

THE GLOBE



DISCOVERY
MONTESSORI SCHOOL

HEAD OF SCHOOL NEWSLETTER
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Youth Philanthropy, Montessori & IB A Global Education Model

In November 2011, Discovery Montessori Elementary students visited the exclusive White Oak Conservation Center as part of our Youth Philanthropy Initiative for the 2011-2012 academic year: Conservation & the Environment. As part of this day of study in the field with researchers & scientists, our students encountered the mysterious Okapi - an endangered species of rainforest giraffe and the focus of our philanthropic work this year. This work, of youth giving of their own time, talents and treasure is connecting the dots of how their local stewardship can protect a flagship species on the other side of the world.

The Okapi Conservation Project is located within the Ituri Forest, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the most biologically diverse country in Africa. The Okapi Conservation Project (OCP) was initiated by White Oak in 1987 to conserve the okapi in the wild while preserving the biological and cultural dynamics of the Ituri Forest. A flagship species, the okapi serves as an ambassador representing the incredible diversity of species found in the region.

Our Youth Philanthropy work at Discovery is in the spirit of our mission, to inspire our children to

become passionate lifelong learners and responsible world citizens, in a challenging and nurturing academic environment firmly rooted in Montessori principles. Our mission is well matched to the missions of our education partners; the American Montessori Society, White Oak Conservation Center, Rainforest Alliance & International Baccalaureate World Schools.

The mission of the American Montessori Society is to make Montessori a significant voice in education; the mission of the White Oak Conservation Center is to conserve and sustain some of the earth's rarest wild animals through innovative training, research, education, breeding and field programs that contribute to the survival of wildlife in nature; the mission of the Rainforest Alliance is to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior; the mission of the International Baccalaureate (IB) World Schools is to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.



...a Global Education Initiative

The mission statement is a ‘living statement’. When formulated and used strategically, a mission statement is a powerful tool which communicates the organization's fundamental truth to internal and external stakeholders. Used in this way, the mission statement becomes a driving force of the organization and allows for ‘mission matching’ with other organizations with similar values.

As Discovery continues the daily work of providing a holistic Montessori education, we have partnered with like-minded organizations to enrich our student's academic experience, while also pursuing an investigation of future partners. On October 5th, 2011 we launched our official feasibility-study IB group to investigate the academic match of Montessori & IB at Discovery. This IB study group is in compliance with Discovery's 2011 Strategic Plan, with the goal to develop a sustainable & competitive advantage that is unique in the northeast Florida region.

The membership of this group is reflective of varied constituencies: Kim Bednarek, Janet Allen, Robin Castle, Nita Hurley, Sheila McLenaghan, Tom Serwatka, Robin McClure, Leigh Weaver, Deborah Alfaro and Leah Hudson. The group is charged with investigating the feasibility of becoming an IB World School that adheres to the IB standards, while maintaining the integrity of our Montessori prepared environments and curriculum. To date, the group has

engaged in conversation with Toronto Montessori (Canada), New Gate Field School (Sarasota, FL), the International School of Indiana and Whitby (Greenwich, CT). IB study group members have visited Toronto, Indianapolis & Whitby, as well as attended an IB orientation in Rochester, NY. The next study group meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2012.

Taken collectively, Discovery Montessori is delivering an exceptional Montessori experience, while poised to expand into our 2016 Vision to create an inclusive and vibrant community that promotes knowledge, creativity, independent thinking and mutual respect. As a well-known contributor to the northeast Florida community, offering a diverse, service-learning model of education, our School embodies the highest Montessori principles with a documented curriculum outlining student outcomes for all stakeholders.

Discovery expects to complete Youth Philanthropy work for the Okapi Conservation Project & Rainforest Alliance in May 2012, culminating in a videoconference with students in Guatemala. The IB study group will be presenting a feasibility report to the DMS Board of Directors in March 2012. Our global education initiatives are connecting our students to their potential as leaders in our rapidly evolving global economies.





Professional Development

Engagement in an educational community is fostered by consistent and persistent professional development. Cultivating on-going learning in a collaborative atmosphere is the key to building and maintaining a student-engagement approach in our School.

The staff and faculty of Discovery Montessori take this initiative seriously, as indicated by our varied professional development pursuits. Our 2011-2012 school year began with a full faculty/staff and Board of Directors retreat at the White Oak Plantation. This multi-day event included School founder, Ms. Leah Hudson and select parent representatives, to ensure our work at Discovery involved a wide constituency group. The focus of this 3 day event was our upcoming multi-agency accreditation process with the Florida Kindergarten Council (FKC) and the Florida Council of Independent Schools (FCIS). The work begun in August 2011 has culminated in comprehensive curriculum guides for each of our program levels, that will be available for review at our upcoming Saturday, January 21st, 2012 Open House event.

