

# Follow the Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY PUBLICATION

TODDLER  
MONTESSORI  
*ART: PROCESS  
OVER PRODUCT*



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## Dear MSGH Community,

We are truly delighted to bring you this edition of *Follow the Child*. The hiatus from our treasured publication should by no means be interpreted as a dearth of happenings at MSGH. We have been totally immersed in the joyful job of providing a rich Montessori experience for our students and families.

Organizations can be judged in many ways, but how they perform in response to challenging circumstances is surely a robust measure. On a small scale, it reminds me of the many times that observers have left classrooms in awe of what they saw -- a large water spill, a broken glass, a knocked over box of material -- then the response of the classroom community -- a calm, gentle reaction from the teacher and a quick offer of support and help from classmates with the rhythmic hum of work quickly returning. On a much larger scale, but with the same trust and faith in our philosophy and community, we are successfully humming along amidst the challenge posed by a pandemic.

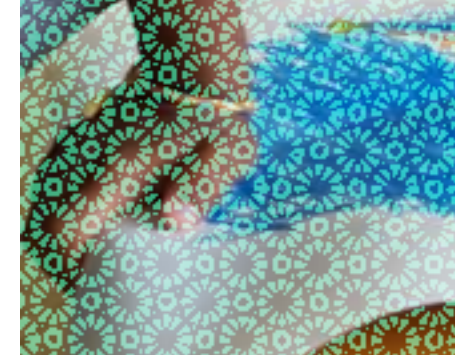
Why?

Interestingly, when schools closed down all over the world, parents got to see their children's teachers and curriculums streamed into their homes. Sadly, many were not impressed by what they saw. I do not say this to be critical because the task was monumental. Nevertheless, our community's experience was different. MSGH teachers pivoted, not missing a beat, guided by their deep knowledge of Montessori and aided by the malleability of the philosophy. Let me explain further.

Montessori meets children where they are. Children are not behind or ahead. They are where they are on their own journey through the curriculum. Through a cycle, teachers accompany children on a large stretch of their developmental path, experiencing their strengths and challenges, and how these can change over time. Children trust the adults who are there to deliver the next experience at just the right time, so as to keep their interest. Teachers, knowing their students in depth, were well equipped in their efforts to deliver an educational experience from afar and to continue seamlessly when they returned to the classroom.

Montessori uses the child as the starting point. A more traditional approach uses the curriculum as the starting point, which is layered upon the students. Imagine a line drawn from a body of knowledge, the curriculum, to the students. In Montessori, children are the starting point and are connected to the curriculum by the teacher who knows exactly where they are. The imaginary line is drawn in the opposite direction and it changes everything, making a truly individualized education possible.

Montessori educates the whole child. The social, emotional and academic well-being of a child is factored into every decision made. Teachers 'read' whatever moment in which they find the child and offer challenge, scaffolding, encouragement, variety, repetition, or light-heartedness in the right measure. What the child is ready for is more important than the



**"Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence."  
-Dr. Maria Montessori**



prepared lesson. Teachers adjust, either reviewing or jumping ahead in academic content, or pausing to take care of another need.

Montessori is developmentally based relying on careful observation. Deep knowledge about the natural developmental stages through which children progress, and training to observe signs of these, is a Montessori teacher's go to. Teachers get to know individual children within the context of understanding the natural sensitivities and characteristics with which children, across time and place, present. This grounding in child development gives the teacher flexibility and a well-stocked toolkit to draw upon.

Montessori can be done anywhere. Classroom environments are carefully prepared with activities organized in sequence and aesthetically. Yet, the truth is Montessori can be done anywhere. The practice of skills in order to move towards capability and independence can take place anywhere (in a classroom, at home, out in the community). It is the readiness, relationship and just the right amount of guidance that are the important ingredients. Even from afar, and not without challenge, teachers were able to support children and their parents in providing targeted experiences.

Maria Montessori lived through two world wars. She knew unrest and political upheaval, and witnessed human suffering. It was against this backdrop

that she developed her philosophy that is practical, universal and enduring. Her medical training meant that her work was scientifically based and today we can attest that her observations have been corroborated by modern-day findings in neuroscience. Her approach is also incredibly optimistic as it recognizes the potential of the child in the future.

Montessori schools throughout the United States, and beyond, are thriving. Families are seeking out a Montessori education for their children for the reasons above and more. From last school year to this one, MSGH's enrollment has grown over twenty-five per cent. This is in part because we had the highest retention rate (eighty per cent) for many years and in part because of families' seeking out MSGH in their quest to provide a well-rounded, nurturing experience for their children that will prepare them to be contributing members to society.

We are simply delighted to bring you this publication to share with you our school's ongoing, joyful, important work. In its fifty-eighth year, MSGH is strong, growing and optimistic, a testament to the enduring legacy of Montessori.

Mary



## First Days Back to School!

WE WELCOMED ALL OF OUR RETURNING AND NEW STUDENTS ALONG WITH THEIR FAMILIES AT BOTH OF OUR CAMPUSES!



MSGH  
Just Got A  
Little Brighter  
With These  
Updates!



Our Natural Playground was in tip-top shape for the beginning of the school year. With refreshed sand, mulch, pathways and luscious grass (thanks to our new sprinklers), it was ready to provide MSGH students with an enriching playground experience.



## Classroom Garden Parties

Our beloved tradition and community favorite, the Garden Party, was separately hosted by each classroom but the format made for more intimate connections! We were very excited to be able to have families gather and enjoy the beautiful afternoon sunlight. Time together truly nurtures our strong and connected community.



