

Inspiring a Healthy Spirit, a Strong Character, and a Clear Intellect



# BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

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## Celebrate the Seasons at Holiday Sing

MIR students of all ages will celebrate the seasons through song and dance at the Holiday Sing on Wednesday, December 15 at the University of Redlands Memorial Chapel. Admission is free. Seating begins at 6:30 PM and the program begins at 7 PM. **School will close at 3:30 PM on December 15** to give students a chance to rest and prepare.

Holiday Sing is a truly special annual performance that always draws a capacity crowd. Please

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Why Less is More

by PETER DAVIDSON, ASSISTANT HEAD OF SCHOOL

*“We must help the child act, think, and will for himself.”—Maria Montessori*

As I met with some prospective MIR parents last week, they liked what they saw but were unsure how their little boy would fit in such a well-organized environment full of such independent and focused children. “He has lots and lots of toys at home,” they went on to tell me, “but never seems to settle down and play with any one thing for very long.” After assuring them that their son did not sound in any way abnormal, I gave them some advice from my experience as a parent and a Montessori teacher. I’ll repeat the advice here, in hopes that some of you may find it helpful, especially as the holiday season approaches.

It sounds counterintuitive, but perhaps the reason a child doesn’t stay with any activity for very long is not that he has *too few* toys, but *too many*. Too many choices can be overwhelming, and can

explain why a child might have a hard time settling down. This may sound strange coming from a Montessorian, given that our classrooms are filled with so many intriguing activities. But actually, we are very careful to limit the available activities to only those that are being actively chosen and used by some child in the group at that point in time.

When the youngest in the group has moved beyond the introductory materials, we’ll put them away until such time as a new student is making the transition to the classroom. If we notice that certain materials are gathering dust and not in active circulation, we will remove them for a period of time and reintroduce them a few weeks or months down the road. Similarly, books in the reading corner are

*(Continued on page 6)*



## A little bird told me...PTM News and Notes

### Food Wanted for Annual Food Drive December 6–17



PTM is holding its annual holiday-season food drive this month. This year our donations will benefit Joseph's Storehouse, a food and clothing bank in Redlands. To participate, bring nonperish-

able food to your child's classroom or the office by December 17. They are particularly in need of the following items:

- Canned sausage
- Canned vegetables
- Cup-of-Soups
- Hot chocolate
- Jelly

- Peanut butter
- Spaghetti sauce (canned or jarred)
- Spaghetti noodles
- Spaghettio's
- Tea
- Top Ramen
- Tuna fish

Joseph's Storehouse also welcomes volunteers. Dona-

tions are handed out on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays, 9–11 AM. Volunteers are asked to be there by 8:30 AM. Young children can volunteer if accompanied with an adult. If you are interested in volunteering or have further questions, call 909-793-5677.

### Got wrap? Get gift wrap and more from Innisbrook

It's not too late to order wrapping paper, gifts, and other holiday supplies through Innisbrook. Shop online at [innisbrook.com](http://innisbrook.com). Our school code is 102074. Orders placed online will be shipped directly to your home. Funds help sponsor PTM events and activities.

### Meet your PTM at Coffee Curbside on December 16

Chat with your PTM reps and have breakfast or snacks on us! Join us Thursday morning at 9 AM on the main campus and Thursday afternoon at 3 PM on the North campus drop-off areas for free coffee, juice, and muffins. You may also drop off your food drive or Annual Fund donations with us. We hope to see you there!

### MIR News and Notes

#### *Coffee, Tea, and M.E. canceled*

Due to the recent flooding, we must cancel December's Coffee, Tea, and M.E. because of limited space. The next Coffee, Tea, and M.E. will be held in January.

#### *Chinese classes rescheduled*

Lango will hold Chinese classes from 4:30–5:15 PM in Kelly's class until the Yoga room is once again available. At that time, all classes will resume their normal schedule.



#### **Bluebird Graces Successful Fundraiser**

Bluebird Gabriel Ortega joined other MIR students and their families at a November fundraiser at Gourmet Pizza Shoppe. All proceeds supported MIR 6th years in their goal of traveling to Washington, D.C. for their spring trip.

