

Board Notesfrom our MMS board member

Karen Lumsden



Hello Friends, Old & New!

When I assumed the role of MMS Board President a few years ago, my first thought was to delegate as much responsibility as possible. In years past, this space was reserved for an inspirational message from the board president.

Recently, it has become an opportunity for various board members to share their lives, allowing the membership to get to know the board members a little better. Hopefully, you have become better acquainted with us and are more comfortable bringing your concerns / suggestions / ideas to us either via email or conversing with us at workshops...as friends.

Currently, I work at Children's Place Montessori in Farmington Hills. This is my second school, the first being Open Meadow Montessori in Lake Orion which operated from 1978–1991. Open Meadow was housed in Lake Orion public schools and was an option for public school students, preschool through third grade. After 13 years, the school district (under a new superintendent) determined that they no longer had space to offer this program to the students and ended our relationship. In 1985, I had opened Children's Place in a rented space and in 1991, construction on our building was completed.

I became interested in Montessori during college while pursuing a degree in Elementary Vocal Music. After graduation, I taught music in both Troy and Highland Park. As music was always the first program to be cut, I was "pink-slipped" every year. My interest in Montessori took on a new intensity as I struggled to find a stable career in which I could invest my energy and passion. I completed my Montessori training in 1977, but was offered a music position for the following school year.

Knowing that it would undoubtedly be a one-year placement, I saved every penny and when the "pink slip" arrived in 1978, I was ready to open my first Montessori school. My husband, also a teacher, took Montessori training the following year and we worked together for 13 years with our children in tow. Those many years of "togetherness" are no doubt responsible for the close bond our family still shares...my husband and I just celebrated our 44th anniversary and we see our children (2) and grandchildren (6) every day.

I am still involved in music, both teaching at our school and performing in a choir. We enjoy family vacations, skiing, traveling and get-aways at our cottage.

I have been privileged to have helped hundreds of families throughout the years, both in caring for and educating their children and providing a safety net for families when needed. Montessori has given me a blessed life for which I am ever grateful.

The holiday season is upon us...
Try to relax and enjoy it.

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MMEAN Update

Michigan Montessori Education Advocacy Network is working for YOU!

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.

Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI) is a joint collaboration between AMS and AMI/USA. As the experts on Montessori policy and advocacy, MPPI unites, supports, and equips the Montessori community, creating an effective advocacy voice for authentic Montessori education. MPPI drives education policy change so that all children have access to the gifts of a Montessori education.

Michigan Montessori Educators Advocacy Network (MMEAN) is working closely with MMPI in our efforts to secure equitable recognition for Montessori teachers. This work is done in connection with LARA and MDE. Recently, Michigan Montessori Society (MMS) adopted the MPPI Essential Elements as standards for Affiliate and Member Schools. This article examines one of the Essential Elements of an authentic Montessori program.

Montessori Essentials and What They Look Like in Action

by

Denise Van Pelt

There are six total Montessori essentials, or key components, which are found in a high-quality Montessori program. While quality Montessori programs can exist while lacking one of these, it is when each of these essential elements are present that the founding principles of Maria Montessori's method are best seen.

The first of the six principles is a carefully **prepared environment**. The environment is prepared with a full understanding of the Montessori principles. Students have easy access in order to complete the work they have chosen. In a primary classroom, everything is on a single tray, or in a single space. In the elementary classroom, materials are in a logical and predictable place within the classroom. The furniture is the correct size for the students, allowing the students to feel comfortable in the classroom.

Montessori materials are the second of the six essential elements. The class has a full complement of Montessori materials, which the teacher places with the care and attention in a way that supports the students' success rate in using it. If a material is damaged or any part of it is lost during the school day, the teacher removes, repairs, or replaces it.

When Maria Montessori developed the material for students, she considered many aspects in the child's development. The material follows an order which helps students learn the

concepts and prepares them for future learning. In this regard, the order of the material on the shelves is also one of the important aspects of the prepared environment.

The students' use of the material is directly connected to the third and fourth essential elements of a high-quality Montessori program. Students should be able to have a three-hour, **uninterrupted work cycle**. This allows students to have a high degree of concentration and to move fluidly between one work and their next choice. Three hours may seem like a long time, but when a student is concentrating on a work, time does not move slowly; rather it passes without notice and the three hours can be over in a blur.