## ADOLESCENT MICRO-ECONOMY BUSINESS



The adolescent community is always busy in Micro-Economy but especially labored in preparation for the Classroom Garden Parties. Students enjoy the hands-on process of making products, and the practical experience of pricing, marketing, selling, and managing their inventory.

Their products include honey, maple syrup, goat milk soap, grape jelly, cards, dried herbs and fresh flowers. The adolescents' work in Micro-Economy inspires their entrepreneurial spirit.

Following their first sale, our student treasurer, Colleen Mathias, presented the class with information detailing profits, best-selling items, and remaining inventory for next sales. Students' pride in their success is infectious and they cannot wait to serve more members of the MSGH community!



Millstream Farm MSGH ADOLESCENT RUN BUSINESS	
<b>BATH + CARE</b>	<b>HERBS + TEAS</b>
Vanilla-Cinnamon Bath Salts 10	Elder Smoothie Powder 2.00
Pink + Blue Bath Salts 10	Calmng Lemon-Lime Tea 10
Goat Milk Soap 1.5	Lemongrass Lemon Tea 4
Beehive Body Balm 12	Italian Herb Blend 4
Beehive Lip Balm 4	Dried Basil 2
	Catnip 2
<b>HONEY + JELLY</b>	<b>HANDMADE</b>
Buckwheat Honey 4	Reusable Beeswax Wrap 2.00
Spring Honey 4	Beeswax 2.00
Honey Lollipops 1.5	Wood Grater Balls 2.00
Napagata Jelly 4	Cards 1.00
<b>Seasonal Items</b>	
Mulling Spices 1	
Ornaments + Garland 1	Individuals Priced
Potpourri Fragrances 1-2	
Want to order online? Scan our QR code or visit our online store at <a href="https://www.millstreamfarm.square.site/">https://www.millstreamfarm.square.site/</a>	



# What Do You See?

By Renee Lockhart, Primary Teacher

We sat together, this little girl and I, to look at cards of the faces of children. Some cards showed little ones with blond, black, straight or tightly coiled hair. The children had skin colors ranging from lily white to café au lait to rich chocolate. On these cards you could see children expressing an array of emotions like joy, pride, boredom, hope and so forth.

We first talked about how much fun she liked to have at the playground – running, climbing, digging and swinging on the monkey bars. I told her that I wondered if she would play with one of these children. One by one, we silently viewed these cards until she stopped me and told me that she would play with a particular little girl. Oh, really was my response. “Yes” she told me “because she looks like me.” I asked, “How so?” It was because both she and the little girl wore glasses.

As we continued on, she picked one child or another that she would play with because they looked either like her or a friend. Finally, we were down to the children she did not want to play with on the playground. One child had “spots all over his face.” They are freckles, let’s talk about them. “I have freckles,” she said. After thinking, she lets me know she would play with the little boy with many freckles on his face. With the remaining children, there was something about their appearance that didn’t sit well with her – the little “girl with the red dot” on her forehead “the boy whose eyes are hard to see” and the “boy with the spiky hair.”

Hmm. The boy with the “spiky” hair. As with the other children, we talked about this boy with hair



that was so different. I shared with her that these are called dreads. They are not spiky, but firm and soft. Not dirty but rather clean. “Did you know that my son has dreads?” I asked. With wide eyes she looked at me. Let me show you a picture of him. Again, after some time of thinking she thought it would be ok to have fun with him on the playground.

This conversation has now created the foundation for interactions with people that she may one day encounter in life. Perhaps, she will be more open and willing to engage with people who look different from her or from what she finds acceptable. Having these talks at an early age or beginning these talks, now at whatever age your child may be places before them a path towards anti-racist behavior.

At MSGH we aim to see each child as “a unique individual that needs to be understood, respected, admired and unconditionally accepted as a precious gift of life.” -Dr. Maria Montessori. It is wonderful to have the opportunity to facilitate and foster discussions and experiences. We honor holidays, cultural and family traditions. As teachers, we have conversations, give lessons, create situations, and delicately nudge interactions that open the door towards the admiration and appreciation of others.

Your child sees color. It cannot be denied what is right before their eyes. Acknowledging the differences, let’s others know you see them, too. Your child sees color. It cannot be denied what is right before their eyes. Acknowledging the differences, let’s others know you see them too. You see all parts of them. It acknowledges that you want to hear and have the difficult conversations. You are working towards understanding all differences.

Never underestimate your child’s ability to identify and comprehend racial injustices and to look for answers. Open the door so that crucial questions may be asked. Have regular conversations about racism, diversity and inclusion and remember it is okay to not have all the answers; you may equally be thinking through these matters for yourself.

Some questions to lead with may be:

- Tell me about yourself? How would other people describe you?
- What if everyone in the world looked the same?
- What are some ways that we are alike and different?
- How do our differences help make the world a more interesting and better place?
- What could you learn from a person of a different race, from a different country or of a different age?

Begin your journey by expanding your social network to include race, gender, religion and ability. You can use books as conversation starters... And then the child will potentially guide the conversation as said by Ibram X. Kendi.

