

Board Notes...from our MMS Board Member

Kerri Graham



MMS
Spring
Gathering
April 26
See article below

One of my favorite things about being in the Montessori realm is hearing fellow Montessorians' origin stories...how they fell in love with this wonderful

pedagogy. My journey started in high school when I was placed in a Montessori school twice a week for a Child Development class. I experienced other early childhood settings, but the Montessori curriculum struck a chord with me. Later, I was placed in that same Montessori school as a co-op student. I remained there for 8 years, as a classroom assistant while attending community college. Unable to obtain Montessori training at that time, I moved to Indianapolis and became a full-time nanny. I yearned to be back in the classroom and became an assistant in a small school. After 3 years, I completed Montessori training and became a lead teacher at the Montessori Center of Downriver for 10 years. I ultimately moved my family back to my hometown of Midland and worked as a lead teacher where I was first introduced to Montessori, 30 years ago. I am continuing my education at CMU focusing on Early Childhood Education and plan to expand my knowledge even more through trainings and conferences. In January of 2022, I became associated with a parent group hoping to establish a non-profit Montessori school in Mt. Pleasant. The current and only Montessori school in the area was closing. I was brought in to be the director and help to open a new Montessori school. It was quite a bit of work, from filing as a 501c3, licensing, enrollment, hiring, and also looking for an actual building. Fortunately, with some very generous donors, loans, and LOTS of fundraising, we were able to make an offer on the previous school

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suemariesez@gmail.com

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emilymyers@ferndalemontessori.com

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vanpelt@students.GRPS.org

Cathé Calder
Meadow Montessori
ccalder@meadowmontessori.org

Kerri Graham
Mid-Mitten Montessori
office@midmittenmontessori.org

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Jasmin Reynolds
Ferndale Montessori Center
jasminh@montessoriedu.com

Barb Barnes
North Star Montessori
northstarmontessori@yahoo.com

Kathy Smoko
MMS Administrative Asst
Kathy@mmsoc.org
MMS Phone (313) 405-0668

building (a converted church) and received the keys in July of 2022. In less than a month, we created a functioning classroom! I was able to get everything ready in the nick of time. We received our license on a Friday afternoon and opened the following Monday morning. Mid-Mitten Montessori had been born, and we have been going ever since!

When I am not at Mid-Mitten Montessori, I love to spend time with my family. I have been married for 13 years, and I have a wonderful 12-year-old daughter who has been in a Montessori classroom since birth. I love art in all forms, music and concerts, live theater and museums. I currently reside in Midland and I am proud to serve as Director as well as lead teacher for Mid-Mitten Montessori. I will forever be a Montessorian, and I strive to continue growing and fostering that love of learning for all of my students. I look forward to being a part of the Michigan Montessori Society!

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.

MMS's Advocacy committee meets regularly with MPPI (Montessori Public Policy Initiative) to explore ways of amplifying our voice. Increasing our membership and school affiliations is one avenue we are pursuing. At this time, we are trying to connect with individuals who have contacts within the Michigan Department of Education. If you are acquainted with anyone in that department, please reach out to MMS. We are particularly interested in engaging public school systems to help us and take a leading role in our ongoing efforts.

MMS Spring Professional Development Opportunity



How to Guide Neurodivergent Children Toward Regulation

Join us in Farmington on Saturday April 26, 2025 from 8:30 – 12:30 for a keynote and discussion groups with fellow Montessorians.

Do you have children in your classroom that you suspect may be neurodivergent? Jessica Ravineala will present some ideas to help you guide them toward self-regulation.



The morning will begin with a presentation from **Jessica Ravineala, MS, OTRL**, an occupational therapist and owner of The Therapy SPOT. She graduated from Grand Valley State University with a Master of Science in Occupational Therapy, after studying psychology, human development, and art at Central Michigan University. She has experience treating autistic children/young adults, children who have sensory processing and regulation issues, feeding and oral motor difficulties, visual processing and perceptual issues, as well as other physical and neurological impairments. She also has experience working with children who struggle with anxiety and mood disorders. Her continuing education has focused on a variety of areas, including visual development and perceptual skills, the vestibular system, neurodevelopmental treatment (NDT), Therapeutic Listening, Myofascial Release, Visceral Manipulation, feeding & oral motor, Social Thinking strategies, DIR/Floortime, the Collaborative Proactive Solutions model (CPS) and responsive parenting. She is passionate about following a child's interests and learning neurodivergent affirming approaches.

The time together will continue with a variety of round table breakout sessions. Bring your concerns and learn from your colleagues that have encountered similar issues...classroom management, language delays, difficult conversations and school culture...bring your questions and wisdom to share with fellow Montessorians and learn how others make these things work at their schools.

