



VOLUME 1 • ISSUE NO. 1

# THE MCH BUZZ



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# WELCOME TO THE 2024-2025 MCH BUZZ!

We're so excited to bring you this digital magazine, created entirely from the contributions of our amazing community.

Every first Wednesday of the month, you can look forward to fresh, engaging content: stories, updates, and insights straight from the people who make MCH such a special place.

At MCH, connection is what brings us all together. Our community is filled with unique voices and perspectives, and The MCH Buzz is here to celebrate that diversity. It's a space for us to share, connect, and lift each other up.

We hope you enjoy this first edition of The MCH Buzz!

Montessori Children's House



# THE GREAT LESSONS IN ELEMENTARY

Mary Moore

Children in the elementary program are in the second plane of development[1], according to Dr. Montessori. They have left behind the absorbent mind of early childhood, which helped them soak up learning through individual experiences in the environment, and now learn more deeply through social interaction. This change requires a new approach to their education. For example, the children in Elementary I work together very frequently in a variety of ways. The elementary curriculum inspires them by providing the big picture first followed by ways to discover the details. The curriculum framework comes from a set of stories called the Five Great Lessons. These are stories we tell every year at the Elementary I level and return to in new ways at the Elementary II level. All our other lessons are connected to them directly or indirectly.

The First Great Lesson is The Story of the Universe. This first story starts children wondering about big ideas. It introduces the disciplines of chemistry, physics, astronomy, cosmology, and geology. It also introduces the idea that everything serves itself, but also serves the universe.



The children begin to think about what their own role might be. This story has a secular spiritual component that can be compatible with both religious and non-religious families at home.

The second story tells The Coming of Life, opening all the areas of biology for study. Again, we suggest that everything has a 'cosmic task'—it serves its own needs and the needs of the universe. Each of us has a place in the universe.



We celebrate The Coming of Humans with the third story, and all the areas of study related to culture come up as we explore how different peoples filled their needs. This story describes “a special kind of love” that appears unique to humans: we can care about people we’ve never seen, people who lived before us and those who will come after us.

The fourth story is The Story of Writing. Through this, we explore different ways people communicate on paper, and how this spreads their culture and opens them to greater influence by other groups. The fifth great lesson is The Story of Number, and it makes math so much more than different ways of calculating; math is a way of understanding the world.

I became an elementary Montessori teacher because I loved how the approach revealed the inter-connectedness of the universe. Children could discover their own role within that web and develop their own powers to learn. Parents in Cedar class will be hearing lots of wonderings after their children hear these stories. They might have thought the big questions were coming out of the blue, but asking big questions is what elementary children do.

**Here are some resources if you would like to learn more about the Great Lessons:**

Watch this nine-minute video with your child. It captures the wonder of things both very large and very small:

- <http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=eames+powers+of+10&FORM=VIRE15#view=detail&mid=780E0A16CE8051F3DF84780E0A16CE8051F3DF84>

(The third option is a newer version starting in Venice. The one showing a guy on a blanket starts from Chicago and was the original idea of the original Eames couple.)

If you prefer a visual presentation of cosmic education and the Great Lessons, watch this short power point presentation, followed by the one specifically on the Great Lessons:

- <http://www.slideshare.net/maureenscudder99/cosmic-education-at-the-cobb-school-montessori>

This is a great introduction to the Great Lessons on an adult level (not a Montessori version, but notice how mainstream Montessori ideas have become! You can even get a degree in this now).

