

Follow *the* Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



55 YEARS STRONG!



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Dear MSGH Community,

Welcome to this edition of *Follow the Child*, one that closes out MSGH's 55th year and what a year it has been. Our quick shift from on-campus to distance-learning was seismic for faculty and families, and drew on everyone's strengths, as challenges were met and overcome. Read on for Sally Tittmann's, Elementary parent, article where she eloquently shares her family's experience during the latter part of the school year. In this edition you will also find wonderful articles highlighting our Elementary and Adolescent Programs. Sarah McCabe brings to life our students' amazing experience at the Montessori Model United Nations in New York. Caren Ross expertly elevates the role of the outdoors, specifically the garden, in meeting young people's need for physical, purposeful, and collaborative work, while Priscilla Marshall, teacher and artist-in-residence, describes with delightful detail how our program capitalizes on and channels the creative energy of this age. James Scarpa, new MSGH parent, generously shares how MSGH validates his personal philosophy on parenting while continuing to shape it. Gina Wangrycht, Primary and Elementary parent, insightfully layers a Montessori lens on a walk in the woods with her sons. I hope you enjoy the collection of beautiful pictures that celebrate our children who completed their Primary, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary levels, and take time to read excerpts from the speeches delivered during our virtual Moving-On Ceremony by our amazing graduates – Noah Cinel, Elliott London, Alex Loudon and Nadine Stetzelberg. Their grace and intelligence were on full display. Check out our alumni corner and, please, make a plan to send a picture and share what is going on with you.

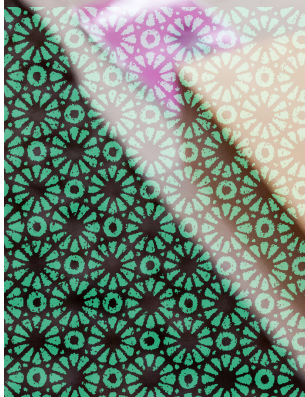
In my current position, working in collaboration with families, along with my other big job, parenting, it is

impossible to escape the reality that children have much in their lives that can be identified as bringing stress. Interestingly, Dr. Montessori's work that began over 110 years ago with a group of children in the tenements of Rome involved taking children from a highly stressful setting where they had no control over their world and placing them in an environment where, based on her careful observations, she created a systematic approach for retaining what a child brings into the world – energy, passion, curiosity and social skills. The result was transformational, not just for the children involved, but for us all, who now have a tried and tested approach to education that is as effective today as it was then because it is based on the true nature of the child, and is centered on giving autonomy that is developmentally appropriate from the earliest of ages. Recently, I had a conversation with Una Barry, former MSGH Head of School and good friend, about how Montessori is a readymade antidote to the stress that children experience from the detrimental demands that the adult world places on them, often played out in the arena of education. It seemed like the perfect topic to bring to this audience, and before I knew it she was off writing the article that follows. I am very grateful to her, as I am to all our contributors.

This summer, we will be busy at school, preparing for our 56th year, one that will look different, but will in no way see us lessen our commitment to "following the child."

All my best,

Mary



“At some given moment it happens that the child becomes deeply interested in a piece of work; we see it in the expression on his face, his intense concentration, the devotion to the exercise.”

-Dr. Maria Montessori

Montessori: The Stress Antidote by Una Barry

"The education of even a small child, therefore, does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life."

Dr. Maria Montessori

Stress: *In a medical or biological context stress is a physical, mental, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension. (medicinenet.com)*

There's good stress, the kind for which our abilities and resources, even if it's necessary to stretch them a little, are a match. This kind of stress often leaves us energized and feeling accomplished, particularly if we have done a little stretching. According to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, in his widely acclaimed book Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience, "The best moments in our lives are not the passive, receptive, relaxing times ... the best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limit in voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile."

Then, there's the not-so-good stress, the kind in which our abilities and resources are overwhelmed. This type of stress leaves us feeling tense, emotionally fragile and can manifest with a myriad of physical symptoms.

In 2018, the American Psychological Association (APA) analyzed data from the National Survey of Mental Health and found that, "rates of anxiety and depression had increased in kids ages 6 to 17, from 5.4% in 2003 to 8.4% in 2012." Among other factors, the APA, cited school as being a source of stress for children.

We all know that with life comes some level of stress. As adults, when we experience unhealthy levels of stress we often have the power to eliminate or temper the offending situation. Our children, on the other hand, are at the mercy of the adult agenda

and consequent demands. Conventional school, under pressure to standardize, offers children little power or control over their experience, as they are bound to a set curriculum that does not cater to the unique challenges and gifts of each child.

