11th cross street,
Besant Nagar,
Chennai 90
Web: cascadefls.org,
cascadefls@gmail.com

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER: 101

IN THE ISSUE

A Word from the Principal

Guides Grapevine

Highlights of the year 2020 -21

Know thy family

Treat from truce – Toddler

Children's feature – Casa

Children's feature - Elementary

Children's feature-Adolescents

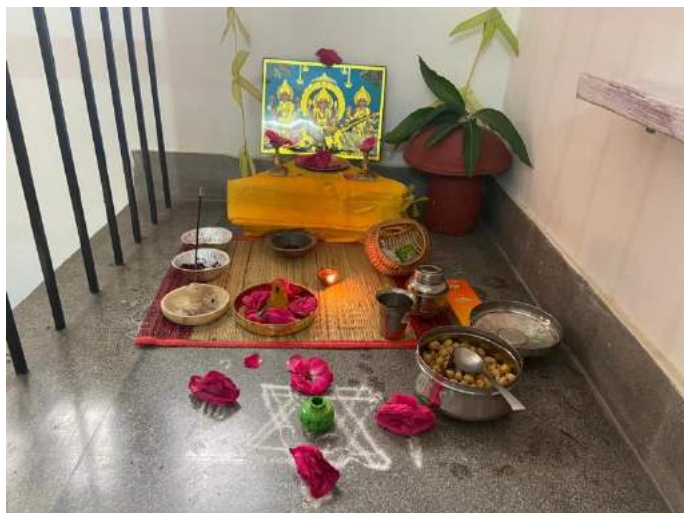
CASA Corner Classic

Volunteer speak

Photo Gallery

"At some given moment it happens that the child becomes deeply interested in a piece of work; we see it in the expression on his face, his intense concentration, the devotion to the exercise."

Dr. Maria Montessori - The Discovery of the Child



A WORD FROM THE PRINCIPAL

- Vidya Shankar

We opened last year, amid a solemn situation of the Covid 19 Pandemic, challenging our very existence and workings. We had anticipated the duration to be longer than a few weeks or a couple of months and embarked on a vacation advisory for specific children besides different age groups, sending out manuals to parents to work with materials at home, the Montessori way.

It was a definite challenge given that the children did not make sense of staying cooped up at home and greeting their beloved friends and aunts over a screen. We called for a meeting of families and drew out safety guidelines to open our classrooms with limited numbers and staggered timings. Month on month, studying the situation, the guidelines were reviewed and adhered to. We seemed to be enveloped by an invisible shield of goodness by Divine Will.

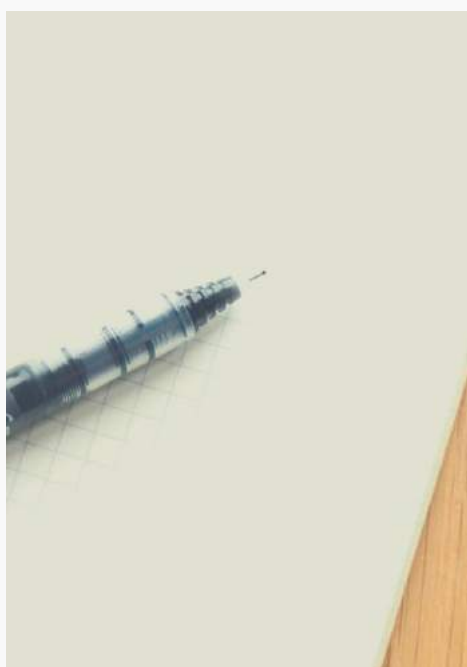


Slowly most of the children returned to the classrooms and by October, we were almost up to full strength, numbers however low and we had closed admissions for higher classes. Toddler environment opened with one child and after a few initial maneuvering needed, the flow was smooth.

The pandemic turned on the opportunity to count our blessings, take on some new courses towards strengthening CASCADE FLS, like the AMI Sports Fundamentals course, AMI Erd Kinder Adolescent studies course and implement the best of principles centered on the child's wellbeing, with cooperation of all families.