*Piano recital rescheduled* The winter piano recital for families of Yang Chen's music students will be held Monday, December 13 at 12 PM in Kelly's classroom. Please contact Yang with any questions.

#### **Next PTM Meeting**

Due to the recent flooding in classrooms and limited space, PTM needed to cancel the meeting scheduled for December 1. The next meeting will be held Thursday, January 13 2011 at 6 PM. All parents are invited. Happy holidays!

#### **HOLIDAY SING (cont.)**

*(Continued from page 1)*

drop off your children at University Hall at 6:30 PM and find your seat.

*Cookies needed* We need 12 dozen cookies from each class (all three Toddler classes count as one) for the reception following the event. Look for signup sheets in the classes. Please deliver cookies to the school by Monday, December 13. Thank you in advance for your help!

*DVDs* Order DVDs of the performance in the classroom or the office.

## Report from the Board

by LEELA MADHAVARAU, PRESIDENT

### Looking to the Future

2011 is, unbelievably, nearly upon us, and as we begin a new year, the Board wants to share with you some of the future planning that we have discussed in previous columns.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the Long Range Planning Committee worked to produce a vision document for the school called *Living the Montessori Journey*. A copy is included with the 2009-2010 MIR Annual Report, which you will receive by the end of this month. *Living the Montessori Journey* outlines the three core values through which we construct the Montessori experience. These values are the guiding principles by which we will frame all future planning for MIR. We invite you to read the document and share your thoughts or suggestions with us.

The Board wishes you happy and peaceful holidays and a wonderful New Year. As always, if you have questions on Board matters, you are more than welcome to contact me.

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## Curriculum Matters

By MAURA JOYCE,  
HEAD OF SCHOOL

*"The child who has felt a strong love for his surroundings and for all living creatures, who has discovered joy and enthusiasm in work, gives us reason to hope that humanity can develop in a new direction." —Maria Montessori*

### Discovering Biology

Everywhere we look today we are reminded how important it is for us to protect and preserve our planet, its resources and all of its living creatures: plant and animal. One hundred years ago, however, Dr. Maria Montessori was already calling for educating our children to make a difference on our planet. She felt that children needed to understand their place in the world and so offered the child biology: the scientific study of life and living organisms, which includes their structure, function, growth, origin, evolution and distribution.

At a very young age, the child is first presented live specimens of animals and plants, which may include the care and study of classroom pets and plants, nature walks, and field trips for further exploration. Montessori addresses the importance of this practice stating, "Instruction becomes a living thing. Instead of being illustrated, it is brought to life." (*From Childhood to Adolescence*, Maria Montessori, page 19). The child is excited by the close observation of real plants and animals and the biology curriculum of the Montessori classroom seeks to satisfy this need to look at it further.



After that concrete exploration of the living organisms, the child in the Toddler and Primary class, is then given the vocabulary (nomenclature) for them. They learn names of plants and animals and some varieties of each (e.g., farm animals vs. jungle animals, different trees, etc.). They then learn parts of the plant, parts of different animals and begin to classify them into groups (e.g., vertebrates—mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles; or leaf shapes—linear, ovals, etc.).

In Elementary, they begin to learn more details of the structure and function of plants and animals and their parts.

*(Continued on page 6)*

## My Amazing Discovery: *Journey and Discovery*

By JAMIE MACKNET, PRIMARY PARENT

Last spring during some sort of hectic child rearing event I had an interaction with another mom. To this day, I have no idea what the source of the shuffling chaos was, or what circumstance brought this conversation to be, but the exchange ended like this: Other Mom: “You haven’t been to *Journey and Discovery* yet!?” Me: “No, it just hasn’t worked out with my schedule; I would like to go though.” Other Mom: “You must, must, must go; it will change your life.”

Fast forward several months, as life invariably seems to do, and *Journey and Discovery* was upon me. My schedule was packed, I had stressors after me from every direction, my weekend overcommitted, my baby was teething, I had umpteen undone projects at home, a huge pile of cyber paperwork to do and I was tired...really, really tired. As I picked up the phone, in due diligence, to see if there was any space left, I half-heartedly hoped I’d have to wait until the next session. Before I knew it, I was confirming a reservation for early the next morning. I hung up, stared off into space and wondered where I would find the energy to take on something more.

