

MMS 2025 Fall Conference

Keynote Presentation

Keynote Speaker:

Rosemary Quaranta

Keynote Bio:

Rosemary Quaranta, M.ED., has over 40 years of experience as a credentialed AMI 3 – 12 teacher and Head of School. She is passionate about Montessori education, instruction of students, curriculum development, and teacher education while supporting and mentoring new and experienced teachers. She is currently spending part of her time with AMS facilitating Instructor Academy, consulting with Seton Montessori Institute In Clarendon Hills, Illinois, and Instructing for the WSMS Teacher Education Program in New York City. She is a frequent global presenter at conferences and enthusiastically shares her passion

Keynote Presentation Title:

“The Gift of Observation: Unearthing the Brilliance in Every Child”

Keynote Description:

What if observation wasn't just a requirement, but a gift?

When we shift our perspective, observation transforms from a daily obligation into a powerful, joyful practice—one that brings deeper meaning to our work. Intentional Daily Observation helps us uncover the unique brilliance within each child, allowing us to guide their growth with clarity and purpose. By tuning in with intention, we don't just support individual development—we build a vibrant, harmonious community of engaged learners.

In this workshop, we'll explore how reframing observation can reignite your love for teaching and cultivate a classroom where curiosity thrives and connection flourishes. A classroom rooted in observation is a place where children love to learn—and you love to teach.

AM Breakout Sessions

Speaker:

Debra Gorman Cagle

Speaker Bio:

Debra is presently the Executive Director and a teacher trainer at the Adrian Montessori Teacher Education Institute. She was a Montessori primary teacher for 42 years, a teacher trainer for 25 years at the Montessori Teacher Academy in Mishawaka, Indiana and has been adjunct faculty in Education at Siena Heights University for over 35 years. Debra holds a M.Ed. in Elementary Education, a B.S. in English, Montessori Primary 3-6 Certification and is certified to teach Kindergarten through 9th grade in the State of Michigan. She is the author of published magazine articles, regularly presents workshops in Michigan, Ohio and Indiana Montessori schools and has presented at many regional and national Montessori conferences. Debra loves Montessori!!

Presentation Title:

Breaking Bread to Bridge Cultures and Build Peace

Presentation Description:

"Breaking Bread to Bridge Cultures and Build Peace" invites the participants to see the world and learn about wonderful people, places and food. We explore the commonality that "Everyone eats bread" and see the similarities and uniqueness of each culture. The workshop demonstrates how this topic integrates the Language, Math, Science, Sensorial, Art, Geography, Social Studies, Practical Life and Peace curriculum areas into education for life about our world.

Speaker:

Leann Chamberlin

Speaker Bio:

Leann Chamberlain is the Owner of Brighton Montessori, where she has spent the past decade building a thriving school community rooted in the Montessori philosophy. Her passion for early childhood education began 25 years ago assisting in Montessori schools where she fell in love with the philosophy and obtained her Infant and Toddler credential from Columbus Montessori Teacher Training and 3-6 at MMTEC. All three of her children attended Montessori school for their early educational years. Inspired by the impact it had on their growth, Leann pursued her vision of creating a school where children could flourish academically, socially, and emotionally.

Since opening Brighton Montessori in 2016 with just 11 students and two employees, Leann has grown the school to serve more than 90 students, supported by a dedicated and dynamic team. She is deeply committed to nurturing each child's potential while fostering a culture of respect, curiosity, and joy in learning.

Leann's leadership style blends her belief in strong school/family partnerships with her dedication to professional growth for educators. She is passionate about empowering teachers, supporting the well-being of students, and creating environments where children feel known, valued, and capable and teachers feel valued as we are rooted in our core values and company culture

When she's not at school, Leann enjoys time with her husband and children, who are all very active teenagers. Leann and her husband also own a bed and breakfast and steakhouse in Bellaire, MI and find enjoyment in connecting with guests over coffee, breakfast, and dinner.

Presentation Title:

From the Classroom to Leadership: Building a Culture of Excellence in Your Montessori Classroom and School

Presentation Description:

I will share insights from over a decade of experience as a Montessori guide, school owner, and leader. Drawing from real-world successes and lessons learned, this workshop will focus on how to build and sustain a positive, mission-driven school culture—from the ground up.

We'll explore strategies for supporting and empowering your team, aligning classroom practices with whole-school values, and cultivating a work environment rooted in Montessori principles of respect, partnership, and purpose. Attendees will leave with actionable tools to strengthen their leadership presence, navigate staff dynamics, and lead a school that not only honors the child—but the adults in the building, too.

Topics will include:

Creating a culture of shared responsibility and professionalism

Mentoring and developing teachers at all stages

Building trust and clear communication across your team

Cultivating consistency between classroom environments and administrative leadership

Translating Montessori values into school-wide practices

Speaker:

Courtney Gupta

Speaker Bio:

Courtney Gupta is the Project Coordinator for Help Me Grow Michigan. Prior to this role, she was a care coordinator in a local Michigan system for three years. She holds a Master's in English Literature and while that may seem like an odd degree for this work, her experience as a teacher at all levels led her to the conviction that: we have to catch these kids much sooner. She is reminded daily of the joy and struggle of parenting two young children and the need for Help Me Grow in our communities. Helpmegrow-mi.org

Presentation Title:

Empowering Early Childhood Educators through Connection and Support

Presentation Description:

This session will highlight free resources and services available to educators working with children birth to age 6 and their families. Participants will learn how Help Me Grow supports families through developmental screening and resource connections, and how Early On and Build Up provide free intervention services for children with developmental concerns. The session will cover when, how, and why to make referrals, reassuring educators that they are not alone in supporting young children's growth and development.

Speaker:

Sheena Patel

Speaker Bio:

Sheena's journey with Flourishing Lives began in 2009 as a volunteer, sparking a lifelong passion for helping children thrive. She holds a degree in Nutritional Sciences from Michigan State University and a graduate degree in Occupational Therapy from Baker College.

Specializing in Trauma, Attachment, Therapist Training, and Research, Sheena is dedicated to supporting the Flourishing Lives team, the families they serve, and children who are often misunderstood due to developmental or emotional challenges. With advanced training in trauma-informed care and attachment theory, she fosters safe, healing environments through a play-based model that emphasizes connection and regulation.

Her holistic approach integrates expertise in sensory processing, neurological development, and evidence-based practices like Sensory Integration and Cranial Sacral Therapy. Sheena is SIPT-certified and continually pursues professional development to ensure high-quality, individualized care.

Outside of work, Sheena is an adventurous spirit who has explored over 12 countries. She finds joy in travel, cooking, and outdoor adventures with her two beloved dogs. Her belief in the

resilience and potential of every child continues to fuel her passion and advocacy in pediatric therapy.

Presentation Title:

Supporting the Whole Child: Understanding Behavior, Sensory Needs, Trauma, and the Impact of Screen Time in the Montessori Environment

Presentation Description:

Montessori educators are uniquely positioned to observe, guide, and support the natural development of each child. However, in today's rapidly changing world, many children are arriving at school with nervous systems that are dysregulated due to trauma, sensory processing challenges, and increasing exposure to screen time. These factors can significantly impact emotional regulation, attention, and a child's ability to engage fully in even the most nurturing learning environments.

This workshop is designed to help Montessori educators better understand the root causes of challenging behaviors by exploring how trauma, sensory integration, and nervous system development are interconnected. We'll also examine how screen time—particularly when introduced early and used excessively—can alter a child's nervous system development, affecting sleep, social skills, attention, and overall emotional resilience.

Educators will gain insight into how motor and sensory play support healthy brain development and why these activities are essential for helping children regulate their emotions and behavior. Practical, sensory-based strategies will be shared to help de-escalate emotional reactions and create supportive, responsive classroom environments that align with Montessori principles.

This session is grounded in evidence-based research and aligns with Montessori values of respect, independence, and following the natural rhythm of the child.

Speaker:

Rosemary Quaranta

Speaker Bio:

Rosemary Quaranta, M.ED. has over 40 years' experience as a credentialed AMI 3 – 12 teacher and Head of School. She is passionate about Montessori education, instruction of students, curriculum development, and teacher education, while supporting and mentoring new and experienced teachers. She is currently spending part of her time with AMS facilitating Instructor Academy, as well as consulting with Seton Montessori Institute in Illinois and Instructing for WSMS Teacher Education Program in New York City. She is a frequent global presenter at conferences and enthusiastically shares her passion.

Presentation Title:

Exploring the Sequence of Montessori Math Materials for Operations

Presentation Description:

In this session, we will delve into the progression of Montessori math materials related to the four operations, with a special focus on the relationship between computation and memorization. You'll gain a deeper understanding of how each operation is introduced and developed through hands-on activities that naturally support the internalization of math facts. A comprehensive chart will outline the journey from concrete to abstract, illustrating how children build a strong mathematical foundation as they advance through the curriculum.

Speaker:

Carey Wendell and Erin Mallory

Speaker Bio:

Carey Wendell – Lower Elementary Guide – (The Children’s House, Traverse City)
Instructor – EI and EII (MMTEC)

Carey grew up in Berkeley, CA, where she got her start in education at a Montessori school. She earned a B.S.-Genetics from UC Davis, followed by an M.S.-Horticulture from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She also holds a Master of Arts in Teaching – Elementary Education and an Education Specialist degree in Leadership from Oakland University. Carey’s certified EI & EII (AMS) and MMTEC, and Sec. I & II (AMS) from Houston Montessori Center. She’s worked with private, charter, and public Montessori schools and also educates future Elementary Montessori teachers at MMTEC. Outside of the classroom, Carey enjoys gardening, baking, and making music. She and her husband Doug have two grown kids—both Montessori kids themselves!

Erin Mallory – Program Director & Lead Guide – Infant, Toddler, Early Childhood (The Montessori School Rochester)

Program Director – Early Childhood (MMTEC)

As an AMS certified guide, Ms. Erin has lead primary, toddler and infant classrooms in her 15 years of Montessori teaching and 20 years of childcare experience. Child education is evidently Ms. Erin’s lifelong passion. During her Bachelors of Science (Education) at Central Michigan University, she majored in Child Development and minored in both Elementary Reading and Mathematics.

Ms. Erin draws on her varied experiences in education to bring rich learning experiences to all in her care. These have included Reggio Emilia, public and private elementary classrooms as well as a student teach abroad program in Australia. As a Montessori mom she loves living Montessori at home with her four young daughters.

Presentation Title:

How to Educate Parents About Montessori Philosophy

Presentation Description:

This workshop will coach you in the different ways you can educate your parents and community members about Montessori philosophy. From how to start a simple book club to how to run “The Journey,” there are many ways to nurture philosophical knowledge. They can be in-person, virtual, synchronous, or asynchronous. We will share our ideas and let you share yours. This workshop will provide you with the materials and directions you need take a step up in your parent education plan whether you are just starting out, or ready to take it to the next level.

PM Breakout Sessions

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Courtney Gupta

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at all levels led her to the conviction that: we have to catch these kids much sooner. She is reminded daily of the joy and struggle of parenting two young children and the need for Help Me Grow in our communities. helpmegrow-mi.org

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Presentation Title:

Explore from Squares to Square Root

Presentation Description:

The exploration of squares begins in Early Childhood and evolves through Upper Elementary, growing in both depth and complexity. Children first discover and define the square, then move on to drawing it and using it to create binomial and trinomial squares. This work is intuitive, engaging, and full of wonder. As students progress, they transition into working with larger squares, eventually constructing square root problems using the peg board. This hands-on, concrete journey through the concept of squaring sparks curiosity and supports the development of the mathematical mind, all through the rich, tactile experience of the Montessori materials.

Speaker:

Chris Schoenherr

Speaker Bio:

Chris Schoenherr is the Director for the Michigan Montessori Teacher Education Center. She is also the District Program Director for Waterford Montessori Academy in Waterford, MI. Chris has been an educator and administrator for over 30 years. She is certified as an Administrator in the State of Michigan and AMS-Credentialed (Elementary I-II).

Presentation Title:

Honing Effective Communication in the Classroom, Staff Room, Conference Room, and at Home

Presentation Description:

Come learn the communication skills for de-escalating disruptive or crisis situations. Move your interventions earlier to ease misunderstandings and miscommunications. You will learn verbal interventions, non-violent crisis interventions, and the skills of positive discipline to handle challenging situations. Practice implementing some of the tools of effective communication and participate in activities to understand your interactions. These universal skills can be used with the diverse people we interact with every day (co-workers, students, parents, family, board members, etc.).

Speaker:

Teneka Thompson

Speaker Bio:

Teneka Thompson has been a Montessori educator for 29 years. For many of those years, she served as a credentialed guide for students in Infant/Toddler and Primary learning environments. Dedicated to holistic education for children and caregivers, she has served as a parent advocate and educator for teenage parents and parents who were formerly incarcerated. As an instructor at ADMTEI, she taught Cultural Studies and currently teaches Peace Education.

Presentation Title:

Culturally Responsive Peace Education

Presentation Description:

"What is the very first goal of Montessori?

Is it academic or is it humanitarian? Are we first teachers or peacemakers?

What comes first?

When we overlook the global vision of Montessori in exchange for the academic standards in front of us, we sacrifice the heart in exchange for the mind.

We can't survive with only one. We must have both to thrive. But even as embryos, our hearts come first." Catherine McTamney The Tao of Montessori

Peace Education is often limited to a rose, a corner, or a table. Join me to examine equitable ways to honor the humanity of the students and adults we are positioned to serve by expanding our view of Peace Education throughout the learning environment as we strive to touch the hearts of our students.

Speaker:

Carey Wendell and Erin Mallory

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Carey Wendell - Lower Elementary Guide - (The Children's House, Traverse City)

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Carey grew up in Berkeley, CA, where she got her start in education at a Montessori school. She earned a B.S.-Genetics from UC Davis, followed by an M.S.-Horticulture from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She also holds a Master of Arts in Teaching – Elementary Education and an Education Specialist degree in Leadership from Oakland University. Carey's certified EI & EII (AMS) and MMTEC, and Sec. I & II (AMS) from Houston Montessori Center. She's worked with private, charter, and public Montessori schools and also educates future Elementary Montessori teachers at MMTEC. Outside of the classroom, Carey enjoys gardening, baking, and making music. She and her husband Doug have two grown kids—both Montessori kids themselves!

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Speaker:

Kaela Wright

Speaker Bio:

Kaela Wright is a Pediatric Psychotherapist and Co-Owner of Reflections Therapeutic Group in Bloomfield Hills, MI. (reflectionsfamily.com) Since 2008, she has been a dedicated mental health clinician and advocate, specializing in infant mental health, trauma, neurodivergence, and parent support. Also a mother of 3 dynamic girls (9, 12, and 14), her work is grounded in the belief that nurturing emotional well-being for adults and children in and around early childhood lays the foundation for lifelong learning and resilience.

In addition to her clinical work, Kaela has provided leadership and consultation in the non-profit sector since 2011. She currently partners with the Great Start Collaborative Detroit-Wayne, where she works to expand access to developmental screenings and early literacy programming for children and families throughout Wayne County. Her role often bridges the gap between mental health services and educational communities, fostering environments where children can thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Presentation Title:

The Absorbent Heart: Approaches to Infant and Toddler Mental Health

Presentation Description:

Learn what Infant and Toddler Mental Health really means, why it matters in the Montessori environment, and how early relationships shape a child's capacity to learn and thrive. Led by an Infant and Toddler Mental Health specialist, this session will help Montessori teachers recognize signs that extra support may be needed and understand when—and how—to refer a family for treatment, all while strengthening everyday practices that foster secure, confident, and joyful learners.