We are humbled by the gracious acceptance of the operational limitations by our children, who are showing us the way of moving forward steadily in learning and providing for natural human development. Sincere wishes, goodwill and prayers have certainly paved our pathway, that we now stand rock steady, ready to emerge as a progressive "Learning and educational pod" model that is slowly being universally valued and sought after.

I hope you enjoy this publication and will send in your thoughts and feedback, as we value them immensely!



Guides grapevine

Shruthi, our Anna Nagar Casa guide witnessed the following conversation among a couple of Elementary children, when one visited another's home for the first time:

Child 1- Hey, my house is taller than yours..

Child 2 - It doesn't matter whose house is taller or bigger, it only matters how it is inside and how we live inside the house.

Child 1- Ya da, what you are saying is correct.

It gave me goosebumps listening to this. So, I just wanted to share.

Highlights of the year 2020 -21

Cascade Family Learning Services is a collaborative effort of families coming together to create an environment that will bring the full potential of the children. As the name suggests, parents are the main stakeholders in framing the rules, managing the finances, delivering academic, non-academic and sports content under the guidance of Ms. Vidya Shankar. All the parents are encouraged to do the Montessori course to understand and craft their lifestyle.

- The year started with the support of parents for opening and running of a new Cascade center at Anna Nagar with 9 children. Many of the parents are Montessori trained, and this facilitates the smooth functioning of the environment, in accordance with our stated objectives.
- Another center for CASA also was opened at Thiruvannamiyur. The aesthetic and carefully prepared environment is inviting to the children, who make it their own house.
- Parents volunteered for several activities like gardening, cake making, clay modelling, Sanskrit, carpentry, Tamizh, and yoga.
- The community continued to be optimistic and active despite the pandemic situation. A good and true use of time has resulted in several positive developments.
 - Vidya Shankar completed her Montessori Sports Certification from AMI
 - Vidya Shankar is a Certified Montessori Coach from NCMPS, Colorado and a DERS (Developmental Environmental Rating Scale) expert consultant for Montessori classrooms.
 - Continuous study circle for parents and guides

Know Thy Family

The Sivakumars- Nandini, Sivakumar, Ikshvaku and Kshetragnya and Girija mami.

- narrated to Divya Balakrishnan (Parent of 3 Nandans at CASCADE)

[A short introduction about the family, its members, and origins.](#)

We a family of five – Sivakumar (the father), Nandini (the mother), Ikshvaku and Kshetragnya (our children) and Girija (the grandma). We hail from a small town called Manakkal in Trichy district but have mostly lived in Chennai.

[What activities do you all, as a family do together regularly and enjoy?](#)

Visiting our neighborhood temple and participating in the temple activities, music - singing bhajans and light devotional songs, visiting the beach (almost negligible in the last year though!) and playing card games are activities that we love to indulge in as a family.



Can you share one thing that you changed in your family's lifestyle after joining CASCADE and how has been the experience?

The first big thing was switching the television off and moving it out of the living room. We were toning down the amount of screen time anyway and the move to the school happened at the right time. We see that the amount of play time available has gone up as also thinking creatively in spending available time more constructively.

The other big thing was encouraging and letting the children be independent. This means the children largely take care of themselves – manage their time themselves, get ready for school (largely) on their own, eat by themselves, help in the kitchen (when they are at home and not playing outside the house with other kids, which is the case most of the time!), clean up spills and generally help around the house. Though it isn't smooth sailing always, the willingness to participate in mundane home activities and helping around the house has definitely gone up post entry to Cascade.

What are the creative pursuits each of your family members are interested in?

All of us love some or the other kind of music – at any point of time somebody at home is listening to or humming or singing (or shouting!) something or playing an instrument. Sivakumar plays the mridangam and loves to sing bhajans. Ikshvaku plays the mridangam too and likes to dabble in different forms of art and craft. Kshetragnya likes pretend play, reading books with his mom and enjoys washing and cleaning up. Nandini likes to bake and is always poring over books (cookbooks and fiction, both!).