"Joy, feeling one's own value, being appreciated and loved by others, feeling useful and capable of production are all factors of enormous value for the human soul." -Dr. Maria Montessori

Feeling incapable and the consequent lack of control are the ingredients for unhealthy stress. Knowing this gives us a roadmap to inure our children against damaging stress. Building capability and a sense of personal dominion is crucial to minimizing unhealthy stress. To be effective in this endeavor, the universal nature of the child, as well as the unique nature of each child, must be front and center.

Watch a 2-year-old go about her business in a safe and nurturing environment. There is energy, focus, self-direction, movement, always movement!! Joy and wonder. This is what learning looks like when left to its own devices: stress-free and joyful.



Inherent in Montessori, which we can call the stress antidote, is a respect and reverence for the nature of the child. Montessori reveres the child's ability to absorb, adapt, and master, an evolutionary acquisition that has allowed humanity to thrive and prosper for millennia. Dr. Montessori, in her brilliance, sought simply to facilitate this natural phenomenon, remove any obstacles, and trust the child to do what he does. It works!

What is this extraordinarily successful approach? What does it look like in action? How does it translate to lots of good stress and how are Montessori students empowered to manage unhealthy stress?



"We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process that develops spontaneously in the human being." -Dr. Maria Montessori

Montessori is a complex set of integrated elements. Remove any one element and the recipe doesn't work, or at least not optimally. Built into this recipe are the ingredients for minimization and management of stress:

- * *An environment designed to facilitate the student's natural drive to learn.*
- * *An adult trained to observe, interpret, and respond to the developmental needs of each child.*
- * *Hands-on experiential work that engages the whole personality.*
- * *Time and freedom of choice, key factors that contribute to deep, joyful, self-directed learning.*
- * *Purposeful intention to maximize a child's independence and capability in every aspect of development.*
- * *Structure, scaffolding, and boundaries that offer clear guidelines, a sense of security, and consistent guidance.*

Let's look at how the child experiences these elements in the Montessori environment:

- * *An environment designed to facilitate the student's natural drive to learn.*

"The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences." -Dr. Maria Montessori

The catch-all, of which all other elements are a part, the **Prepared Environment** is the child's total experience, from the physical elements, to the community of children and adults, to the activities, to the overarching approach of Freedom and Responsibility. Dr. Montessori's true genius shines

in this, her most extraordinary creation. Meticulously prepared by the guide, seamless indoor and outdoor environments offer the student the world in microcosm, safely nurturing and liberating. Additional elements incorporated into the core framework tailor each environment to the needs of the age-group to be served. This world, navigated daily, is experiential, didactic, supportive, engaging, empowering, and navigable by the initiated child. It is, as Dr. Montessori says, designed to facilitate the child's developing independence.

Challenging and enticing work with academics, **animals and plants** to care for, gardens to create and maintain, places to be alone and contemplate are all choices to be made. Students develop their own flow, moving from intense challenging work alone, to relaxing meditative work, to conversations and collaborative work with friends. For the child, finding your own balance, getting to know yourself, is key to understanding your needs and your limits.

Speaking of friends, each Prepared Environment is a community of **mixed ages** based on developmental similarities. The young look for and find mentors and role-models. The middle-aged dip into the younger and older cohorts as their developing maturity and abilities dictate. And the elders are the statesmen and women who have trained for and anticipated this role. Conscious and capable, they lead, mentor, take responsibility, learn about themselves and their leadership style, and proudly give back to the community in the way of



their predecessors.

The life of this micro-community mirrors that of the larger adult community. As such, a student navigating it daily meets many of the same obstacles and frustrations. Fortunately, the students have an ever-present, on-site coach who guides and supports as they develop and hone their life skills. Students observe and take part in "Grace and Courtesy" lessons that are modeled by the guide (teacher). These little vignettes demonstrate how to navigate the social life of the community. This is the stuff of empowerment in managing and minimizing unhealthy stress: With the support of the guide and their peers, students learn to:

Manage conflict

Self-sooth

Appropriately advocate for oneself

Appropriately advocate for others

Access support

Provide support

Another important benefit of the mixed-aged community becomes apparent when, as often occurs, a student's pace varies across subjects or areas of development. In this case, for example, the



the known (comfort) and the unknown (challenge matching skills). Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi states, "Enjoyment appears at the boundary between boredom and anxiety, when the challenges are just balanced with the person's capacity to act." It sets the child up for success

invite the child to touch and manipulate. Each set of didactic materials is a concrete representation of a universal concept, e.g., dimension, color, multiplication, geometry, etc. Repeatedly manipulating these didactic materials, students discover patterns, and the limitations and extent of an inherent concept. As students internalize and abstract these concepts and acquire the language to express them, they let go of the materials. Now the student, confidently and capably applies these concepts in advanced study, conversation, and life.