*"Acknowledging the differences, lets others know you see them, too."*

## RESOURCES FOR STARTING A CONVERSATION

### Picture Books:

- Antiracist Baby – Ibram X. Kendi
- It's Okay to Be Different – Todd Parr
- The Colors of Us – Karen Katz
- Someday Is Now: Clara Luper and the 1958 Oklahoma City Sit-ins by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich
- Happy in Our Skin – Fran Manushkin

### Chapter Books:

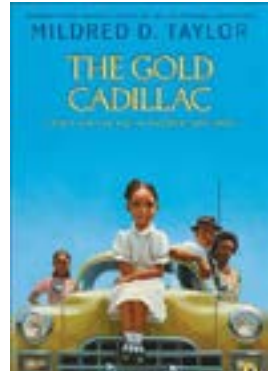
- The Gold Cadillac – Mildred D. Taylor
- The Year of the Dog – Grace Lin
- The Upside Down Boy/El nino de cabeza by Juan Felipe Herrera

### Middle Grades:

- One Crazy Summer – Rita Williams-Garcia
- Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry – Mildred D. Taylor
- Secret Keeper – Mitali Perkins
- The Dragon’s Child – Laurence Yep
- The Watson’s Go to Birmingham – Christopher Paul Curtis

### Young Adult

- Bad Boy – Walter Dean Myers
- Butterfly Yellow - Thanhha Lai
- Caramelo - Sandra Cisneros
- Copper Sun – Sharon M. Draper



## NEW: The MSGH Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Library



To continue to aid in this process, we have established the MSGH Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Library. There are now many great pieces of literature ranging in age from Toddler to Adolescent that explore a variety of concepts like skin color, religion, gender identity and more. Each child, teacher and staff member can use these books to gather knowledge, learn from it and use it to make their classroom, neighborhood, and the world at large a better place.





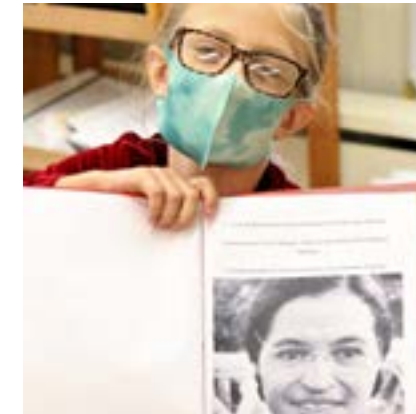
# Toddler Montessori

## Art: Process Over Product

Art, in the Montessori classroom, is used for self-expression and experimentation with a variety of mediums. On the shelves, we offer an array of tools with which children may create their own form of art. The Many activities include, coloring; working with chalk on an easel or table board; painting on an easel; working with clay; cutting; sewing; and, gluing. The adult demonstrates how the material is brought to a table and the different methods in which the tools can be used. The child is then allowed the freedom to explore independently. Montessori places emphasis on the process of creating art versus the product. Children are encouraged to explore with a variety of mediums without the pressure of completing a specific project. Unlike traditional settings, the children have access to the material at all times and may freely choose which skills to practice at any given time. Since the child is not rushed along to achieve the end product, the activity is not goal oriented. For the child, work is play and play is work. For example, a child begins painting at the easel and forgets to place paper on the easel. What ends up happening: the child paints on the easel and as she's cleaning up, she wipes away her "painting." The wiping away of her "art" doesn't bother her. She's done with the process of the painting. She put on her art apron, stirred the paint, used the brush to make stroke patterns on the easel, and cleaned up her work. The paper represents the finished product, and the children more often than not, don't want to take the paper home. Children live very much in the moment; once the easel is cleaned, they are on to the next activity. Rather than focusing on the quality or quantity of the end product, attention needs to be placed on the process and the development of skills acquired through the process. Focusing strictly on the product can stunt autonomy, the ability to be an individual, and change the urge towards the work in the first place.



## Mystery History



Our most cherished Elementary event, Mystery History, is a day filled with a little mystery, a little history and a lot of preparation by the students weeks in advance. The Elementary students research famous (sometimes obscure, sometimes infamous) contributors to history, study them in great depth, write a report and then they present their historical figure to an audience of family and friends.

Students set up a wax museum in their classroom inviting visitors to "press" their museum button. Once the button has been pressed, the students recite facts about their historical figure, and ask the visitor to guess who they are!





## A TODDLER FEAST



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 19**  
**Virtual Community Board Meeting**

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 27**  
**Parent Education Primary Math**  
**6:30-7:30p.m.**

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15**  
**Parent Education Toddler Practical Life**  
**6:30-7:30p.m.**

**FRIDAY, MARCH 11**  
**Parent Conferences**  
 Teachers sharing the magic that goes on inside the classroom with parents!

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION AT MSGH

*by Bill MacLean, Physical Educator*

Our bodies need to keep moving and we need to find time for meaningful play with our peers. Fact: the greater we understand how to play a particular game, the more we will enjoy it and want to keep playing, even as an adult. AMI agrees and developed a certificate program called Montessori-Sports. I completed the certificate course in the fall of 2020 and now provide Physical Education at MSGH. Montessori-Sports has focused on soccer due to its worldwide popularity and because of the Montessori-Sports founders experience with the Holland Ajax Soccer Organization. In addition to soccer, several other sports are introduced at MSGH including pickleball, platform tennis, floor hockey, handball, touch football broomball, along with noncompetitive activities such as hiking, yoga and fitness. Physical Education complements the inclusion of movement that is always present in the daily Montessori schedule, under the observant eye of a teacher. Teachers have important oversight regarding the development of the Physical Education curriculum as part of the child's development.

Physical Education begins with a prepared environment (physically and psychologically), control of objects, control of the body and a leader who guides, observes and to some extent, controls error. Our classes begin with yoga poses. We then do a battery of exercises including running, side to side, backwards, skipping and another handful of stretches. Student's individual success is readily apparent due to repetition and sheer determination. For instance, running forwards is no problem, but skipping backwards is much more challenging and students are learning how to do it! The instruction or lesson part of the class attempts to breakdown skills. For example, if you kick a soccer ball with the side of your foot with a locked ankle and bent knee, you will be more successful and therefore gain enjoyment from the game! Class finishes with a small sided game with carefully selected teammates and opponents (control of error) to reinforce participation and repetition. We introduce modified games such as soccer baseball and soccer golf. These games intentionally slow the activity down, without pressure of an opponent, so the student can observe and really try on their newly acquired skills. This approach provides a healthy balance between competitive and non-competitive activity and can be applied to a variety of sports.



On our West Hartford Campus, most classes occur outdoors on the large field on top of the hill. Our neighbors at the American School for the Deaf have provided outstanding indoor space in the adjacent Cogswell building during the cold months. On our New Hartford Campus, for the adolescents, we are fortunate to have outside access to an official paddle tennis court and to the Browns Corner complex. In the colder months, we will also use the Millstream Farm's barn and the pond for ice skating and hockey.

Physical Education is evolving at MSGH. Stay tuned for future developments!





# Adolescent Math at MSGH

By Jack McArdle, Adolescent Guide

Montessorians study math because it's a noble part of our human nature. Math is also a cultural study for us. The Adolescent Program gives a nod to the high-school world our students will soon be in, so for us math is a practical-life skill as well. At a minimum, all students aim for mastery of algebra. As always in Montessori, we "follow the child," which means that we endeavor to see the nature of the child's age, and prepare an environment where that nature thrives.

Along with all the other adolescent changes, intelligence changes. Adolescents abstract more readily. This new superpower is not quite tamed, however. Adolescent minds can momentarily seize-up over Zeno's paradox, for example. They can see that the most precise measure of the speed of an object is the speed measured over a zero distance in zero seconds – that is, when it's not moving at all! That feels like the thrill of standing at the edge of a cliff. When students hear that calculus is the way out of the quandary, they are desperate to learn more. Alas, deferred gratification is a life-skill too.

Algebra is the study most of our adolescents master. It is suited to their abilities, and, happily, jibes with mainstream curricula. We Montessorians are still clever at this level about "materializing the abstraction" for students. It's a strange thing to say, "I have negative 4." Among many beautiful materials, we make ones that represent negative quantities. But abstraction is no longer the culmination of exploration of the material world; the abstraction, the symbolic notation, is the material. The materials we create are an aid. Math is an additional way, besides reading, for students to see how consequential our ability to manipulate symbols is.



In algebra, as part of the cultural aspect, we take the time to let the students discover linear equations. You cannot list all the solutions to a two variable, first-degree equation such as  $y = 3x + 5$  because there are an infinite number of them. But students can represent them all on a [Des]Cartesian grid, that is, they can graph the equation. Students discover that you always get a straight line for those type of equations (hence "linear equations"). How amazing is that! And when you do the same work with a quadratic equation, it always makes a parabola! And so on with other functions.

By allowing that knowledge to come by discovery, the algebra students sense how fertile it was to marry geometry and algebra half-a-millennium ago. That leads to various discussions: why the nerds of the time were all writing in Latin; how algebra seeped into Europe from Arabian lands, the increasing reverence for and confidence in reason; how the seed for reason's ascendancy was planted centuries earlier by Thomas Aquinas and others; how ideas and events percolate and change the world; etc.

As for the nitty-gritty, the steady work of the adolescent math program is the work units, a progressive series of assignments with both direct and indirect aims embedded. Each student advances at a pace that suits him or her best, just as in the elementary years. There are many reasons for varying speeds of progress: desire, depth of reflection, other claims on a student's time, a need for more, or less, "breakout work" (think drill sheets), or even just the general retreat from intellectual pursuits that Maria Montessori saw as a trait of adolescence.

With that totally individualized pace, those who need more than average time to master topics do not pile-up a set of half-learned skills that will eventually swamp them. There is no need to resort to, "I'm no good at math." Math doesn't become a misery and torture. It remains a satisfying, normalizing work. On the other hand, we let students with a facility for math fly, and thus increase their excitement. From those who master basic algebra, to those who add geometry, algebra 2, and/or parts of precalc to their repertoire, all our adolescents experience the positive reinforcement and confidence that comes from overcoming obstacles, and gain the satisfaction of achievement.

In contemporary jargon, the approach we take is a spiral, integrated curriculum. For example,



introductory probability-and-statistics is introduced early at a simple level via discovery and by creating expected-value games (or, as the kids call them - gambling). The concepts are then allowed to marinate while other topics are studied. Later, the student revisits their old statistics friend and learns more at a higher level.

Students are tested constantly. The tests are low-stakes. They are for the purpose of demonstrating mastery; they are not part of a high-stakes ranking system. Even students who initially approach tests with anxiety soon see their true purpose in our program, and start to treat tests as useful feedback, not verdicts.

Group work has magnetic pull for adolescents. The fact that the core is the same for all students leads easily to fluid ad-hoc study groups. Besides working with math peers, in our day-to-day life students get help from those who are further along the path, which clarifies the work for both the explainer and the explaine. From time-to-time, "seminar" math problems are given to the whole group. Those are puzzle-like problems that require raw math thinking, and are most efficiently solved by working with others. We try to create an atmosphere that talks math – informally, formally, at lunch, during transitions, in other subjects – wherever & whenever.

Geometry as a formal study is an aspirational course in our lovely multi-faceted community. Though our core work includes some geometry and even extends



to re-enacting the geometry in Plato's dialogue Meno, students who are driven by math and have mastered study skills can form a group to study Euclid's Elements Book I - its postulates and its 48 proofs.

Book I is an austere deductive system that culminates in the Pythagorean Theorem. Students learned the theorem inductively in their elementary years. Now they learn deductively. Logic shows them that the theorem has to be true – no way around it – for every right triangle - IF you accept the axioms. Euclid's Elements has nothing that is unnecessary, but has everything that is necessary. The students feel its truth and beauty. They learn to demonstrate proofs, to think on their feet, answer questions, and maintain their thread. The time it takes from bumbling, uncertain presenters to unshakeable, confident ones is short enough for them to be gratified by their accomplishment.

The Euclid study takes two to three months. Then those students do an entire high-school geometry course. We permit only two math periods per week to be given over to geometry. You can see why the students must have masterful organization and time-management skills! The Euclid study helps immensely in that ambitious undertaking, and the students proceed with joy and confidence.

"Follow the child" - we have the flexibility to do that in individual ways too. When students become particularly enthusiastic about a topic, we can allow time for a deep-dive. When a few students became fascinated with binary, for example, they pursued it. Their enthusiasm spread to everyone, and we soon had students creating ternary, base 4, and base 5 number systems, complete with their own invented symbols and multiplication tables – even choirs singing rousing renditions of "The Twelve Days of Christmas"





in binary. With the new knowledge, the students learned how computers work: how they transmit bits and bytes, and how programs translate the bits of electricity into data for humans.

Math, as all the work in the Adolescent Program, means working with many types of people. That helps the students see that a facility with math is just one trait among many that a person might have. In our small environment, there is no possibility of associating with only types of people like yourself. That helps in the adolescent's quest to figure out who they are and how they can be worthy contributors to society. Working in such close quarters helps the students gain a heart-felt appreciation of each other's gifts, and see how the diversity of natures strengthens the overall society.

As to various natures, here's a parting quote:

"The difference between the poet and the mathematician is that the poet tries to get his head into the heavens while the mathematician tries to get the heavens into his head." – G. K. Chesterton



## 2ND Annual MSGH Elementary Jog-A-Thon

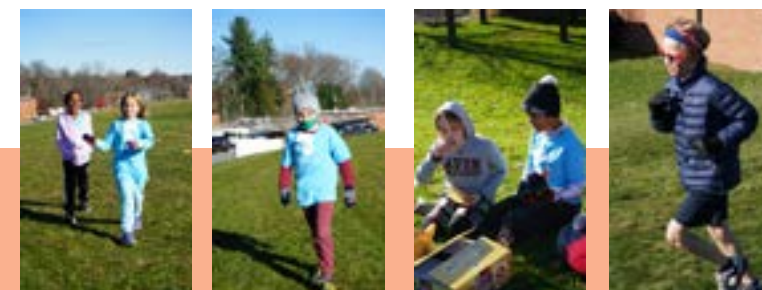
Tuesday, November 23, 2021

This event evolved from two Lower Elementary traditions that were very popular in past years—the Mitten Run and a holiday gift to a charitable organization. Last year we decided to combine the two and begin a new tradition—the MSGH Jog-A-Thon!



Students, sponsored by their family, ran laps on the upper field to raise money to support a family in need during the upcoming holidays! At the end of the two-hour event, all students tallied their laps and then crunched the numbers to determine their total contributions to the project. They then collected the donations, which were pooled together and used to meet some of the needs, and hopefully a few wishes, of the families they support.

The students LOVE the freedom, camaraderie, and health benefits of this activity!



This collaboration encourages the students to be engaged in a community effort that is much bigger than themselves. It supports so many of the second plane characteristics—the emerging social being, big work, admiration/hero worship, extraordinary stamina, empathy, and gratitude. Students also realize the potential of the gifts unique to humans—the *head* which enables us to dream big and communicate our ideas, the *hands* which bring to fruition our ideas, and our *heart* which allows us to love and care about others who we may never even meet.





## A JOYFUL AND POSITIVE PLACE

By Rebecca London, Board of Trustees Chair.



When I think about the values that are important and represent our best hopes for the future, ideas such as compassion, respect, intellectual curiosity, kindness, trust and authenticity come to mind. I feel profoundly lucky to have found a community at The Montessori School of Greater Hartford that embodies these values and so much more. MSGH is a place where every individual is treated with respect and kindness while taking an important role in the collective well-being of our community. When I watch a child stop

to give a smaller student words of encouragement or see children enthusiastically sharing their work, I know that these behaviors have been demonstrated by caring adults who are nurturing them and helping them grow into their best selves. Children who will continue to exemplify these values into adulthood will become thoughtful and compassionate global citizens. It is not just our children who benefit from this caring environment—as parents and caregivers and as respected partners in our children’s well-being, we have immense opportunities to grow and become more invested in their development. I often think about the fact that my children spend more of their waking hours at school than they do with me. This makes it vitally important that the values of their learning environment are of the highest caliber and that they are part of a community not only educates—but nurtures, supports and embraces us. MSGH is most certainly this place. Whether you are just joining MSGH or if you have been a part of MSGH for years, I am so glad that both you and your children are part of our vibrant community. I hope that you will fully immerse yourselves in all MSGH has to offer in the new year and help us celebrate what a joyful and positive place it represents in our lives.



Sign-up for this class easily by scanning this QR code.

## We are grateful to have YOU in our community!

Our community is growing, so please take a moment to meet some of our members and what they love!



**Lindsay Cook**  
*Learning Specialist*

### New Pet:

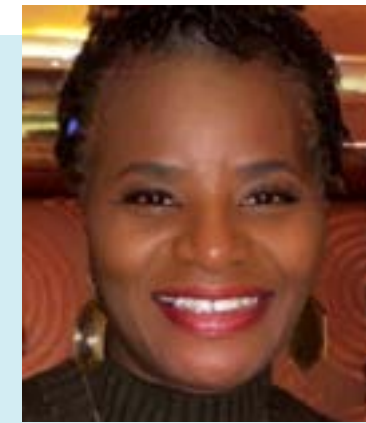
Ziggy, a goldendoodle puppy, who we expected to grow to be 40 lbs, has turned out to be 85 lbs of fluff. More dog to love!

### Favorite Travel Story

My husband and I met while hiking in Spain. We were both completing El Camino de Santiago, when we fell in love.

