



### Mission Statement

To respect children as self-directed individuals and foster their growth toward independence and social responsibility.

To adhere to the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori and maintain the standard of The Association Montessori Internationale.

To create a joyful, diverse, and family-oriented community which provides an atmosphere that supports the growth of the child.

To inspire the child to live both passionately and compassionately in a global community.



### The Montessori School

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# Observations



THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL | 2015



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## And suddenly, it’s fall!

Autumn has always been my favorite time of year for as long as I can remember. It is especially so now that I call New England my home. The beauty of this season most often shows itself to me in a way that now has special significance—a gradual unfolding—from the slant of daylight as the late afternoons blend into the early fall evenings, to the color-shading of the leaves as they steadily present their splendor. The privilege I have to observe the Montessori child on this educational journey, every day at our dear school, is not unlike this steady unfolding, and I know I have only begun to realize the magnitude of this privilege.

Fall and the opening of school, and along with the renewal of The Montessori journey for our Elementary students, brings with it the cycle of The Great Stories. The first of these is “God With No Hands” and “The Coming of Human Life”. Learning more about the human mind, the human hands, and the human capacity to love, we are reminded with our students of the totality of the human experience that includes the gifts and responsibilities of learning, communication, choice, and imagination. How we live our lives, the choices we make, impact all that are a part of our earth and our existence. We have great responsibility and we have great freedoms. About Dr. Montessori’s seminal work creating The Great Stories and the whole of Cosmic Education, author John R. Snyder observes,

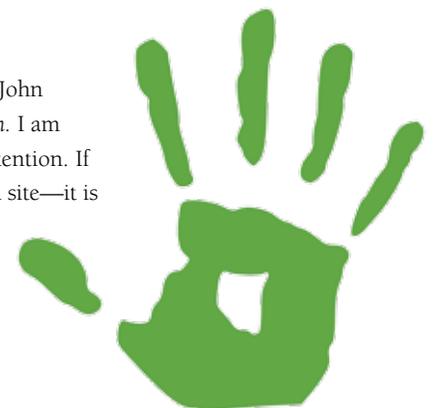
In the plan for Cosmic Education, the mind is supported by the many intellectual explorations the children are guided to undertake. The hand and the mind work together with the carefully crafted materials to call forth, . . . The community of children, guided by adults who have given themselves to the highest possible development of these gifts in their own lives, provides fertile ground for the development of uniquely human love.

—John R. Snyder, *Tending the Light* \*

As you visit the pages before you, celebrate with us the Big Work of our community. This is our Being, and before us lies the Becoming—what an incredible honor to share this with our children.

—Sarah Walker, Head of School

\* (I am presently making my way through a collection of essays by John R. Snyder entitled, *Tending the Light: Essays on Montessori Education*. I am indebted to Carla Samardzija for bringing this collection to my attention. If you are interested, you may purchase a copy through the NAMTA site—it is beautiful reading and certainly enriching to me.)



# Why We Give to “The Mont”

It's been a long time since our younger girl, Hannah (now 26), fell flat out asleep on the classroom floor, on top of the map of South America, when she was 3. And even longer since our older girl, Corinne (28), challenged another Primary kid who was intruding into the bathroom—she arose from the throne and planted her hands on her hips: “I haven't finished yet!” Old lore. Still, every time I walk into the school (We call it “The Mont”), I purely *know* that blue/green paint on the doors, smell that beautiful and familiar smell of the building, and see the current art display on the front wall, and it feels pretty much as if we have never left.

Our girls had plenty of struggles and battles from Primary through Upper El, plenty of being mad about what so-and-so said or did, how UNFAIR something was. They also spent plenty of time sitting in a community circle to work things out. That was a built-in part of life, learning to really regard other people's feelings. I'm sure they were taught well, and in a hands-on way, why the square of the hypotenuse is equal to etc. etc., and the history of the universe, and how to classify plants and animals, and all about the Latin scrolls in the Alexandria project, and how to take joy in being orderly. But what they still brag about to their work colleagues is call-

**We're not big donors, but we have become looong donors. I guess it's because we still want our family to belong, if only as silent partners.**

**We want our school to keep giving decades of children and families the same sense of encouragement along the way and of being Part of It All. Giving is a sweet way of keeping a hand in the game.**



Hannah and Corinne observing an insect, circa 1992



Hannah and Corinne on a sisters-only road trip, circa 2015

ing their teachers by their first names, wearing slippers in class, and being able to sit on the sofa and read when they wanted to. There was a lot of writing songs and stories, and times to present what they had discovered, to sing in a group and act in plays. It was all very familial, very human at The Mont. The continuity of years and years in that fellow-human environment seems to have guided Corinne and Hannah toward being forthright, seeing each person as a person, and toward feeling like full-fledged, belonging members of the world. Hannah sat on a grand jury in Brooklyn the past two weeks and says she had questions that made the judge call a witness back to explain more.

So, now what was the topic? Oh, yes, why we donate to Annual Giving or Endowment every year, 26 years down the road. We're not big donors, but we have become looong donors. I guess it's because we still want our family to belong, if only as silent partners. We want our school to keep giving decades of children and families the same sense of encouragement along the way and of being Part of It All. Giving is a sweet way of keeping a hand in the game.

—Norbie Longman, alum mama,  
member of the Board of Trustees.

# What Most Endures

## 10:00 a.m. on a rainy Tuesday afternoon in May:

Two Primary children knocked at my office door. “Would you like some tea, Dana?”, they wondered, opening a felt-lined, wooden chest of abundant tea selections. With a meeting starting in 15 minutes, I hesitated, then quickly came to my senses. How many more offers of tea would there be in the few remaining weeks of my time at our school? I chose ginger and promptly notified my colleagues that I’d be a few minutes late to our meeting. Uncharacteristically, I did not immediately turn back to the work at hand. Instead, I walked to the threshold of the classroom door and observed the careful and patient tea preparations happening within.

Countless are the genius qualities of well-practiced Montessori education and certainly we name the brilliant didactic materials, Dr. Montessori’s prescient understanding of human development and her devotion to the truth of education as an aid to life as evidence. But I have come to believe that it is our devotion to the collective work of Practical Life that truly transforms us and, in the end, is what most endures.

Our lives are filled with examples of ordinary moments that—all of a sudden—illuminate. In my case, I began to notice in exquisite detail a kaleidoscope of Practical Life examples happening across and among the generations of our school community. Evidence of care of self, care for others and for the environment could be, I thought, at the heart of who we are as a culture. The work itself is often quite ordinary: Pitching a tent; watering a plant; raking some leaves; helping a friend buckle his shoe; organizing a party; hammering a nail; baking some bread; serving tea. Something more, though, made it worthy of transforming lives and qualifying as most enduring: the deep intention and devotion to whatever is the task at hand.