Members will receive a “take and make” activity of their choosing. A sequence work, a middle sound activity and a famous landmark matching work will be offered to interested members. In addition, a Members Only raffle will take place with a variety of prizes for lucky members.

By joining us, we hope you are inspired to finish the school year with new material for your class, some great ideas, and some tools to help you guide your students.

The cost will be \$25. for members and \$30. for non-members. Your attendance will be logged in your MiRegistry account and you will receive a certificate for four hours of professional development. The event will be held at Children's Place Montessori school in Farmington. Snacks and beverages will be provided. Watch for more information in your email soon!



Artificial Intelligence for Montessori

by Catharine Calder



AI. Two letters that strike fear in the hearts of many and excitement in the minds of others. For most of us, AI is a bit of a muddle. Hopefully this brief article will separate a few of the many strands that are part of this past and future tapestry.

Take comfort. AI has been around for a long time. We can break AI into separate groups:

1. Artificial Narrow Intelligence takes on general tasks such as analyzing data.
2. Artificial General Intelligence that has the capacity to *learn* and apply knowledge. This is Adaptive AI, and until recently has been pretty limited.
3. Artificial Super Intelligence is—so far—only theoretical. It may come to pass that this Super Intelligence is smarter than the human mind. (This is the one that is scaring people.)
4. **Generative AI** is getting a lot of attention. This AI learns by watching “others” and coming up with something new.

Whether we note it or not, we have all been using AI for a long time. What is new is the easy access to Generative AI, commonly known as ChatGPT.

ChatGPT was “born” in 2018, but it didn’t really become accessible until 2020. Currently, many professionals, like lawyers, use ChatGPT 4, but not without issues. Because ChatGPT 4 cannot distinguish “real” cases from AI generated cases, lawyers have faced court sanctions for using “fake” cases (New York Times June 8, 2023).

So, be careful when using ChatGPT for research. However, is it useful for learning?

If you have used Grammarly for writing or Duolingo for learning a new language, you are using AI. Many teachers have found ChatGPT useful for generating lesson plans. AI image generating programs such as Dream Studio can be a boost to student creativity.



The use of AI in a Montessori classroom is a complicated question and the answers comes down to how and when. Schools should explore at least the following topics when exploring options for the classroom:

- Digital Citizenship
- Ethical Use of Technology
- Age Appropriate Use for Technology
- Impact of Technology on Brain Development

The American Montessori Society explored these questions and more at the January 2024 Labposium in San Diego and is currently in the process of drafting a policy which includes the following recommendations.

- Cultivate wonder, not dependence.
- Respect individual autonomy.
- Nurture collaboration, not competition.
- Embrace transparency and inclusivity.
- Prioritize human connection over automation.

Hopefully Montessorians will use AI as a powerful tool for empowering curiosity, fostering individuality, and igniting a lifelong love of learning. If you would like to see a draft policy created by Meadow Montessori School, reach out to ccalder@meadowmontessori.org.

Please also see the very comprehensive technology policy developed by the Austin Montessori School: <https://www.austinmontessori.org/partnership/screen-media-and-technology-policy-and-guidelines>

MiRegistry –



Required Health and Safety Training for 2025

The Health and Safety Training for 2025 focuses on playground safety and preparing for emergencies. It provides some reminders and a few new ideas that every one of us can use.

While we have until the fall to complete it, there's no reason to put it off! Just log into your MiRegistry account and sign up for the course. It's free and takes less than 2 hours. If you need help accessing the online course through Michigan Virtual, you may contact MMS Administrative Assistant, Kathy Smoko at Kathy@mmsoc.org for assistance.

For Procrastinators Only...

Drinking Water Management Plan... ...Due Jan. 24, 2025



By Karen Lumsden

Drinking Water Management Plan...due in January but won't be required till June of 2026...a procrastinator's dream! If you are like me...a true procrastinator...you're still "working on it." If not, and you've got your plan in place, you can skip this and move on to the next article.

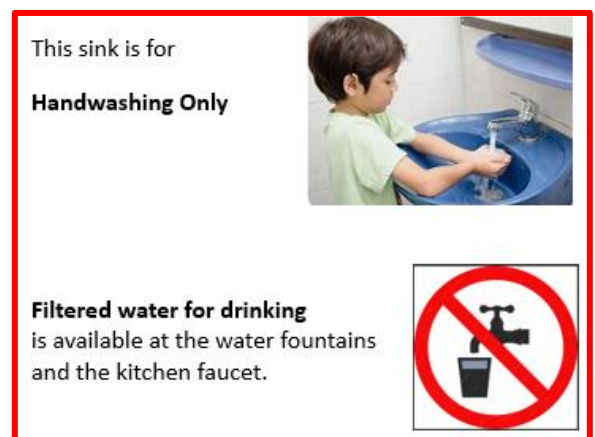


This article is for those who have not yet fulfilled their obligation to prepare a water filtration plan by Jan. 24, 2025. Hopefully, this will give you a plan to get it done before June, 2026 !

I first reached out to Holly Gohlke at The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE). She was most helpful and gave me ideas as to how to meet the requirements. Her contact info is EGLE-DWEHD-FilterFirst@Michigan.gov, and her phone number is (517)220-1904. She listened as I described my facility and offered some suggestions, but referred me to Dave Scott, a business development manager specializing in education needs in Michigan. He offers to come into your facility, assess your needs and offer suggestions.

Dave is employed by Zurn Elkay, a manufacturer of fixtures that meet the criteria of the program to eliminate lead from children's drinking water, however, he is not a salesman. (contact info: david.scott@zurn.com, 947-813-8042) His job is to make you aware of the type of fixture you will need to meet the requirements.

Dave and a coworker came to our school and surveyed our water sources, assessed our water purification needs and discussed what options we might consider. Several days later, we received a report with photos of our water distribution areas and several fixtures / filters that would work in those specific areas. After deciding where to install filters, how best to secure fixtures that are lead-free to deliver the filtered water, I looked for the best way to complete my written plan and found the [Drinking Water Management Plan template](#) provided on the Filter First page. If you are unable to access it with the link above, it is located at the



bottom of the first page under Guidance Materials For Schools at <https://www.michigan.gov/egle/about/organization/drinking-water-and-environmental-health/school-drinking-water-program/filter-first> . The 22 page templet will guide you through the process of identifying your water source locations, types of fixtures, filters, responsible parties, and everything else required for your plan. The law requires that all schools have at least one filtered bottle-filling station that meets all requirements per 100 building occupants and that all other fixtures must filter out lead if used for consumption. One suggestion is to determine if you will want a fixture that will provide both filtered water and non-filtered water, should you want that option. One of my filtered water stations is in the kitchen where food is prepared. This faucet is also used for other activities that do not require filtered water. The filters are expensive and with multiuse faucets, the filter's life can be extended by limiting the filter use to only when drinking water or food preparation water is needed. Another consideration is whether or not you will need to filter an outside drinking fountain. These filters are a bit more complex and will require "winterizing."



Next, installation. The fixtures are available at a number of plumbing supply stores. Plumbers (or someone well skilled in plumbing) are required to install the fixtures.

In discussing water plans with other Montessori schools, it's very clear that there are many ways to meet the requirements. One very inexpensive way is to provide a jug of filtered water for the children's drinking needs. Britta water filters meet the requirement. Providing filtered water in a jug with a spigot provides clean water and a practical like opportunity. Children can fill small pitchers with water and maintain a "drinking water station" for the class.



The final step is to provide a sign for all water sources. We chose to provide a written alert as well as a visual graphic that the children can understand. These signs need to be located adjacent to the sinks in question.

I know many schools have already addressed this requirement, but for those of us that might still be "getting a round tuit," I hope this will give you encouragement to put this task on the front burner. There is great joy in good, clean water...let's make sure it's safe for our kids.



MMS is continuing to bring “A Parent’s Perspective” to our newsletter. Affiliate and member schools are asked to disseminate this newsletter to their parents to encourage them to support MMS in our advocacy efforts and enjoy the benefits of MMS membership. The purpose of this column is to elevate the voice of Montessori parents in our organization.

A Parent’s Perspective...

Rewards Punish – Part 2

How Do We Motivate Our Kids?

By Anthony Bonanni, Montessori Parent

The first part of this continuing article was published in the fall issue of this newsletter. The author continues his article on rewards and punishment with his thoughts on how to motivate without them.

How do we motivate our kids? We create environments. There are no specific strategies or programs. We have to create environments that foster autonomy, mastery, purpose, and collaboration. Fortunately, learning is constructive by nature, so by shifting to a mindset of creation, as previously one of control—we are going to learn just as much as our children. Isn’t that the point of being a lifelong learner?

External stimuli, while motivating in nature, are not effective motivators in practice because they take away the autonomy our brains need to develop. Learning is a constructive action within the mind. This type of action requires a sense of agency, one’s control over one’s thoughts and emotions. Even when used with the best intentions, external motivators are methods of control that cannot promote that autonomy, because the child is doing the task for something or someone else.

If “this” must be done in order to get or to avoid “that”, we have instantly taken away the worth from the activity that we value (this) and placed it all in the consequence (that). Children will not internalize the characteristics we want them to learn because the final product of the transaction is not what was learned, it is what was gained.

Students will then unfortunately learn to play the game of rewards. Students take fewer risks in their academics, fearful of losing out on important rewards—again grades. They engage in more deceitful behavior to avoid punishment. The ones that do experience success often struggle when faced with more complicated problems than the simple ones they sought out to keep their grades inflated. I cannot stress enough how much grades deserve a long look if we are to increase motivation in our students. And I cannot be more honest when I say I am terrified to bring this idea up at work. I’m still growing too.

