

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


BLUEBIRD BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2010 VOLUME 37, ISSUE 4

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Reprint

My Amazing Discovery: *Journey and Discovery*

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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 sud-

denly 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.


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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 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.**