Then reality and reason spoke. Who was I kidding? There was absolutely no chance I’d be able to sleep in anyway. All my other demands were sure to wait, and well, anything that deserved three “musts” and was professed to be life-changing had to be important.

It was a beautiful Saturday, and like so many mornings before (and several since) my faithful minivan navigated to our campus. Latte in hand, I stepped out of the car and suddenly felt a peace about me. The grounds, the classrooms, the program was being prepared for me. This day, these buildings and materials were all there for me to investigate and enjoy. Suddenly, life’s external noise quieted, I took a deep breath, and I felt an internal curiosity and drive to discover.

After a brief meeting in the yoga room (and some really

yummy muffins) we set out on a silent tour of our school. My mouth was quiet, but my mind boisterous with data as I thoroughly surveyed classrooms on the Toddler, Primary, Upper and Lower Elementary levels. Muted, we walked over to The Grove School and toured the classrooms, barns, laboratory, and workshops. My eyes compared and contrasted flashbacks from my own education with what my adult eyes were seeing.

Quietly observing each environment was analogous to being in an educational candy store. Everything was so simple and attractive. I made notes; I wrote down questions; the scientist in me wanted to understand each element and detail I observed. My analytical mind wanted to make sense

of how all these amazing pieces of work fit together into the framework of concepts seared in my brain by my conventional, traditional education. My adventurous, curious mind wanted to touch and try everything. Walking back to the yoga room I was totally excited and overwhelmed with visual information and questions. What was this for? What do you do with that?

What concept are you presenting here? How do you measure outcomes? Where are these amazing children going and doing after this incredible education?

After a short rendezvous and discussion (and promise for more answers over lunch) we dispersed into different groups—one to explore the lower elementary through high school, and the other to tour the Toddler, Primary, lower and upper Elementary programs. Before I knew it, our large group had dissipated, and I found myself in the realm of a toddler. On my hands and knees I was drawn to one activity after the next. Although exquisitely uncomfortable for my nearly six foot frame, I could tell that each piece of furniture was just the right size and in just the right place



(Continued on page 7)

# Give to the Annual Fund and Help MIR *Bridge the Gap*

Bring in your puzzle piece with your Annual Fund pledge to help complete the picture!

Our goal for each classroom is to reach 100% participation. To make it fun and show the progress for each class, the MIR Annual Fund committee has created a series of puzzles. As pledges or donations are returned, pieces are added to the class puzzle until it is complete.

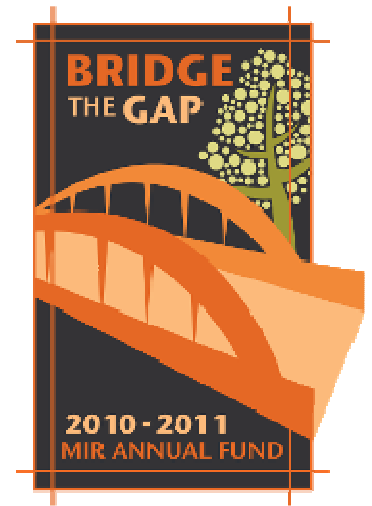
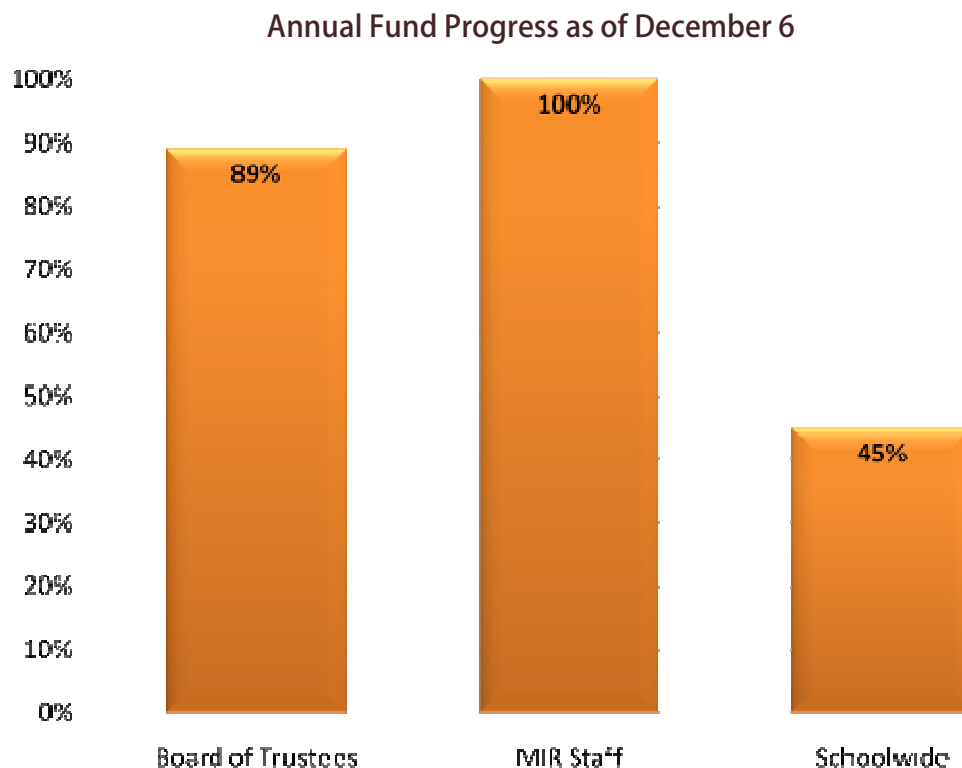
If you have already pledged or donated, return your puzzle piece to the MIR office and we'll fill in your gap on each class in which you have a child. If you have not yet pledged, bring in your puzzle piece with your completed pledge form, and we'll fill in your gap at that time. You may also pledge online at [montessoriiinredlands.org/bridgethegap](http://montessoriiinredlands.org/bridgethegap).