- <https://www.bighistoryproject.com/home>

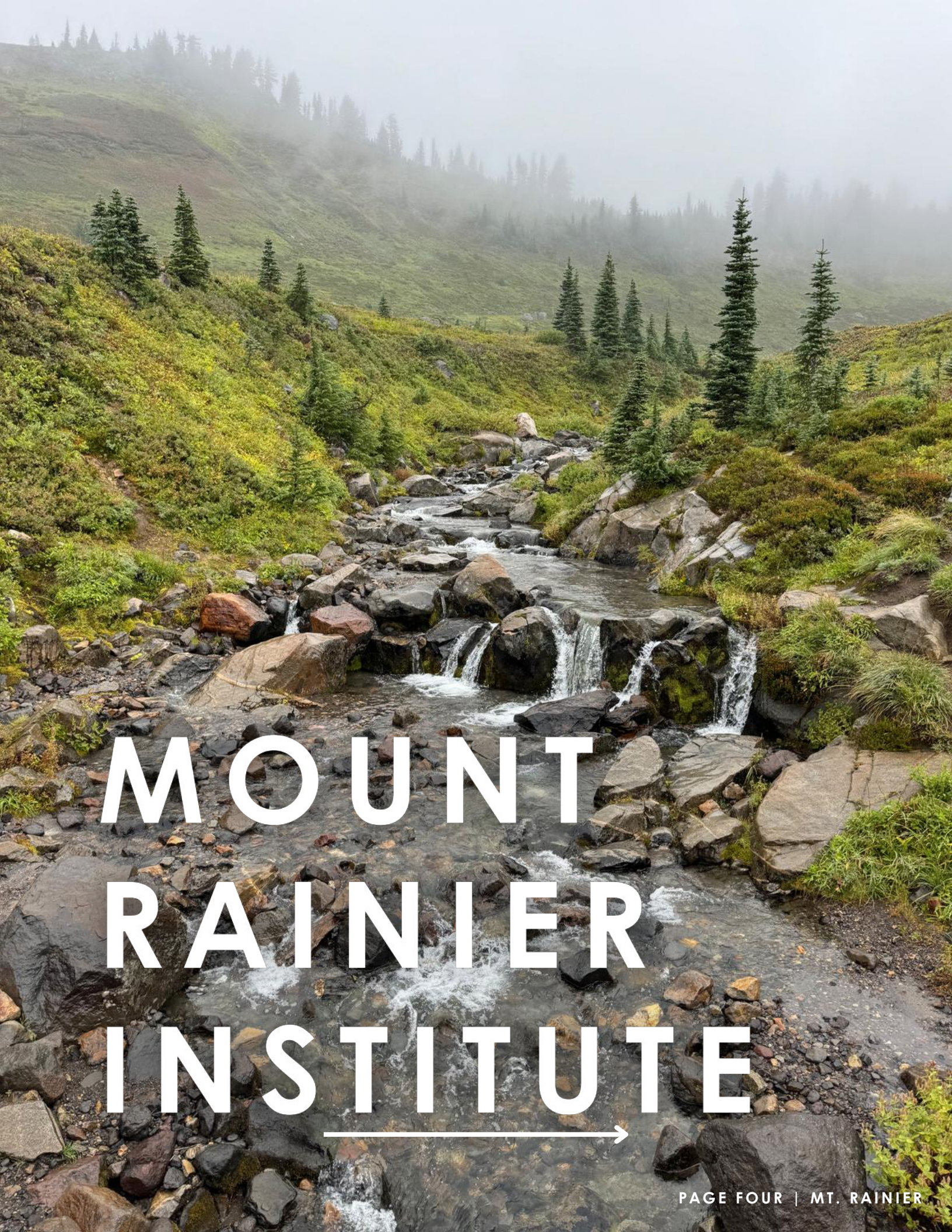
Read *Montessori Today*, by Paula Polk Lillard. While this is an entire book, it is an easy, quick read.

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[1] <https://amiusa.org/families/childs-development/>

**“The secret of good teaching is to regard the child’s intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination... so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his inmost core.”**

**-Maria Montessori  
(To Educate the Human Potential [p. 11])**



# MOUNT RAINIER INSTITUTE



by Nicole Rich

Cascara's middle schoolers kicked off the school year with a four-day, three-night trip to the Mount Rainier Institute from September 10-13th. Mount Rainier Institute's (MRI's) mission is to provide outstanding nature-based education experiences that are rooted in science and nurture the next generation of environmental stewards and leaders. This outdoor educational trip also served as a wonderful class community building experience to help create strong bonds within our middle school. Students participated in fun games and activities which helped to emphasize the importance of teamwork and communication skills that they will use throughout the upcoming year.

The cabins where the students stayed were located within the Pack Forest.

The forest was established in 1926 when Charles Pack donated the land to University of Washington's School of Environmental and Forest Science. The Pack Forest spans 4,200 acres of working forest used for research, sustainable forestry practices, preservation and recreation. While hiking within the forest, an educator from MRI guided the students through activities that highlighted the complex decision making that is involved in managing sustainable resources.

Students utilized tools like clinometers to measure the height of the trees, which allowed them to calculate the amount of wood in each tree and its potential lumber value. They also learned about the crucial role of trees in the carbon cycle, estimating the carbon storage capacity of individual trees and their impact on atmospheric carbon dioxide levels.





Using their data, they were also able to determine the number of pounds of carbon stored in a tree and how much carbon dioxide would be removed from the atmosphere. This activity highlighted the need to manage our renewable resources wisely. In addition to their field studies, the students conducted scientific investigations to research the types of berries that were most abundant in the Old Growth Forest during September. They presented findings at a symposium attended by peers and staff from another middle school, which showcased their hard work and dedication.

The adventure also included a memorable, albeit rainy and foggy, day trip to Mount Rainier National Park, where students hiked to Myrtle Falls. At the falls, they were excited to see a group of marmots playing near the falls. This trip not only provided valuable educational experiences but also helped cultivate a strong sense of community within the Cascara class. Cascara students returned to school full of wonderful memories and a greater appreciation for the natural world. ----



# How Filipino Food Connects Me to Home and Culture

Diana Caramat

As a Filipino, food has always been a huge part of my life and my identity. Growing up, meals weren't just about eating—they were about connection, community, and tradition. Filipino cuisine is a vibrant mix of flavors and influences, combining native ingredients with Spanish, Chinese, and American touches. Dishes like adobo, sinigang, and lechon aren't just things you eat; they're tied to family stories and memories. Every gathering, whether it's a casual weekend lunch or a big fiesta, has food at its center. It's how we celebrate, show love, and pass on our culture to the next generation.





***“[Food is] how we celebrate, show love, and pass on our culture to the next generation”***

Since I moved away from the Philippines, food has become an even stronger link to home. Like many Filipinos abroad, I've found that cooking the dishes I grew up with is one of the best ways to stay connected to my roots. No matter where I am, making something like sinigang or frying up lumpia instantly transports me back to my childhood.

I'll never forget when my aunt visited from the Philippines and brought a suitcase filled with dried fish, bagoong, and ube jam. The moment I opened the package, my apartment filled with those familiar smells that reminded me of family dinners. That first meal I made with those ingredients felt like a little piece of the Philippines had come to visit me. It's moments like that that remind me how important food is to staying connected to where I come from.

One of my favorite food memories is eating in the Kamayan tradition. For those who don't know, Kamayan means eating with your hands, no utensils—just you, the food, and the people you're with.

It's a communal experience, where banana leaves are laid out on the table and loaded up with rice, grilled meats, seafood, and vegetables. One time at a family reunion, we had a huge Kamayan feast. Everyone was seated at this long table, all grabbing food with their hands, laughing, and passing dishes around. There's something special about eating like that. It's messy, but in a fun way that brings everyone closer together.

The simplicity of using your hands makes it feel more personal, like you're not just sharing food but sharing an experience. Even though I live far from the Philippines now, I try to bring that spirit of Kamayan to my own gatherings. It reminds me that food isn't just about eating—it's about creating memories, connecting with the people around you, and keeping traditions alive no matter where life takes you.

# Suman Malagkit

(Filipino steamed rice cakes)

## MCH PA Cookbook Recipe

### Ingredients: Suman

Coconut Milk	2 (13.5oz) cans
Granulated Sugar	3/4 - 1 cup (your preference)
Salt	3/4 teaspoon
Sweet Rice	2 cups
Fresh or Frozen Banana Leaves	10 - 12x10 pieces plus extra for tying
Optional: Fresh Ginger	2 inches, sliced into 2-3 chunks

### Ingredients: Coconut Caramel Sauce

Coconut Milk	1 (13.5oz) cans
Brown or Granulated Sugar	3/4 cup
Salt	1/2 teaspoon
Optional: Vanilla Extract	1/2 teaspoon

### Equipment

- Large wok or pot (preferably non-stick)
- Clean flat surface (for stuffing leaves)
- Shallow steamer pot
- Scissors, to cut banana leaves
- Clean towel, to clean banana leaves