In *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, Thich Nhat Hahn shares: “There are two ways to wash the dishes. The first is to wash the dishes in order to have clean dishes and the second is to



wash the dishes in order to wash the dishes.” If while washing the dishes, we think only of the cup of tea that awaits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as if they were a nuisance, then we are not “washing the dishes to wash the dishes.” What’s more, we are not alive during the time we are washing the dishes. In fact we are completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink. If we can’t wash the dishes, the chances are we won’t be able to drink our tea, either. While drinking the cup of tea, we will only be thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands. Thus we are sucked away into the future—and we are incapable of actually living one minute of life.

What a gift it is to have Practical Life as a central tenet of our educational philosophy and practice. What a legacy we enjoy in practicing it at all levels of our life as a school. Through our countless actions of care and attention, we sustain a quality of life that is rich and rewarding and, in so doing, I imagine we also touch something eternal in our selves.

—Dana Eisenberg,  
former Assistant Head of School and Admissions Director

# This is...



**A few years ago,** The Montessori School asked my husband, Frank, to speak at Grandparents' Day. He rushed home and said, "Guess what? They want you to speak at Grandparents' Day, Susan." Much to his dismay I said, "I believe that they asked you, Frank." Well, he did a great job, but now it's my turn and I'm honored to have been asked.

This is always my favorite day of the year when my husband, Frank, and I visit our three grandchildren in their classrooms at Montessori. They've been here in Wilton since Primary and now Lukas is graduating from Upper El to Middle School, his sister, Nadia, is graduating from Lower El to Upper El and their cousin Isabella is continuing with her second year of Upper El. So, for the last decade on Grandparents Day, they have been eager to share their special space and show us their latest accomplishments.

While Frank and I are very fortunate that we live in the same town as our grandchildren and we get to spend a great deal of time with them outside of school, many of our most treasured memories are from this place—starting with peek-

ing in at them during observation days in Primary, birthday celebrations, the art show, theatrical performances, instrument day, Christmas Choral, all the way through two graduations that we have attended for Ben and Sam Czaja (they are like our adopted grandsons).

There just isn't enough time for me to go into what the students get academically here. Suffice it to say, that our Montessori children have no problem getting into the schools of their choice and I know that the schools feel very fortunate when our students arrive because they are comfortable around adults, love to learn in the truest sense, are articulate and respectful of their community, and understand the world at large—geographically and culturally.

I could spend an hour up here with a long list of things that make this school special, but we don't have time so I can tell you in one word what I believe makes it so special—kindness. Everywhere you look here, every day, there are acts of kindness, support and thoughtfulness going on. Think back to your

school years and I doubt many of us, if any, had such a nurturing environment. I've actually lost count of the number of people—grandparents, parents, teachers and now our new Head of School, Sarah Walker, whom I've heard say "Oh, if only I could have gone to a school like this!"

This environment makes it possible for our precious children to learn in a way that very few of the rest of us ever got an opportunity to. The children aren't afraid because there just are no failures here—a perfect example happened recently on instrument day—a child got up to sing her first solo and sang the first verse beautifully but then her nerves got the best of her and she just couldn't go on. And what happened? Everyone—from the parents, to the teachers to the youngest child broke into thunderous applause with cheers telling her how terrific she was and that she could do it. But, when she decided she couldn't and walked off the stage, she got the loudest applause of any of the others. It's not about having the best voice or being the best violinist; in this school, every time



a child tries something it is celebrated as a success. Failure is not part of the vocabulary here!

How many of us, me included, are afraid to speak in front of a large audience. Well here at Montessori, the children have Gathering once a month starting in Primary and even the shyest ones, eventually realize that they want to share, that what they have to share is of value to the community. By the time they graduate, and as I mentioned I've been to two graduations, each and every one of them can speak in front of a crowd just as well (actually better!) than many Presidents of large companies do at their annual meetings.

Four mornings a week the Middle School kids start the day by picking a topic that is current in the news. Frank and I listened in on one of these discussions recently, the topic being Tom Brady and the deflated footballs. It was fascinating to hear them debate and share their ideas with an eye ultimately on the bigger issues of ethics and setting a good example (especially to children) who look up to sports heroes. They understand that the younger children at Montessori look up to them as well and it is their responsibility to tell the truth and be ethical.

I have three quick grandchildren stories, although they are not at all unique here at The Montessori School:

Last year, when Isabella was a 3rd Year, a young girl from Kenya joined the class as a 1st Year, there was concern on her parent's part that she might have a difficult time with the transition. But, Trista, their teacher, told us that Isabella,



along with her friend Giana, took this little girl under their wings and welcomed her with patience and kindness, making sure she felt included in their classroom. They showed her the ropes and within two weeks she was thriving. Isabella learned by example when she was a 1st and 2nd Year how to pay it forward.

Nadia went to Costa Rica last Christmas and went to visit a refuge for monkeys and fell in love with the orphaned babies. She discovered that many of the mothers are electrocuted when crossing wires that have not been properly insulated. Once home, she did further research, wrote a synopsis of their plight and along with Sophia and Gwyneth set up a Costa Rican snack shack in the Main Hall and raised \$350 to send to the refuge and to the company that makes the insulated wire. Nadia told me she has no problem if someone walks on by, chasing them down to make sure they know it's a worthy cause. This was Nadia's second fundraiser this year and I can just picture her running a non-profit one day!

Lukas, my sports jock, rough and

tumble grandson, recently spent a week helping with the toddlers. It is a wonderful program where all 6th Years get to spend time with the newest students at Montessori. Among the many stories, he brought home each day, the one that stands out is when he said that his favorite time of the day is when he helped the little ones take off their shoes upon arrival. He said, quote, "They are so full of stories and joy first thing in the morning."

Sometimes you hear people say, "This type of environment is not the real world." I strongly disagree. This is the real world. This is the real world that our children are living and thriving in during the most formative time of their lives. This is the real world that they will model. Imagine a world with adults who are kind and living consciously, ethically and who care about people and the environment everywhere. That's the kind of world I want to live in!