* *Time and freedom of choice are key factors that contribute to deep, joyful, self-directed learning.*

"Flow is being completely involved in activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz." - Mihaly Csikszentmihaly

Dr. Montessori, years earlier, described examples of profound concentration that she witnessed resulting from spontaneously chosen work in her classrooms. She knew the ingredients for an optimal learning experience, over 100 years ago. We've already established that purposeful, challenging work brings meaning and joy. However, to be optimal it must be combined with **freedom to choose work and unlimited, uninterrupted time** to go into "flow."

The guide is tasked with ensuring that each student has a broad repertoire of work to access. As a lesson concludes, the student is told, "You may take this work out at any time." Work chosen freely and out of interest drives deeper engagement, more enjoyment, and higher probability that the student will return over and over, layering and deepening understanding.

in independent follow-up and enjoyment.

The guide's ultimate goal is to become less and less needed by the children as the children become more and more capable. For this to come to fruition, the guide must trust the method and must trust the child. The child senses this and so trusts herself.

* *Hands-on experiential work that engages the whole personality, developing capability and confidence.*

"The greatest sign of success for a teacher ... is to be able to say, "the children are now working as if I did not exist." - Dr. Maria Montessori

The developing child has extremely important work to do, i.e., to become the adult he will make.

From a very young age, children are drawn to the work of adults. And so, work in a Montessori environment is real, meaningful, and purposeful. Students do not play with toy kitchens; they cook food that they may have grown and that will be served to the community. Montessori adolescent students, before studying commerce in the classroom, plant, harvest, process, market and sell their own products. This real work is intellectual, physical, social, and intensely gratifying; it feeds the soul.

Children are drawn to beauty and precision. And so, the **Montessori materials** are beautiful and precise. They

academically advanced student will be challenged and excited by working with older peers while socially spending time with same-age peers.

Freedom to move about, choose work and work partners is honored. Work that is uninterrupted, deep, and completed to personal satisfaction is the norm. Joyful purpose is the result.

* *An adult trained to observe, interpret, and respond to the developmental needs of each child.*

"We teachers can only help the work going on, as servants wait upon a master." - Dr. Maria Montessori

The adult, or guide, is first and foremost, trained to observe. Armed with honed observation skills, detailed knowledge of child development, and **the Montessori open-ended curriculum**, he has the means to support the community and each student's unique development. The trained adult and the prepared environment partner most visibly in the **lesson**. The lesson fuels the child's energy, engagement and drive. As befits developmental needs, lessons can be given to one student (mostly for ages 0 to 6) or a small group (mostly for ages 6 to 18). The lesson demonstrates the key to an activity. It is carefully chosen based on observation and knowledge of the child's ability, readiness, and interest. Each lesson has an element of

Freedom of choice must be paired with plenty of time to honor each student's pace, and to deeply engage. **Independent work periods** of two to three hours are protected. Students engage in cycles of work, choosing an activity, working for as long as they wish, and completing and starting all over again, all the while navigating the social community, and taking care of themselves and their environment. Lots of practice for life is provided in this little cosmos.

* Purposeful intention to maximize a child's independence and capability in every aspect of development.

Montessori is an education for independence, preparing not just for school, but for life." -Dr. Maria Montessori

The hardest thing to do is sit on your hands when a child is struggling. However, as long as the child is persevering and capable of meeting the challenge, doing so is a gift you give for life. Dr. Montessori said, "Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed." The child who repeatedly meets and overcomes challenges becomes the adult who faces challenges with courage and tenacity.

In the Montessori environment, students get many opportunities to face challenges. They are proactively provided with as many tools as possible to independently handle challenges. For example, in the area of **Practical Life**, systems are demonstrated for care of the environment, clean-up of spills, etc. Lessons are presented on self-care appropriate to age. Navigating various social challenges is demonstrated and practiced. Students are shown how to find and ask for help from peers. Academics are clearly demonstrated to support success. Then, the student is trusted to try, try, and try again, alone and without interference.

Only when the guide sees upset or is asked for help will she approach and give the minimum amount of help necessary.

Interfering when a child is persisting is robbing the child of the experience that often ends with a joyful declaration in a Montessori environment, "I did it all by myself." There is no greater satisfaction!

* Structure, scaffolding, and boundaries offering clear guidelines, a sense of security, and consistent guidance.

