

Save \$\$\$ This Summer!
Use your MMS In School Field Trip Provider List to plan events for your school!

President's Corner

Mary Lamos

Fellow Montessorians,

As we look forward to the spring with warmer and sunnier days, I hope that we have all enjoyed the winter months surrounded by wonderful Montessori experiences. For those of you who came out of hibernation on Saturday, March 15th to join us for our Spring Workshop, "Observation, If I Could Only Find the Time", it was a wonderful day! Our presenter Wendy Calise, currently Head of School at Countryside Montessori in Northbrook, Illinois offered her insights regarding exploring the challenges of observation, ways to overcome them, and the many inspirations they allow. Please take the time to visit her website, www.mitps.org, which offers a great deal of valuable information. She has generously allowed us to reprint one of her articles in this newsletter. We are grateful to the Beverly Hills Academy for allowing us to use their beautiful facility for this event which we found comfortable and welcoming.

The feedback provided by many MMS members through the evaluations forms

that were completed after past conferences indicated that you wanted to shorten the time that we sit for our lecture based conferences. This workshop was the first one with our new "half day" format. We will be interested to hear how this new format was received and whether or not we should offer it again.

Even though the day was cold outside, the warmth of our Montessori community was felt by all, and it was a joy to come together to learn new techniques to assist us in carrying on the legacy that Maria Montessori has left.



MICHIGAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

[Contact the Board](#)

Mary Lamos, President
[Montessori Center of Downriver](#)
 734.282.6465

Shawn Gasiorowski, Secretary
[MMTEC](#)
 248.375.2800

Kay Neff, Treasurer
[Dearborn Heights Montessori](#)
 313.359.3000

Pat Moore, Vice-President
 313.881.2255

MEMBERS AT LARGE

Heidi Gauger
[Dearborn Heights Montessori](#)
 313.359.3000

Julie Harrison
[Maple Tree Montessori](#)
 810.225.8321

Cyndi Iannuzzi
 Montessori Children's Academy
 586.286.4566

Jackie Kalogerakos
[KidSpace Montessori](#)
 313.224.5046

Karen Lumsden
 Children's Place Montessori
 (248) 476-9660 (school)

Anne Kern
[Birmingham Community Montessori](#)
 248.646.1535

Kirsten Dusseau
 Children's Place Montessori
 (248) 476-9660

Attachment Relationships & Emotional Intelligence

Recently, our school staff attended a workshop on the importance of attachment relationships and emotional intelligence. Attachment relationships are emotional bonds between a parent/primary caregiver and child that develops over time and is a result of positive careseeking behaviors and responsive caregiving. Attachment relationships are essential for the development of emotional intelligence which allows the child to recognize emotions in one's self and others. The ability to recognize emotions leads to an understanding of the causes and consequences of emotions and helps develop the ability to express and regulate emotions appropriately. Emotional intelligence is essential not only for the child's social development, but it is also an essential component of healthy brain development.

Secure Attachment Relationships help to ensure that the neural pathways within the child's brain become sculpted with the best possible connections made to handle stress, reduce anxiety and easily absorb new information and experiences. (Nancy J Cohen, Hincks-Dellcrest Centre & University of Toronto, 2006) Children with secure attachments exhibit higher self-esteem and confidence, greater willingness



to explore, better emotional control, improved problem-solving and coping skills, better communication and social skills and more positive relationships with other children.

While it is hoped that a secure attachment relationship is developed with a parent, that is not always the case. We as caregivers of young children have an opportunity to establish these essential relationships with the children in our care and give them a chance to grow to their full potential. Behaviors that promote secure attachment relationships are:

Responding with empathy to a child who is frightened, injured or otherwise upset using comforting words and actions

Providing predictable routines, activities

Creating a safe and secure world for children to explore and become independent

Offering supportive encouragement

Showing warm, positive feelings toward the children

Responding promptly and appropriately to the child

Following the child's lead

Being predictable and consistent in interactions

Seeing the child as an individual

While these are all qualities we strive for, it is always good to remind ourselves of how very important our job is to the lives of the children we serve and rededicate ourselves to our profession.

Suggestions for Coping with the New Food Date Regulation

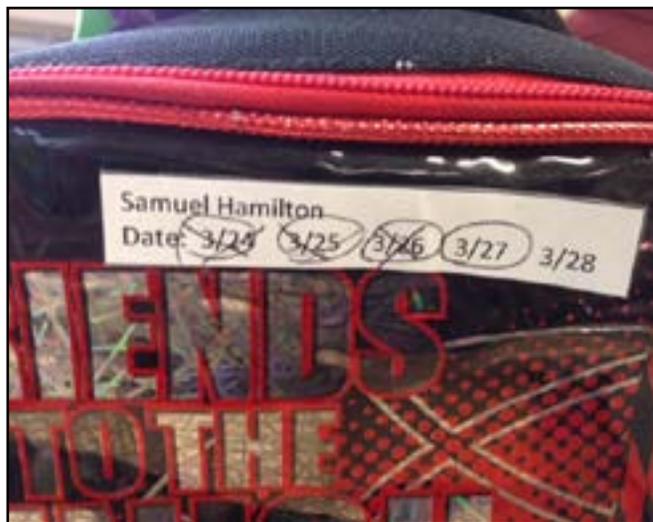
As of January 1, 2014, all food brought from home to school must be dated in addition to having the children's names on their items. This has met with some resistance on the parent's part and hence the schools are "between a rock and a hard place" trying to accommodate busy parents, yet meet the new regulation's requirement.

