



2026 Monthly Notes & Chronicle

January 2026

Happy New Year!

I can always get carried away with the newsletter. At first it seems like too much and then I get sucked into interesting information and spending hours.

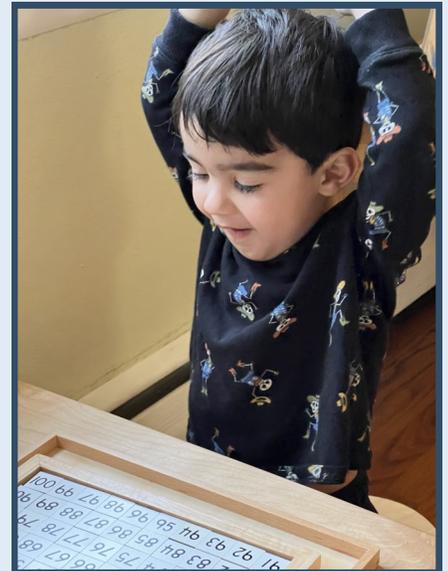


I'm trying to be done. It's 12/31 and I want to say there is so much in here. A lot of it is links to information that I think is reputable where you can learn more. I haven't read all of it, but have skimmed it and find it interesting.

There are many quotes because otherwise I would take even longer making it mine. When we meet again, please let me know what intrigues you about the topics covered this month:

- ◆ Nurturing Humility
- ◆ Combatting the Sugar-ful Diet

- ◆ Boredom... and Mattering
- ◆ Learning About Race— and Our Own Implicit Biases



Off to Germany!

Let's be Pen Pals!

We think it would be fun to send letters, stories, a pic two back and forth...

Write to Ansel and family!

**Am Sandwerder 17-19,
14109
Berlin, Germany**



January Dates

1/1 & 1/2 CLOSED

New Year's

1/9

Ansel's last day in Germany until 6/8

1/15

Zeffie's 4th Birthday

1/19

CLOSED
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (Birthday 1/15)

January					
M	T	W	Th	F	
				1	2
5	6	7	8	9	
12	13	14	15	16	
19	20	21	22	23	
26	27	28	29	30	

Curriculum Ideas for January

- ◆ Tracks and Tracking
- ◆ Migrators, Hibernators and Adaptors
- ◆ Light, Rainbows
- ◆ Equity, Race, Racism
- ◆ Printmaking
- ◆ Weaving
- ◆ Germs—and staying healthy
- ◆ Snowflake cutting
- ◆ Snowflake matching

Nurturing Humility

So many of “our” kids seem to be correcting each other, arguing yes/no, yes/no, I’m right, no me, no ME! to the point of exhaustion. I was recently asked about this, and about how we support the development of humility.

Cultivating humble kids and fostering empathy and kindness in the preschool years includes: ([1](#), [2](#))

1. Listening
2. Modeling empathy
3. Emphasize process over product
4. Encourage independence and self-motivation
5. Avoiding comparisons and praise for intelligence or achievements
6. Support healthy self-expression ([great guide with developmental info](#))
7. Encourage children to take responsibility for their actions and emotions
8. Create a peaceful and respectful (home) environment
9. Emphasize teamwork
10. Promote a culture of sharing, encourage acts of kindness, helping others, maybe community service
11. Gratitude, practice thankfulness
12. Develop awareness of the world and global interconnections

“Being humble means your child understands they are not better or worse than anyone else. They can accept praise without boasting and admit mistakes without feeling ashamed.” (mommysembrace.com)

Ideas for activities [1](#), [2](#)

- ◆ Learning from mistakes journal pairs perfectly with;
- ◆ Reading, stories with humble heroes (*Willa the Whale Made 32 Mistakes* is a great book!)
- ◆ “Compliment” ball



Fun in
the
Snow!



Combating the Sugar-ful Diet CACFP Recommendations Add Limit for Added Sugars

Recently after a conversation about low-sugar breakfasts, I realized that I neglected to let you know about changes to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) regarding added sugar.

Primarily to promote child health and academic performance, on October 1, 2025, new CACFP standards went into effect, limiting the amount of added sugar can be served. At this time, cereals, yogurt and flavored milk limits are in effect. Beginning July 1, 2027, there will be additional changes to other foods that contribute added sugars (such as grain-based desserts and bars), that limit added sugars to less than 10% of calories across the week in school lunches and breakfasts.

Besides health and academic performance, the factual reasoning also compelled the changes.

