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COLLABORATION: 10% chimp and 90% bee

Observations is my favorite Montessori School publication. With many different school magazines mailed to my home and work, I always find *Observations* a breath of fresh air. I've been involved with it, a little or a lot, for over a decade and am pleased to share my feeling of pride in our unique and meaningful magazine.

Part of why *Observations* is meaningful to me is that it shares many voices—but one overarching message. This comes from people embracing their individuality, tone, quirks, and intonation—yet speaking collectively about one true passion: Our School. That leads me to our theme for the 2018-2019 year, which shouted to me from the rooftops: **COLLABORATION**.

We choose a theme each year to put intentional focus on a particular concept or value.

It simply means that we are looking at things in a focused way through that particular LENS. When you call something out like that, suddenly connections happen—you notice things. Here are some things I noticed...

At the Cocktail Party last fall, per tradition, there was a special gift for new families. The gift was a little bottle of Montessori School honey. The honey came to be with the work and care of many different people. Staff. Students. Parents.

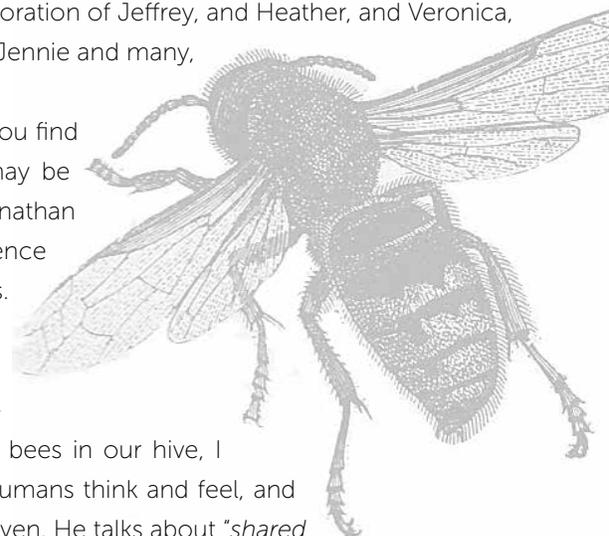
Several years ago our Elementary students were learning about the important role of bees in our food chain and in our world. That led to establishing our own hive. A Montessori dad named Jeffrey working with the Elementary Teachers Elizabeth and Susan, was supported by our Art Teacher Mark, and another dad Joel...and involved many students in the thrilling and sometimes sticky details of beekeeping.

Fast forward a few years and enter alum mom and Staff member Heather who re-connected with now alum dad Jeffrey—with some additional support by Toddler Directress Veronica—the hive was revitalized!

Cleaned off, cleaned up, and repositioned to a warmer, sunnier spot on our property. As things evolved, alum dad Joel got re-involved again and—big thanks here—Primary Directress Jennie P. stepped up to take the mantle as lead beekeeper on site. (Read more about that later...) So the honey came to us from the voluntary collaboration of Jeffrey, and Heather, and Veronica, and Mark, and Elizabeth, and Susan, and Joel, and Jennie and many, many students...and thousands of bees.

When you call something out with intention, you find it around every corner, or in every cloud. You may be familiar with the book *The Righteous Mind*, by Jonathan Haidt. He's a psychologist, a professor, a social science researcher, and to me, a moral philosopher of sorts.

In the book he uses a metaphor that human nature is 90% chimp and 10% bee. The 90% chimp reflects the *individual*, the 10% bee is the *collaborative inclination*. As we are working with actual bees in our hive, I mentally made the connection to how and why humans think and feel, and how that leads to collaboration—or not. It's not a given. He talks about "shared





But I loved how that was phrased—**promises**. What goes to the core of what we do, why we are here? I was inspired to ask our Staff. But instead of asking, “What do we *promise* parents?” I asked, “What do we *promise* our students?”

intentionality” and how deeply collaborative experiences are “often among the most cherished of our lives.”

He goes on to tell a personal story of working on a major project with a team. After months of work together, including many frustrating as well as joyous moments, he came to define that time when he and his colleagues felt they had become “10% chimp and 90% bee.”

Last fall I attended a governance conference run by the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools. At the conference, a speaker in one of the breakout sessions talked about being inspired at another school, years before, asking staff to talk about promises they make to the parents.

Obviously, the goal of staff is to educate students. At our School—in addition to curriculum work, we keep up with brain science studies and best practices in Montessori and beyond, and do a lot of value work as a Staff, year after year.

But I loved how that was phrased—**promises**. What goes to the core of what we do, why we are here? I was inspired to ask our Staff. But instead of asking, “What do we *promise* parents?” I asked, “What do we *promise* our students?”

Some of the same promises were repeated many times over, and some Staff had several promises that came right to mind.

We had quite a bit of fun doing this, and it was profound and uplifting. It goes to the heart of what can be accomplished by people with *shared intentionality*.

Here is what I promise. I promise to always keep what is best for the child at the center of every decision. It is a foundational principal for me personally—and for our School. When faced with a decision, confounded by what to do about a problem or conflict or concern—I just ask that question—of myself, and of others—and it parts the clouds.

That is **COLLABORATION**. There is a focused commonality of purpose and passion—educating children, for them, for you, for the future.

—Lisa B.A. Potter, Head of School

I grew up in rural Connecticut, on a farm in the woods, on a dirt road, with horses, cats, dogs, and cows. My mother was a gardener and we grew our own food all summer long. My love and connection with animals and nature is innate and reflects who I am, what I believe, and how I teach.

Dr. Montessori believed in nature being part of the classroom and an integral part of learning and curriculum. The Montessori School has beautiful outdoor spaces. We have extended patios for each classroom that are a natural bridge to the outdoors, with large windows for an expansive view and the warmth of natural sunlight. Each day the children go out into the woods and play, discover, observe and explore freely. Children need to experience the importance of nature. It is essential for them to grow wholly and develop a spiritual connection to the earth.

Our School consciously and thoughtfully tends our grounds with purpose and care. This year, on the warmer, sunny-side of our 7-acre property, in a carefully selected spot, we reestablished a hive with thousands of Italian bees. My natural curiosity and thirst for knowledge and nature pushed my hand up to volunteer as the onsite beekeeper with the help and guidance of an experienced parent in our community. I am fascinated, in awe, and inspired by the complexity, organization, and intelligence of the hive. I studied its hierarchy, jobs, productivity, and health as I observed the bees firsthand. So on a spring day in April, carefully timed to the rhythm of the bees, we suited up and moved them into their new home. Exhilarated, but remaining calm and focused,



The Buzz About the Bees...



I followed our experienced apiarist as the bees hummed and buzzed but moved with purpose and intention into their carefully constructed hive.