Your perfect vacation would be...

A beach-side location for sure! We all love to play in the sand and step into the water (yes! The adults love it as much as the kids do).

What would you say to someone considering CASCADE?

If you are looking for a holistic approach to education – one place that gives as much importance on life skills as on academics – then this is a great place for your children to be in. The focus here is on “learning” and not on finishing a pre-decided amount of syllabus.

What are your tricks to balance the needs of the children and the demands of your career or other adulting tasks?

As parents, we take turns in tending to the needs of our children – one step is when another has a task on hand, where children cannot be involved.

What would you like to see more in CASCADE?

Greater exposure to language, for one. The children also had more opportunity to be involved in gardening at the old premises. That could, perhaps, be restarted. We could also look at reducing the churn in the Cascade family.

Please recommend a book that you think we all should read, and why?

The Fountainhead by Ayn Rand. The book has some lofty ideas, but what stands out in the book for me is the fact that the central character, an architect, refuses to follow the architectural fashion trends of the time (Greek columns et al) and chooses substance over style – his designs are functional, not stylistic alone. While this may seem superficial in the example I've just quoted from the book, it is this conviction in one's values and being true to them that reaches out to me in this book.

Favourite Quote Be the change that you want to see.

What are 3 top qualities/skills do you want to equip your child/ren with, so they can navigate the world effectively and fruitfully, when they are adults?

1. Self-Confidence
2. Problem-solving
3. Inculcating the right value-systems and being always true to them

What are your child/ren's favourite books at the moment?

Ikshvaku loves the Amar Chitra Katha series. Ranganna and Gajapathi Kulapathi (both Tulika titles) are his all-time favourites.

Kshetragnya is currently in love with an “Octopus book” at school.

Which is your hometown or favourite place? and If you would like to bring one characteristic from there to Chennai, what would it be?

Our hometown is Manakkal. We visit the place about once a year. We would love to bring the peaceful, laid-back lifestyle that is typical of the place.

Any interesting incident/conversation you have observed with children that is worth sharing.

Ikshvaku and his friends were having a conversation about India and Pakistan, with his friend telling him about how the two countries are still not on common grounds over a part of land. Ikshvaku wondered why the two countries must fight at all and if it wouldn't be easier to just share amicably! Children's' simplistic way of looking at and dealing with things is really astounding.

Kshetragnya was at a friend's house recently and the friend remarked how small his hands looked compared to the friend's father's hands (the friend's father is a 6-footer!). Kshetragnya coolly remarked that it is silly to expect that a “chicken will grow up into a rooster shortly after it is born!”

Treat from Truce – Toddler feature –Harikumar. V

After being a Casa adult for close to 7 years, working with the Toddlers, as expected, has been completely different. Four months since we opened the Toddler environment for a single child, we have two Toddlers and one young Casa entrant who use the facility every day.

The first few days with a Toddler are always filled with small battles, the key being providing two doable choices at the moment. But once the initial battles are overcome, the experience is quite adorable. The work with Casa calls for a lot of observation as does with Toddler, but the real difference is in the manifestation of changes.



The Toddler brain is developing at a rapid pace. There is at least one new aspect added or shown by the child every day. Careful observation can be rewarding in this aspect.

Two days back, the Toddler newer to the environment had her first attempt to use the knife. She is a strongly independent child and didn't let me demonstrate the peeling of the banana before using the knife and started tapping hard with the knife. Repeatedly calm words "Let's peel before cutting" led to tears and she went to her mom crying. She took a different work and came back to the food prep table and I quickly took the opportunity to slice the banana in front of her. She followed suit calmly and sliced the entire banana peacefully.

The power of the Absorbent Mind is evident in book reading with the Toddlers. There are English and Tamil books in the reading corner. The child who has been longer has been read the books several times while she sees and the ease with which the words are caught up is simply amazing. 'Thachar' for a carpenter is so strong that when I mentioned 'carpenter' in the English version, 'thachar' was the vehemently used one.