There are several ways to donate:

- ❶ *Donate now to maximize your tax benefit*—Your contribution may qualify for a tax deduction. Make a lump-sum donation before the end of the year to have it qualify for the 2010 tax year.
- ❷ *Pledge now, pay later*—The deadline for the classroom participation program is December 31, so make your pledge now. Donation payments are not due until the end of the school year.
- ❸ *Make a monthly donation*—If you are able, consider making a larger donation broken into monthly installments.

The chart below shows total donations as of December 6. Updated totals are noted in the MIR School Planner e-mail sent each week.

*Thank you for your contribution and participation!*



Please consider making a **monthly donation**. By doing so, you provide crucial ongoing support to our mission to provide every child with an individualized education that helps them be the person they were meant to be.



[montessoriiinredlands.org/bridgethegap](http://montessoriiinredlands.org/bridgethegap)

## LESS IS MORE... (cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

periodically changed and rotated when the teacher notices a waning of interest. They can be brought back a few months later to renewed excitement and engagement. Even the pictures on the wall are very limited in number, and changed periodically to elicit fresh notice and spark conversation.

My suggestion for the home would be to go through your child's toys and select a limited number that seem to be the current favorites. Make sure that all of these toys are complete and unbroken and ready to use. Be sure to select a variety including a couple of games, a couple of puzzles, a couple of cars, a couple of art activities, etc. Put the rest away in a closet.

When presented with fewer but still varied options, most children will make better choices and find it easier to settle down with one thing for a period of time. As you observe your child, you'll notice that her play patterns will change over time. When she shows signs of disinterest in some of the toys, put them away and bring out replacements from the storage closet. An old toy seems fresh and new to a child after it has been out of sight for even a few weeks.

My next suggestion is to place toys on a shelf, rather than in a toy box, much as the materials are arranged on

shelves in a Montessori classroom. When making a choice from among a number of items, it's very helpful if the items are displayed on a shelf rather than buried in a box. It helps the child find an item when they decide they want to use it. By contrast, a toy box makes it difficult to find any particular item, and invariably the one the child wants is at the bottom of the box. To the child, that means that when he's done playing with a toy, not only does he need to put it away, but also all of the other toys he had to unpack to get to it! This might explain why in some homes with toy boxes the children don't want to put their toys away.