Absorbing all that I can through reading and watching and doing, I share the bees with the children. As with everything, we begin with the basics. How they collect pollen and are pollinators, and the importance of this cycle to the survival of the ecosystem. This leads to discussion on all the pollinator creatures. We look at how the hive works. We learn the different roles—the drones (male bees) stay in the hive, the worker bees (female), and the queen—and how they work together. We learn the parts of the hive and look at the honeycomb and discuss the differences between a manmade hive and a natural hive. The sweetest lesson of all is experiencing the honey! We take some honey but we know we must leave some for the bees, as they survive off the honey they have made and stored.

In our little corner of Wilton we make a difference by providing a home for the honey bees. We talk about nature and animals and share pictures, but the real lesson is in seeing our School build a hive and making learning tangible. We bring the real world into the classroom and the classroom out into the world. The children watch and respect the bees, see and taste the beautiful golden, sticky-sweet honey and begin to understanding the purpose and role and importance of bees in our lives and in nature, and that all living things are connected, have a job and a purpose, and play a role in the care and survival of our world.

—Jennie Paragarino, Primary Lead Teacher

Full Circle

Growth & Transformation

Some of my earliest and fondest memories are from this place. The golden light shining through the Toddler window across the table where I rolled out fragrant dough. The smell of damp leaves and crisp air during Fall Clean Up. The peaceful precision of tracing metal insets with perfectly sharpened pencils. A fading chorus of “Come, follow, follow, follow...” as we return to our classrooms from Gathering on a Friday afternoon. I spent most of my childhood here, from soon after I was born until I graduated as a 6th Year. As the child of two dedicated teachers, I often spent summer days sprawled across the cool tile floor drawing or reading while my parents prepared their classrooms for the coming School year.

The relationships I formed here—with others, with education, with nature, with myself—set the foundation for my worldview and scaffolded the path for my life’s journey. These relationships instilled in me a sense of belonging and purpose,

an inclination toward collaboration and responsibility to my community, and an appreciation for the cyclical nature of life and reverence for the mysteries of the cosmos.

A childhood memory I return to often is of my short time as a 6th Year apprentice to the Toddler program: the giddy excitement I felt at the prospect of being back in the classroom where my journey at the School began, under the guidance of my first teacher, Mary Reinhardt. I took pride in the responsibility of observing and presenting to my littlest peers; the experience felt sacred. In retrospect, my attitude toward this tradition may have been a clear foreshadowing of the direction my life would take.

With every three-year cycle, I experienced a crucial pattern of attachment, growth, and separation that became both comforting and empowering, and ultimately set me on the path to reach my own potential. Later in life, my Montessori training brought me to a cosmic

perspective of this attachment and separation, emphasizing the role of transformation; everything that exists in the universe is constantly being transformed, and we are no different. If life is understood as a sequence of attachments and separations, growth and transformation necessitate each departure and allow for new connections to be made. I can recall how profoundly important it was to me that I had completed my full elementary experience at The Montessori School, culminating with the bittersweet graduation ceremony. I entered this new phase of adolescence with a deep sense of completion and accomplishment; it was the biggest change in my life, and I was ready for it.

In the grand scheme of my life’s story, my transition to traditional school was unremarkable. That is to say, I was well-prepared academically, and while 7th grade is a notoriously socially awkward time to begin somewhere new, it all felt quite natural. I remember eventually feeling a bit bored by traditional education; not because it wasn’t challenging, not because my teachers lacked passion, but because there was little room for depth or discovery, for satisfying curiosity of the why or the how. I became aware that this contrasted starkly with my Montessori education. I found myself intrigued by intersections and connections between disciplines, always searching for opportunities to delve deeper and make my own meaning and come to my own understandings.

As a college freshman with a budding fascination for the mysteries and complexities of the human mind, I



Hannah working with Floor Scrubbing in her Toddler classroom (1991).



Hannah and her dad, Gerry, walking to School (1990).

sought a few courses relating to the biology and psychology of the brain and nervous system. As I continued to follow my interests, unsure of where they would lead, I found myself captivated by brain development. How could the functions and processes of the brain possibly develop from nothing to the most complex thing in the known universe? I was in awe when I realized the magnitude of neurological development that happens in the first 3 years of life. Study after study confirmed, as Maria Montessori had declared seventy years ago, there was “... no room for doubt: the first two years are important forever, because in that period, one passes from being nothing into being something.” (Maria Montessori, *San Remo Lectures*, 1949). I spent much of my senior year working in an Infant Cognitive Development Lab, reviewing research, collecting data, and designing my own study in which I observed infants’ reactions to novel objects. The drudgery of daily data

analysis quickly lost my interest and I looked for any excuse to get away from the computer and into the lab, greeting families and spending time directly with the infants. My initial, almost clinical awe of the infant’s developing brain shifted to sheer admiration of the infant herself and the great potential unfolding within her tiny but powerful mind.

I pursued a graduate program in Child Development with an emphasis on child-centered work experience and considerable flexibility in designing my own course of study (which appealed immensely to the Montessori child in me!) My first fieldwork experience placed me, quite fortuitously, as the assistant in a play-centered toddler classroom. I gathered a great deal about communicating with and observing toddlers, and as I reflected each day, I kept returning to Montessori. I began to read Montessori’s writing in earnest, and I recalled from my own experience at The Montessori School to compare with what I was witnessing each day. Montessori’s words echoed in my head as I observed the capability and humanity of these small humans: “The child is both a hope and promise for mankind.” (Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace*). What a powerful sentiment, and each day with those toddlers I felt its truth. It was humbling to think anyone could have looked at me as a small child and seen promise and hope, and yet looking back on my childhood I knew I had been offered that profound level of respect. I knew at my core that Montessori just made sense—for every child, and now for me as a vocation.

I applied to AMI (Association Mon-

tessori Internationale) 0-3 Training and set off to San Diego to begin the most important transformation of my life. When the time came for teaching practice, I reached out to Mary Reinhardt, and I once again found myself under the guidance of my very first teacher. “Full circle!” everyone noted. Then, six years later, the very same week that my time living and teaching in Manhattan was coming to a close, The Montessori School was seeking a new Toddler teacher. Life is a beautiful sequence of attachments, transformations, and separations. I could not have foreseen the sequence of transformations my life had in store that would allow me to return and make a new attachment to this exceptional School. And yet here I am, entering my second year teaching in this School that set the foundation for me to find my life’s work—which happened to bring me right back to this very School.

—Hannah Leonard, *Toddler Lead Teacher and Alumna Student (UE 2001)*



Hannah crawling through the tunnel on the Toddler playground (1992).

Our search began over seven years ago. Our little Christine was ready for preschool, and we wanted a very special school, that “checked all the boxes” for all of us—her mom, Marlene, a licensed clinical social worker, her dad, David, an artist and art teacher and her late grandmother, Roz, my dear friend and mentor, who had been a teacher, guidance counselor and principal. I, the dotting godmother, was enlisted to join the search. Not to boast, but only to show that I was uniquely qualified for the task, my experience lent itself to this exhaustive project. As Director of Pupil Personnel in a region covering four school districts in New York City, and Deputy Superintendent, I had visited scores of schools and had continued my career in education by supervising student teachers for the State University of New York.