# Instructions

## Suman

- Rinse the rice 3-4 times or until the water runs clear. Place it into a large bowl, cover with fresh water and soak overnight.
- Add in the coconut milk, sugar, and salt in a deep skillet or wok over medium heat. Mix until the sugar dissolves.
- Drain the excess water from the rice and add it to the wok with the ginger.
- Once boiling, lower the heat to a simmer. Cook, stir until it becomes thick, like oatmeal or porridge. Remove from heat and discard the ginger. Set aside for now.
- Wash banana leaves and then pat gently with a towel. If they are frozen, run them under warm water until thawed.
- Cut the banana leaves into 12×10 inch pieces. Heat both sides of the banana leaves over low heat on the stovetop and then set aside.
- Scoop 1/3 cup of the rice mixture into the prepared banana leaves and spread it out into a smooth shape about 5-inches long, about 1 inch away from the bottom. Roll the banana leaf over the mound of rice, then fold in the sides. Continue until you have rolled all of the suman.
- Rip strings from the extra banana leaves and tie the suman shut. You can tie them individually or in pairs. Kitchen twine works here as well.
- Place into a shallow steamer pot and add enough water to where it's touching the suman.
- Cover and bring to a boil over medium heat. Once boiling, reduce the heat to low and steam for 1 hour, adding more water as needed.

## Caramel Sauce

- Prepare the caramel sauce. Combine all ingredients except for the vanilla in a small pot over medium heat and whisk together until smooth. Bring to a boil and continue cooking until thick caramel forms, regularly mixing for 15-20 minutes. Remove from heat and add the vanilla.
- Once the suman is done, remove it from the steamer and allow it to cool until easy to handle.
- Unwrap the suman and serve with a drizzle of caramel sauce.



Last year, many of you contributed your favorite recipes, and our Parent Association proudly presented a beautiful collection of these dishes in the form of the first-ever MCH Community Cookbook!

Every family and staff member received a copy, thanks to the hard work of our Parent Association. We are incredibly grateful for the time and care put into this labor of love, and we hope this cookbook brings joy and inspiration to our kitchens for years to come.

Looking ahead, we're excited to incorporate this cookbook into some of our upcoming events! To celebrate this new addition to our community, Faculty and staff came together for a cookbook potluck during our September In-Service and we enjoyed delicious recipes straight from the MCH Cookbook!





The Parent Association's annual SEED fundraiser will kick off on Monday, October 21st.



SEED entirely funds the PA's operations and activities throughout the year. The PA is so excited to share with you all the great ideas that they are planning for the year during this fundraiser.

To make all the goodness happen, they will need to raise \$30,000 before November 3rd. Please be on the lookout for their emails and consider supporting their community building mission!





# 2024 CONNECTION WEEK







# Empathy

# Equity

# Fairness

We wrapped up our annual Connection Week with a heartfelt gathering that brought our community together to celebrate diversity, unity, and resilience. Connection Week, inspired by Dr. Maria Montessori's peace education principles, assigns each day a different color of the rainbow, with each color representing a core MCH community value. The rainbow—symbolizing hope, diversity, new beginnings, equity, peace, and pride—served as the unifying theme throughout the week.

"There's something magical about seeing everyone dressed in the same color each day," Angela Spayde shared at our end-of-week gathering. "It creates a deep sense of connection across campus, reminding us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves." Teachers wove these colors and values into their classroom activities, with each day becoming an opportunity to celebrate and reflect on our community's shared purpose. The goal, as always, was to provide meaningful moments of connection and belonging, making sure that each person felt like a vital part of our MCH family.

The closing gathering also introduced something new and special: a beautiful wooden salmon art installation, now proudly displayed along the school fence. Students worked hard painting each salmon, and as Angela explained, the salmon were chosen for their symbolism. "Salmon are incredible creatures that travel vast distances but always find their way home."



# Agency

# Integrity

# Community

Similarly, as a school, we guide each other through our own journeys, always returning to the values of kindness, connection, and learning," she said.

The ceremony also featured our annual flag-raising, highlighting three flags we fly with pride. First, the Progress Pride Flag, which reflects MCH's commitment to inclusivity and celebrates the LGBTQIA+ community. Next, the International Flag of Planet Earth, a symbol of the interconnectedness of all life, resonating with our focus on environmental responsibility. Lastly, the American flag was raised, representing our vision for an inclusive and diverse America, where everyone is valued and accepted.

As the week came to an end, both students and staff reflected on the themes that had been woven throughout Connection Week. The salmon installation stands as a lasting symbol of the school's guiding values. "Just like the salmon return home, we too find our way back to what matters most - home, community, and love," Angela concluded.

We ended the gathering on a high note, with a song led by Ms. Becky, bubbles and our goats celebrating the unity and sense of belonging we had cultivated over the week. Walking away from the gathering, the feeling of connection was undeniable, setting a positive and hopeful tone for the year ahead at Montessori Children's House.

Montessori  
Children's House