Here's another example. The first child knows where the wash basin is and has been adept at opening the tap and washing hands with soap. For a number of days, she would open the tap further in an attempt to close. The reverse movement just happened suddenly a few days back and the joy she had in stopping the water was just as lovely to watch as the time when she started to wash hands repeatedly.

The discovery of these little moments of happiness is what keeps the adults in the Toddler go on and on.



Children's feature

- Casa volunteer- **Nandini Sivakumar.**

Being around kids teaches you a lot of things – patience, being one. Expecting the unexpected, being another. I have baked with my children very many times. This was the first time I was baking with other children. Christmas was a few days away and I had a baking session the previous day with Elementary children. At Casa that day we were to bake gluten-free Christmas muffins.



Once I reached school, I found that most of them were doing other “work” – some were watering plants, a couple of them were doing “farm work” and one child was working with “tasting bottles”. While they completed their tasks, I set my bowls and spoons and ingredients out. Looking at all the apparatus I had set about, the children quickly made their way to the “baking station” that I had set up.

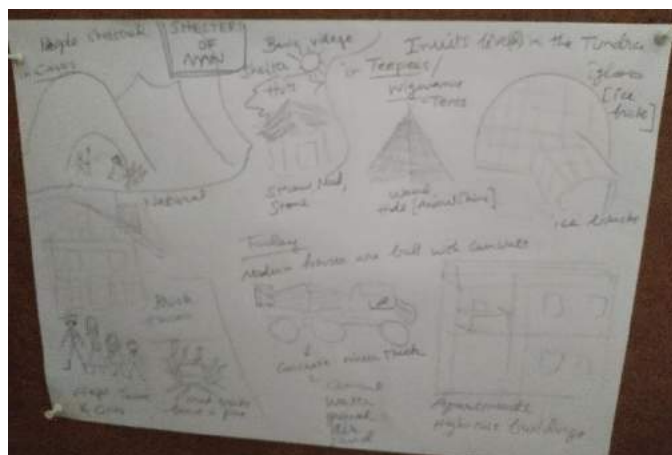
I really learnt how children value and love independence that day. The joy in their faces and their accomplished demeanor when they finished a task I asked them to do – sifting the flour, mixing all the dry ingredients together and adding in the jaggery to finally putting

in all the different dry fruit and nuts to the batter – was wonderful to observe. Each of them chose the mold in which his/her muffin would be baked and filled it with the batter themselves. Once the muffins went into the oven to bake, the kids went on with their other tasks, every now and then checking to see if the muffins were ready.

The kids did not have any snack that day as the snacking time and ingredients went towards the preparation of muffins. It had taken us much longer than expected and the children were ready to have lunch by the time the muffins were done.

Children's feature - Elementary

As a follow-up to the presentation on the fundamental needs of Man, an integral part of the study of history, a group project emerged in the elementary environment, Anna Nagar, where the children, along with parent volunteer Mahadevan, modeled 'Shelters by humans'.



The children came to a consensus to build a cave, a hut, an igloo,

a wigwam, a brick house, and a modern concrete building. The first three were built. More model igloos are to be built with great fidelity to the actual architectural methods. The brick and concrete structures are hopefully going to be masterpiece scale models! To be continued in the new academic year!

Our Adolescents working in the farm



Cooking village food



Children's feature – Adolescents

An interview with the journalist Ms. Chitradeepa Anatharaman by CASCADE FLS Student - Shyam Karthik.

How did you get your job?

I applied for a job in The Hindu [Newspaper] and received an appointment letter 2 weeks later. Before working in The Hindu, I was working in a smaller, less known newspaper, called The Trinity Mirror. I started working in The Hindu at 19/01/1997.

What kind of training did you take to get Qualified?

I took a post graduate course on mass communications and a master's degree in mass communications. There were only a few people in my class as most people did not take journalism very seriously.



Bio-clean liquid preparation



What are the most important responsibilities of your job?