We all agreed on many aspects of what we wanted. Primarily, we wanted Christine to feel comfortable and feel valued for her own unique talents. There would have to be a nurturing, learner-centered environment, with authentic learning and emphasis on the basics. We all wanted Christine to be challenged, academically, on her own level, and engaged in developmentally appropriate learning. Art and music would have to be in place. Most important to all of us was that social/emotional learning would be infused into the curriculum, not seen as an “add on.” Of course, the physical plant and grounds would have to support the learning we were looking for.

Together and apart, we visited many schools seeking this “ideal.” To be honest, some of the schools contained some of the elements. However, only The Montessori School had everything we were seeking. In addition, we, as adults felt welcome, comfortable and respected from when we first toured the School. When we were notified that Christine had been accepted, we celebrated!

I brought Christine to School on her first day in Betsy’s class. Betsy met Christine at the door,

An Oasis of Learning and Peace

A Grandparents’ Day Presentation



Joan with goddaughter Christine.

Intergenerational relationships help children understand, respect and value the wisdom of their elders. Children also gain an appreciation for their place in the continuity of the family.

looked her in the eyes and shook her hand. I immediately felt that I had left her in good hands. As the School year proceeded, I gained more of an understanding of how the class operated. Participating in various activities to which parents and significant others were invited, I watched Christine pour water, cut bananas, wash her plate and participate in various learning activities. Christine reported that each child had a job and that they would change jobs every week. By Christine’s second year in Primary, she was an engaged learner, had started reading, and began to learn cursive writing.

Concurrently, since Christine’s parents worked, she participated in the “Nappers” and “Late Day” programs. Having had the experience of picking her up on numerous occasions, what stood out for me was how

those programs maintained the same philosophy that permeated the rest of the School. Consistently, whenever I came into the School, I was recognized and greeted. I got to know many Staff members and parents.

It became a tradition for me to take Christine to School on every first day and take a picture of her sitting on the bench in front. She was in Trista’s class for Lower Elementary, and she blossomed into a dedicated learner. Her range of interests had clearly expanded. She had “nailed” the concepts of east, west, north and south and was able to navigate easily around a map of the United States to find and name all the states. Christine developed a love for reading and enjoyed author studies. She became more observant and more of a critical thinker. One afternoon, after participating in the Running Club with Jason, she reported that, while running in the woods, she had seen a cat carrying a bird in its mouth. I said, “That’s too bad.” She corrected me by saying, “No. That’s the way he survives.” Christine had many other enriching experiences in Lower Elementary. She had the experience of trying many different jobs. Her least favorite was pushing the Toddlers on the swings because she would have to miss part of recess. With

her creative juices flowing, she wrote and directed a play, "Christine and Friends." She recruited her fellow classmates to act in it at her ninth birthday party. Her imagination was boundless!

Upper Elementary with Nandini and Elizabeth provided more enriching experiences. Christine was becoming a more fluent writer and developing her own literary voice. It was clear that she had internalized language structure and richness of vocabulary taught in class. She described herself as a "bookworm," a positive in a world filled with video games and addictive screen time! In fact, she is a voracious reader and enjoys participating in her class book club. I continue book discussions with her, as she inspires me to read some of the same books she is reading. Now Christine is in the

process of writing her own book, *Fibi*. A few months ago, we were invited to the class to experience "Mystery History." Each student was dressed as a famous person, from various walks of life, and when touched on the shoulder, would tell about themselves. Christine was Maria Montessori. I was impressed and thought that it clearly highlighted a well-designed interdisciplinary project.

I think that it is appropriate, at this point, to discuss the fact that all that is happening in The Montessori School, unlike in many other schools, is being done without "teaching to a test." While some standardized testing is done to assess the effectiveness of instruction, standardized tests are not used to determine student success. Clearly, valuable classroom time is not spent on test preparation. As I currently supervise student teachers, and go into many schools and classrooms, on many grade levels, I can clearly see that the instruction here exceeds, in depth and breadth, what is taught elsewhere.

Thanks to the leadership of Lisa Potter, the Administrators, Teachers and all Staff, The Montessori School is an oasis of learning and peace, which could serve as a model for how the world should be. I know, from my professional career,



Grandparents enjoy student presentations in the classrooms.

The Montessori School is an oasis of learning and peace, which could serve as a model for how the world should be. I know from my professional career, that this does not happen "magically." Rather, it is by design, through hard work, planning and collaboration.

that this does not happen "magically." Rather, it is by design, through hard work, planning and collaboration. Parents, grandparents and other adults in the children's lives must work in partnership to promote this culture. The role of grandparents is particularly significant. Most studies of resiliency in children point to the fact that children need significant adult mentors, besides their parents, in their lives. Through interactions with grandchildren, grandparents serve as role models and provide guidance, through informal discussions and by example. Intergenerational relationships help children understand, respect and value the wisdom of their elders. Children also gain an appreciation for their place in the continuity of the family. Family history and stories should be told often, so that children can feel part of the larger structure and appreciate their roles in the family.

I feel most honored to have been asked to speak today and, I am looking forward to many more experiences in The Montessori School, as I continue to see Christine grow and thrive. Thank you for your kind attention.

Joan Mizrahi has had a long and varied career in education beginning as a junior high school English teacher and reading specialist, then guidance counselor and then assistant principal over a span of 18 years, during which she was included in *Who's Who Among America's Teachers*. From there she moved to the District level, where she headed a districtwide substance abuse prevention education program and then became Deputy Superintendent for Pupil Personnel in another district. She moved on to the regional level, where she served as a School Based Services Administrator for four different districts. Currently, she supervises student teachers from State University of New York Oswego.

The Doodle

A Collaborative Art Project



The Montessori School invited our School community to contribute to a long-term collaborative art project including students, parents, Staff, grandparents, caregivers and friends. A three foot by three foot canvas was

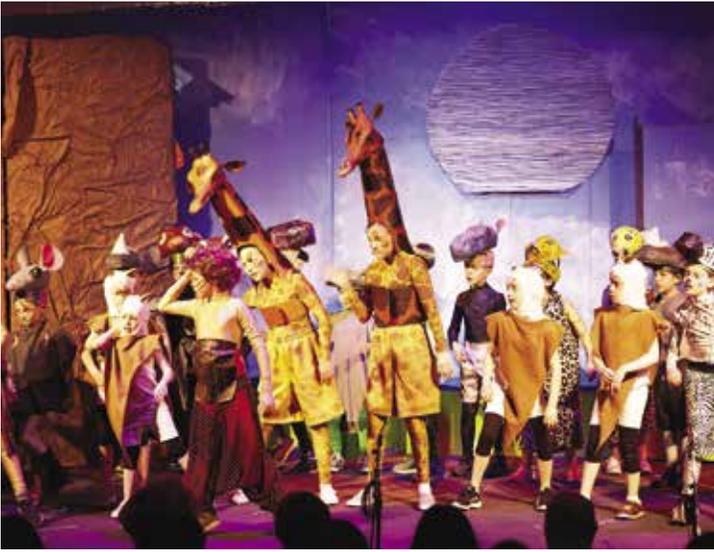
hung in the Front Hall, and rotated 90 degrees daily. Periodically the pencil lines were inked over. Participants were encouraged to fit work into available spaces, draw over, embellish or extend the work of others. Paint

was added to some open spaces to accentuate and harmonize the entire canvas.