(From [USDA Added Sugars](#), edited for readability):

“The [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (*Dietary Guidelines*) recommend limiting added sugars to less than 10 percent of calories daily, yet“

- ◆ school breakfasts (were) providing about 17 percent of calories from added sugars
- ◆ school lunches provided 11 percent
- ◆ Further, the *Dietary Guidelines* indicate that the diets of about 70 to 80 percent of school-aged children exceeded the recommended limit for added sugars.

Current Limits for Preschool and Elementary Meals

- ◆ **Yogurt:** No more than **12 grams (g)** of added sugars per **6 ounces (oz)**
- ◆ **Cereal:** No more than **6 grams (g)** of added sugars per **dry ounce (oz)**
- ◆ **Flavored Milk:** No more than **10 grams (g)** of added sugars per **8 fluid ounces**

Resources—Learn More!

[Provider’s Resource on Creditable Cereals and Yogurts](#)

(Wegmans Greek Nonfat Vanilla is also ok, Trader Joes is not)

[Choose Yogurt That is Lower in Added Sugars in the CACFP](#)

[Identifying Added Sugar Limits in Cereal](#)

[USDA: Reducing Added Sugars at School Breakfast](#)



"It's more than OK for kids to be bored – it's good for them"!

I was raised in child care and when the weekend came, if I said "I'm bored" my mom would exclaim something about how she could never have all the activities they have for me...

"Boredom is uncomfortable—Tolerating boredom is a skill that many children resist learning or do not have the opportunity to develop. Even many adults would rather shock themselves with electricity than experience boredom." An estimated 91% of youth in North America report experiencing boredom "often" and boredom avoidance is a primary reason young adults pick up their smart phone.

When a child complains how bored they are, we may have many reactions—we may feel frustrated, guilty or just bad because nothing we do or suggest works. It is particularly hard when we're just trying to cook dinner, finish a call, something that seems brief to us. Maybe we try to solve the boredom for them, it's so much easier for us. But what if we don't?



We all experience boredom. Even though it might feel like it is dragging you down, boredom actually has many benefits including cultivating curiosity, imagination and creativity, resulting in many benefits like discovering new interests, activities or places. But boredom can also be solved with negative actions and consequences. Learning to productively deal with boredom is important for us throughout life.

As I am summarizing and thinking about this topic, I find myself thinking that boredom may at times be about wanting connection. That's why Magda's practice of providing "want's nothing time" helps parents to get some time of their own. But there is something more...

I recently received an email from the *Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University* focused on the concept of mattering. Mattering is described as "our sense of whether or not we matter—the feeling that we are valued and have value to add to the world." A sense of mattering begins in the earliest days of infancy and brings lifelong well-being. I find myself wondering, if in wanting to be seen or to have (more) contact, children feel lonely and like they don't matter. Full circle, I find a Psychology Today article stating that mattering "is associated with positive relationships, satisfaction and purpose in life, and protection from social isolation and loneliness."

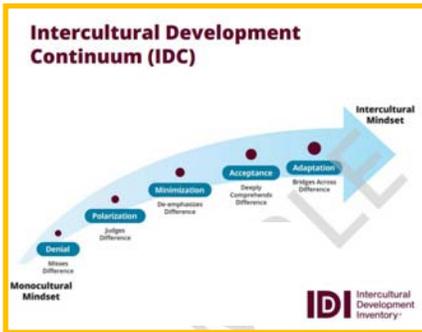
Resources—Learn More!

- ◆ [How To Help Your Kids Embrace Boredom: Age-appropriate ways to help your kids beat boredom—without the help of screens.](#)
- ◆ [Why Boredom is Good for Your Kid](#)
- ◆ [On Boredom: A Guide for Parents and Educators](#)
- ◆ [Why It's OK for Kids to Be Bored](#)
- ◆ [Why Hearing "I'm Bored" Is a Good Thing for Your Child's Brain](#)
- ◆ [The Benefits of Boredom: What kids can learn from handling more free time](#)
- ◆ [Mattering in Early Childhood, Building a Strong Foundation for Life](#) (also a [podcast](#))
- ◆ [Why Mattering Matters](#)
- ◆ [Jennifer B. Wallace website](#)

Learning About Race—and Our Own Implicit Biases

I have been holding onto the idea of sharing this information with you for awhile and it struck me that since we have an additional emphasis on equity with Martin Luther King's birthday this month, that it is as good a time as any. Learning about race and gender identity development has been a focus of mine and this information was really interesting to me.