During this uninterrupted work period, the teacher allows students to choose their own work. This **freedom** is the fourth essential element. Students in the Montessori classroom are allowed the freedom to work uninterrupted on lessons, which the Montessori teacher has given, for as long as they wish. Students work where they wish. In the elementary class and with whomever they choose, while respecting the freedom of their classmates to freely choose the work. This speaks to the limits which are also a part of the Montessori method.

As the fifth essential element, the **Montessori lessons** are either one-on-one (primary or Children's House) class or small groups (elementary). This way of presenting the lessons is in direct response to where the students are developmentally. Children who are in what Maria Montessori refers to as the "first plane of development" have the need to develop themselves and gain independence. While this statement only scratches the surface of the first plane of development, it points to the desire of students and their need to work on their own on the activities they choose.

Each of the five elements are fully realized when the sixth element is in place - a **Montessori credentialed teacher** in the classroom. Currently, there are many programs an untrained teacher may choose to attend to learn the function, use, and scope of the materials in the classroom, as well as the philosophy behind the structure of the class. In recent times many of these programs have become more accessible to people by being both in person and a hybrid program utilizing distance learning. To provide a complete program, teachers need to immerse themselves in Montessori's philosophy as well knowing how the materials should be utilized.

The Montessori class which is of high quality has all of these elements in place. Recognizing the goal--offering students the opportunity to learn in a quality environment--will help drive any program in the correct direction. Remembering that offering the best for children is the root of Montessori schools.



MMS Autumn Workshop



Montessori and the Science of Reading

with

Laura Saylor

by Karen Lumsden

The recent workshop presented by Laura Saylor, sponsored by MMS, was an informative and eye-opening experience for those who participated. Laura shared research on what does and does not impact children's educational growth and compared them with children's experiences in the Montessori environment.



Teacher clarity, peer tutoring, mastery learning, teacher/student relationships, individual vs. mass instruction, and direct instruction--all characteristics of a Montessori classroom--rated high on the positive impact each has on children's growth in learning. Homework, grade retention, Whole Language instruction, teaching to test did not rate high on the scale. Interestingly, current trends in education also did not appear to have a positive impact on children's reading development. Improvements due to Teaching to Learning Styles, Multiple Literacies, Brain Based Education, and Whole Language were not supported by research.

In addition to sharing research on reading, Dr. Saylor shared many practical examples that the teachers present would be able to implement in their classrooms. Suggestions on helping children with the mechanics of reading, reading comprehension, writing, and language reasoning were shared throughout her fast-paced discussion.

As the goal of reading is to convey information, reading comprehension is ultimately what all reading instruction should aim to encourage. Prior knowledge provides essential information to children allowing them to comprehend what they are reading and is a key factor in children's ability to share information they've attained by reading. Dr. Saylor's observation that throughout the Montessori classroom, children are exposed to a wealth of "prior knowledge" in botany, biology, cosmology, grammar, geography, cultural studies, sensory observations, physics, conflict resolution techniques, and so much more. The building blocks of reading comprehension are found throughout the Montessori classroom. The attendees left this workshop with a new appreciation for the opportunities we all provide the children in our care. We are building the future in each little one we touch with the tools that Maria Montessori shared with us.



Language Comprehension: Background Knowledge

FIGURE 10-10

- 1. Focus on reading and comprehension learning
- 2. Focus on background knowledge
- 3. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension
- 4. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension
- 5. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension
- 6. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension
- 7. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension
- 8. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension
- 9. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension
- 10. Focus on...
 - a. Vocabulary
 - b. Grammar
 - c. Reading strategies
 - d. Reading fluency
 - e. Reading comprehension



Our Newest MMS Board Member...

Fran Olesen



Hello my name is Frances Olesen. Like many Montessori educators, my children led me into the Cosmic Education world of Maria Montessori. I received my 6-9 and 9-12 Montessori credentials at Michigan Montessori Teacher Education Center. I also completed my MACTE accredited Montessori Leadership certificate at CGMS. I am committed to continue strengthening my knowledge and skill at being an empathetic, compassionate, and effective Montessori advocate.

I am retired from Black River Public School in Holland, MI, where in 2001 I founded and built Black River's first Montessori program. I have taught there, in a variety of roles including Team Leader, Reading Specialist, Title I director, and Montessori coach and mentor. I am currently volunteering at Lakeside Montessori Preschool in Holland, MI.