The purpose of the project was to create a unified image by repeatedly grouping and overlapping individual images. Over time,

emerging patterns influenced subsequent additions and layers. The process was intended to mirror the natural progression of coming together as individuals to contribute to and form a collective.

The Montessori School Elementary Theater production of Disney The Lion King Jr.



The Ensemble performing "I Just Can't Wait to be King."

The Montessori School Elementary students performed a rousing rendition of the classic musical *Lion King Jr.* on May 2-3, 2019. Students ranging in age from 6 to 12, with the guidance of Teachers and Staff, worked together to plan, produce, and perform a successful show, with both nights sold out!

The Montessori philosophy and curriculum support and encompass performing arts, beyond foundational classroom work that is vital to the growth and development of each child. We are fortunate to offer a program that provides a strong academic foundation through experiential and personalized learning, is rich in diversity, and creates the opportunity for students to explore and experiment in a safe and nurturing environment. The play offered an opportunity for the children to expand their talents and interests outside the classroom. A theatrical production is a grand creative and academic pursuit. It includes working on set design, lighting and sound, prop sourcing, auditioning, preparing and performing songs, and much more. It also

requires the children to use organizational skills, engineering for sets, and collaborative teamwork. The very essence of this challenging work is a practical application of myriad skills.

Students had a variety of roles in the production. Since the fall they were all involved in creating the animal masks worn by the characters in the show. Following the final performance, the students' animal masks were on display at the Rene Soto Gallery in Norwalk for the month of May.

6th Year student Diego Brasher oversaw the stage crew and set design. He created many of the backgrounds used in the production, which included Scar's cave and elephant graveyard. "My favorite part was making Pride Rock," he said. "That was fun!" Diego said he made Pride Rock using wood and brown paper, drawing inspiration from the movie to put the work together. He also had another important role, "I really enjoyed raising the sun up and down."



Animals of the Pridelands featuring zebras, mice, hippos, cheetahs, and antelopes.



Elementary students working on masks and scenery in art class.



The Elementary students designed and crafted the animal masks. Following the final production, the masks were displayed at Rene Soto Gallery in Norwalk in May.



Montessori Model United Nations

“...in the minds of these boys and girls there lies all our hope of future progress and the judgement of ourselves and our times.” —Maria Montessori

Our students are on a continuous path of growth, exploration and learning. Even from the earliest age it is a path to adulthood. It is our job to prepare them for their future. As Montessorians, we are trained to meet the academic challenges placed upon the children of today and understand the development of the human being during various stages of growth. We look at and address social, emotional, intellectual, and physical situations and changes. We support the needs of their growing bodies, developing minds, and eagerness to meet the world head-on. We ensure their progress with standard academic subjects and through real experiences that speak to their passions, interests, and drive to be compassionate and appreciate and impact the community and the world. Dr. Maria Montessori recognized that a future of peace grows from the education of children. During the Upper Elementary years (4-6th grades) the child is keenly aware and zealous about moral issues and justice, and motivated to work within their community to meaningfully build, influence and contribute to a peaceful, fair, and civil world. As we nurture and support the moral, just and caring student, participation in Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN) at this level is a natural and useful piece of the curriculum addressing real and relevant topics and issues in an external, real world situation. They are creative and innovative, examine different perspectives, and use their voices in a meaningful way to try to effect change. It is amazing and vigorous!

Each level of Montessori education provides a clear foundation that expands with learning, mastery and maturity. MMUN is a thoughtful, detailed, and meticulous process that begins with conversation, research and collaboration with peers at School and culminates in a unique, dynamic and grand life and learning experience.

MMUN is a United Nations program specifically designed

for Montessori students that simulates a United Nations meeting and mirrors the General Assembly. The journey with MMUN is a capstone experience for our student elders. It is a long and challenging process involving months of preparation to reach the General Assembly Hall in NYC. The project requires a balance of both group and individual work as they research the country and topics and write detailed reports and formal speeches.

At our School, Global Studies class introduces significant world topics. The students explore socioeconomic, political globalization, and environmental issues, and human rights, sustainable development, and diversity. These are serious, sometimes difficult and important subjects that take significant exploration and understanding. As the Delegates of Chile, they extensively researched, studied and examined the country's geographical layout, flora, fauna, and political stance, and the way of life including clothing, food, spiritual beliefs, and education. It is collaborative work requiring brainstorming, teamwork, and the creation of a display board that travels to NYC. Students take a position and speak on behalf of the citizens of Chile, and are prepared to understand the country's economics, trade, culture, needs, political stand, wars and treaties, offering a real-world experience.

After immersing themselves in the country, the students then work on individually assigned topics. Our students researched 1) dumping of radioactive waste, 2) elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance, 3) rights of people to self-determination and 4) disarmament in the Middle East.





The research is organized into a Position paper including information about the country's history, effects on the country, United Nations involvement, and other organization involvement. The students also look at the country's policies, and already proposed and established solutions. Using their knowledge and understanding, the students are challenged to remove themselves from their personal opinion and write from the perspective of a citizen and representative/delegate of the assigned country.

Following the in-depth research and writing, the students write, practice, and ultimately deliver a formal speech. The speech is prepared to address the committee and explain the country's policy and introduce the resolution and any sub-issues. The students learn speech writing, tone, pacing, delivery and presentation, confidence, and other necessary important life skills. This is an exceptional growing and learning experience to carry with them beyond our School.

After months of preparation, the students attended the MMUN Conference in NYC. They arrived inspired, confident, and prepared to go off to their designated area. They immediately adapt to the format of interacting. They are provided instructions on how to address the committee, raising their paddle to say, "The Delegation of Chile would like to ask a question." The students practice all the proper terminology and learn Grace and Courtesy. For example, one may not use the term "honorable" to address the Delegates but can say "distinguished delegates."

Each country has the opportunity to deliver a short speech introducing their topic and providing insight into their posi-

tion. The representatives decide what countries they would like to work with. Social skills and refined negotiation tactics are necessary for the small group discussions. Some students quickly demonstrate leadership by organizing the small group and leading the discussion towards a solution. It is intense and exhilarating and the process goes on for two days!

As the students come to a place of resolution, all resolutions are read aloud. Every line is read and examined in the document, and delegates can accept or reject lines, making significant or minor adjustments to the paper, and there is a vote of a pass or not pass the resolution. In our case, there were a few resolutions that did not pass, and that means that the topic would be brought back to the drawing table for another time.