As always, my wife and I will spend Christmas morning at our daughter's house, watching our grandchildren open their presents. You can be sure that I'll be taking my own advice. Later in the day I'll help each child find room for their new toys and games on their toy shelf, and decide which toys can be packed away for a while to make room. In a few weeks, our daughter will notice that the novelty has worn off some of the new toys and will bring some of the old toys out again. This will spark a new round of interest and engagement and prove the old axiom that sometimes, less really is more!

## CURRICULUM MATTERS (cont.)

(Continued from page 3)

They are exposed to plant experiments that illustrate the function of the root, or how plants give off water and oxygen. They are shown the processes of photosynthesis and cellular respiration, they study the animal and plant kingdoms and eventually learn how to classify species. Lastly they look at ecosystems and how the plant and animal life are reliant on a very delicate balance that could easily bring drastic consequences.

We build upon this curriculum of details in order to help the child understand not only nomenclature or functions of parts, but the

importance of valuing and respecting the whole of nature. Lessons and discussions regarding protecting our



planet and reducing our own carbon footprint. Montessori states, "The child who has

felt a strong love for his surroundings and for all living creatures, who has discovered joy and enthusiasm in

work, gives us reason to hope that humanity can develop in a new direc-

tion." (*Education and Peace*, Maria Montessori, page 58).

Montessori's biology curriculum facilitates the child's development of that spiritual force which includes the reverence for all living things and respect for our relationship within nature. Montessori addresses the importance of understanding the interconnectedness of all living things and states. The children excitedly embrace the role they hold within the function of earth because they have been exposed to Montessori's scientific study of biology. It is our hope and mission that these children become the peacemakers and caretakers of our planet.

## JOURNEY AND DISCOVERY... (cont.)

(Continued from page 4)

for the ease and comfort of a toddler. I wondered: “Is my toddler this uncomfortable in my ‘big’ world?” Just when I was getting into the toddler “groove,” it was time to move to the Primary room.

Because I have a child in Primary, that environment felt very familiar. So many materials surrounded me; it was like a buffet of activity. Where to go first? I dug in. I chose my first lesson mostly because it was familiar; my child had presented me with the finished product for the work the day before. As I tried to focus on what I was doing, I noticed all the inviting activities around me. I pondered “No wonder my child wants to get five different works out at any given time—it’s hard to resist!” I persisted, completed my work and moved on to another lesson...and then another, and another. I was having fun, and yes, I was learning—new ways, more tangible ways of dealing with old concepts ingrained in my brain. I found myself repetitively thinking “I can’t believe these kids are doing this—I learned this in fourth and fifth grade!”

Moving on to the lower-upper combination Elementary room was like entering a time warp of my own education. There were materials everywhere, but the smorgasbord of concepts presented in that room ranged anywhere from third



grade into graduate school from my time line of educational memories. I found myself drawn to the math and science lessons. Suddenly, complex concepts from my academic past transcended “accepting what is” to understanding. It was like a continuous stream of light bulbs illuminating, as I was presented previously mastered concepts in a completely different way. Each teacher had a unique approach—all amazing and wonderful.

The delightful day ended with a wonderful lunch where, as promised, every last question was answered. What a treat to sit with all the teachers and staff, as adults, and talk about the process of educating my children. I returned to the car, my Zen almost palpable. **I felt at peace with my child’s education.** I was excited for her, and excited for me. I knew that the infrastructure was available for her to choose her way, and gain her own success in life. I had many lessons that

day but left our beautiful campus with a few reflective thoughts. First—Montessori education, as our school executes it, is an amazing, fantastic, wonderful, privilege our families have, and second—when *Journey and Discovery* appears on my schedule again, I will be excited and motivated to attend such a treat. **I hope you all do the same, you really must, must, must go, and it will change your life.**

## Let this Montessori Bluebird perch on your tree...

Local artist Ada Jarvis is offering beautiful keepsake MIR ornaments for sale, with a portion of the proceeds going to the school. Small ornaments feature the Montessori Bluebird and are available for \$17. Large ornaments feature the MIR bridge or soccer field on one side and the Bluebird on the other. They sell for \$26.

