

President's Corner

Dear Montessori friends!

I hope your year is off to an amazing start. Montessorians see the fall as a time of preparation and the sowing of seeds of curiosity and challenge to further learning. It is a time of presentations of new or review of previously used materials. It is a time of optimism and faith in the year to come. We hope it is all those things for you.

The fall Seminar was full of information to take back to your environments. As I watched our members register, see colleagues, introduce new friends

and exchange hugs with smiling faces I remember that we are a community. It is a personal choice and decision to pursue being a Montessori educator (and to take time to continue to learn and research.) A choice made to offer an amazing opportunity to children to learn in an organic and developmentally appropriate way! MMS strives to support and encourage our members. We consider your comments and interests intensely, thanks to those who take the time to fill out the evaluations. We strive to use the topics you suggest. We also work earnestly on your behalf for recognition of the quality offered by authentic Montessori environments. Thanks for your time and commitment.

My hands to yours ...Heidi Gauger

MMS
Spring
Workshop
March 21, 2020
Troy
Community
Center

Michigan Montessori Board of Directors 2019-20

Heidi Gauger, President
MMTEC
(248) 674-3800
hwgmontessori@gmail.com

Theresa Weber, Secretary
Adrian(ADMTEI) Training Center
(517) 266-3415
tweber@comcast.net

Karen Lumsden, Newsletter
Children's Place Montessori
(248) 476-9660
cpmontessori@gmail.com

Mary Lamos, Workshop
Montessori Center of Downriver
(734) 282-6465
mlamos@montessoridownriver.com

Erin Compton
Stepping Stones Montessori
(517) 336-0422
erin.m.compton@gmail.com

Sue Fitzpatrick, MMEAN Advocate
Livonia Montessori School
(248) 474-4764
sfitzpatrick@dhmontessori.org

Cyndi Iannuzzi, Vice President
Montessori Children's Academy
(586) 286-4566
ciannuzzi@montessori-childrens-academy.org

Kay Neff, Treasurer
Dearborn Heights Montessori
(313) 259-3000
kayneff@aol.com

Shawn Gasiorowski, Affiliations
MMTEC
(248) 674-3800
shawng@montessoriedu.com

Julie Harrison, Vendors
Maple Tree Montessori
(586) 212-6577
jlharrison@oneworldmind.com

Amy Dressler
MMTEC
(248) 674-3800
amydressler@prodigy.net

Sue Szczesny
Birmingham Community Montessori
(248) 646-1535
suemariesez@gmail.com

MMEAN Update

Michigan Montessori Education Advocacy Network is working for YOU!

By Sue Fitzpatrick

MMEAN's Mission Statement:

"We advocate for the validation and advancement of authentic Montessori education in Michiaan."

This group of passionate volunteers has been busy working on behalf of all of you in the greater Michigan Montessori community to ensure that Montessori programs are included in and protected by any legislation and regulation that will impact them.

Years of work on the PQA-R rating instrument for early childhood environments is complete and it is published. However, Michigan Department of Education has temporarily delayed its use for Great Start to Quality program rating. This rating scale is quite different from the original PQA in both format and areas of focus. The goal of the Center for Early Education Evaluation- CEEE- was to make the instrument reflect new science, be compatible with most curricula and be shorter and easier to use. After collecting data throughout the revision process by testing it on Michigan Montessori programs, we can see that high fidelity Montessori primary programs will score much better within the PQA-R.

One of our members has been invited to join the Great Start to Quality advisory team. We will be a voice for Montessori as the state's preschool QRIS program designs its next phase. These meetings will begin monthly in Lansing in December.

The advocacy committee has been informed of new, locally based Montessori Consortia forming around the State. The Montessori Consortium of the Great Lakes consists of 10 schools in Northern Indiana and Southwest Michigan. <https://montessoriconsortium.org/> It is centered at Good Shepherd Montessori School in South Bend, Indiana. The Michigan Charter School Montessori Consortium consists of fifteen Montessori public charter schools in Southeast Michigan. It is centered at Light of the World Montessori Academy in Pinkney, Michigan. These developments indicate the passion of Montessorians across the State! Networking and collaborating, disseminating current research about Montessori education, coordinating to provide quality professional development, strengthening our numbers in seeking Montessori Teacher credential recognition, and engaging the general public in the benefits of the Montessori method and philosophy are strengthened when we speak together with one voice!