To complete the experience, the students visit the General Assembly Hall at the United Nations. We were proud to say that one of our students was selected to address the entire MMUN Committee at the United Nations.

Montessori allows students to deeply explore subjects, to begin at a foundational level and expand exponentially. Participation in MMUN is a full experience of a project cycle where the students begin with planning and preparation, work individually and collaboratively, and must master academics, public speaking, and social skills. It is a unique opportunity to step outside the School and classroom and engage in a safe but unfamiliar and unpredictable environment using their experience, intelligence, confidence, knowledge and technique to represent themselves, their school and their assigned country. As Dr. Montessori is often quoted as saying, "This is Education For Life."

—Lisbeth Harrison, Elementary Program Leader

A Capstone, Real-Life Experience

To the graduates, congratulations to all of you. You should be very proud of yourselves. Well done!

Dr. Maria Montessori said, “Free the child’s potential and you will transform him into the world.”

You have worked hard, shed tears; you’ve had good days and bad. You got through it all because of your hard work and dedication to your Montessori education. You are well prepared for the next stage of your life. When you find yourselves in doubt, remember your many accomplishments. You became an elder of the School, a role with many responsibilities.

Alina You are the quintessential Montessori child. In fourth grade, we would observe your self-direction, your incredible thirst for research, and your kind and helpful ways... While you remain that student, you are definitely ready for your next challenge... You are bright and already brimming with knowledge... Those around you will notice and you will be proud.

Marlayna You are unique in your own way, and I have seen tremendous growth in you as a Montessori student. It’s one of those things we tell parents about the three year cycle of the Upper Elementary. “Just wait,” we say, “you will see a completely different child; one who has leapt into another level of maturity, compassion and independence.” That’s you. You’re that proof... You fly through challenging things with ease. My goal has always been to help you to envision the incredible talent you have. It is right there for you to realize.

Olivia You bring your own sense of majesty... you have a head about you that says, “I got this”... You have a natural talent for learning and processing information. It is your wisdom that strikes me as your most amazing trait... you take each day at a time with your maturity and grace... you are living the Montessori life of compassion, empathy and as a responsible a global citizen...

Diego You have proven that you are full of love, honesty, compassion, vast knowledge, and a sense of humor. Your care for living things and the environment, your passion for drama (the creative kind), and kindness toward your friends, are all things that make you who you are... You express stories through your artwork... You are good at what you do... This school has helped you to be passionate about what you care for... Use your wisdom, fall back on your sense of humor, find the good in other people and follow your dreams.

—Elizabeth Zobel, Upper Elementary Teacher

This is a special day for all of you; a culmination of a journey that spans a lifetime for some of you. This beautiful school has been your haven; your learning ground; the perfect platform for your academic, social and emotional growth. Each one of you, in your own unique way, has given us reason to beam with pride. You all will be missed, but I know you’ll make us proud wherever you go.

Diego Beneath that nonchalant exterior is a deep, compassionate, kind-hearted, supremely creative young man... one thing all of us here know is that you radiate happiness whenever you can display your creative and artistic side. That is who you are. I hope your talents are recognized and given a chance to blossom in your next environment...

Alina Underneath that delicate, petite frame is a very determined, hard-working, diligent young lady ready to climb every stair to success. Your dedication towards everything you do is quite admirable... You are a perfectionist, and when I see you worry about what can go wrong, I want you to get excited about all that you have done right. You have it in you to pirouette your way into people’s hearts...

Olivia A confident and intelligent young girl, a meritorious student with a feisty spirit (quite the potent mix), who I know will make a name for herself in the world. You are the social “Pied Piper” and wherever you go, friends follow. You have amazing social leadership skills, so use them to make this world a better place... what a beautiful journey yours has been...

Marlayna Your time at this School has been short, but what a success story. You have blossomed into a poised and self-assured young girl ready to take on the world. Your creativity never ceases to amaze me. Many of your creative assignments have permanently found a home in my albums, ready to be shared with future generations of students...

They say that without the stairs of the past, you cannot arrive at your future... Hold on to all those beautiful memories, because they have shaped who you are today and all that you can become tomorrow. Here’s wishing success to all of you...

—Nandini Seetharam, Upper Elementary Teacher

Excerpts From Our Graduates' Speeches—Commencement 2019



I've been in this school my whole life. I started in Toddler and moved up to Primary when I was two in the middle of the year. My brother Joaquin was in second or third grade in Stephane's class when we started the first Kitchen Project. Kitchen Project is what we called movies we were making. My dad filmed directly from an old Dell computer. We usually started the movies in late spring and my dad and my brother made a four- or five-part movie series based on a toy story alien. I was around two when the first movie came out...and four when the fourth came out. The fourth movie was the debut of Montessori Man. Joaquin was always the lead but in the fourth movie he drank the MM liquid and became Montessori Man! Besides the movies the inspiration was also the old logo. The four stars and the three buildings represent the levels. I used the elements of the old logo and elements of the new logo to create this painting.

Today I'd like to make this painting a gift to the School.

Diego Brasher

As some of you know I have been at this School nearly my whole life. In Primary I learned a lot from the Pink Tower and the Moveable Alphabet. I loved the decimal system as well as making banana bread and brewing tea...Elizabeth told me it was different in Upper El. And it was. She prepared me for what was to come. We had a huge project called "Imaginary Island"...We had to create an imaginary island and create rules, government and exports. It was challenging but fun. This year, the first big thing was Montessori Model United Nations. Although it was a long and tiring project, it ended up being AWESOME. I made some new friends and gave my speech. We built bridges and bonded with other people. This year we did a bridge project, that consisted of three main things...building, beta testing, and breaking...and presented our reports to three classrooms...there are many things I will miss, the main thing being the people here. I am excited because we are crossing our own bridges to a new school, new experiences and new friends.

Olivia Grace

I have lots of great memories of my time here. One of the first things I remember is visiting Mystic Seaport...We stayed on a boat and we learned a lot about boats and whaling...During my second year, the class went to Nature's Classroom...I remember the Ort report that measured how many pounds of food we threw out. It taught us not to waste as much food...I also remember MNAP (Mother Nature's Amusement Park) a second playground we made. There was a slide, a climbing wall, and more. There was also...a giant fort my friends and I built together... It was probably the biggest fort ever built at the School. We were very proud of it...My third year we went to Club Getaway. We went on zip lines and tried rope climbing. Perhaps the greatest trip of all was The Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN). We stayed at a hotel in Times Square and on the last day we got to go to the real UN. MMUN taught me to be more confident and it was overall a really exciting experience...In the classroom, my favorite subject is science. This year we dissected frogs. Nandini showed us all the different parts of the frog...it was really cool! I am very grateful for all this School has taught me and I will always remember my time here.

