



## February Dates

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

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



# 2026 Monthly Notes & Chronicle

## February 2026

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

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®





**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: <span style="background-color: #e91e63; color: white; padding: 2px;">FIRE</span> <span style="background-color: #8d6e14; color: white; padding: 2px;">EARTH</span> <span style="background-color: #c5e1a5; color: white; padding: 2px;">METAL</span> <span style="background-color: #2196f3; color: white; padding: 2px;">WATER</span> <span style="background-color: #8bc34a; color: white; padding: 2px;">WOOD</span>					
 <b>RAT</b> 1912 1924 1936 1948 1960 1972 1984 1996 2008 2020 2032 2044	 <b>OX</b> 1913 1925 1937 1949 1961 1973 1985 1997 2009 2021 2033 2045	 <b>TIGER</b> 1914 1926 1938 1950 1962 1974 1986 1998 2010 2022 2034 2046	 <b>RABBIT</b> 1915 1927 1939 1951 1963 1975 1987 1999 2011 2023 2035 2047	 <b>DRAGON</b> 1916 1928 1940 1952 1964 1976 1988 2000 2012 2024 2036 2048	 <b>SNAKE</b> 1917 1929 1941 1953 1965 1977 1989 2001 2013 2025 2037 2049
 <b>HORSE</b> 1918 1930 1942 1954 1966 1978 1990 2002 2014 2026 2038 2050	 <b>SHEEP</b> 1919 1931 1943 1955 1967 1979 1991 2003 2015 2027 2039 2051	 <b>MONKEY</b> 1920 1932 1944 1956 1968 1980 1992 2004 2016 2028 2040 2052	 <b>ROOSTER</b> 1921 1933 1945 1957 1969 1981 1993 2005 2017 2023 2041 2053	 <b>DOG</b> 1922 1934 1946 1958 1970 1982 1994 2006 2018 2030 2042 2054	 <b>PIG</b> 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/>