Writing, mostly writing and the travel, I have to go to many places and meet a lot of people, so I get a little weary. I write about street food, arts, crafts and human interests.

What were the challenges you faced while trying to get your job?

My challenges were mostly based on practical exposure to journalism and my biggest challenge was getting training.

What was your inspiration to get your job?

My inspiration to take up this job is the magazine called Reader's Digest, for its simplicity, variety and straightforwardness.

Where there any instances when you thought you should have taken a different job?

There were a few instances when I thought I should leave The Hindu and go for technical writing but was advised not to by a friend who said technical writing is extremely boring and he would happily switch places with me.



What do you like most about your job?

What I like most about my job is that I get opportunities to meet people and listen to their ideas and share views

with them.

What do you like the least about your job?

The restrictions and barricades for ideas and views is what I like least about my job.

Casa Classic Corner



Snack making became an everyday affair during November to March with children slowly deciding a week's menu of snacks through hand voting every Friday. They enjoyed these discussions and the self-control to raise a hand for the snack they wanted first was so evidently observed with pride and understanding.

The Bengal gram laddus for Deepavali, ragi cup cakes with Nandini aunty for Christmas, Corn peas salad, Bhel Puri, Dry fruit salad, Peanut sundal, a variety of fruit salads were all part of the snack making menu.



Sharmilee, a relative of one of our children, visited the center and spent 2 hours with children working on clay modelling with them. The children wanted to get their hands on soon and she was well prepared with balls of terracotta clay ready for their usage. She had shown how to cut, manipulate and join different clay pieces and the children came out with some pretty models soon. They even got to take the remainder of the clay back home to make more.

Materials of this season

Binomial Cube is made up of several colored blocks, which fit together in a specific way. Assembling it uses a child's fine-motor skills and requires the ability to discriminate between the blocks based on multiple characteristics.

To the young child, the binomial cube is an entertaining three-dimensional puzzle, but more fundamentally, it is a concrete representation of the cube of a simple binomial equation: $(a+b)^3$. As with all Montessori sensorial materials, the cube has both a direct and an indirect purpose. The direct purpose of the binomial cubes is for the child to practice the steps to properly disassemble and build the cube, while refining dexterity and visual acuity. Indirectly, the binomial cube prepares the child for higher-level math through concrete and visual exposure to the algebraic concept of a binomial cube.



The indirect purpose in the Casa becomes the direct purpose when the material is re-introduced in the elementary classrooms. Elementary-aged children use the cube to develop an understanding of the expanded equation $(a+b)^3 = a^3 + 3a^2b + 3b^2a + b^3$.

Volunteer Speak

Sujatha - Tamil & Arts Parent Volunteer:

I came in first to volunteer and help children learn stitching, Crochet, paper craft etc. I felt this will improve their concentration and make them focus more on the given task. To create interest in learning the Tamil language I made the children read moral stories based on Thirukkural and Aathichudi. Also, they took to writing a few sentences based on simple Tamil words that we often use while interacting with others, checking daily sheet Tamil calendar and writing down the information about some fruits that have some medical benefits. In the classroom they discussed these topics with avidity.

I got to understand the children's learning and psychology through this volunteering work. Children are interested to learn the subject if presented in a way they enjoy, relishing each small step. It is a nice feeling when I see smiles on their faces when they just got one knot right or one sentence fully right.

Vidya - Sports Parent Volunteer

I enjoy sports with the children, as it gives me an opportunity to move my muscles, get some sun, kindle my own memory of school and college days:) For the kids, I enjoy practicing the language of cooperation, and most importantly I see an opportunity for sports without gender bias! Girls and boys play football, badminton, cricket. We don't ever split the groups as boys and girls, which is so common in regular schools. And we have never heard the children speak such language either. To me this is very very important.



Mahadevan – Carpentry

Cascade received a nice workbench and a few tools. Children had been working now and then with some of these tools. It was decided to have a regular class on alternate Saturdays. The first session started on August 21st 2021 at the Anna Nagar premises.