—Susan Mansfield.  
*Grandparent to Isabella, Nadia and Lukas*

# ...the Real World

# Being &



Being / becoming  
Souls humming, spring always coming  
The beat of small hearts and  
Big drums drumming  
A five-year-old on a mat  
Laid out flat  
She is silently summing  
Being a parent I know  
The whole child is more than  
The sum of the parts  
More than math and science and arts  
It's the human being, the ethics instilled  
That will determine the person we build  
And the life that starts  
once the child departs  
Becoming a trustee I see  
Behind the growth of each beautiful student  
There is strategy, thoughtful and prudent  
Short-term planning: Obligations, compensation  
A building and grounds for cultivation  
Long-term plans for unification  
As a new trustee I will listen and grow  
Aware of how much I still don't know  
So once again I'm the student, learning  
Passion burning.  
Being and becoming:  
The wheel always turning.



—Brent Donnelly



# Becoming



verb	adjective	noun	article
preposition	pronoun	adverb	conjunction
interjection	[Blank blue card]		



**W**ithin the world of philosophy, Plato organized “being” as the state where things never change in any way, and “becoming” as the state where things are never stable in any way. And more recently, in his book, *Being and Becoming: Psycho-dynamics, Buddhism, and the Origins of Selfhood*, Franklyn Sills combines psychoanalysis, Buddhism, somatic theory, and Heidegger’s work to explore the question “What does it mean to *be*?” He talks about developing one’s self as “my becoming” rather than “my being,” and also views “being” as static and “becoming” as movement. This brief theoretical mix of being and becoming will act as my diving board to launch into a pool of observations of *being and becoming* a child within a Montessori framework. My plan is to playfully use anecdotes to highlight classroom materials, discuss the flexibility of our senses in this independent learning approach, and reveal this process of *becoming* with a little help from my child.

During my own elementary years, I really wanted to have synesthesia—a neurological condition where you might smell sounds or taste colors. It is defined as “the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body.” In Greek, the word translates to “joined perception.” I first learned about synesthesia in fourth grade, when my art teacher brought up the word—we talked about how different colors might taste, and what feelings different colors might have. Looking back, I believe this idea was appealing because I liked imagining my senses intertwined in a fun and novel way, opening up potential for a more flexible and whimsical connection to my sensory/sensual self and the surrounding world. And I was fascinated with words, so the word synesthesia must have held interest for me as well—it was soft, lyrical, and danced on my tongue. As a child, I was always drawn to the cross-pollination of subjects and ideas, and I still am intrigued by the interplay between learning, art, music, and movement. As such, my free associative whimsy begins...

The painter, Wassily Kandinsky had synesthesia (as I only

# My Circles in a Circle

recently learned when viewing a Lower Elementary class art project, inspired by the artist). Kandinsky created a piece of art entitled “Circles in a Circle,” (1923) which reminds me of children developing within the context of their surroundings. Many colorful, individual, smaller circles within a bigger, thick circle containing them, and their movement within this static scene. Art analysis for this work suggests that in this part of his life, Kandinsky called circles “romantic” and thought them to be “a link to the cosmos.” He viewed them as the “perfect combination of oppositions like stable and unstable.” Circles are stable, static objects, but when they are surrounding by other circles, they move and *become* unstable, or develop into something else. This idea next reminds me of materials in a Montessori classroom, which are static and unchanging (they are just materials), but when a child interacts with them, they become so much more. The static material becomes representational and part of that child’s experience and develops symbolic meaning. That symbolic meaning is something that they can share with others, and opens up social and aesthetic communication. In my experience of Montessori materials (through parent education and reading), I feel that they bend your mind by bending your senses. They are beautiful and colorful and orderly, but look deeper—they are also smart and thoughtful and academically profound. These experiential aesthetics allow intellectual and neurological acrobatics to happen within the senses of your body (seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting) which ultimately lead to change in the mind. The static *being* of the materials (they exist predictably in a classroom) allow the child to become the director of their own learning, ultimately *becoming* individuals. They get what they need when they need it because their mind and body interconnect in the classroom. The large circle with its visually strong and solid presence contains and guides their movement (the Directress). When the circle of the material joins the circle of the child, a newer self emerges from the moment before. The material remains the same, but the child is forever changed, bit by bit.

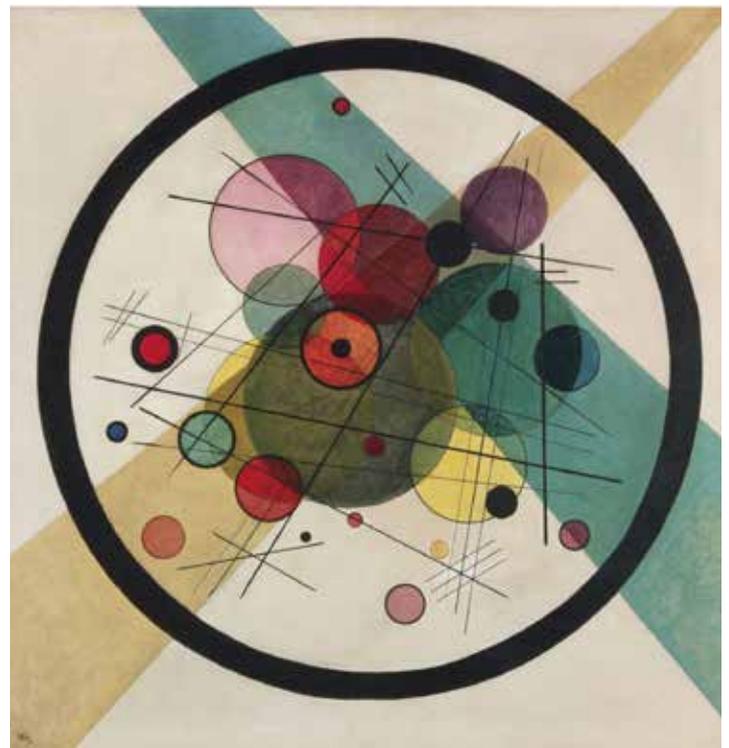
This brings me to another association. My 6-year-old son, Cyrus, was proudly reviewing his collection of metal inset tracings from his Primary class graduation (bound together as a gift by his teachers with two ring clasps) while listening to Pachelbel's *Canon in D* (his choosing). The ring clasp came undone when he was turning pages, causing his many, many individual inset tracings to float to the ground like fall leaves. He began picking them up in a new order, and declared with glee and amazement—"Pachelbel is a circle inside an oval inside a rectangle." He began this new telling of his reconfigured shapes, and his ordered booklet became reordered and reconfigured and became something new for him—a profound connection to the shape of this music. But when Cyrus said what he said, it reminded *me* of Kandinsky's artwork, and the beauty and complexity of his expression through the simplicity of shapes, just shapes. For me, I was marveling that static pieces of a simple tracing of a metal inset could so powerfully act upon my mind help me to feel the potential symphony of joy Kandinsky might have felt creating that work. Cyrus reconnected to his static metal inset tracings as the many voices layered in a musical canon. In that concentrated moment of joy, I emotionally joined with my son, to his education, to his love of music, to his mind, to my appreciation of art, to our history as mother and son, and to the greater world. We always continue a re-experiencing of static, old information throughout our life. This process allows that information to become synthesized in new, meaningful ways. I will never think of metal inset work the same again. Neither will my son. That fills me with joy.