### The Best but Hardest Job:

Being a parent is one of the best and hardest jobs in the world. Understanding our children’s strengths, supporting their challenges and setting them free to “become” is the greatest mission. I have been on all sides of the table—as a worried parent, as a proud teacher, as a supporting specialist—and feel grateful to be doing this work alongside the parent community at MSGH.



**Kimberly Palmer Davis**  
*Toddler Assistant*

### A Nostalgic Song You Love:

“Family Reunion” by the O’Jays

### A Word You Love to Say:

“Serendipity” is my favorite word to say and is also how I discovered Montessori Education.

### Your Favorite Game to Play:

Scrabble Challenge



**Gülen Tuncer Senecal**  
*Board Treasurer*

### Your Go To For Amazing Food:

My kitchen or Arugula in West Hartford Center

### Your Secret Talent:

I play a mean air guitar!

### Your Good Luck Charm:

My evil eye bracelet that my grandmother gave me.





## To My Montessori Community,



*As 2021 draws to a close and COVID continues to rage, we all have plenty of challenges. And yet, even in this stressful and imperfect world, we have much to be thankful for.*

*Many of us — all of us, I hope — are thankful for our school, the Montessori School of Greater Hartford. We are thankful for our wonderful, experienced, dedicated teachers. We are thankful for the meticulously prepared environments. We are thankful for the gold-standard, AMI-accredited Montessori programming. We are very thankful for the fact that, in contrast to every other situation I have heard about, MSGH has managed to make the COVID-era school experience so very close to normal. Our children have not suffered a “lost year.” They have thrived.*

*I know we are all grateful for these things, but I also know that it is possible to take MSGH for granted.*

*A friend of mine whose young daughter had been at MSGH had to move to a different city. She immediately toured the Montessori schools there — this city has more than most —, looking for the best school for her daughter. It was dispiriting, she told me. The schools weren't the same. I asked her if it was because they weren't AMI schools? She said no: it was because they weren't MSGH.*



*This woman was an educator herself, trained in child development. She was able to recognize, not just from the point of view of a loving parent, but with the eyes and experience of a professional, just how special MSGH is. She was able to fully appreciate how richly MSGH embodies the guiding concept of “follow the child,” where following the child does not mean indulging in the child's every whim, but rather closely observing the child's current state of emotional and intellectual development, and harnessing that natural energy and curiosity so that the child can flourish.*

*I am not trained as my friend is, but when I remember this conversation, I am reminded of how fortunate we are to have this school to send our children to, and what a rare and precious opportunity we have. New York City does not have such a school (I know; I used to live and teach there). Boston does not have such a school (my siblings live there). For a very few, fleeting years, we in the Hartford area are able to provide our children with the best, richest, healthiest environment possible, one that allows them to grow to their fullest — intellectually, emotionally, and socially. We are able to provide them a genuine, deep, lasting education that is free from the limiting, superficial demands and counter-productive focus on metrics that is unavoidable in traditional schools.*

*MSGH is only able to maintain its gold-standard programming because it is an independent school. It does not depend on (and does not get) funding from the state. It does not have to twist and narrow its lessons to meet a standardized exam.*

*And, like any independent school, its expenses are never fully covered by tuition. Like any not-for-profit institution, it depends in part on donations. The Children's Fund is an essential part of the MSGH budget. The Children's Fund supports many aspects of the school experience, including classroom materials, professional development, and tuition assistance.*

*Every year, 100% of the staff demonstrates its support of the school by contributing to the Children's Fund. As parents, grandparents, alumni, board members and friends, let's join them. Please consider making a contribution, of any amount, to the Children's Fund. Every dollar does count. It's not just the total amount raised that matters: the percentage of the community that participates is perhaps even more meaningful.*

*Please join us, and help support our extraordinary school.*

*Sincerely,  
Sally Tittmann*

*Parent of Arthur (8th year, Adolescent Program) and Ruth (5th year, Upper Elementary)*





## Music Program at MSGH *by Colleen Casey-Nelson, Music Teacher*

With the sights of bright red clothing and the sounds of clanging, whether in a field, under a tree, or in a barn, music is bringing MSGH students together - reaffirming community, fostering creativity, and making connections. Most music classes have been outdoors this fall, providing a setting that inspires and brings joy. Many children associate the outdoors with beauty and wonder - with exploration and play. Nature and wide-open space has allowed students to stretch their bodies as well as their imaginations.

### COMMUNITY:

Coming together to share music has reinforced our sense of ensemble. Students balance individual ideas with the creative contributions of those around them. All levels have been using body percussion challenges to sharpen their inner rhythmic skills while coordinating to be part of the “musical machine” - each playing a part. The Adolescent students had rehearsed as a “Band in the Barn” - balancing each other’s musical contributions to perform a bilingual version of “Stand by Me.” With multiple listenings to Bob Dylan’s “Blowin’ in the Wind”, students in Upper Elementary interpreted the deep meaning behind each verse and linked it to the world they live in today. They then composed their own original lyrics to the tune in an effort to expand on Dylan’s theme. With wide open spaces, children in Lower Elementary have been able to do (modified) folk dancing - from the Danish “7 Jumps” to a school favorite, “Sasha”. As students join together under the sky for music, they continue to sing, dance, play, and listen - together.

### CREATIVITY:

The breadth of music embraces the notion of creativity. Nurturing creativity requires patience and space - space in terms of time, but space in terms

of making room for ideas of all kinds. At times, we respond to music kinesthetically - other times, we discuss and examine - and yet, at other time, we explore and experience. Whether creating new dance moves for “Pata Pata” in the field at Millstream Farm, or Upper Elementary improvising jazz “scat” solos after being inspired by Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, and Mel Torme. Lower Elementary children explored the book, “In the Space of the Sky”, through creative movement and interpretation as Debussy’s “Claire de Lune” accompanied their movement. Voice, body, and instruments all are tools for expression.