After a few sessions, it was decided to shift the class to Anna Colony, since the space at Anna Nagar was quite cramped and Anna Colony has a spacious place at the entrance.

The class is taken by Mahadevan, a parent volunteer. The sessions are structured to begin with a prayer, followed by a reminder of



simple safety instructions.

All the children received safety wear, including anti-cut gloves, anti-pollution masks, safety glasses and ear protection. The very first class had a full talk about carpentry and woodworking, including the utility and aesthetics of the skills.

The working tools and space were introduced, and children worked with several hand and power tools. The tools of the trade were specially chosen. Only a small selection has been provided this first year. High powered tools, which are available, such as the table saw, have been benched for now ☺.

Tools that the children have learnt include the power jigsaw, power drill and different types of drill bits, hammer and chisel, vises, clamps, sand paper, hand saw, screwdriver and measuring tape. Natural finishes using kitchen materials have been introduced and applied. A lot of experimentation is going to happen in the coming year in this area!

At the close of the year, practice on scrap wood was promoted to working on good quality plywood. They have begun to design boxes on papers and working on joints and frames. Only 3mm plywood was provided, to help the young children cut straight, and the basic box is built with reinforced butt joints with carpenter's glue. As precise planning, drawing and work skills develop this year, they will build more and more beautiful and useful things for the school and home.

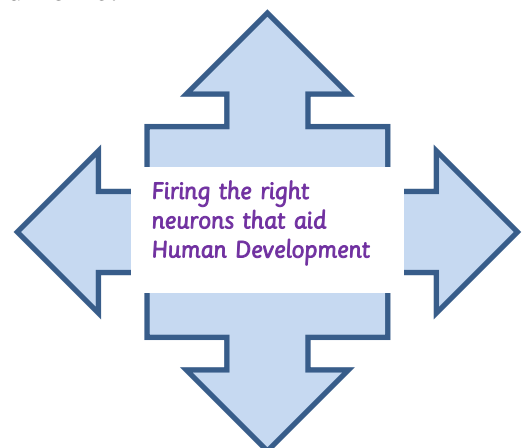
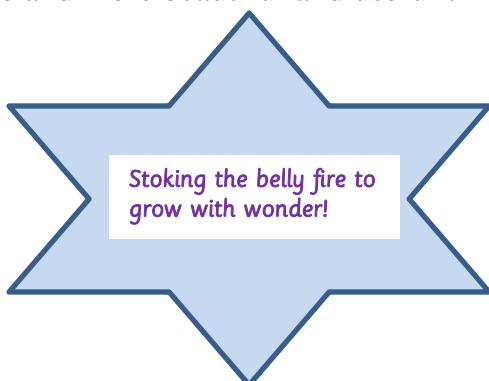


Photo Gallery

Sneak peek into our Toddler Environment – Jeevarathnam Nagar



Gardening Session as part of the day routine



A Visit to post office



OUR NEW PREMISES: IN VALMIKI NAGAR

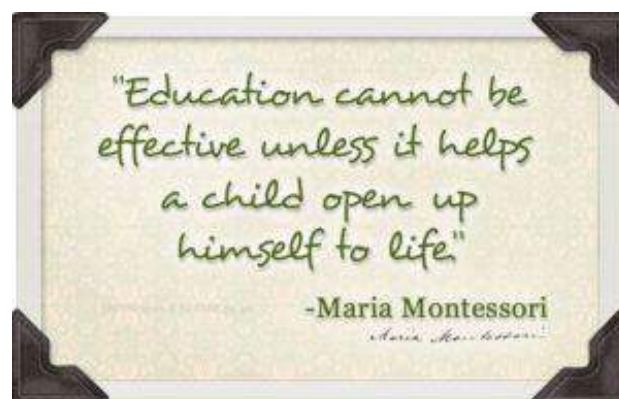
“The hands are the instruments of man’s intelligence.”

- Dr. Maria Montessori





THE 6 LEVELS OF BLOOM'S REVISED TAXONOMY



THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST!