

*Board Notes...from our MMS Board Member*

*Theresa Weber*



Protect us  
all...  
Wear a  
mask.

Greetings! I am Theresa Weber and a member of the Michigan Montessori Society board. Currently, I am the secretary and also on the workshop committee. I have been part of the Montessori community in one form or another for 34 years. This lifelong obsession began with my children attending Montessori schools and continues to this day as a language instructor for Montessori educators at ADMTEI in Adrian. My teaching career began in a traditional classroom 44 years ago. Once I found Montessori I never looked back!

Working with the hands especially resonates with me. In my free time I love to knit, crochet, sew, and garden. I have four "Montessori" grandchildren who give me ample opportunity to hone my skills. Every year we have a crafty "Grandma Camp," where I can satisfy my need to work with children and do children's art, cooking, nature study, and various other activities. My other interest is reading. I belong to two book clubs and only wish I could figure out a way to read while knitting! The other job that I have is working as a standardized patient for the University of Michigan Medical School. My purpose is to evaluate the learners' communication skills. It is just another way to use my Montessori skills and work with outstanding people.

Montessori is very "dynamic" for me in that I am always learning new things and developing new skills. It is not a stagnant philosophy. We continually strive for self-fulfillment, inner peace, and matching the perfect lesson to the child. Mastery is a life-long journey. That is what has kept me connected.

MMS works very hard to provide quality speakers and workshops for the professional development of our Montessori community. Creative individuals with creative techniques are a springboard for developing attitudes and ideas that further our understanding of children and our method of directing them. Every workshop or seminar provides a new insight and needed mental boost to continue what we do. We try to provide an opportunity for "life-long learning."

In conclusion, I hope I have inspired some of you to begin or continue attending the workshops we offer for your ongoing education. To be a part of a professional community is to be part of a powerful support group for your most important work.

*"It is not enough for the teacher to love the child. She must first love and understand the universe. She must prepare herself, and truly work at it." ~ Maria Montessori*

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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 and teachers are included in and protected by any legislation and regulations that will impact them.*

By Denise Van Pelt

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 MPPI in our efforts to secure equitable recognition for Montessori teachers. This work is being 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.

The Montessori Essentials, #2 - A full complement of Montessori materials for each class and age group.

There are four main points which the Montessori Public Policy Initiative refers to as essential elements. The first speaks to the prepared environment. The second is closely linked to it, being about the materials within the prepared environment. This is both about the materials which are used to give the presentation, and the furniture the children use as they work. This essential says schools will have “A full complement of Montessori materials for each class and age group.”

Many people are aware of the pink tower and see it as the main material necessary to have in a Montessori school. This is true, however, the idea of a full complement of Montessori materials goes beyond this. For some schools this simple expectation can be a challenge. It is obvious to say schools of high quality will not only have the materials, but have them in good condition, and within the proper classroom. *“The didactic material must be always beautiful, shining and in good repair, with nothing missing, so that it looks new to the child, and is complete and ready for use.”* Maria Montessori, (Education for a New World, pg. 68)

Before going into detail about the material itself, it is important to remember the needs of students change based on where they are developmentally. The age groupings for Montessori classes are based on the observations of Maria Montessori. These age groups within the classes have to do with the developmental plane of the child. The materials in the different age group classrooms also reflect where they are developmentally. *“From three to six years, children have a real ‘sense hunger’, they love to touch things, to fit different shapes together, to grade colours and musical sounds. The material is carefully graded to satisfy the*



*child's every need, and once the child has fixed his attention, he becomes a little individual, no longer an imitator.” -Maria Montessori (Maria Montessori Speaks to Parents, pg. 22)*



Schools should be able to best serve the children and their needs with the proper materials being presented at the proper time. To do this the administration and teachers need to have familiarity with the Montessori method. The understanding of the different areas of the class should be a part of this knowledge.

Each area of the class at each level has its own unique set of materials. The materials which do flow between age groups have a different use in each level. One example of this can be seen through the primary material of the pink tower. The pink tower in the

primary class allows the student to learn about size, comparatives, superlatives, care of movement, and precision. In the elementary classes, the pink tower may be brought in to teach students about comparatives and superlatives in relation to volume. Other concepts can also include squaring and more complex math concepts.

Montessori schools will have classrooms with the proper material in each area of study. These areas change as the child matures. The sensorial area materials are mainly found in the assistant to infancy and primary classes. Geography materials such as maps, flags, and land and water formation works are most evident in the primary and younger elementary classes. Math materials fade as students age and move from needing the concrete material to learn concepts to being able to abstract. Language materials can be found in all Montessori classes, though they change as well.



Guides who know how to present the material to the students will lead students to a high quality of learning. For the material to be viewed as “a full complement of Montessori materials for each class and age group,” the guide must be versed in each material and how to present it to the child at the correct time. Following the guide’s presentation, the child continues to learn through repeated use of the material.

*“The objects in our system are instead a help to the child himself, he chooses what he wants for his own use, and works with it according to his own needs, tendencies and special interests. In this way, the objects become a means of growth.” – Maria Montessori (The Discovery of the Child pg. 150)*





# MMS Virtual Spring Workshop



## What I Notice, What I Wonder: Having Difficult Conversations with Families With Jennifer Shields & Dr. Andrée Rolfe

On March 5, we will spend 3½ hours together in an active learning experience. The topic is an important one: how to prepare, initiate, and conduct conversations with families when you have concerns about a child.

We will start our interactions around a shared text, *How Can I Tell Her Parents?* This chapter was written by Cathie Perolman in the recent publication, Montessori Inclusion, and will be attached as a pdf.\* **You'll need to set aside some time to read the chapter before March 5.** Please reflect on the following: *What about this story is familiar? What do you do differently? What about your process needs refinement?*

If you work with children who are 0 - 3, 6 - 12, or adolescents, the specifics of the situation may be different, but the heart of the matter – how you have these hard conversations with families – is the same. Look for the commonalities of the challenge that we share as Montessori guides and administrators.

In our time together, there will be breakout discussion groups, presentations to inform your knowledge, practice in developing your own template for these conversations, suggestions about what you should consider when talking with families, and an opportunity to experience processing multiple perspectives when a group of adults gather to talk about a child.

Come with an open mind and leave with new knowledge, new skills, and a readiness to apply what you've learned.

\*The chapter pdf will be sent after you register, so please register early to allow yourself time to complete the reading.

# Our Presenters



## Jennifer Shields...

has been an AMI Primary Teacher-Trainer since 2010. She is a lecturer, examiner, and consultant for the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). She taught primary children for over ten years and now serves as a Director of Primary Training at Washington Montessori Institute.

Jennifer earned her 3-6 Primary AMI diploma in 1992. Twenty years later, she earned her 0-3 Assistants to Infancy diploma. Jennifer holds a BA in English from Georgetown University, where she graduated summa cum laude. She earned an M.Ed. from Cleveland State University.

Jennifer has trained teachers at WMI, nationally, and internationally. She most recently trained teachers in Switzerland and in Austin, TX. Jennifer joined the Board of the AMI Global in spring of 2019.

Jennifer delights in the adventures of her three young adult children who all “grew up Montessori.” She loves to eat vegetarian food, and to hike with her husband and with their German shepherd.

## Dr. Andrée Rolfe...

has accumulated over 35 years of experience working with children in the area of spelling. She served as a special education teacher, Learning Consultant, and Supervisor of Special Services in Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. A graduate of Teachers College, Columbia University, Dr. Rolfe has taught masters level courses in reading and special education at Fordham University. She recently earned Montessori credentials at the elementary level from Washington Montessori Institute and is now an educational specialist and a teacher educator in the AMS and AMI Montessori communities. Dr. Rolfe works nationwide as a spelling consultant and over the past 20 years, she has launched developmental spelling programs in a wide range of public, private, and Montessori classrooms.



## Focus on Schools

# Meadow Montessori School

## *An Outstanding Montessori School in Michigan*

By Cathè Calder

Did you know that Michigan has the distinction of having the *only* fully accredited school, infant through high school, in the nation? Children aged 6 weeks though 18 years have found a place to grow at Meadow Montessori School whose programs are all fully accredited by the American Montessori Society. Once again, our state stands out in the Montessori world!