What Does the PQA-R Mean for Montessori Schools?

Several issues ago, various rating systems and scales known by their acronyms were discussed. Hopefully, you all are now familiar with them. Montessori schools will soon be evaluated using these instruments.

Eventually, all preschools, Montessori schools included, will be assessed according to the new PQA-R rating instrument. While MMS, through its advocacy committee MMEAN (Michigan Montessori Education Advocacy Network), has been successful in initiating some changes in the instrument that more closely reflect the goals of the Montessori philosophy, there are still areas that we must adjust a bit to achieve a high score on the rating scale. We hope to address some of these challenges in this and in upcoming issues of this newsletter.

This issue will deal with the requirement that each classroom provide “dress-up” clothing for the children. The Montessori classroom is designed to be an honest environment with real materials and work for the children. Dress-up clothing does not appear to have a place in the Montessori curriculum. While the intent of the rule is to provide children with costumes that reflect adult roles and community workers (fire fighters, police, construction workers, cooks, railroad engineers, etc.) Montessori schools can successfully fulfill this requirement by providing clothing of various cultures in the cultural area of their classrooms. Clothing specific to a culture (hats, scarves, vests, or other items) can be brought into the classroom to give the children an understanding of the weather of the area or to introduce the artistic values of the culture. These items can be accompanied by photos of the landscape, examples of foods eaten, games, housing, or any other item that might engage the child.

However, evaluators may or may not be aware of this Montessori accommodation. It will be up to the teacher or administrator to explain and demonstrate how this “dress-up” opportunity fulfills the requirement. You must continue to advocate for your program and seek ways to fulfill the requirements that initially appear to be inconsistent with and sometimes in complete opposition to the Montessori philosophy. It has been the task of the MMEAN representatives to advocate for a review of the original PQA instrument that was very challenging for Montessori schools, and attempt to find ways for Montessori schools to receive a high rating on the new PQA-R. The MMS Board is very grateful for the years of work the MMEAN representatives have devoted to and continue to devote to making it possible for quality Montessori schools to receive a fair evaluation.

Note: Use of the PQA-R has been delayed. Unfortunately, the PQA will still be used until High Scope can provide data proving the new instrument is valid. Watch this space for further information.



Michigan Montessori Society

Fall Workshop with...

Jesse McCarthy

This fall's Best Practices workshop held at Weber's Inn in Ann Arbor was a well-received event. For many, it was their first experience with MMS conferences, and they were excited to have such an inspiring event so close to home. For those of you who were unable to attend, we are including a thumbnail sketch of several of the workshop offerings. Hopefully, you'll be able to join us for the spring workshop in Troy.

Barbara Murphy – Physical Education the Montessori Way

Barbara Murphy of Montessori Gym presented her ideas on a physical education program based on Montessori principles. Using the basic principle that we learn through movement, the program focused on introducing various skills and refining motor movements that already exist in the child. As well as introducing their unique materials, Barbara explained how the program develops independence and cooperative learning as well as children confident with their bodies and abilities. Many of the materials she presented are suitable for classroom use.



Heidi Gauger – Assistants: The Heroes of the Montessori Environment

The session provided a short review of Montessori philosophy. The all important role of the assistant was explored. New strategies in supporting the environment, the lead guide, the children and families, schools, and colleagues were outlined. The attendees participated in discussions of challenges and successes in working in their environments.



Jesse McCarthy - Mastering Parent Communication

This session outlined three steps to improving parent communication. While there were many anecdotal examples, essentially the first step is to get to know your students' parents. Try to understand them as well as you do their children. Only when you know where they are coming from can you begin to communicate effectively. The second step is attempt to demystify Montessori lingo. Referring to teachers as "guides" may work well with colleagues, but using Montessori-specific words with parents may not help your ability to connect. Bring them into these concepts slowly and give them time to absorb the philosophy behind these terms. The third step is to avoid overcomplicating things. Include information that will help to clarify rather than confuse your point. Too much information is just as bad

as too little when trying to communicate effectively.