Our volunteer Board of Directors utilized their time at White Oak to reflect upon the Strategic Plan of 2011 and review & map the achievement of our goals for a 2016 Vision. Our Board members present a diversity of talent and have worked diligently to support Discovery's expanded Annual Fund campaign and Golden Bead Society, while working side-by-side with leadership to define our self-study documentation for both the Florida Kindergarten Council and the Florida Council of Independent Schools.

On October 11th-13th, Elementary Lead Teacher, Nita Hurley, participated in a 3 day Rainforest Alliance (RA) curriculum training seminar within the Duval County public school district. This training was hosted by Susie Tolbert Elementary School, a gifted & talented public magnet school. Discovery's academic leadership around integration of RA into core subjects was well-received by participating regional teachers.

On October 22nd, Kim Bednarek, attended the annual Florida Kindergarten Council conference in Orlando. Kim met with the FKC/FCIS Chair of Accreditation to prepare Discovery for the February 22nd-24th accreditation visit. This particular conference focused on Kindergarten standards and expectations within the private, independent school community in Florida.

On Tuesday, October 25th, Kim Bednarek and Leah Hudson visited the prestigious Whitby school in Greenwich, CT. Whitby is the first Montessori school in America, founded by Dr. Nancy Rambusch, credited with bringing the Montessori movement to America. Whitby has successfully integrated Montessori & IB within their classrooms. Whitby is currently accredited by both the American Montessori Society and as an International Baccalaureate World School.

On November 3rd-5th, Discovery sent a team of 2 Toddler & 1 Pre-Primary Lead Teacher's (Heather Dore, Linda Ploegert & Kirby Belcher) to represent the American Montessori Society at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Conference in Orlando. Our Lead Teaching staff worked the AMS booth, introducing many attendees to the wonderful world of Montessori, while also having the opportunity to attend the NAEYC conference workshops.

On November 16th-18th, Jenny Homler, Janet Allen & Sara Schmalfeld attended the Florida Council of Independent School (FCIS) conference in Weston, Florida. FCIS is one of the agency's visiting Discovery in February for an inaugural accreditation. The Florida Council of Independent Schools was founded in Jacksonville in December 1954. From the small handful of schools and correspondingly low student population that comprised the original group, the Council has grown to become one of the largest independent school organizations in the United States. Many of the workshops that our staff/faculty attended were focused on technology integration & best practice within independent school classrooms.

On December 14th, Janet Allen & Nita Hurley attended an International Baccalaureate World School orientation & seminar in Rochester, NY. The information gathered from this session will be incorporated into a larger discussion in January 2012, relative to the potential growth of Discovery within a combined Montessori - IB academic culture.

In March of 2012, Kim Bednarek, Nita Hurley and Theresa Day-Allen will head to San Francisco, CA to participate in the American Montessori Society 2012 annual conference. This conference titled, The Bridge to Learning for Every Child, is dedicated to connecting children and their global community as we guide them in becoming independent, responsible, and caring lifelong learners. This will also be an opportunity for Discovery to discuss our Fall 2012 whole-school accreditation visit and present proposals for the AMS 2013 annual conference in Orlando, FL.

JCCI - Children 1-2-3

Alongside our commitment to professional development, as a culture of life-long learners at Discovery, we also have deep commitment to the city of Jacksonville. This year, Discovery is participating in the Jacksonville Community Council Inc's (JCCI) latest community study, Children 1-2-3: Early Learning for Future Success. This study is examining, "How can Jacksonville best foster early learning success for children ages birth to 3 in our community?"

The Issue: How can Jacksonville best foster early learning success for children from birth to age 3 in the community? The JCCI study will:

- Explore the characteristics of academically successful children and the environmental factors in early childhood that produce those characteristics.
- Understand the programs and policies in Duval County and elsewhere which attempt to enhance those characteristics.
- Understand the context of infancy and early childhood programs and policies and the continuum of services that are or could be available for families and young children.
- Identify gaps in programs, policies, and resources, as well as barriers to full use of local resources, to address positive early learning development.
- Examine successful programs, policies, and funding models in other communities, and review each for their ability to be adapted to the local environment.
- Recommend specific strategies for the Jacksonville community to foster positive early learning development for children from birth to 3.

Discovery is sending a representative to each of the 25 meetings. Meetings 1 through 17 are "fact finding" meetings with expert local, regional, and national resource speakers. These 90 minute meetings are informative seminars that provide critical information about the study topic.

Meetings 18 through 25 are report development meetings where the study committee will work to reach consensus on what was learned (the study findings), what the findings mean (conclusions), and the work necessary to create community change (recommendations).

Our Discovery community hopes to both learn from and contribute to this important work being stewarded by JCCI. It is another opportunity for our faculty/staff to remain current on best practices defined by state, federal and pediatric/clinical early childhood practitioners. For more information, please visit their website:

<http://jccichildren123.blogspot.com/>