"Discipline must come through liberty." -Dr. Maria Montessori

Freedom and Discipline could be the software or operating system of the Montessori environment. It creates and provides clear structure, scaffolding, and boundaries for the life of the community. The basic premise is that there is a balance between freedoms afforded the members and the responsibility or discipline that comes with those freedoms. Sound familiar? It should; it's the basis for society as we know it. Only when we are free can we develop true self-discipline. Within this system of freedom and discipline children may:

- Choose work (freedom) from the work that the teacher has presented to them (responsibility).
- Choose work, (freedom) clean up and put it back in its place (responsibility).
- Choose work, (freedom) carry it out

respectfully and with care (responsibility).

•Move freely around the classroom (freedom) without disturbing others' work (responsibility).

•Watch others work (freedom) without disturbing their concentration (responsibility).

•Work with others (freedom) in a manner that is conducive to work (responsibility).

•Converse with others (freedom) respectfully and kindly (responsibility).

•Give a lesson to another child (freedom) when they have mastered the work and had a lesson on how to give a lesson (responsibility).

As always, nothing is left to chance. Processes, systems, and skills are demonstrated to facilitate success. Now the student takes it and makes it her own and applies it to life.

In conclusion, the complex set of separate yet integrated elements that are discussed here come together to create the recipe for an authentic Montessori experience, one that is characterized by energy, focus, self-direction, wonder, movement, always movement! It's exactly what learning looks like when left to its own devices. Fundamentally rooted in the nature of the child, it is adaptable to any culture, place, or time. Tried and true for over 110 years, Montessori generates purpose, engagement, ownership, belonging and joy. What better way to fortify our children against damaging stress.

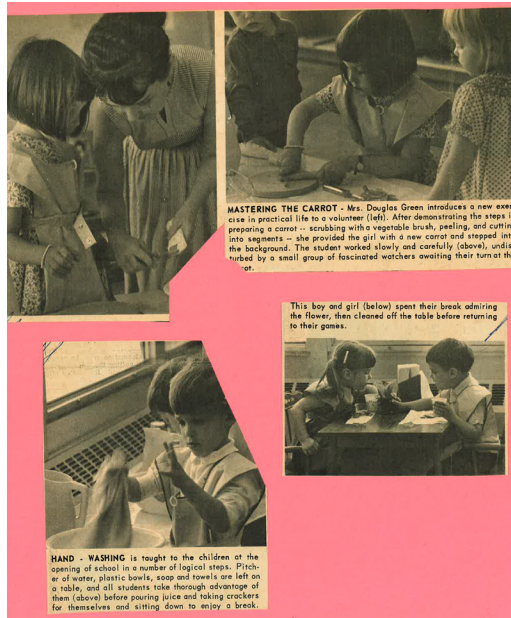
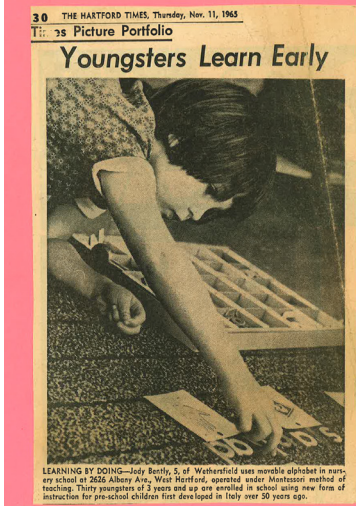
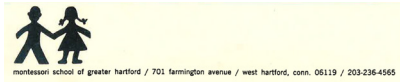


HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, MSGH!

55 years of bringing the joy of learning to the community!



Thank you,
Ms. Anayancy and Ms. Mary
for your 25 years of service caring for
our children!



Continued from Page E1

The atmosphere is tailored to children, in that the furniture is small, the paintings are hung at children's eye-level and the classrooms are decorated with bright colors. There are live animals and fish in the rooms to pique the children's curiosity.

Since it started in 1964 with a class in the morning and a class in the afternoon, the school has expanded its services to include after-school care for the children of working parents; an extended day program — much like full-day kindergarten — for 30 of its students; and a summer school, Kuszik said. The staff now includes four classroom teachers, two child-care teachers and four assistants.

A walk through the building, located behind Congregation Beth Israel at 701 Farmington Ave., shows children playing quietly, working on art and music projects or resting. Kuszik said some parents who tour the school remark upon how quiet the children are.

"They have to develop concentration and independence," Kuszik said, and the quiet work time helps them to do that. "Later they go to gym and they know that is their loud time."

According to a brochure on the school, Montessori was the first woman physician to graduate from an Italian medical school. She spent about 15 years after that working in private practice, serving on the staff of an institute for handicapped children and lecturing on anthropology. She then was asked to direct a day care center in San Lorenzo, a suburb of Rome.