Meadow Montessori School, located in Monroe, has been around since 1984. The school sits on an eight-acre campus with three distinct buildings. The Early Childhood Building houses infant, toddler, and three Children's Houses; the main building is where you will find the elementary and middle school students, as well as the administrative offices; and a third building—Hobby's House—is where you will find the high school students.



In addition to these buildings, the school has several out-buildings: a wood-working shop, hoop house (a large outdoor plastic-covered "greenhouse" that extends the growing season by many months), garden shed, chicken coop, and an observation "hut" on



the far west of the campus for quiet contemplation. Often you will see students collecting eggs from the coop and working in the hoop house. On Fridays, the middle school students are either on campus or at a nearby farm for Farm Program. Two years ago, the school installed a professional kitchen for Chef Matt



to prepare lunches (and sometimes dinners) for the students and faculty. Chef Matt's menus include ethnic dishes like black pepper yogurt chicken with rice, star anise and soy shredded pork, and porcino (pork) carnitas. Of course, some days there is also pasta al Limone or French toast casserole. A map on the wall of the Meadow Café highlights the origins of the day's meal.

The school's embrace of multi-culturalism extends into the classroom. The infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms have native Spanish speakers, so the children are immersed in a second language each day. Chinese is also





heard in Children's House, so when students enter the lower elementary classroom, they continue their language study four days a week.



A visitor hears music throughout the school and can visit a weekly revolving art exhibit in the hallways. This year, students have studied—and recreated—the work of Van Gogh, Kahlo, Calder, and Ansel Adams. All students play a musical instrument and read music because isn't music the most international language of all?

Cathè Calder and Meg Fedorowicz have been working together since 1984 and both are still actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. Cathè continues as Head of School and teaches one class in either

middle or high school each year. Although Meg retired from teaching in 2020, she continues as the school's Curriculum Coordinator. Both Cathè and Meg have been teacher-trainers in Michigan, Illinois, and Texas.



The school is affiliated with the Michigan Montessori Society and accredited by American Montessori Society (AMS). Meadow Montessori School is a member of the Association of Independent Michigan Schools (AIMS) and has close ties with AMI (Association Montessori Internationale). Of course, it is licensed by the State of Michigan and approved by the Michigan Board of Education.

Meadow Montessori School is a non-profit organization with tax-exempt status. Please take time to learn more about the school by following it on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/MeadowMontessoriSchool>) and visiting the website ([www.meadowmontessori.org](http://www.meadowmontessori.org))



# Kids are Falling Behind Due to Covid!

This Montessori teacher says, "I don't think so!"

By Erin Compton

If you are a parent or a teacher, there is one thing I am sure you have heard about lately, Covid and how it is affecting our daily lives. We often hear "we are living in unprecedented times." It is true, we are living during the time of a major pandemic. Our lives have been completely turned upside down for over the past year and a half (going on two years). There is a lot of buzz these days about kids being behind because of lost school time. What does that mean, "kids are behind"? For most, it means that kids are currently not at grade level. There are a lot of statements being thrown around that kids are years behind in math skills and reading levels. So, how do we, as Montessori educators, respond to this statement? Are kids truly behind? Is this something we should be worried about? Should we join in the concern? How can we reassure our parents? What can be done? How should this be addressed?



At this point it is a good idea to remind one another of what makes Montessori unique. What does make Montessori stand out from the norm? It is important to look at the basic principles of Montessori education that offer us a safety net. We can remind one another that as Montessori educators we are doing everything to meet the current needs of children. The basic needs of a child are met with Montessori principles every day. The basic needs of a child living during Covid, although they may seem different, really are the same. Children need social, psychological, and emotional support, routines, consistency, predictability, and reassurance to combat stress and anxiety. Montessori teachers meet the children where they are and follow the child. A Montessori classroom usually has areas set up for children when they need time to rest, relax, recharge, or refocus. By having these areas established in the environment, the children can self-regulate and learn to take time when needed to center themselves. A child can do this by visiting a peace corner, reading a book in the library, choosing a sewing activity, painting at the easel, repeating a hand skill in Practical Life, walking the line, carrying sensorial materials for movement and grounding, tracing metal insets, beautifying the classroom by making flower arrangements, scrubbing a chair, observing a classroom pet, etc. We know that when a child can take the time to recenter, they are generally able to concentrate and focus more on their work. When the needs of the child are respected and acknowledged there is more potential for growth and development. This is when amazing things can happen and children will challenge themselves with new work, because they are ready to focus. The child is seen as a whole person. Now the child can work to his or her full potential.