Katie Kopp– Building Bridges and Connecting with Parents (AM/PM Sessions)

Katie Kopp holds an AMS certification in Early Childhood, K-8 Illinois State Certification, and is currently completing her training towards an AMS Infant and Toddler Certification. She is the Parent and Child teacher at Ronald Knox Montessori School. Her goal is to build bridges by building relationships amongst parents, children, the parent community, and school members.

The session started with Katie sharing her experiences at her school in her Parent and Child class. The parent guides the child through the transition into the room. During this time Katie can observe the interactions with the parent and child. She can also use this time for parent education.



After learning about her program, we had an amazing discussion about Montessori and shared our personal stories. Assessment, family involvement, parent education, communication, successful programs, and ideas for encouraging parent attendance were some of the topics. We also discussed changes in society that have a direct effect on parents, children, teachers, and school communities. It was a wonderful afternoon for connecting with other Montessorians and creating a community of support for one another.



Sue Fitzpatrick - STEM and Montessori

In 2016, the United States Department of Education published the document *STEM 2026: A Vision for Innovation in STEM Education*. Participants in this timely session became familiar with the six components that form the recommendations for the future of education, and were exposed to the ways Montessori curriculum and practice meet these. Montessori, an education method that is over 100 years old, is still ahead of its time!

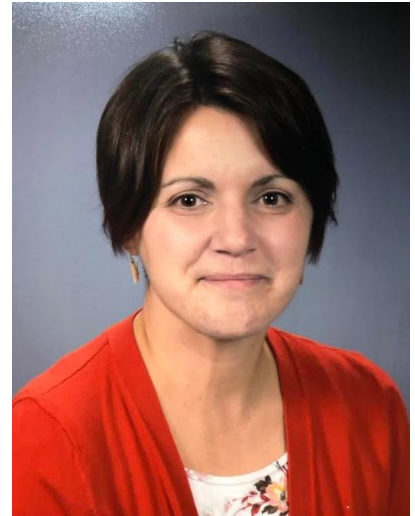
Julie Harrison – Diversity Throughout the Montessori Curriculum

Participants walked away from the Diversity workshop with a curriculum that can be used in the early childhood classroom along with expanded lessons that are specifically designed for children in the lower elementary and upper elementary Montessori classrooms. To enable the participants to easily add this curriculum to their classroom, Julie Harrison shared numerous slide show presentations with every detail of each lesson.



New Face on the MMS Board – Erin Compton

After the resignation of board member Emily Myers, Erin Compton was asked to fill the vacancy. She graciously accepted and has been a great asset since coming to the MMS board in September.



I am very happy that the MMS board offered me the opportunity to serve on the board to replace Emily Myers. I have enjoyed participating in the board meetings and providing assistance with the recent workshop and other matters that come before us. I received a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Michigan State University in 1999, with an emphasis in Psychology and Child Development. My Montessori training includes a Certificate in Primary Education from the American Montessori Society (AMS), which I earned from Adrian Dominican Montessori Teacher Education Institute in Adrian, Michigan. I will be returning to Adrian this year to teach science and family involvement for ADMTEI. I am a member of American Montessori Society and Michigan Montessori Society.

I worked at Stepping Stones Montessori School in East Lansing from 1996 to 2016, where I taught in a primary classroom, taught parent education classes, trained assistants, ran professional development for staff, and was interim Head of School. For 2 years (2017-2018) I worked at Radmoor Montessori School in Okemos, Michigan. I was an assistant in a primary class and ran an assistant's training program for the support staff. I recently returned to Stepping Stones Montessori School and began my 24th year in Montessori education.

I live in East Lansing, Michigan with my husband Chris, who is an engineer and works for MSU FRIB. He also coaches the East Lansing Junior Trojans wrestling team. We have two children. Our daughter, Emma, is in 10th grade this year. She is involved in Color Guard, Winter Guard, gymnastics, and track for East Lansing High School. Our son, Max, who is 9 is enrolled at Marble School Elementary; he is in 4th grade this year. He enjoys wrestling for East Lansing Junior Trojans. I enjoy taking my dog, Hazel, on daily walks, camping with family, playing card/board games, crafting, bird watching, gardening, and spending as much time outside as possible.

I am excited to be on the MMS board where I hope to provide support for their endeavors on behalf of the Montessori community in Michigan. It is an honor to serve with such dedicated and creative Montessorians.