Three schools have come up with their answers to this dilemma. Hopefully, they will either give you a viable option or help you create your own system.

One school has purchased "luggage tag" type laminated products. These tags are then used to laminate a school business card with the child's name written on the back. Each child is given the tag to attach to his/her lunchbox. The parents then use a dry erase marker to



put the current date on the lunch box. The tags were purchased online for a nominal cost. (Note: As parents sometimes substitute sharpee markers for dry erase,



Magic Erasers will remove permanent marker from laminated tags)

At another school, the children bring in items that must be removed from the lunch box as they require refrigeration. Their solution is to prepare small pieces of masking tape with the current date on them and place them on the refrigerator door. Then, the parents take one piece and place it on the item that is removed from the lunchbox.

A third school has opted to purchase paper labels and create a label for each week with the child's name on it and the dates for the entire week. The labels are then placed on each child's lunch box on Monday and the parents circle the date on the label and cross out the previous circled date. These options are solutions for particular schools and may not be feasible for your problem. However, as the new regulation is something we must all incorporate into our daily routine, we hope these suggestions will help you find your own answer.

Making the Best of Parent-Teacher Conferences

Wendy Calise

This article is from the presenter at our recent Spring Conference. There are many other interesting articles found on MTIPS.org, a website Wendy coordinates.

- 1) Know the child: In order to know any child, you must observe. Your interactions with a child will help you to know him, but observation is your real window. Make time for it. In addition, have some conversations with the child. Ask your co-workers what they have seen. Know his academic achievement and know his character. You must know the child's strengths, weaknesses, and interests in order to conduct a conference of quality.
- 2) Take time to prepare for conferences: Make clear and concise notes. Don't wing it. Parents can feel this, and it is insulting. It will be difficult for you to overcome any struggles with parents if they do not see your integrity.
- 3) Dress accordingly: Dress professionally on conference days. It is a matter of respect.
- 4) Three points only: Conferences should have no more than three main ideas. More than this is unreasonable to expect parents to absorb. At least one of the points must be positive.

continued on page 4

Conferences, continued

An example of three points in a conference might be:

- 1) Review of academic study overall
 - 2) Very strong reader
 - 3) Some struggles with social interactions
- 5) Don't know everything: Be comfortable saying, "Let me give that some thought and get back to you." Or, "Let me find out more about that and get back to you."
- 6) Listen: If parents have a concern, it will serve all of you well to listen to the concern first. Listening allows parents to relax a bit as they build trust that what they are saying is important to you and that you want to understand them. Second, it keeps you from making erroneous assumptions about the subject of their concern before you get all of the details. We each have our own fears that we worry about in our teaching, which often cause us to misinterpret what a parent is saying.

For example:
What parents say:

"John seems to be struggling with reading."

What we hear:

"You are not doing your job as a teacher."

This may or may not be what the parents are feeling. Having a parent to tell you a little bit more may reveal that he is only asking you if you feel that some outside help is necessary.

7) Have the silent conversation out loud: The silent conversation is the monologue that you have in your head about a child but have no intention of sharing with the parents themselves. Sometimes this is the best choice. But more often it is just the easier and safer one.

For example, you might be thinking: "I meet with the Smiths tonight. I am dreading the conference because the parents are always complaining that other kids are mean to Bobbie, but he is the one who is really mean spirited. He is brutal with the other children. He is always aggravating others. It's a wonder they put up with him at all." There are probably three reasons you don't want to say this. One reason is that you don't think that the parents will hear you or believe you. Another reason is that you are afraid it will cause a confrontation. And the last is that the way you have phrased it in your mind makes it impossible to deliver to a parent.

Take some time with a colleague to find a way to frame the content more respectfully. Not indirectly, not wishy washy, but without words like dreading, brutal, mean spirited, always, put up with, etc... The message may be hard to hear, but it is not undeliverable.

Will you run into some conflict? Possibly. But that is part of the job.

8) Smile: Regardless of the news you have to deliver to a parent, the conference should begin with a warm and pleasant greeting. This will not only make the parents feel comfortable, but it will also relieve your stress and help you establish perspective.

Wendy Calise graduated from Northwestern University with a degree in psychology in 1988. A Montessori student herself, she is Head of School at Countryside Montessori School in Northbrook, IL. Before her role as Head of School, Wendy taught classes of children ages three to twelve for nineteen years.

She holds Association Montessori Internationale diplomas at the Primary and Elementary Levels. She is an international presenter and school consultant. In August 2009 she founded the Montessori Teachers Institute for Professional Studies which offers a variety of continuing education opportunities for Montessori teachers as well as support for teachers and schools in the form of mentorship and consultation.

Board Member: Kirsten Dusseau



Kirsten Dusseau was elected to the MMS board in 2012. She currently teaches at Children's Place Montessori in Farmington Hills and has been on the staff there since 2002. She received her Montessori training at

Adrian in 2004 and continued her education at U of M, receiving her BS in Children and Families in 2009.

Kirsten is married and lives in Berkley. She is the mother of two teenaged boys. She is very artistic and creative and has recently become interested in pottery. She has taken classes on a variety of techniques using clay.

Kirsten is also interested in Montessori programs for children with special needs. She brings energy and new ideas to the board. She enjoyed her first year as a board member and looks forward to new challenges.