Preschool is not too early to learn and even un-learn about race and racism. "The research literature shows us that children begin to distinguish faces by race early in infancy 2" (embracerace.org) "Research documents the ways that young children take notice of racial differences and note that as early as preschool, children may begin excluding their peers of different races from play and other activities (Winkler2009)." ([naeyc](http://naeyc.org)) "Without a real conversation about why they might think this way or how to counter these ideas, children don't unlearn bias; they just learn not to say it out loud." ([scientificamerican](http://scientificamerican.com)). "They're Not Too Young to Talk About Race": The Science of Early Racial Learning is well researched article about children's learning.



Meanwhile... *How does our own learning about race impact our parenting? How well do we know ourselves?*

While working at the Child Development Council and Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, I learned about a couple of different ways for adults to think about where they might be on the scale of biased or inclusive.



Project Implicit

- Skin-tone IAT**: Skin-tone (Light Skin - Dark Skin) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize light-skinned faces and dark-skinned faces as well as positive and negative words.
- Weapons IAT**: Weapons (Weapons - Harmless Objects) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize White and Black faces as well as images of weapons and harmless objects.
- President IAT**: Presidency (Presidential Popularity) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize photos of Donald Trump and one or more previous presidents as well as positive and negative words.
- Race IAT**: Race (Black - White) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize White and Black faces as well as positive and negative words.
- Asian IAT**: Asian American (Asian - European American) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize White and Asian-American faces as well as positive and negative words.
- Gender-Career IAT**: Gender - Career. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize typical male names and typical female names as well as words associated with career and family.
- Arab IAT**: Arab (Arab-White) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize names that likely belong to Arab Americans and names that likely belong to White Americans as well as positive and negative words.
- Asian-Foreign IAT**: Asian American (Asian - European American) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize White and Asian-American faces as well as images of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.
- Muslim IAT**: Muslim (Muslim People/Jewish) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize images culturally associated with Muslim people/Jewish and other Christian people/Christianity or Jewish people/Judaism (randomly assigned), as well as positive and negative words.
- Sexuality IAT**: Sexuality (Gay - Straight) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize words and symbols representing gay and straight people as well as positive and negative words.
- Native IAT**: Native American (Native - White American) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize last names that likely belong to Native Americans and last names that likely belong to White Americans as well as words associated with the past and the present.
- Jewish IAT**: Jewish (Jewish People/Judaism) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize images culturally associated with Jewish people/Judaism and other Christian people/Christianity or Muslim people/Islam (randomly assigned), as well as positive and negative words.
- Transgender IAT**: Transgender (Transgender People - Cisgender People) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize photos of transgender celebrities and photos of cisgender celebrities as well as positive and negative words.
- Gender-Science IAT**: Gender - Science. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize male-associated words and female-associated words as well as words associated with liberal arts and science.
- Weight IAT**: Weight (Fat - Thin) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize silhouettes of people who are fat and people who are thin as well as positive and negative words.
- Disability IAT**: Disability (Physically Disabled - Physically Able) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize figures representing physically disabled people and physically able people as well as positive and negative words.
- Hispanic IAT**: Hispanic American (Hispanic American - European American) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize typical Hispanic names and typical European American names as well as positive and negative words.
- Age IAT**: Age (Young - Old) IAT. In this IAT, you will be asked to categorize older and younger faces as well as positive and negative words.

Copyright © Project Implicit

Curious about your own implicit biases?

Take a test!
It is interesting and can be quite surprising.

The Harvard Project Implicit tests are free and available immediately, the IDC/IDI process is much more extensive and can be done for individuals or groups.

Click on one of the gold bordered IDC/IDI or Project Implicit image on this page.



Kids are processing race
4.5 years
earlier than adults think they are.





February Dates

- 2/16-20** CLOSED
Mid-winter Recess
- 2/17** Chinese New Year

February					
M	T	W	Th	F	S
	2	3	4	5	6
	9	10	11	12	13
	16	17	18	19	20
	23	24	25	26	27



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Thank you for the **LOVE** (testimonials)!

As I am writing this morning, I hear so many great things coming from the classroom—the kids are playing together, creating stories and adventures that we could never imagine...

Also, take a minute or two to check out [our revised site](#). Mostly just the initial messaging (first page). There is more to do—I have unfortunately learned it is showing up as not secure, which will take some time to fix.

This month the newsletter is kind of dense. I hope you enjoy it. Find lots to ponder in the articles:

- ◆ Thoughts About Praise and Motivation
- ◆ The Power of Play: How WHE Supports Brain Development
- ◆ Chinese New Year



Curriculum Ideas for February

- ◆ **Love** and kindness, *why not?*
- ◆ Weaving
- ◆ Our bodies, inside out
- ◆ Space
- ◆ Chinese New Year
- ◆ **Play!**

At WHE we integrate both Educaring and Montessori approaches.

Both approaches serve to develop children's brain by placing an emphasis on:

- ◆ **preparing the environment** to build trust and support active, meaningful, self-directed learning. To do this, we choose materials and activities to *meet children's interests*, build on their current skills with achievable challenges and meet their *developmental needs*. To understand children's needs, we *observe*, then later *support what they can do* and try to provide toys and materials that are in their *zone of proximal development*, things that are attainable, but challenging—just out of reach (a term coined by cognitive development theorist [Lev Vygotsky](#)).
- ◆ giving children the opportunity of **free choice** of activity and helping them follow-through with the complete a "work" cycle. This helps them learn to take responsibility for their choices and actions. This might look like reminding them to clean and prepare the materials for the next person before putting it back where they found it. *They might even be the one that is looking for it next!* These skills are reiterated with organizational tips for their own belongings.
- ◆ allowing as much time as possible for **uninterrupted play** without telling them *how* to do things.

"Play is the child's work"

- Maria Montessori

My mother was a single parent and chose her battles so she didn't just fight with us when we shared limited time together. She was out loud about it. Before barging in, she used to consider, *Is it dangerous? Is it illegal? Is it immoral?* Allowing time for uninterrupted play means not interrupting struggles or guessing what children want. When children are free to explore they learn persistence, physics, math and more. We all have the opportunity to be enamored with what they *are able* to do. When we resist anticipating children's needs and *doing for* them, we learn what they do want, and can do, and what kind of help they

might want or need. Therefore, we ask children if they have tried yet before asking for help. After all, that's how we learn how to do things. When they just don't have the bandwidth to do something we know they can do, we recognize that *sometimes they don't want to* and make room for a little extra love and work *with* them to succeed. Friends are great people to ask too! In fact, helping and teaching others enables children solidify what they have learned. If children need or want help, we are happy to help them. We just encourage them to ask for it. When we guess what they need or what kind of help they want, we set ourselves up for potentially getting it wrong. *None of us adults want to create conflict!*

When we see and hear tension rising, we intervene—of course, and support their efforts or help them to navigate their own frustration or resolve a conflict with another child.

Asking for help is an invaluable lifelong skill.

(Continues on next page)

**"Observe more,
do less.
Do less,
enjoy more."**

- Magda Gerber,
Founder, RIE®



(page 2 of 2)

In addition to all these points about the value of uninterrupted play, not being interrupted helps to build our brains. Having the time and space to organize *our* own thoughts and observations gives us *a chance to think* our own thoughts. When we are able to pause and reflect, we figure out what we think. We have the opportunity to learn from our efforts and actions, and consider what we might do differently next time. We build concentration. This might take a lifetime. Many of us build systems to support our executive functioning skills (like deciding where things go and putting them in their place). *I'm sure you all understand how challenging constant interruptions can be!*

- ◆ using **descriptive and appreciative praise**. When we use *evaluative praise*, the stress response increases and the brain shifts to a self-evaluative mode. We might begin to judge and label ourselves as not good enough, rather than learning to recognize and appreciate how much we have accomplished or learned. We learn to be patient with ourselves and to be driven to learn more or try again to achieve the skills and we really want. (See next page to learn more about types of praise)



All of these efforts respect the developing child and serve to build executive functioning skills ([link](#))... in turn building the brain! ([link](#))



The way we give feedback to children has an impact on their feelings

—and their motivation. Recognition is often what a child is seeking when they glance at you during what is otherwise independent play. They are wanting connection, and want to be sure you're still there, you're interested in them, and that it's still safe to explore. Receiving and giving attention builds connection and praise can be a form of that attention. But not all types of recognition have the same impact.

There is immense power in what we choose to say ([link](#)). When you have something to say, describing and appreciating what you see can be the most effective forms of praise. There are three types of praise; *evaluative, descriptive and appreciative*.

♦ **Evaluative praise** makes a judgment and develops self-worth based on the opinion of others. We all say things like "I love it!" and "Good job!" when asked if we like the artwork. It may be worth considering trying to break that habit. What if you think your child's drawing is not their best or you don't like it? What do you say? Would it be authentic?

♦ **Descriptive praise** builds motivation. It gives information, emphasizes process over product, builds vocabulary, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Describing what we see that is interesting helps children want to try more or different things, ultimately helps them to make choices and master skills. In addition, children learn to describe what they have done or created, want or think. Through descriptive recognition, children learn to describe what they see, what they know or have learned and to be understood.