### CONNECTION:

Music can be a lens through which to view ourselves, other subjects, and the world. From creating a playlist for the book, “The Giver”, to singing songs in Spanish, the Adolescent students’ subject areas overlap and complement each other. Music can add sound and dimension to the literature students are studying. Listening to the Upper Elementary book, “Saint Louis Armstrong Beach” prompted some students to recall learning about Trombone Shorty and his life growing up in New Orleans. Upper Elementary considered the composer’s point of view - the clouds as inspiration for music. Students then delved into studying a bit about Jazz, jazz artists, and jazz techniques. Our lives are not compartmentalized, nor should our learning. Lower Elementary has been making connections of nature to music. Cloud formations moving about on a particularly windy day prompted a relaxed ending to classes where students watched the ballet in the sky as they listened to “Cumulus”.

Music at MSGH brings us together as a community. Music at MSGH inspires us to create rhythm, melodies, lyrics, and movement. Music at MSGH connects us to each other - to other content areas - to our surroundings - to our shared global experiences. The combination of Community, Creativity, and Connection allow for meaningful exploration and growth.

Keeping Listening - that is the key.

Open Ears.

Open Hearts.

Open Minds.





## ALUMNI CORNER

### Taking Another Look and Capturing More MSGH Moments



I graduated from Syracuse University with a B.A. in International Relations in spring 2020. Like many of my peers, I left school feeling uncertain about what my future would hold as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the summer I picked up two part-time jobs to keep me busy which was incredibly lucky. Just when I thought the universe was finished blessing me, it sent me another opportunity: to return to my elementary school, MSGH, to take photos of the students! So, I spent my days safely and sanitarily going to each classroom to take photos of the children and putting together the weekly Bulletin.

As a college student for the past four years, I had limited chances to interact with anyone outside of my age group, so being with the children at MSGH gave me a whole new energy that I haven't experienced in a while. It was fascinating to see all their different personalities—some of them posed right when I aimed the lens towards them while some of them hid behind their books. It made me

wonder what kind of kid I used to be.

I was a student at MSGH for ten years (from when I was 2 to 11!) so essentially my entire childhood was spent here. Walking through the halls and classrooms brought me so much nostalgia and reminisced about working on the Pink Tower or pouring beans. It was amazing to see all that has changed, but also all the things that stayed the same. For example, on Mystery History day when the kids guessed each other's characters, I'd hear them say, "I'm not calling on you, you already know!" or "I already told you who I am!" So I knew some things really never change from generation to generation—kids will always be kids.

I feel so lucky to be a part of this community again. Between the kindness of teachers, staff, and students, it was really hard to have a bad day here! I'm thankful to the community for welcoming me back with open arms. And, thank you to the MSGH parents who allowed me to capture these incredible moments for your families' and school's memories!

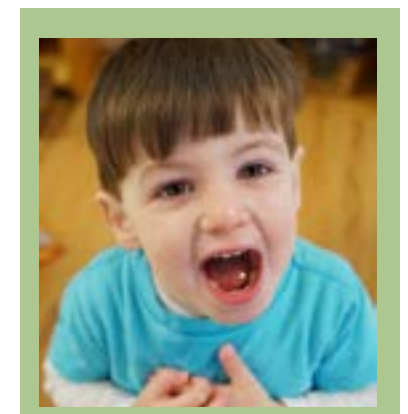
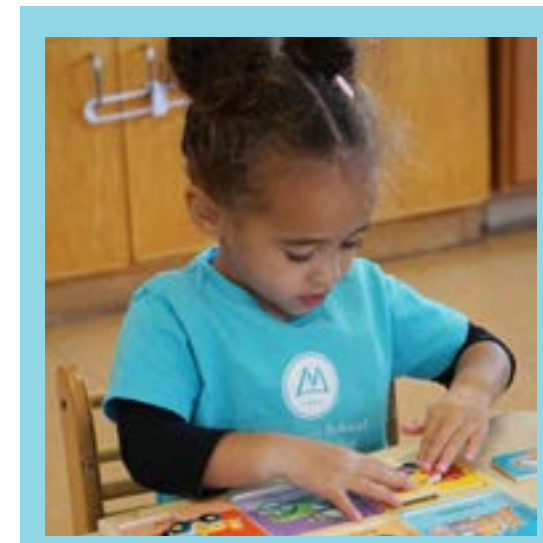
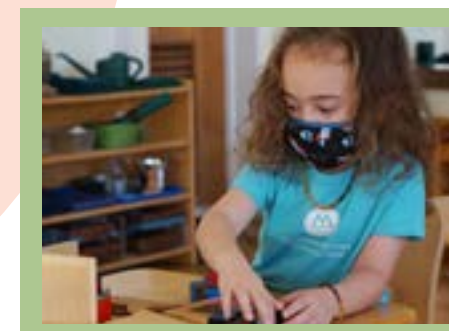
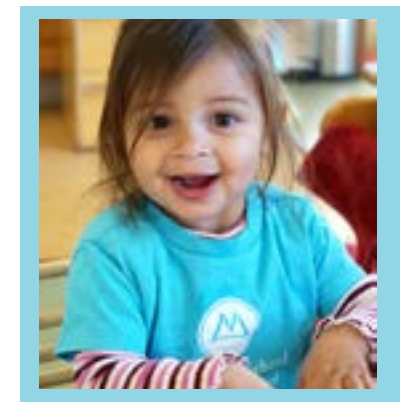
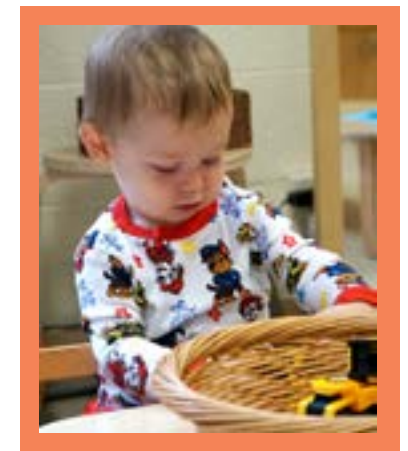
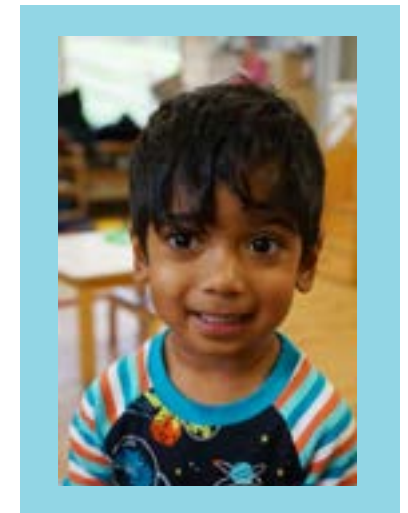
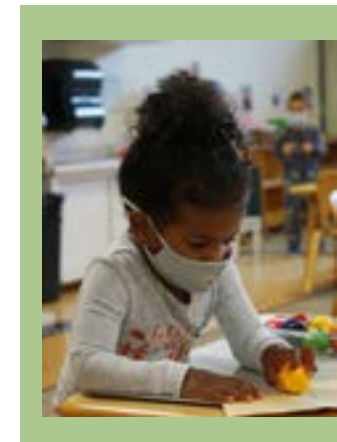
Thank you,  
Hayley Madigan