If we want to increase the amount of autonomy our children have, then we need to increase the amount of choice they have in familial, personal, school decisions. We need to think of ways to authentically give our kids a voice in what happens around the house and classroom. Choice and control of superficial tasks and responsibilities will be sniffed out right away. You can say a lot of things about kids, but my favorite is their ability to sniff out bull crap from a mile away. Don’t be afraid to let go of certain formalities that you have held on to, because that’s the way it’s supposed to be. It may feel like giving in to the child, but if you try to structure the situation in a way that still leads to good outcomes, it then becomes a partnership building the foundation for their understanding of positive relationships. This is a much more fulfilling method of bonding with your child(ren) than using predetermined rewards.

Talk to your child(ren) about what needs to be done to achieve a goal. Or in those times where you really don't have a specific outcome in mind, talk to your kids about creating it. Real life examples: It is a beautiful day. I have just spent 30 dollars on a county park pass and we are going to use it. I know my girls like the playground. I ask them if they want to go to the playground. Important note: If you ask your children a yes or no question, you have to be okay with a no response, or don't ask that question. Even though I have a desired outcome, go outside and play because it's healthy and we love it, they are still in control of what we do. Plus, I know they love the playground.

I provided a choice, they said yes. We discussed what needed to be done to leave, clothes on, shoes on, diaper bag, etc. Moving through these tasks then became a lot less stressful as expectations were built together and made clear for all (except my two-year old, gotta love those terrible twos :)

Sometimes, your child says no, like after purchasing a ton of skating stuff because we thought it was something we wanted to do. Now she does not want to skate. Instead of controlling the narrative and saying she had to try because it builds character, etc., I asked her why not. I gave her time and space to tell me why she was not comfortable. She responded and we came up with a solution together, and while not perfect, it gave us more skating opportunities while we continue to build the skill together. (It was skating in the house) Parents, remember that your child is very much like you. They have their own wants and needs and being able to meet them is just as important for them as it is for you. Respecting that autonomy is not enabling them or spoiling them, it allows you both to create the boundaries needed for growth.

We have to stop making our love and support conditional, which is an underlying effect of using punishments, rewards, and other fairly traditional methods of parenting that most of us grew up with, myself included.

I am not going to stand in my ivory tower and tell you my children are perfect or that I have never had to resort to methods that I was not comfortable with after the fact. Let's face it, sometimes we have to be at work, we have to be at that appointment or we are being rude to the other people, or sometimes we have just run out of patience and we say things we wish we hadn't. To err is human, to forgive is divine. Give your child a chance to forgive you. Apologize for mistakes which you later realized was an attempt to control them needlessly, or apologize just simply for being out of line. They will probably understand you better than anyone else in this world.

This article will conclude in the spring newsletter. Watch for "Mastery" in the next newsletter.

Recommended Reading on Motivation

Drive by Daniel Pink (2009)

Punished by Rewards by Alfie Kohn (2018 updated edition)

Unconditional Parenting by Alfie Kohn (2006)

Mindsets by Carol Dweck (2008)

The Whole Brain Child by Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson (2012)

Brain Rules (2008) by John Medina

Anthony Bonanni is a teacher and a Montessori parent. He is married with two children. He is pictured here with his daughters, Maria and Carmen.



A Benefit from MMS -

Classroom Activities You Can Use

By Sue Szczesny

This year, along with the other benefits of being a Michigan Montessori Member, we sent out teacher-made materials that members can print and use in their classrooms. It is a fun way to share with other Montessorians, so we plan to continue this benefit for the 2025-26 membership year. You will receive a "Montessori gift" this year...maybe more! If you would like to share something you have created for the children at your school, please email it to Kathy@mmsoc.org. Please note, we will **not** be sharing any copyrighted materials.



We sent these to all MMS members during the 2024-2025 membership year.

MMS Members Only*

Summer Raffle Is Coming!

MMS's 5th Annual Summer Raffle - Join and Win!

Our summer raffle is a benefit to all current members. When you renew your membership, you will be entered to win one of the prizes offered in addition to the other benefits of MMS membership. Please remember to submit your annual dues in June or July to qualify. Past prizes include beautiful wooden materials from Teaching Timbers, books, and materials for your classroom. Don't miss out!

*Membership for the 2025-26 school year begins July 1, 2025.

Only new and members that renew their membership for the 2025-26 school year prior to the August drawing are eligible to win in the 2025 MMS Summer Raffle.

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.



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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. If you have something you'd like to offer in the next newsletter, contact Kathy at (313) 405-0668.

A Trading Table will be available at the Spring Gathering for you to bring items you'd like to share.