***"Our care of the children should be governed not by the desire to 'make them learn things' but by the endeavor to keep burning within them the light which is called intelligence."***

***- María Montessori***



So, at this time, I would say to a Montessori teacher, remember the basics. You've got this covered. You are doing great. As long as you run an authentic Montessori classroom, your children are exactly where they need to be. You can rest assured that your students are going to be just fine. This would, however, be a great time for your school to run some parent forums, even if on Zoom. Increase your parent education for reassurance. That is what parents are looking for the most, reassurance. They trust your opinion and they just want to hear that they are not alone. They feel the same way that many parents feel right now. They are concerned about the same things as other parents. Covid has isolated people, so this is a good time to build community within your school. I would recommend focusing on Montessori 101 and Montessori in the Home courses to cover the basic principles of Montessori in the classroom and in the home. You could also facilitate a social hour or a group discussion time via Zoom. Staff at your school could take turns facilitating an evening on Zoom where parents could come together to talk, share ideas, ask questions and connect. It is a good time to make sure there is unity and consistency between the two environments (home and school) where children spend the majority of their time. When there is cohesion there is more growth.



To the Montessori parent, I would say "relax." One thing to consider, during this time of Covid, is that most Montessori schools have been open and in person, offering children time to interact with peers and have their social needs met. Many schools went online during this time and isolated students at home making it impossible to meet their need for peers and engaging with friends. This seclusion led to the child requiring more time to readjust when they returned in-person. By Montessori schools being open



and more consistent, students experienced less transitions and therefore more progress in their development and growth. This is the time to trust the Montessori environment that you have chosen for your child. Remind yourself that you chose this philosophy and this school for a reason. Remind yourself of your decision and all the thought that went into it and trust the process. Trust the school. Trust the teacher. Trust that your child is in good hands and is at a school that places value on your child as an individual. An authentic Montessori school will meet the needs of the individual child and there will be growth over time. Your child is enrolled in a classroom for up to three years with the same teacher. That is a significant amount of time and there will be progress. Montessori education encourages children to be lifelong learners. The children in a Montessori education are doing just fine. No one is "falling behind." Each individual student is moving

forward and developing. That is all that matters right now, individual growth. There is no need to compare your child to another. No two children are the same. They are each unique...and remember, we are in this together.

*"An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking: it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people to understand the times in which they live." — Maria Montessori*

# Stabilization Grant – A Blessing ...

## But How Best to Utilize It?

By Karen Lumsden

Many schools applied for and received a Stabilization Grant in January. The money is a welcome acknowledgement of how important early childhood education / child care is to families and the economy as a whole. It has given teachers a much-needed boost in the form of bonuses and has given administrators funds to improve their programs and facilities.



Michigan Department of Education is administering the program and the Great Start to Quality staff has gone to great lengths to give recipients all the information they need to spend the money on acceptable items and supply the required paperwork to verify the spending. Most recently, they held three virtual meetings where they outlined when and how the receipts for the funds need to be provided.

The form for submitting the documents went live on February 1. You may now report all spending and upload receipts. The form will keep track of your spending, giving you a balance of the amount yet to be reported.

One theme that the presenters repeated more than once is that they want the money spent...they do not want to have any funds returned. Recipients were encouraged to provide documentation for allowable expenses that have already been covered by tuition and use the extra funds for projects that do not qualify. A follow-up question informed us that funds used after March 2021 were more likely to be accepted. Another important aspect of the spending report is the Impact Statement they hope to receive from the grant recipients. These statements will be used to show how the funds were utilized and hopefully will provide ample reasons for a continuation of these grant programs.