Tell us what you've  
Been up to!  
(students and families)

We wish to include your "news" in our next *Follow the Child*. Current and "back in the day" pictures along with fond memories of your time at MSGH are always welcome. Updated email addresses for the entire family are also helpful so we can stay in contact with everyone. Please email [Tokoo@msgh.org](mailto:Tokoo@msgh.org).

We'd love for you to stop by and connect in person!

## MSGH Spirit Days: Pajama Day & MSGH T-shirt Day!







## Our 2021/2022 Children's Fund

Families find their way to MSGH in a variety of ways: they may have been referred by a friend, visited our website, attended an open House, or specifically sought out a Montessori education for their child. Regardless of how they found their way here, virtually all of our families cite an instant connection to the MSGH guides and our community. Families feel comfortable entrusting their children to MSGH, because they know their children will be given an incredible experience, both academically and developmentally. An important part of the relationship between MSGH and its families is our support of one another. MSGH supports all of our students and their families, and in turn, MSGH relies on its families and friends to be active and involved in our school community. This is shown through participation in our Information Series, conferences with guides, attendance at school events, and by supporting our development efforts.

Gifts to the Children's Fund are gifts from the heart. These donations directly support every student at our school; they support our programming, operating costs, staff professional development, and our Flexible Tuition Program. Thank you to everyone who has already donated this school year.

When we give to the Children's Fund, we are demonstrating our commitment to the school and its mission of fostering a strong foundation for confident, compassionate participation in the world by nurturing each child's unique gifts, passion for learning, and independence.

Every donation to the Children's Fund, regardless of the amount, makes a difference. We hope you will consider making a meaningful contribution to the Children's Fund, at whatever level is comfortable for you. On behalf of every student, past and present, thank you for all the many ways you support MSGH.

Warmly,  
Toko Odorcuk



# Montessori School of Greater Hartford

## 2021-2022 Children's Fund

### CATEGORIES OF GIVING

Education for Peace	\$10,000+	Benefactor	\$1,000-\$1,499
The Maria Montessori Circle	\$5,000 - \$9,999	Sustainer	\$500-\$999
The Pink Tower Circle	\$2,500-\$4,999	Patron	\$250-\$499
The Director's Circle	\$1,500-\$2,499	Supporter	\$100-\$249
		Friend	\$1 to \$99

I/We gift \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- Where MSGH needs it most   
  Faculty Professional Development   
  Facilities & Natural Playground  
 Classroom Materials and Programming   
  Financial Assistance

*Should any fund become oversubscribed, MSGH will use the gift where it is most needed.*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Maiden Name, if MSGH Alumna \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please initial here if you wish to remain an anonymous donor   
 \_\_\_\_\_ Please initial here if your company will match this contribution

### AFFILIATION TO MSGH:

- Current Parent   
  Parent of Alumnus/a   
  Friend  
 Alumnus/a   
  Grandparent   
  Trustee

### MY GIFT IS:

- In Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_  
 In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

### To give online, visit:

www.msgh.org ➔ Support MSGH ➔ Children's Fund

For questions, please contact Toko Odorcuk, Director of Advancement at 860.236.4565 ext. 112.



MSGH is a 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

**Thank you for supporting the Montessori School of Greater Hartford!**

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## Montessori School of Greater Hartford

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### Have an idea for the next publication?

Let us know by emailing [ericak@msgh.org](mailto:ericak@msgh.org).

We would love to hear from you!

For copies of FTC photos or articles, please contact the Advancement Office.



#### *Our Mission:*

*Montessori School of Greater Hartford fosters a strong foundation for confident, compassionate participation in the world by nurturing each child's unique gifts, passion for learning, and independence. As a community, we enrich families, live our diversity, and embody the Association Montessori Internationale standards of excellence.*

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