Marlayna Kasdan

I would like to talk about how much this school means to me...my first language is Russian...I didn't know how to speak English very well, but within a few months, I learned...After four years in Primary. I was ready to move up to Lower El...I loved all the lessons! My favorites were the timeline of life, the volcano, long division, and science lessons. I enjoyed my first choral concert and Lesson Night when I introduced verbs and nouns to the parents...Our final trip in Lower El was to Camp Sloane. We stayed in canvas tents and participated in activities like fishing and archery...

There were many highlights of my Upper Elementary years...spending two nights in Mystic Seaport, and Nature's Classroom...In February Marlayna, Olivia and I went to Montessori Model United Nations in NYC. Over the course of three days we discussed world peace and made a resolution with Montessori students from all over the world. When I said my speech it was scary but exciting. I learned how to think on my feet.

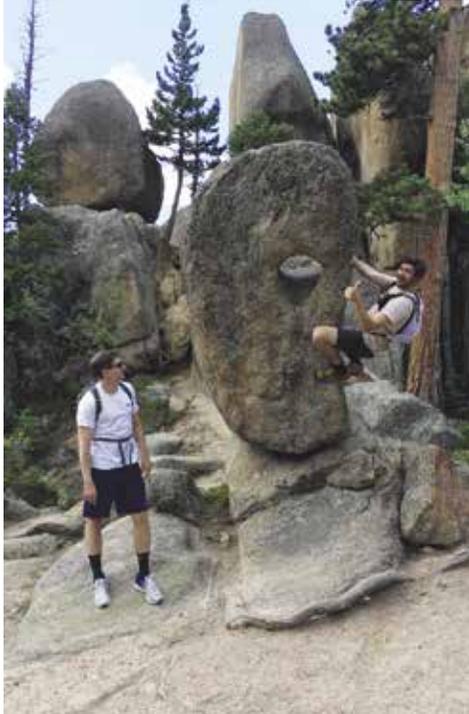
This School taught me to be kind and compassionate, and has made me a better person...working with the Peacekeeper group, taking care of nature, and including people when playing outside...

I would like to thank my parents for bringing me to this School.

Alina Vinokur

Alumni Spotlight:

Sam Alkaitis



Sam, with his brother (also a Montessori Alum) Matt Alkaitis, rock climbing in Boulder, Colorado.

It all started with a swamp water project from his days in Upper Elementary. Students Sam Alkaitis and Kyle Miller heard that there were a bunch of single-cell organisms in swamp water, and this ignited the natural curiosity that continues to motivate Sam to this day. “We went into our backyards, grabbed some swamp water, looked under a microscope and drew what we saw.” The boys ran to Teachers Kathy Allen and Gerry Leonard for an explanation of what they saw. “They got us the right books, they guided us...I still remember the volvox in the swamp water...a living pseudo multicellular organism...they form these communal groups into a cluster...and then we learned about it in Intro to Cell Biology in college. It tied into theory and history and who discovered what. But at

the time, it was like we discovered it ourselves.”

Sam started at The Montessori School in Primary in 1992 and continued through Lower and Upper Elementary, graduating in 2001. Beginning in seventh grade, Sam studied at Greens Farms Academy in Westport, CT, completed his senior year at St. Mary’s High School in Annapolis, MD in 2008 and went on to the University of Virginia.

The summer of his junior year, Sam landed a coveted “dream job in environmental science,” an internship working for the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation in Washington, D.C. His assignment within the Eastern Brook Trout program was to restore the fish to cold water streams. The role focused on looking at success metrics of the various initiatives within the program. Most interesting to Sam was speaking with scientists directly to learn what was working. Sam completed his degree in biology and earned a bachelor of science in biology, launching him on an optional pre-med path—with a minor in English and a “strong interest in art” in 2012.

Following graduation, Sam harkened back on a question his aunt posed while at UVA, “What would you be doing if you weren’t doing pre-med?” The answer for Sam was clear: animation. His answer prompted him to consider a broader path and with his interest piqued, he enrolled in a one-year program at Vancouver Film School. In a program that afforded him the opportunity to directly enter the animation industry, he travelled to the west coast of Canada, and earned a diploma in animation in 2013. Sam was immedi-

ately recruited for contract work on an animation project and gained experience as he moved from one project to another, challenged by the constantly evolving technology available. He has worked on programs including Rick & Morty (the top-rated animated comedy) as well as Jake and the Neverland Pirates and the new Donald Duck Three Caballeros on Disney’s streaming service.

In order to keep Sam engaged between projects, one company tasked him with learning a new animation program—Toon Boom Harmony—“You draw things once, and the computer fills in the motions between the images. We inherited season three of Jake and the Neverland Pirates and [the prior animation company] was using complicated rigs of the characters. (Rigs are the programs that enable movement in 2D animation, and make it so that the animator does not have to draw every micro movement from pose to pose.) We had to replicate the rigs without knowing how. It was an impossible situation, and I was tasked to figure it out. In a month and a half, I had to learn how to do the whole process.” Drawing from his primary research strategies from the National Fish and Wildlife internship, Sam called everyone he knew and was able to reverse-engineer the rigs. “A lot of it was biology! The code they used to make the rig is node-based with if-then logic.” Drawing on his science training and logical thinking, Sam learned the programming necessary to build the code. His training as an animator helped him understand how to apply the code to the design. Drawing from his Montessori schooling, embracing learn-

ing through natural curiosity, Sam was able to accomplish the monumental task.

Because of Sam's contribution, applying advanced coding skills in Vancouver, he was promoted to manager. A bit of a fish out of water, Sam knew how to do the work, but had to tackle how to motivate and teach others. Admittedly, he found management challenging and made a lot of mistakes. "A lot of times we [manage] through carrots and sticks, but alternative modes are useful. Not having a crime and punishment mentality has been important and left the door open to implementing positive reinforcement and positively motivate without telling what to do. Having alternative things to try and ways to understand when things fail is critical for management, and in life."

The Montessori model became Sam's most successful application for managing other. "It is a trusting system because you have to believe that learning is fun in order for Montessori to work. At Montessori, you trust that learning itself is powerful and it's empowering for kids. It made learning way more fun...it is a co-piloted educational experience."

Sam applied his take on the Montessori methodology to leading a ten-person project team on a colossal task—understaffed, under-budgeted. The strategy his own previous managers adopted of "hire someone to do a job, pressure them to do it and shame them if they don't" was one option. However, his team was behind and Sam recognized that was not the path. "I could see what they were producing and it wouldn't work. If I'd broken them, they would all quit. I knew the



Sam surrounded by "friends" in a humorous and creative Instagram post.

only way they'd hit the mark was if they learned more." Sam determined the best strategy was to drill, teach and support, applying his Montessori learning experience, and referred to his approach as "co-piloting." He engaged in open conversations with staff about "greatest fears at work" and together, they learned the best way for the group to work. As a manager, he recognized the need to help his staff learn and motivate and moved away from product/output oriented management to learning and process oriented. And it worked. Within eight months, his team was out-producing others by 200%, and nothing was intimidating. Sam's team became the volvox that Sam and Kyle found in the swamp water, working together to do amazing, important work.