Winter Songs

I had intended to include some fall songs, but our November snowfall made me change my mind. Here are a couple of winter songs your children might enjoy.

Karen Lumsden

The Sky Bears, author unknown [click here for video](#)

Oh it snowed last night, it snowed last night

The sky bears had a pillow fight,

They tore up every cloud in sight

And tossed down all the feathers white

Oh it snowed last night, it snowed last night.

Jolly Snowman, a folk song from Canada [click here for video](#)

Once a jolly snowman stood outside my door

Thought he'd like to come inside and play upon the floor

Thought he'd like to warm himself, by the fire light red,

Thought he'd like to climb upon the big white bed

So he called the North Wind, "Help me wind, I pray,"

"I'm completely frozen standing here all day!"

So the North Wind came along, blew him in the door,

Now there's nothing left of him but a puddle on the floor!



Three-Day vs. Five-Day Montessori Program – What Do You Think?

The controversy of whether or not to accept schools offering a 3-day option for MMS affiliation has been front and center at many MMS Board meetings. We have decided to open up the conversation with you, our members.

As many of you know, the Michigan Montessori Society affiliates Montessori schools in Michigan that meet the following criteria:

The school has a full range of Montessori materials available to the children.

The school employs trained Montessori teachers for each level affiliated.

The school maintains an uninterrupted work period of 150 to 180 minutes.

The school maintains a three-year, multiage classroom.

The classes meet a minimum of five half days per week.

This last requirement has prevented some very nice programs from affiliating with MMS. This has caused some concern for the schools unable to affiliate, and also for the MMS Board. The topic has come up at our meetings many times, but we have been unable to come to a consensus as to how to resolve this issue. Some that have had experience with 3-day programs express the difficulties the children have had integrating into the classroom, their inability to fully normalize, and the challenges they pose for the children that attend five days. Their rationale for requiring a five-day attendance is sound and convincing. On the other hand, the fiscal realities for some schools make it impossible for them to operate without the three-day option. Some newer schools that are working toward requiring a five-day program need some time to grow their class size by offering a three-day program for the first year. The five-day attendance requirement penalizes schools that are working hard to establish themselves, but on the other hand, gives those schools that do require five-day attendance an additional argument to convince the parents of the necessity of the a five-day commitment.

The MMS Board has discussed a number of solutions ranging from establishing a tiered affiliation option to providing an interim affiliation status for a limited time. Other options suggested are affiliating classrooms rather than schools, developing a rating scale giving points for each requirement so that the school would obtain a score based on how fully they adhere to the MMS guidelines, or simply maintaining the present five day requirement. Aside from the benefits the three-day programs would gain from being able to affiliate with us, MMS is also looking to increase the number of affiliate schools as we attempt to fight for recognition of Montessori differences with governmental agencies in Lansing. There is strength in numbers and our skilled Montessori representatives need to show that they represent a larger constituency.

It is for this reason we turn to you, our members. Understanding what is at stake for both MMS and the individual schools, what is your opinion? Will creating a tiered system or interim status adversely impact you or your school? Is the five day requirement of benefit to you or your school? Do you have another idea as to how we can welcome three day programs into MMS? Many of you know the board members personally. We would encourage you to reach out to one of us and express your opinions. If you are not personally acquainted with one of us, please look at the contact information on the first page of this newsletter and give one of us a call or send an email. We hope to make a decision on this issue that is important to all of us in the Montessori community very soon. Please weigh in so that your opinion can be considered as we seek to make MMS accessible to more Montessorians.

MMS Spotlight on

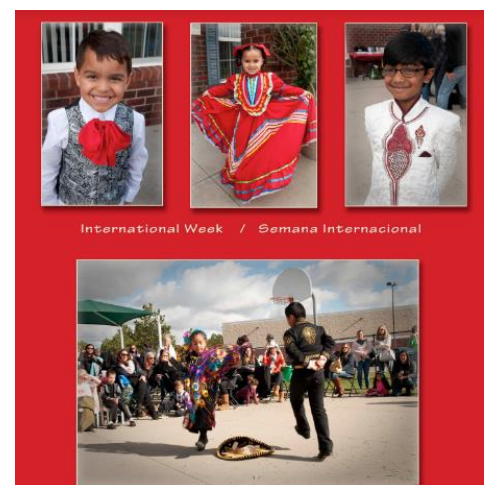
Chiquitos Montessori ~ ~A Spanish Immersion Program ~