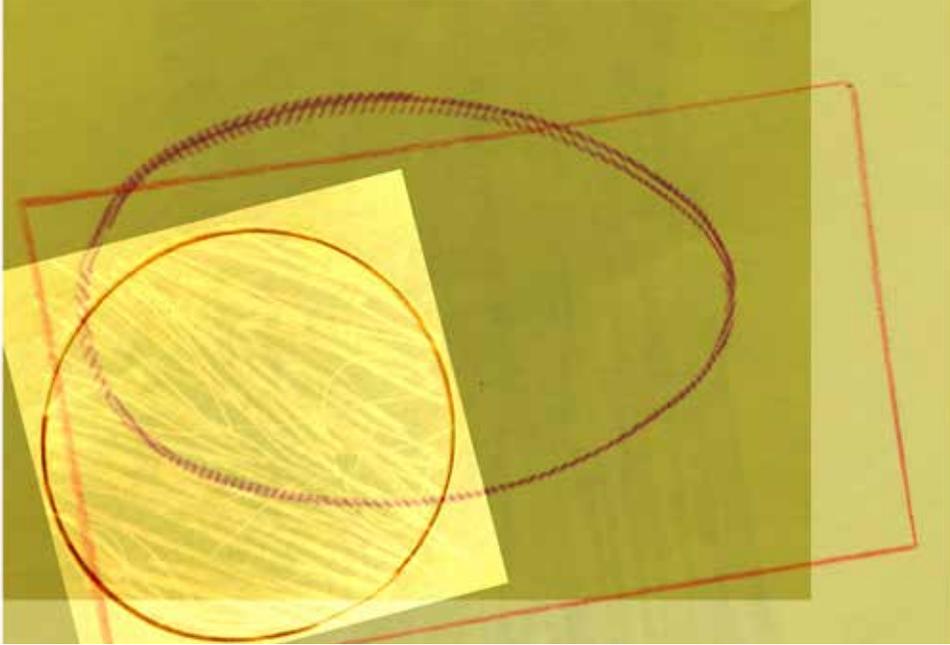
Last year I participated in our school's Silent Journey. When I began in the Toddler Room my eye caught a material—a gradient of blue hues on a table. But in my moment of being intoxicated with Montessori, my mind did some unconscious gymnastics and I experienced a musical scale. (And I was not hallucinating, I assure you!) The movement of sounds represented by the slight hue changes of the cooling blues next to each other. I felt a shift in my thinking, as if sensing the unfolding of new neural pathways. I was completely mesmerized. As an adult, I can experience this observation, and decide to talk and write about it. I imagine that new connections are being made for a child interacting with the same materials—their experience might be different or it might be similar, but it will be

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something profound. But the complication is that a child might not be able to articulate their experience of that material to their teacher or their parent. And take the silence to another level—when your child is in their second year in a three-year cycle and they are known to be more reserved, internal, and quiet about their learning. You hear from their teachers, but you get nothing until they start to tell you—it all may seem mysterious to a parent residing along the sidelines. But really, that might be the best place to watch their amazing minds develop.

As a parent, it is challenging to tolerate that subtlety of becoming. That is the BIG WORK for parents. How do we trust, and believe that our child will make it to the last color in the sequence? Are they doing it right? In a museum, each viewer's experience of the same artwork





may be vastly different. The same happens with a child in a Montessori classroom interacting with the materials. It might not benefit one to compare and contrast your child with another. One child may be experiencing numbers as beautiful pictures, another might be memorizing the long chains in a more concrete way. But both are connecting with numbers, and both approaches are quite acceptable. We all learn in different ways. Remember too, that time is complicated. One child might figure it out within that 3-year cycle, but another might get there at the beginning of the next plane of development. They seem rarely to work on your schedule, they *become* on theirs. Take for a moment, a child interacting with materials as someone looking at an art exhibit in a museum, place yourself as the parent into the vantage point of *observing your child observe*. Watch how they see the world, but try not to utilize a graded worksheet to let you know that they know mathematics; use something else—challenge yourself to find a new measure. What is their non-verbal reaction? Are they smiling, concentrating, confused? Take the moment to watch them, listen and see what they do next. Minimize adult questions which involve static results, and let them just *become*. The subtle contrast in the materials where one blue is not like the other is a visual reminder of the subtlety of movement in the learning process. Sometimes, you might not notice the change unless you have the contrast

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of the previous to judge against the next. Sometimes, learning is indirect, and not always obviously defined.

Learning is how you take things in from the world around you—how you integrate, process, regurgitate, and re-process and create something new within the space of your mind. The Montessori materials are educational, yes, but are often beautiful and always evocative, like art pieces in a museum, to open up a conversation with the viewer, in this case, a child. They are viewing and taking in Montessori “artwork” and having an aesthetic and connective inner experience, which leads to new neurological pathways. When you step back, and watch people experiencing their world, it serves as a reminder that everyone sees things differently. And thank goodness, because that means we have a handful of young Kandinskys in the world around us, close enough so their circle intersects with ours and ours with theirs, and what *becomes* in that juxtaposition of pathways is of utmost importance. We are circles in a circle, or maybe even a circle inside an oval inside a rectangle!

— Mazia Qaiser, mother of  
Cyrus & Duncan

# To our graduates, from Kathleen Kranzlin (MS 2008)

The nine of you sitting up here have all reached an **important milestone**, and share something in common.



You share an incredibly **strong bond** that is due to the **unique education** you have received from The Montessori School. You are all about to start the next stage of your journeys and **follow your own individual paths**. You will soon find, however, that the bonds you created here **will stay with you forever**. Just last week, I spent the day with the three other girls I graduated with from the middle school. The following day, I had breakfast with my two other close friends from the middle school. Despite being at very different stages and having very different paths in life, **we always find ourselves coming back together**. Most people tell you that the friends you make in college will stay with you forever, but as someone who is about to graduate from college, I have found that **the people I always come back to are my friends from here**.



# In the Words of Our Graduates



## **Michelle Menard**

The Montessori Middle School is a place of practice. The mistakes I have made here I imagine I should not repeat in high school. Building a community and living respectfully in a community is one of life's biggest challenges. I am proud to say that the one thing I have consistently been able to do is to be a humble community member and give of my best. The point here I am trying to make to all those of you who will join the middle school next year is to make as many mistakes as you can here because you will have all of these fantastic teachers help you get better. You will have one chance and one chance only either in two or three years, to do your best. After learning the hard way, my advice to all of you out there is to take as much as you can to make the changes. And then run with it as far as you can go and don't forget to aim towards the sky. I wish I had more time, but I don't. I thank each of you who has helped me to become a stronger, better and a more community-minded person. Montessori rocks! If you are lucky enough to attend this great school, you have received one of life's greatest blessings. And for that I am eternally grateful.

## **Thomas Mazarulli**

Dedication and Passion were my 8th Year themes. One of the most important things to be, both in school and in real life, is dedicated and passionate about what you do. All of my years at this school wrapped up in the end of this one to give me this important lesson. Throughout my time here, I have grown to enjoy and become passionate about many things and subjects. For example, before I enjoyed science, but it was not the subject I looked forward to most. I grew to love and enjoy that subject. Here, everybody finds what they want to do, and what they enjoy in life, and use it to help grow the passion and love for that subject.

In addition to that, it teaches every student to dedicate themselves to the subjects they are not as good at, so they can grow in every field, and become the best student that they can possibly be. When I slipped in certain subjects, the teachers helped me push myself to dedicate more to that subject, and become the best I could be. This helped both expand my horizons, and give me a glimpse of what it will be like in the future, when we can't always do what we want to do.

## **Matias Martinez**

More than just concepts to follow, these are values which are the foundation of Montessori: of learning, and of passing through to your future. These values will help guide the path for not only me, but all those that have had the opportunity of learning this way. They are key to creating a bright future, and to understanding how to function in life. Some values go beyond that. They are fundamental in how you should perceive what is around you, and how to create goodness in the world, and a close community. I love that we have morning meeting to discuss topics and engage in global issues. We have a vegetable garden where we grow produce and use it in our kitchen. We connect with nature in our outdoor expedition program. We engage in experiential learning. And we are given plenty of opportunities to be leaders. We advocate, learn life lessons and ultimately are given a platform to make the choices that speak to us.

## **Saira Munshani**

Socrates once said, "The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new." To me, this means that instead of resisting elements, you can overcome them, and forever saying that you can't do them, you should try to challenge yourself and hopefully try to succeed. My adventure through 11 years in Montessori has impacted my way of thinking and way of working on my obstacles. From the very beginning of my education I learned to overcome obstacles. There were moments when I mastered the virtue of patience by waiting for the last drop to fall. I remember waiting for my turn to use a Montessori material. I worked on asking fewer and more thoughtful questions in Upper El. Moments like those were the ones that shaped me into who I am today.

# A Commencement Blessing

For our graduating 8th years from Sarah Walker, Head of School



It is my honor to offer a blessing for our graduating 8th Years. As I was considering what to offer, it occurred to me that the auction painting of Peacemakers of The World provided a wonderful resource. And so for our 8th Years, the following words are from the subjects of the painting and include: Maria Montessori, Mother Theresa, the Rev. Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lennon, Mahatma Gandhi, Malala Yousafzai, Pope Francis, The Dalai Lama, and Alfred Nobel:

"People are often unreasonable and self-centered. **Forgive them anyway.**

If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. **Be kind anyway.**

If you are honest, people may cheat you. **Be honest anyway.**

If you find happiness, people may be jealous. **Be happy anyway.**

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. **Do good anyway.**

Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. **Give your best anyway.**

For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. **It was never between you and them anyway."**

—Mother Theresa

"There are two basic motivating forces: **fear and love.** When we are afraid, we pull back from life. When we are in love, we open to all that life has to offer with passion, excitement, and acceptance. We need to learn to love ourselves first, in all our glory and our imperfections. **If we cannot love ourselves, we cannot fully open to our ability to love others or our potential to create.** Evolution and all hopes for a better world rest in the fearlessness and open-hearted vision of people who embrace life."

—John Lennon

"Without love, there is no reason to know anyone, for **love will, in the end, connect us** to our neighbors, our children and our hearts."

—The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Let us **make our future now**, and let us make our dreams tomorrow's reality."

—Malala Yousafzai

"Good wishes alone will not **ensure peace.**"

—Alfred Nobel

"We must **restore** hope to young people, **help** the old, **be open** to the future, spread **love.** Be poor among the poor. We need to **include the excluded and preach peace.**"

—Pope Francis

"Be kind whenever possible. **It is always possible.**

If you want others to be happy, practice compassion.

If **you** want to be happy, practice compassion."

—The Dalai Lama

"In a gentle way, you can **shake the world.**"

—Mahatma Gandhi

And finally...

**"The unknown energy that can help humanity is that which lies hidden in the child."**

—Dr. Maria Montessori

So in closing:

**Cece, Biz, Sara, Matias, Thomas, Michelle, Saira, Niall, Max:**

The following from St. Catherine's Unitarian in Canada captures our wishes to send you forth on your journey ahead:

"May the love in your hearts give you joy.

May the greatness of life bring you peace.

May your days be good, and your lives be long upon the earth."

...We love you.

## Alumni Spotlight:

# Brooke James



We caught up with alumna Brooke James (UE 2001) this summer and wanted to share snippets from our conversation. Our thanks to Brooke for her work as an Alum Rep for our school, and for spending some time with us.

**TMS: What have you been up to since graduating from Upper Elementary here at The Montessori School?**

**Brooke:** After Montessori I went to Weston Middle and High Schools. I graduated from The George Washington University with a degree in Economics. Going to school in DC, I was able to take advantage of the city and interned in marketing, licensing, and government affairs. I went on to a financial services firm where I ended up managing communications and executive stakeholders for a technology group. Now I am living in New York City where I am consulting

at EY (Ernst & Young) doing Mergers and Acquisitions.

As far as life goes, I enjoy spending time with family and friends, trying out new restaurants, cooking at home, reading, going to museums and travelling. I have been fortunate enough to do a lot of travelling in my life, and that is something that I put great importance on. Being able to travel and see other cultures—whether domestically, internationally or exploring in your own city—is so important because it opens your eyes and changes your perspective.

**How do you feel the various stages of your education (Montessori and otherwise) informed the personal and professional goals you set for yourself?**

I think that Montessori shaped my personality on so many levels. At a young age we were taught to be reliant on ourselves in a way that I don't think is taught in a conventional educational environment. This sense of independence and purpose helped me to interact with and feel comfortable with adults. Additionally, when faced with a problem, Montessori taught me to solve it in a collaborative way, to look at things from multiple perspectives and not to give up.

Another thing that Montessori stressed was completion of a task. While it may seem silly looking in to see a 4 year old rolling up a rug, or pouring water into a cup, these activities teach the importance of getting things completed during each stage of the task [and that] is something that is really valuable.

I really see the benefit of this in

both my personal and professional life. Currently I'm a consultant at EY where we need to work with a wide variety of people and think on our feet. I need to be able to delegate to our interns as well as brief a C-level executive, and I'm comfortable collaborating with both of those groups. This is something that I have Montessori to thank for.

**What are things you are most grateful for?**

My family and friends. I feel so lucky to come from such a big family that I'm so close with and on top of that to have so many good friends! I know it sounds cliché but I would say that clichés are cliché for a reason.

**What are your fondest memories from your time at The Montessori School?**

I used to love to play in the woods. Three qualities that stemmed from my time at Montessori are a sense of independence, curiosity and imagination. I remember loving recess and that we had the freedom to go outside and play in the woods behind the school, we would build forts and go on adventures! I was so perplexed moving to public school and not being trusted enough by teachers to go play in the woods, we had to stay on the field or the playground—which didn't really lend itself to building a fort. Playing in the woods during recess definitely ties in to why I love to travel, have a sense of adventure and am curious about the world. I so appreciate that I spent my formative years in a Montessori environment.

## Alumni Spotlight:

# Emily Bennetts

I attended Montessori from Primary through 6th grade, then moved to Greens Farms Academy for 7th and 8th, then Trinity Catholic for high school. I then went to Marist College and studied Psychology. Attending schools with varying philosophies and student bodies allowed me to interact with individuals with many different backgrounds and personalities. I grew in my empathy and understanding of just how different people can be—and learn. Teaching came naturally to me, but my passion for it came through my experiences in all sorts of different classrooms. I saw how some students thrived in a particular environment while others floundered. I also witnessed how the philosophy, attitude and respect of a teacher can make or break a learning environment. I came to believe that education should recognize students as whole people and further take into account various needs, skill sets, and passions that an individual brings to the classroom. I am currently working in a Montessori school, but ultimately want to work towards remodeling the standardized education system.

I am most grateful for the people and experiences I have had in my life. Both have al-

lowed me to broaden my view of the world and encouraged my ability to change it. Traveling and trying new things have helped me to understand myself further, while having friends and family who love and accept me as I am has given me a comfortable base to come back to.

Every choice we make can have a positive or negative impact—and acting impulsively can often leave us with results we don't initially consider. We can make someone so much happier through an act of kindness as simple as a smile, which in turn will most likely encourage them to help someone else out too. That's very powerful.

My favorite memories of Montessori are all centered around my teachers allowing me to be myself, while also pushing me out of my comfort zone. I remember working for weeks on a project about Galileo with a handful of friends in Lower Elementary—we decided we were interested in his life and work and created a huge timeline. We were allowed to work freely on this in the hallway, and through it we not only learned about Galileo but also responsibility, teamwork, and independence. I also remember my 6th grade play—Pirates of Penzance—in which

I was given the role of the Major General. As a 6th grade girl, the role of a crochety old man was less than desirable and I remember coming home very upset and remained so for a period of time. Ultimately, this was probably the most fun I've ever had in a theater production, and delivered results that I never would have dreamed the day we got our roles. This encouraged me to have an open mind and trust myself. Montessori also allowed me to connect with the natural

world in a very unique way through being able to have recess in the woods—there was an incredible amount of trust from our teachers involved here. We created extravagant forts, climbed trees and sometimes stumbled upon animal remains that teachers helped us to preserve and identify (I still have a skull I found in Upper Elementary). Our teachers understood the importance of letting children intimately connect with the earth and it has enriched me incredibly.



# Enjoying my Strawberries



Melissa Luse

**It was** my pleasure to work along side my fellow Montessori alumni at my senior internship at Wilton High School this spring. The senior internship program offers seniors the opportunity to select an organization that they would like to work with and learn about during the last 6 weeks of their senior year. I reached out to Bashar Nabulsi (class of 2003) about an internship opportunity because I had known him through my sister Mary's years at The Montessori School (class of 2003). After speaking with Bashar, I was even more excited to learn that I would also be working with Alec and Ian Ross, other students from the Montessori school. Together Bashar, Alec, and Ian started a t-shirt company called Slothin while they were at Wilton High School. The idea behind Slothin is that people move too fast through their

lives, not stopping to enjoy the good stuff, the stuff that makes life worth living. At Slothin, we moved through life a little slower, taking extra time to appreciate the simple things along the way; family, good friends and great times.

I can remember one day in Lower Elementary when Elizabeth was reading a book to the class as we all sat on the rug. One student kept asking Elizabeth "what happens next?" and "how many pages are you going to read?" Elizabeth and Vicki's response to these questions is something that has clearly stayed with me to this day. They both said, "enjoy your strawberries". As a 10 year old I didn't quite understand what that was supposed to mean, but after working for Slothin I have come to realize what they were trying to tell us. Much like Slothin, enjoying your strawberries symbolizes enjoying the moment and appreciating the time in which you are in right now.

Connecting the two spheres of my life, Montessori and Wilton High School, is something I really struggle to do. Not many people understand what Montessori is or why I feel so passionate about certain things like service, the treatment of others, and community. When I happened to find this connec-

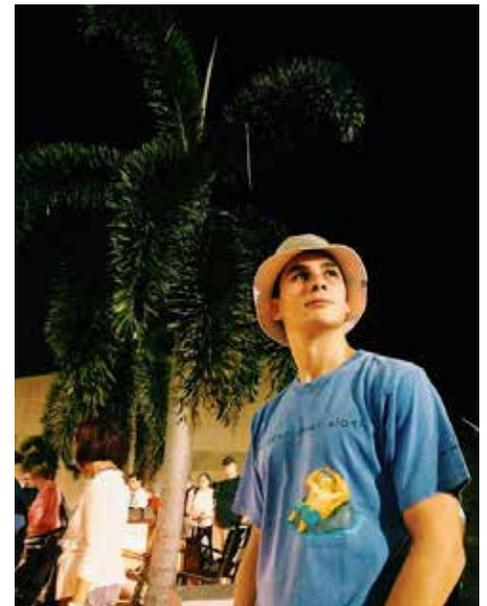
tion of the two spheres with Bashar and Alec, I couldn't overlook it. Something many Montessori alumni share is the love of discovering others with the same values and background in unexpected places. I didn't know Alec or Ian when I first started working at Slothin and I hadn't talked to Bashar since I was in Primary, but Montessorians simply have a way of taking care of each other and instantly bonding. Montessori has instilled in me a sense of community, giving back and enjoying what is in front of me. This is something that will never fade and my experience with Slothin is a perfect example of this sentiment.

—Melissa Luse,

*The Montessori School, class of 2011*



Alec Ross



Bashar Nabulsi

# Staff Notes

As our school grows and strengthens, we offer heartfelt congratulations to **Lynn Armstrong** on her new role as Montessori Assistant to the Elementary Classrooms, and to **Nicole Barba** for completing her AMI training and leading her own Toddler classroom this September. **Fabiana Jarrin** is now the Directress of her own Primary classroom after four years as assistant to **Heather Maccabe**, who has become the All School Academic Coordinator. We offer gratitude to **Susan Clark** also, for representing our School as guest lecturer, course assistant, album reader, and AMI examiner for the AMI Elementary Teacher Training at MTCNE in Hartford.

## Applause

We welcome the addition of **Mark Dansereau** as Interim Middle School Director. Mark comes to us most recently from serving 12 years at the Connecticut Friends School in various roles, ultimately as Head of School. Previous to that he was the MS Head Teacher and Upper Elementary Teacher at Whitby School in Greenwich. Mark holds the AMI Elementary Diploma which he received in Bergamo, Italy, and holds a Secondary Teacher Certification from the American Montessori Society. His history as a Montessori educator and seasoned administrator will strengthen our culture of openness and our ethos of compassion.

## Greetings

Our School also welcomes new faces in a variety of capacities: We welcome **Kimberly Jackson**, our new Middle School Science Teacher. Kimberly holds a Math degree from Stanford University and will also support veteran Linda Krulwich in the Math department. Kimberly comes with eight years of teaching experience most recently at the Connecticut Friends School at the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade level. **Liz Keeffe** has also joined the Middle School as a Spanish Teacher, Administrative Assistant and co-teacher of the Culinary Arts Program. Liz is a recent graduate of Dickinson College with a major in International Studies—Globalization and Sustainability. **Deb Conry** joins as co-teacher of the Culinary Arts Program, and is a graduate of the Institute of Culinary Education in NYC. Deb holds a degree in Sociology from UC Santa Barbara. She is the mother of two primary students at Whipple Road.

## Learning

Whipple Road has added a number of new Assistants at the different levels of our continuum. **Stella Caicedo** joins Veronica in her Toddler Room. **Mariana Buckmir**, mother of two primary students, will work alongside Nicole in the new Toddler classroom. **Lily Burns** joins Fabiana as the Assistant in her Primary classroom and **Suzie Ettie** will work alongside Carla in her Lower Elementary classroom. Finally, **Liz Favazzo** has joined our staff as a Learning Assistant, working alongside Meg Drake in the PEASS Program.

The depth of our staff has been our greatest gift and this summer was a time of purposeful development for many of our staff: **Susan Clark** and **Trista Gamble** attended the MTIPS Summer Institute for the Elementary Track; **Colleen Stonbely** spent her first summer at MTCNE in Hartford to begin her AMI Primary Training; **Heather Maccabe** attended the AMI Adolescent Orientation in Chihuahua, Mexico; and **Ted Stonbely** attended The Introduction to the Montessori Approach held at the Washington Montessori Institute.

## Thanks

Many have been called to work in the service of children and we want to thank those that have dedicated their time, energy, and passion to our school and its children: **Andrea DeBroka** for her work in the classrooms and through the PEASS Program and Enrichment opportunities; **Ramani DeAlwis** for her work, vision and energy in forging a path for the Middle School. **Cara Roure Johnson**, MS Science Teacher, and **Carolina Martino**, Middle School Administrator and Spanish Teacher, have found new opportunities to pursue and we wish them the best in their endeavors. Finally, we send gratitude and good wishes to **Dana Eisenberg** for her long-term service to the school as a Language Specialist, Director of Development, Director of Admission, and Assistant Head of School. She has begun at the Yale School of Nursing to pursue a career in Pediatric Nursing, engaging in another way to serve children with her energy and spirit. These individuals have worked to shape our culture and have dedicated themselves to the betterment of our school and its mission.

# AlumNOTES

After graduating from Colorado College, **Charles Allison-Godfrey ('03)** began teaching English as a second language in South Korea.

**Alex Amador (MS 2006)** graduated, Summa Cum Laude from Lafayette this spring. Alex will be in the Peace Corps in Cameroon beginning in September working in sustainable agriculture, economic development/ micro-lending.



**Alex Amador with brother Bennett and family, at Alex's graduation from Lafayette. At far right, Montessori Primary Teacher Jennie Paragarino.**



**Brothers Alex and Bennett Amador with Jennie circa 1999!**

**Bennett Amador (MS 2009)** is considering Economics as his major at Holy Cross, and mom Lois writes that this summer he is "landscaping all over Fairfield County....dirt under his finger nails, getting into the poison ivy..."

**Daniel Bogaev (MS 2011)** graduated from Weston High School during which time he has actively pursued photography and filmmaking. He produced the documentary Investing in the Future: The Importance of Early Education in America, for which he won the C-Span Film Award.

**Clint Corso** earned All American honors at the New Balance Indoor Nationals Track and Field Meet in March! The team he is on from Ridgefield High School placed 6th and broke both the Ridgefield High record by more than 7 seconds and the CT Indoor State record by more than 5 seconds.



**Clint Corso with his Ridgefield High Track & Field team**

**Claudia D'Adamo (UE 2003)** writes: I graduated in 2013 from Wheaton College in Massachusetts with my bachelor's in Computer Science and Psychology, and I'm currently working in Boston as a Data Analyst for Compete, Inc.

**Harry Epstein (MS 2011)** was awarded the Young Entrepreneur award by the Westport-Weston Chamber of Commerce in June for his work as owner and founder of a clothing brand he designs and manufactures, Gracious Mfg. Harry graduated from Staples High School and will be attending the University of Michigan.

A graduate of Ridgefield HS, **Jacob Feldman** plans to attend Colgate University in the fall.

**Mallory Feldman**, now a student at Tufts University, enjoyed her fall semester abroad with SIT in Nepal and India and will be completing her degree in Psychology and Peace & Justice Studies as she heads into her senior year.

**Callie Ferguson (UE 2005)** graduated this spring Cum Laude from Bowdoin College. She loves Maine and is settling in Portland. Through the end of October, she is working at Allagash Brewing Company where she couldn't be happier, after having spent the last 18 months writing a beer review column for the college paper and doing a bit of home brewing on the side!



**Ben Ferguson** graduated this spring from Hofstra University with a theater major and will be spending the next year in New York City at Michael Howard Studio, honing his craft. He continues to play music with his band and performing at local venues.

**Larissa Gacso (MS 2006)** writes: "Nannying and in Nursing school at St. Vincent's in Fairfield."



**Kelly McKenna (MS 2013)**  
**Gaby Pisano (MS 2013)** and  
**Thomas Rosiello (MS 2011)**

served as counsellors this June at our first ever Labyrinth Athletics Multi Sport Camp, run by Athletic Director Jason Brasher.

**Mary Luse (UE 2003)**, graduated from Lasell College and is a Certified Personal Trainer, now working as a personal trainer and fitness instructor at Crunch in Port Chester, NY.

**Jon Luse (MS 2009)** is a Lance Corporal in the US Marine Corps. Jon graduated from recruit training at Parris Island, SC in 2013 and from the School of Infantry at Camp Geiger, NC in 2014. He is now a Mortarman with the 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines, 3rd Marine Regiment, Kilo Company based at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. After a six month deployment to Okinawa, South Korea and Fuji, he is currently at Camp Pendleton, CA in a leadership training program.

**Melissa Luse (MS 2011)** graduated from Wilton HS in June and is headed to the University of Maryland, College Park in the fall where she intends to study Biology with a goal of a career in medicine.

After graduating from the University of Chicago, **Justin Manley (UE 2005)** is off to San Francisco to work for Google.

**Ambika Mookerjee (Primary, 2001)** is a freshman studying biomedical engineering at Columbia University and Barnard College.

**Karl Rempe (UE 2004)**—After high school Karl attended the University of Maryland where he studied Marketing and played on the school's rugby team. Last June his team played in the Collegiate Rugby Championship which aired live on NBC and his team won the Plate. After university, Karl began working at Sachs Walsh Insurance as a marketing specialist and is looking to do an internship abroad.

**Ian Ross (UE 2003)** writes: I'm currently still living in Wilton. I'm finishing up school online this fall and I am coaching soccer around CT as well as trying to grow our start-up clothing company with my brother **Alec (UE 2002)**. **Bashar Nabulsi (UE 2003)** is working with us as well. It's called Slothin and we have some awesome shirts. If you guys aren't familiar, you should definitely check it out at slothin.com. I'm still playing some soccer here and there as well.



**Meaghan Wheeler**, at our school's Fall Clean Up & Alumni Reunion in November 2014 with her posse of former Montessori students! Another photo of Meaghan, along with Montessori classmates **Annabella Fay**, **Anne Blount** and **Nicole Firman** during the 1996-1997 school year!



**Alex Kranzlin (MS 2006)**, **Andrew Allison Godfrey (MS 2009)** and **Harrison Potter (MS 2010)** helping with the post-Auction clean up in May—thank you, gentlemen!



**Sebastian Van Eck** graduated this May from Bryant University in Rhode Island with a degree in supply management. He'll be moving to New York State to work for IBM.

**Caitlin Wood (UE 2003)** graduated from the University of San Diego and moved to Shijiazhuang, China, which is about an hour outside of Beijing. She teaches English to children ages 3–12.

The following members of the Montessori Class of 2011 have graduated from high school and, as of press time, we have learned they will begin their college careers as follows...

**Daniel Bogaev**, Bowdoin College...**Matteo Bruni**, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill...**Harry Epstein**, University of Michigan... **Meg Fay**, Bowdoin College ... **James Kitt**, Bryant College ... **Melissa Luse**, University of Maryland ... **Sarah Owen**, MIT...**Claire Phillips**, Barnard College...**Bella Pisano**, University of Miami (FL)...and **Katie Williams**, University of Kentucky. Congratulations, all!

# Who We Are

## Vital Statistics

### The Montessori School

34 Whipple Road

Wilton, CT 06897

203-834-0440

24 Lois Street

Norwalk, CT 06851

203-840-1850

email:

[info@themontessorischool.com](mailto:info@themontessorischool.com)

web:

[www.themontessorischool.com](http://www.themontessorischool.com)

## Accreditation

CAIS Connecticut Association  
of Independent Schools

AMI Association Montessori  
Internationale



**THE MONTESSORI SCHOOL** is a non-profit Montessori school committed to the healthy development of children from infancy through eighth grade. Accredited by both The Association Montessori Internationale and The Connecticut Association of Independent Schools, our School offers nationally and internationally acclaimed Montessori education to 240 children and their families from many area towns. We have served families in the greater Fairfield County area since 1964.

Our School's culture is devoted to helping each child grow toward independence by building confidence, competence, self-esteem and respect for others. More than an approach to education, Montessori becomes a way of life. Our program, both in philosophy and pedagogy, is based on the scientific research of Dr. Maria Montessori and on AMI Montessori training.

Montessori classrooms are designed for a multi-age mix which allows for both individual and social development. The classrooms are beautiful by design and are set up in an open style, with work areas throughout the room and materials available on accessible shelving. Most lessons are given to small groups or individual children while others work independently. The School uses stories, Montessori materials, charts, timelines, objects of nature, treasures from the wealth of world cultures and sometimes conventional tools to teach the children. Guided by the teacher, Montessori students actively participate in planning their time and taking responsibility for their work.

Our relationship to the outdoors is an integral part of our educational approach, and is based on Dr. Montessori's vision for the extended classroom and the respect and responsibility inherent in meaningful encounters with the land. Gardening, composting and other elements of care of the outdoors are introduced at the earliest stages of the program. At the Elementary and Middle School levels, the children's experience with the outdoors grows through the added dimension of outdoor expeditions such as camping trips, rites of passage, and adventures further afield.

Our School's Specialist Program is a complement and support to the essential Montessori curriculum and approach. Lead by experts in their fields, our Specialists, like the Montessori classroom teachers, are committed to the highest tenets of Montessori and to the importance of learning as a lifetime habit of curiosity, observation and thought. We offer art, chorus, physical education, and foreign language as well as intramural sports and After School Programs. Two Learning Specialists are on-site to support students with learning differences. Because we believe in sharing what we have with those in need and encouraging children to learn to live responsibly in the world, outreach and community service are part of our way of life.