Sam enthusiastically talks about the animation industry and has expanded his skills beyond building (code-writing) to storyboarding. He has a deep appreci-

ation for the art of animation and warmly embraces the opportunity to learn: "One of the guys came up to teach us how to draw Donald Duck, one of the original animators." Sam continues to honor his natural curiosity through interests in cooking—mostly inspired by unique combinations such as beet and basil ice cream (successful) topped with caramelized tomato sauce (not so successful). Sam toyed with resin and wood jewelry (a win) and found raw malachite and smelted it into copper (a failure)! He's writing a young adult novel just for fun and he keeps a book of ideas to try in the future. "We were encouraged to be broad, and for me that was really fun. I enjoy variety, it's exciting to try new things."

AlumNOTES

Notes were shared by Alums during the summer of 2019.

Alex Amador (MS 2006)

began veterinary school as a member of the Ohio State University class of 2023 and hopes to specialize in food animal care and public health.

Bennett Amador (MS 2009)

is working in Boston for John Hancock and taking advantage of living in Somerville.



David Andersson (UE 1999), Katy Gray (UE 1999) and Lily Schweitzer (UE 1999)

celebrated at Katy's wedding to partner Dale Booth in Vermont last summer.

David also shared that his father, Bruno Andersson, passed away suddenly on May 20, 2019. "He was a member of the Montessori School family for the five years I attended (and for many years beyond!), and actually helped bring a

Montessori-inspired religious education program to the St. Francis of Assisi Church in Weston, CT, where he was a catechist for 25 years. Many members of The Montessori School community attended his funeral, including **Kathy Allen** and **Gerry Leonard**, **Lily Schweitzer** and family, **Katy Gray** and family, **Heather McCabe** and family, and **Lois** and **Alex Amador**, among others.



From left to right: **Sebastien Bolea**, **Remy Bolea**, **Annie Tang Bolea**, **Stefan Bolea**, **Lucas Bickford**, **Rahman Nabulsi**

On May 18, 2019, **Stefan Bolea (UE 1996)** tied the knot with fiancée Annie Tang at the Beauport Hotel in Gloucester, MA. Alumni who joined the happy couple in this lifetime milestone included **Sebastien Bolea (UE 2000)**, **Remy Bolea (UE 2001)**, **Lucas Bickford (UE2000)**, and **Rahman Nabulsi (UE 2000)**.

Seen together at the Guilford Yacht Club for Hopkins pre-prom photos this past



June were **Lauren Seto (UE 2000)**, **Sara Kranzlin (MS 2015)**, **Ethan Pritchard (UE 2013)** and **Biz Fay (UE 2013)**. Congratulations to all on their Hopkins and Staples graduations!

The **Evans** family has been enjoying their first year living in Staffordshire, England. Both **Hannah (UE 2018)** and **Sarah (P 2018)** are playing golf and riding their ponies. Hannah rides a black 15-2 hand horse named Tilly, and Sarah just got her first pony named Roany, a 13-1. The girls enjoy staying



at the yard with their horses and take lessons with Lee Pearson, a medaled Olympian. The girls have adjusted well to their new school and credit having a strong foundation from The Montessori School. This fall, Hannah is in Year 8, the equivalent of 7th grade and Sarah is attending Prep year 2, the equivalent to 1st grade in America.



Kendall Flavin (LE 2007)

followed her passion for fashion and her flair for design to the Westphal College of Media Arts and Design at Drexel University. Kendall learned the detailed and intricate arts of drawing, designing, patterning, sewing and production with a full schedule of core academic classes. In her senior year she traveled to Seoul, South Korea, for Drexel Intensive Course Abroad, and was also the recipient of the 2019 Fashion Scholarship Fund Award. The culmination of

her four years was the 2019 Drexel Fashion Show at the Urban Outfitters headquarters in Philadelphia this past June, where she presented her creations and was awarded the Worlfgang Harbor PROMISE NOW Award for her line of menswear-inspired wearable women's clothing. Each piece incorporated asymmetrical and linear elements of architectural lines and structure. Following a valuable co-op experience at Milly in New York City, she is now working in product development for the company.

Alison Lide (UE Teacher 2008-2012) writes: After a year in Asia, I took a position as a 6-12 guide at a small but growing school in the Columbia Gorge in Washington state. I just finished six wonderful years there, and have now moved to Innsbruck, Austria. This coming year I'll be working at Ecole Montessori Casablanca in Morocco for a year, and then will see what comes after that.

My husband and I are still running the House of Flowers orphanage, which is a Montessori-based home and school program for about 30 destitute children in Kabul, Afghanistan (<http://www.mepoonline.org>). It's been operating for over 16 years. People from The Montessori School continue to support the House of Flowers. It is gratifying and meaningful to have such long-lasting connections.

Former Communications Director, Former Trustee, and alumna mom, **Ruth**

Hurwitz shares: After moving back to Boston in the fall of 2017 I took on a variety of consulting projects. This spring I accepted a full-time position at Financial Recovery Technologies as their Director of Professional Development & Administration. I will be the company's in-house Coach while also developing a variety of professional development initiatives, including an Emerging Leadership Program, a Women in Leadership group and a Mindfulness Mafia! In addition to the new job I moved into an apartment on Beacon Street in Brookline, between Kenmore Square and Coolidge Corner and love absorbing the energy of the city.



Abbey O'Meara (MS 2016) recently finished her fifth year at the Acadia Institute of Oceanography, a hands-on program off the coast of Maine in Acadia National Park. "Working with other students I completed a shark dissection, water quality monitoring, tank maintenance, crab identifications, collections and more! The experience has been valuable for me as I

am going into my senior year of high school with a deep passion for Marine Science and Conservation.

I interned at Save the Sound this summer under the Soundkeeper, Bill Lucey." Abbey participated in many projects, including one measuring the Dissolved Oxygen in Captain's Cove Marina in Bridgeport. She shares, "The results are devastating as they have been at zero since we started testing. The fish and other organisms in this cove will eventually die due to the lack of nutrients and oxygen in the water. If this continues, as it has for over 50 years, due to sewage outflows and pollution, it will spread into Long Island Sound and impact the shellfish industry, and our economy. Another recent project is collecting "ghost" traps on the bottom of Long Island Sound. Ghost traps are abandoned lobster or crab traps that collect organisms but aren't pulled up and can kill lobsters...which impacts the ecosystem at the bottom of the Sound."

Abbey also received her Open Water PADI License in North Carolina. "I am excited about the opportunities that await me!"

Abbey is looking at local colleges, hoping to stay within a two-hour drive from home, and hopes to play field hockey in a D3 program.