Chiquitos Bilingual Montessori was first opened on January, 2010 in Shelby Township, Michigan. Luly Calleros, the founder and director of Chiquitos, is an experienced teacher from Chihuahua, Mexico. When her family first moved to the United States due to her husband's work, Luly searched hard for a Montessori education to provide her children with, as well as a place for them to continue growing in their Catholic values. As the years went by, she created a Spanish reading and writing curriculum to instruct her children with on the weekends in order that they not lose their native tongue. Other families soon began to bring their children to her for instruction as well. Eventually, Luly was inspired to open a school that would incorporate the Montessori philosophy, the Spanish language, and her Catholic faith, which she valued so much. After years of purchasing and collecting copious books and Montessori materials, Luly, her husband, and her three children inaugurated Chiquitos Bilingual Montessori. Six years after opening, the school community outgrew the building, requiring the move of Chiquitos to the current location in Utica.



Besides the Montessori Philosophy, Chiquitos also carries a bilingual curriculum in which Spanish and English are both spoken and learned in the classrooms. The children learn to develop their reading, writing, and conversational skills in both languages. Chiquitos also carries the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, which is a Catholic faith curriculum based on the Montessori philosophy. The children grow and develop in a peaceful and loving environment where their ideas and personalities are valued and respected. They are taught to love and respect themselves as well as their peers, for each one's uniqueness and different talents.

Chiquitos Bilingual Montessori is made up of a great diversity of families from all over the world. The school is especially proud of their International Week in which respect for every culture and its traditions are fostered. This is one of the students' and families' favorite celebrations because the children learn to be proud of their roots and who they are as individuals, while learning to love and appreciate their peers for who they are.





Children's Day Celebration

Every April, Children's Day is celebrated, in which staff create a fun-filled day for the students to celebrate the beauty of being a child, innocent and pure in God's eyes. The staff organizes games, the breaking of a Piñata, and a picnic for all the students.



Mother's Day Celebration

In May, all mothers in the school community are invited to celebrate Mother's Day. The students each make a craft for their mom and perform songs and dances.



Christmas Posada

In December, the children participate in a Christmas Posada in which they remember the long and difficult journey that Mary and Joseph had to endure before finding shelter at a humble stable, where Jesus was born. The children perform a nativity play and sing Christmas carols for their families, fostering the love and joy of family that Christmas brings.

The Chiquitos curriculum also fosters a love for the arts. The elementary students receive instruction in art and display their work at the annual Chiquitos Art Exhibition held at Oakland University. The children learn chess as well as violin and have the opportunity of studying guitar, while developing their voice and love for singing in the Chiquitos Choir. The students perform at different school and charity events throughout the year and have even had the opportunity of recording a CD.



Chiquitos is a diverse and lively community of staff members, parents, and students seeking academic excellence as well as the formation of values that will make their students leaders in the creation of a more just and humane world for all!

MMS - What's In It For Me?

Individual membership and school affiliation in the Michigan Montessori Society help you keep in touch with other active Montessorians! Networking with others committed to promoting authentic Montessori programs is vital to your professional growth. Don't miss the opportunity to join our vibrant organization.

- MMS presents two professional development seminars every year. Members enjoy a significant reduction in seminar fees.*
- A newly designed website has launched! We continue to work on ways to make your experience as a MMS member more timely and exciting!*
- You can register for seminars and become a member online using your credit card.*
- MMS publishes a newsletter online, posts job openings, promotes educational opportunities and disseminates other helpful information.*
- Because most MMS communication will be sent electronically, it is imperative that you provide us with your email address. Please be assured that we do not sell or share our electronic list with anyone.*
- We have also assumed the important task of advocating for Montessori education at the State level. There is power in numbers; your membership supports our efforts (see MMEAN article above).*
- You will be notified when affiliated schools offer mini workshops that may interest your staff.*

The Michigan Montessori Society's objectives are to:

- Broaden understanding of the Montessori method*
- Encourage the growth of Montessori education*
- Act as an information center*
- Support existing schools*
- Provide professional development*

In order to continue to receive these benefits and more, join MMS today!