There will be another round of grants offered this spring, however, the fall grant monies must be spent and accounted for before the spring grant can be approved. This puts a bit of a time crunch on utilizing the current grant funds. The following list is a compilation of the ways several schools have chosen to spend the grant money. While I'm sure most of us will have no trouble spending the grant, we thought it might be interesting to see how others have benefitted from this program.

**Please note:** Some of these items may not be acceptable use for the grant funds, but they will be purchased with tuition money freed up by the grant. This is acceptable.

**Bonuses** – The bonus is a requirement of the grant and both full time and part time staff will benefit. However, the bonus amounts provided are a minimum, not a maximum, so some schools have chosen to provide larger bonuses to their employees.

**IRA** – A SIMPLE IRA is a low-cost retirement plan that most schools are able to provide. This is another way some schools are utilizing their funds to benefit their staff.

**Tuition Grants to Parents** – Some schools have decided to share the grant money with a one-time reduction in tuition for all parents. Tuition deductions for parents receiving state funding as well as scholarships for parents wishing to utilize the school for their child's kindergarten year are another way to share the funds with parents.

Air Purifiers – Air purifiers clean the air of germs and contaminants. Some schools have installed UVC lights on their furnaces to kill harmful viruses in the air as they pass through the heating system. Others have purchased stand-alone air filtering systems.

New Playground Equipment – To encourage outdoor play and make the playground safer for the children.

New sleeping mats – Older sleeping mats were replaced.

Dishwasher – A dishwasher with a sanitizing cycle to improve the cleanliness of dishes and silverware used by the children.

Outdoor Storage Shed – Bikes and outdoor equipment need a place to be stored safely.

New bikes

Washer/dryer – To more easily clean the children's bedclothes.

Liability insurance / Worker's Compensation Insurance – Is an allowable expense.

Property Taxes – Are an allowable expense.

New Carpeting – Replacing old carpeting with new, easier to maintain carpeting.

Cupboards – Any requirement required for licensing is an allowable expense. This school was having difficulty storing cleaning supplies and needed extra storage space that was kid-proof.

Sidewalk Repair – Any repair that will improve safety and is recommended by insurance inspectors is allowed.

Utility bills – An allowable expense

Replaced an older iPad

Provided a stipend for staff to be used for health insurance expenses.

Paid hourly workers that had to take time off work due to Covid.

Rent / Mortgage payments

Carpet cleaning / tile floor cleaning

A party for parents (and teachers) to celebrate when their children are all fully vaccinated.

Important Dates :

**February 1, 2022** – Reporting form will be available

**March 1, 2022** - All bonuses to staff must be paid by this date.

**March 2022** – Spring Grant will be made available and you will have at least 30 days to submit your application.

**May 20, 2022** – All reports for fall grant must be completed if you plan on applying for spring grant funds in March.

**July 31, 2022** - All spending and final reports for fall grant must be submitted if you are **not** applying for spring grand funds in March.

**July 31, 2022** - Hiring and recruitment report is due

Allowable uses of funds from Michigan Department of Education:

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/definitions\\_for\\_spending\\_categories\\_744659\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/definitions_for_spending_categories_744659_7.pdf)

There are also new resources available at the MDE webpage at [www.michigan.gov/childcare](http://www.michigan.gov/childcare)



# Lunar New Year Festival at Children's Place Montessori



Puzzles, games, coloring, special food, stories, red envelopes, lucky candies, and dressing up were all a part of our Lunar New Year celebration.



We enjoyed moon shaped dumplings

Red lanterns and fire crackers are part of the celebration.



Dressing up is exciting!



Celebrating cultural holidays is a fun way to learn about other lands.

We decorated our lanterns with stickers celebrating the Year of the Tiger- 2022



Dragons are also a part of the New Year celebration.



The boys wore special hats.



Games featuring the signs of the zodiac were exciting... especially when special lucky candies and red envelopes with Chinese money were the prizes!



# 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 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.
- 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.
- 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!



# 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, help someone out, and possibly earn a little cash! If you see something here you might be able to put to good use, please send an email to Kathy at [Kathy@mmsoc.org](mailto:Kathy@mmsoc.org). If you have something you'd like to offer in the next newsletter, contact Kathy at (313) 405-0668.

Sleeping Mats - Free!