Gaby Pisano, (MS 2013) currently a student at University of Denver, is studying in Jordan. Here is a snippet from her blog: "Yesterday I took my written placement exam

for Arabic. The best way to describe the difficulty of this exam is that everyone in my testing room stared at the first page for 45 minutes before even attempting to begin answering the questions. This morning at 10:45 I sat with one of the teachers at the university and began my oral placement exam which included her asking me questions in Arabic which I had to answer, obviously, in Arabic. After about fifteen minutes, I signed my language pledge agreeing to only speak Arabic until I am headed back to the USA in December. When I walked out of that exam I could feel a shift in the air. Something big had just happened and Jordan would never be the same for me. I am very excited and nervous to have taken the pledge. What resonated with me most was the professor asking me what my goals for taking the pledge and being on this program were. I took a minute to think. I have been taking Arabic on and off since freshmen year of high school...I want full immersion and to take this pledge to push past that point, finally get to that level of fluent in order to take my language and run with it. Whether I can use it at a job or at home or traveling, I want to be speaking Arabic in my future. While Arabic is hard, I would say day one went pretty well—definitely better than I expected—so I am excited to see what the next few months brings.

مع السلامة
(good night!) xo"



Annual Spring Auction 2019— Havana Nights

On the evening of May 18th, The Montessori School parent community, along with Alumni, Board and friends turned out in celebration and support for our School for our Annual Spring Auction. The space was transformed and the festive and colorful theme, “Havana Nights,” transported guests as they immersed themselves in the lively décor, feasted on Cuban-inspired fare and took to the dance floor to music played by a traditional, eight-piece Cuban band and a professional dance ensemble. Fundraising included our traditional Silent Auction, beautiful and inspirational Class Projects and a Raise the Paddle, all to benefit our School. Even more popular this year, was an offering of more than two dozen different and unique sign-up events to engage a variety of interests and ages including evening adult group dinners, a bird watching hike for families, a Spanish scavenger hunt and movie night at the School for children, and a Sunday morning coffee and excursion for dads. These carefully crafted sign-ups are scheduled and planned throughout the calendar to keep the party and connections going well into the next School year!

Being part of the Annual Spring Auction preparation is a big responsibility as we are tasked with making the overall vision a reality. It is so rewarding to be part of the teamwork that results in such a transformative, successful evening. The finished product is like entering another time or place. Everyone is dressed up and excited for those amazing hours we get to spend each year celebrating our community, raising money for our children and their precious School, and having FUN! It's truly a magical event not to be missed!

—Ginger Parsons, Parent and Auction Committee Member



Photos from Shoot the Cake by Dorie Hagler Photography



Welcome

Throughout 2018-2019 we welcomed several new Staff members to our School in various roles: **Dee Barba** (Primary Assistant), **Micaela Belmonte** (Toddler Assistant), **Chris Coogan** (Music Specialist), **Kimberly Fox** (French Specialist), **Lauren Houlihan** (Primary Assistant), TMS alumna **Hannah Leonard** (Toddler Lead Teacher), **Julia Mannarino** (Lower Elementary Assistant), and **Lorena Seidel** (Elementary Specialist). We welcomed back some former Staff, some in brand new roles for them at our School: **Charlene Blount** (Office Support), **Dana Eisenberg** (Infant/Parent Specialist) and **Mercy Farfan** (Primary Lead Teacher).



Staff Notes



Farewell

We offer gratitude, and best wishes, to departing Staff members who have positively and meaningfully impacted our School, our community and our hearts each day and over the years they shared with us: **Hannah Ford**, **Lisbeth Harrison**, **Jane Jessep**, **Heather Maccabe**, **Lyndsay Mayer**, **Jennifer Moore**, **Carla Samardzija** and **Esther Wallace-Sweeney**.



Enrichment

Staff professional development work deepens and broadens individual and collective perspective, performance and expertise. Professional opportunities supplement and inspire us at every level and benefit our students, classrooms and community. The following opportunities are just some examples of group professional development work enjoyed throughout the 2018-2019 School year.



In Spring 2019, we reaffirmed our strong Montessori pedagogy by achieving re-accreditation at all levels by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). The re-accreditation process, mandated every 3 years, requires that all Classroom Teachers be observed and assessed by AMI Consultants trained specifically for each program level. The AMI Consultants closely reviewed teaching materials and classroom configurations. Teachers and Administration engaged in discussions with the Consultants regarding the assessments and School culture, providing a deep professional development experience for our whole School. In addition to this extensive work, former The Montessori School Primary Teacher Uma Ramani, currently a Primary Level Consultant, engaged with Staff in a Grace & Courtesy workshop. Grace & Courtesy are foundational principles in Montessori philosophy and support human development.



Teaching Staff attended the annual Montessori Schools of Connecticut (MSC) Day in November 2018 at the University of Hartford. Howard Gardner, acclaimed author and Professor of Cognition and Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education, spoke on "Growing up in the App Generation." The day included breakout sessions by pediatric occupational therapist Barbara Luborsky; Ellen Winner, Professor of Psychology at Boston College and Associate at Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education, advanced the concept of "Helping Children Think Like Artists," and Vipin Thekk, founder of the Changemaker Communities Initiative, spoke on fostering social entrepreneurship within schools, non-profits and business.



Professional development extends to our Trustees as well. Every year, members of our Board attend the Connecticut Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) Governance Conference, held at the Hopkins School, New Haven, CT. This year, on a sunny fall Saturday, this full-day event covered topics ranging from Budgets and Audits, Innovations in Independent School Marketing, Legal Trends in schools, Fundraising Campaigns and Endowments, and understanding the deeper messages of Diversity and Inclusion.



Who We Are

Vital Statistics

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Accreditations

CAIS Connecticut Association
of Independent Schools

AMI Association Montessori
Internationale



The Montessori School is a vibrant learning community supporting and guiding the growth and development of children 14 months through sixth grade. The School is a non-profit serving children and families in the greater Fairfield County area of Connecticut since 1964.

More than an approach to education, the Montessori philosophy is an approach to life and learning and supports the natural tendencies of human development. Current studies in brain development, technology, and social innovations complement and reinforce Dr. Montessori's work, research, observations and methods.

The School provides a strong academic foundation. Our curriculum cultivates intellectual curiosity and subject mastery through experiential and personalized learning, naturally woven into each individual's social, emotional and physical growth. Through Montessori's integrated and holistic learning approach, students attain independence, inner discipline and peace in an environment that nurtures confidence, competence, academic excellence, self-esteem and integrity.

We model and uphold social stewardship through equity and respect. Outreach and community service are integral to our program and students are inspired to live responsibly, passionately and compassionately in the world.

Work extends through meaningful interaction with the earth and outdoors on campus and beyond. The Elementary Specialist Program complements the curriculum offering art, music, physical education, foreign language, intermural sports and After School Programs. Learning Specialists are on-site to support students.

Children remain in the same classroom for three to four years at each level in a learning environment designed for intellectual, social, emotional and physical success.

Students achieve mastery of the academic curriculum and age-appropriate social and cultural responsibilities and develop as naturally confident peer leaders. The School is a joyful, diverse, and family-oriented community and values the partnership that grows, strengthens and thrives with families committed to our School's mission, philosophy and approach to education.