♦ **Appreciative praise** gives recognition for effort and learning. It encourages on-going efforts and a desire to do with, cooperate and supports positive forward progress on your goals. *Imagine how it feels to be recognized for your efforts, for navigating a situation in an admirable way, To hear that your actions are appreciated, valued and seen.*

"Extrinsic motivation, with its assortment of verbal and tangible rewards, can be a potent tool to catalyze learning engagement. However, the potential risks of dampening intrinsic motivation must be approached with caution. Striking a balance between extrinsic incentives and the inherent joy of learning is crucial for nurturing well-rounded, intrinsically motivated learners."

Research Gate article

Whether it is behavior you like or want to change, sometimes just walking near without saying a thing, or a glance is enough...

Evaluative Praise

"Good work."
"Pretty."
"I like your drawing."

Descriptive Praise

"You used a little of every color and covered the page!"
"That really worked! You asked & they gave it to you."

Appreciative Praise

"That really helps me when you put your dishes away."
"You remembered to..."

[More re descriptive and appreciative praise](#)

"Mastery motivation" is a forerunner to future academic motivational development. (APA abstract)

Evaluative Praise
= external motivation

Descriptive Praise
= develops intrinsic motivation

Appreciative Praise
= boosts intrinsic motivation



Chinese New Year 2026

Year of the Red Fire Horse

Living across the bay from San Francisco, I grew up celebrating the Chinese New Year and pondering the Chinese Zodiac. I remember the little red silk book, bound with golden thread that I got in Chinatown. We would go to SF at night and watch the lion dance in the street, firecrackers, lights, a big crowd—I loved this celebration so much myself, and I continue to find it fun to share with children.

It looks like we have a group of Metal Oxen and one Water Tiger (Shiloh) being cared for by two water tigers!



Years of the Chinese zodiac					
Element: FIRE EARTH METAL WATER WOOD					
RAT	OX	TIGER	RABBIT	DRAGON	SNAKE
1912 1924 1936 1948 1960 1972 1984 1996 2008 2020 2032 2044	1913 1925 1937 1949 1961 1973 1985 1997 2009 2021 2033 2045	1914 1926 1938 1950 1962 1974 1986 1998 2010 2022 2034 2046	1915 1927 1939 1951 1963 1975 1987 1999 2011 2023 2035 2047	1916 1928 1940 1952 1964 1976 1988 2000 2012 2024 2036 2048	1917 1929 1941 1953 1965 1977 1989 2001 2013 2025 2037 2049
HORSE	SHEEP	MONKEY	ROOSTER	DOG	PIG
1918 1930 1942 1954 1966 1978 1990 2002 2014 2026 2038 2050	1919 1931 1943 1955 1967 1979 1991 2003 2015 2027 2039 2051	1920 1932 1944 1956 1968 1980 1992 2004 2016 2028 2040 2052	1921 1933 1945 1957 1969 1981 1993 2005 2017 2023 2041 2053	1922 1934 1946 1958 1970 1982 1994 2006 2018 2030 2042 2054	1923 1935 1947 1959 1971 1983 1995 2007 2019 2031 2043 2055

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What's your sign?

Maybe your family would enjoy learning about this as much as we did?

“**The Metal Ox**, a formidable and respected figure in the [Chinese Zodiac](#), represents individuals born in 1961 and 2021, whose character is forged by the potent combination of the Ox’s earthly diligence and the Metal element’s unyielding strength. These individuals are defined by their profound sense of duty, unwavering determination, and an active, hardworking nature that drives them to achieve their goals with remarkable persistence. Guided by a strong moral compass and an innate honesty, the Metal Ox navigates life with a quiet confidence, valuing stability, integrity, and tangible results over fleeting fame or superficial praise. Understanding this sign offers a window into a personality built on resilience, reliability, and an unshakable will to succeed.”



<https://miamidaily.life/horoscopes/metal-ox-personality-traits/>

“**The Water Tiger**, a unique and compelling sign appearing only once every 60 years in the Chinese zodiac, represents a powerful fusion of raw courage and profound intuition.



Those born under this sign, most recently in 1962 and 2022, are defined by the Tiger’s natural bravery and leadership, which is tempered and refined by the calming, reflective qualities of the Water element.

This creates a personality that is less impulsive and more strategic than other Tigers, one driven by a deep sense of purpose, objectivity, and an exceptional ability to connect with others on an emotional level. They navigate the world not with brute force, but with a quiet confidence, intellectual curiosity, and an innate understanding of the currents of human nature.”

<https://miamidaily.life/horoscopes/water-tiger-personality-traits/>