Place your order in the office. Ornaments will be delivered in approximately a week following your order. **The deadline to order is Friday, December 10.**

Detail from small ornament



Detail from large ornament



# BIRTHDAYS



## students

Allison Kim	12/1
Lance Smith	12/2
Jacob Paugh	12/5
Keerthana Toure	12/7
Rocco DeVito	12/8
Isabella Patel	12/8
Kavya Narayanan	12/9
Ella Sabo	12/9
Ada Bridgers	12/10
Dutch Rumar	12/16
Elaine Spencer	12/16
Ronan Sherrell	12/18
Thomas Dixon	12/21
Matthew Bline	12/22
Ananya Anand	12/24
Mia Davies	12/24
Rachel Porter	12/28
Nicolas (Rocco) Farre	12/30
Margo Male	12/30
Jaycee Hendrickson	12/31
Maia Richards-Dinger	12/31

## staff

Lisa Oliver	12/5
Kristen Gonzales	12/9
Jill McDermott	12/10
Nicole Fedorow	12/12
Shelley McCarthy	12/12
Nikki Farooq	12/17
Kelly Read	12/20
Kelsey Rock	12/28



**TWEET:** [twitter.com/mirmatters](https://twitter.com/mirmatters)

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## School Calendar for the Holiday

December brings many holidays and a more complicated school schedule. Please note below the dates of class field trips and year-end holiday feasts.

MIR will be closed for the winter holidays starting December 20 and re-opening January 3. No childcare is provided December 20–24 but is available by reservation for December 27–30. Childcare is not available on Friday, December 31.

**Stop by the office to sign up for childcare. The deadline is December 10.**

## Holiday Sing Dress Rehearsal Schedule—Don't be Late!

Dress rehearsals for the Holiday Sing performance will take place during the morning on **Wednesday, December 15**. Please be sure your child is at school on time. Children will be transported by bus to the University of Redlands.

All classes will rehearse at various times beginning at 9 AM. **It is very important that all children arrive at school on time to get on the bus. Elementary students leave by 8:45 AM.** Otherwise, your child could miss their opportunity to rehearse.

Parents of Thursday/Friday Toddler students are welcome to bring their child to the University. You will have to remain with your child through the rehearsal. Check with your child's teacher for exact times.

### Activities Canceled Due to Flooding

PTM meeting • Parent Education Night • Coffee, Tea, and M.E. (Montessori Education). All other activities were rescheduled or moved to a new location.

## DECEMBER 2010

<b>29</b> Scholastic Book Fair begins	<b>30</b>	<b>1</b> Dance class, 3:30-5 PM PTM meeting, CANCELED Parent Ed. Night CANCELED	 <b>2</b> Jean/MH & Emily/Teesie fieldtrip to Nutcracker Dance class, 3:30-5 PM Lango classes	<b>3</b> Sara, Nikki, and Dorama/Kara fieldtrip to Nutcracker 6th years host Parents Night Out
<b>6</b> PTM food drive begins  Dance class, 3:30-5 PM	<b>7</b> Lango classes	<b>8</b> Emily and Margaretann's 4th and 5th years to Bowers Museum  Dance class, 3:30-5 PM	<b>9</b> Lango classes  6th years fundraiser @ Barnes & Noble	<b>10/11</b> Scholastic Book Fair ends <b>Holiday break childcare reservations due</b> Sara's class caroling @ Braswell's Nikki's Potluck, 11 AM <b>11th:</b> 6th years host Parents Night Out
<b>13</b> Piano recital, NOON Dance class, 3:30-5 PM	<b>14</b> Sara's holiday international potluck, 11 AM  Lango classes	<b>15</b> School closes @ 3:30 PM   <b>Holiday Sing, 7:00 PM</b>	<b>16</b> PTM's Coffee Curbside, 9 AM (both campuses) Emily/Teesie's class @ Braswell's Dorama/Kara's holiday potluck, 11:30 AM MA/Nicole and Kelly's classes snow tubing Lango classes Elem. Solstice sleepover	<b>17</b> Bluebird assembly, 9:15 Maria's potluck, 10 AM Emily/Teesie's brunch, 10 AM Kelly's potluck 10:30 AM Jean/MH's brunch, 10:30 AM Margaretann/Nicole's potluck, 10:30 AM PTM food drive ends <b>School closes at NOON</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>  
Winter holiday break. No school; no childcare.				
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>  School closed for New Year's Eve. No childcare.
Winter holiday break. No school; childcare by reservation				