Nature keeps me grounded. I love camping, hiking, and currently turning my yard into a native plant meadow. I enjoy knitting, reading, and listening to podcasts. I must admit I am a slow processor - always catching myself thinking, "Why didn't I say" after a question or a meeting. I am honored to be an MMS board member.



Focus on Schools: Mid-Mitten Montessori ...our newest affiliate school

by Kerri Graham

Mid-Mitten Montessori opened its doors in

August of 2022. Formerly White Pine Montessori, we are located in the heart of downtown



Mid Mitten hopes to transform their choir loft into an observation area, hoping to introduce CMU students to Montessori.

Mount Pleasant, just minutes away from Central Michigan University campus. White Pine Montessori was in this location for almost two decades when the owner decided to retire. Parents that had their children enrolled were saddened to hear that a quality Montessori program, the only one in Mount Pleasant, was closing. A few parents decided that quality care with an educational philosophy that works was too valuable to

lose so they decided to form a

parent-run Board of Directors, and in January of 2022, filed a 501 C-3 to form a non-profit preschool and early elementary. With nearly three decades of Montessori experience (at Montessori Center of Downriver, Indianapolis IN, and Midland MI), I was brought in to be the Director and lead teacher of the newly formed Mid-Mitten Montessori.



The entire chancel area is their Peace Corner. A calm area in the classroom where several children can relax.



The Practical Life area adjoins the classroom and provides a spacious area for the children.

lose so they decided to form a

Our small and personable school is housed in the old Zion Lutheran Church which was built in the early 1900's outside of Mount Pleasant. The church was then moved in entirety to its current location in 1940. When the church vacated the building, White Pine moved into the empty space. While looking for a location for the new Mid-Mitten Montessori, the Board of Directors and myself, kept coming back to the For Sale sign at White Pine Montessori. We looked at multiple locations, but the space was too beautiful to pass up, and we knew it already worked as a successful Montessori school. We purchased the building in July of 2022, and opened Mid-Mitten Montessori on August 22, 2022. It was a labor of love for



myself as a new director, starting a new program from scratch in a month. Enrollment, inspections, staffing, budget, furniture, licensing, and a huge snafu in the ordering of an entire classroom of materials were just a few of the roadblocks I encountered. I spent many days at flea markets, thrift stores, and may have even purchased used materials from Montessori schools in your area! I spent days sanding, painting, cleaning, and shopping for supplies. We received some very generous donations with the help of a Patronicity campaign, and from local businesses, which helped



The lower level of the building provides lunch space and nap area and can be utilized for indoor recess.



Mid-Mitten is fortunate to have a spacious classroom as well as an outdoor area with fruit trees and garden.

tremendously in the purchase of some new materials. It was extremely important to me to have good quality Montessori materials, and although we may not have everything I would like...yet, we have enough to run a program efficiently.

Mid-Mitten Montessori offers a 5-half day, school day, or full day option with a 3-hour uninterrupted work time. We accept students 2.75 years of age until 6 years, and offer kindergarten and first grade instruction. We follow the teachings and philosophy of Maria Montessori and provide the children of our community a classroom that prioritizes inclusivity, accessibility, and organization. Freedom of movement, a prepared child-sized environment, and an opportunity for self-directed education under the guidance of an observing, trained teacher, provides children with a rich, peaceful, and purposeful education. Montessori education has been an important part of me for more than half of my life. My staff and I strive every day to give each child a happy, safe, and compassionate learning environment.



Locataed near the Isabella Reservation, Mid-Mitten Montessori celebrates Native American heritage while providing a caring educational community for children.

MMS - What's in it for Me?



Individual, Member School and Affiliate School membership 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 an MMS member timelier and more 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.
- New! You will receive at least two activities you can reprint and use in your classroom.
- 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.
- 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! *



*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.

MMS Trading Places...For Sale...For Trade...For Free

Have something you no longer want, but think it could be useful to someone else? Have something that you just can't throw away, but don't have a need for it? Here's where you can avoid adding to landfills, might help someone out and possibly earn a little cash! If you see something you might be able to put to good use, please send an email to Kathy at Kathy@mmsoc.org. If you have something you'd like to offer in the next newsletter, contact Kathy.