1964-2004

For forty years, the Montessori School of Greater Hartford has nurtured the love of learning in children in the spirit of Maria Montessori's method. The 40th Anniversary was appropriately observed with a day celebrating the diversity of our community and the world to which we all belong.



Pandemic Learning: The Right Time for MSGH

By Sally Tittmann, current Elementary parent

It's Summer! I'd venture to say that I'm not the only parent breathing a sigh of relief that this school year is over, while also taking a deep, deep breath to calm myself before a summer where most activities have been canceled. The past few months have been for all of us some version of hard, very hard, extremely hard, and unbelievably hard. To be sure, there have also been moments of grace and beauty — if only due to the beautiful weather and cleaner air we've been breathing. There is also much occasion for gratitude.

As a staunch champion of Montessori in general and MSGH in particular, I keep seeing new ways to be grateful for the school we have chosen for our children. I have watched in dazed admiration over the past few months as our teachers have performed astonishing feats of pedagogical flexibility, so quickly adjusting their lesson plans to distance learning. When we first learned that our kids would not be going back to the classroom (for two weeks: remember that?), I thought that that would be it: the Montessori philosophy is so grounded in hands-on, relational learning that I did not see how it could possibly translate to online education. But I had forgotten about the even more fundamental Montessori tenet: "Follow the Child." As we adjusted to our quarantine rhythms, I saw how creative the teachers were in finding ways to apply their lessons to what our children needed now — lessons that truly did follow the children, right into their own locked-down homes. I saw how they so quickly became adepts at Google Classroom, how they posted links to other helpful age-appropriate sites and activities, how they directed the kids to go into their own backyards and pursue their learning outside. My hat is off to the entire MSGH staff. You must be exhausted!

Still, it is far from the kind of school day we want for our children, and I cannot wait until that beautiful, glorious day when our kids go back to the actual school building.

It is here, envisioning the return to the classroom, that I am even more sharply aware of how fortunate we all are to send our kids to MSGH. When our children go back into the

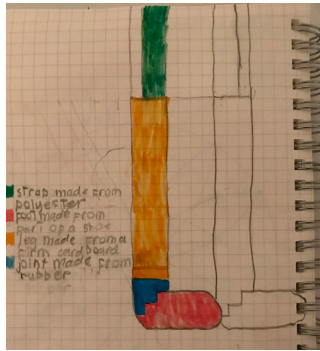


classroom, they will have had very different experiences at home. Some will have been of an age and personality where they could adjust easily to screen-based lessons. Some will have had a much more difficult time concentrating in these circumstances. Different sibling situations, different home stressors — all these factors mean that the kids will be in different places when "regular" school starts again.

But this is exactly where Montessori shines. When our children go back, they may be in different places, but no child will be behind. No child will be ahead. Each child will simply be where they are — and that is exactly where our MSGH teachers will meet them. That is what our MSGH teachers are trained to do: observe the child, and guide the child, and help that child to grow and flourish by urging and encouraging them and challenging them to learn to their greatest potential. I also believe that when the kids get back into a real classroom environment, they will be so happy to be there that they will soak up the in-person learning like a sponge, not only recovering from the interruption, but — just perhaps — even benefitting from it.

So, as I take a deep breath to prepare for the next couple of months, I feel happy anticipation knowing that my children will be in the best possible environment at the end of August. Yet again, I feel deep gratitude for the enormous good luck we had in coming upon MSGH for our children. I wish all children could be as lucky.

WORK FROM OUR DISTANT LEARNING PROGRAM



Montessori Model United Nations Conference

By Sarah McCabe, Upper Elementary Teacher

This year, MSGH's group of sixth year students had the unforgettable opportunity to travel to New York City to participate in the 2020 Montessori Model United Nations Conference (MMUN). Nancy Rivera and I were lucky enough to bear witness to the fruits of their labor. The students joined peers from over seventy other Montessori schools for a three-day conference.

During her lifetime, Maria Montessori supported the work of the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations (UN) as a forum for peace. MMUN has partnered with the UN to create a program for Montessori students who are in their sensitive period for reason, justice and morality.

Four years ago, as I found myself nearing the end of my Montessori Teacher Training, Loyola University gifted the Master's students with a guest speaker by the name of Judith Cunningham. She is a visionary and the dedicated founder of the Montessori Model United Nations, a model that honors Dr. Maria Montessori's vision of educating children to be stewards of world peace. As soon as Judith spoke of MMUN, the crowd was entranced by her passion and energy. "I can't wait to implement this in my future classroom," was the resounding reaction from us all.

Fast forward four years, the timing was just right - I was ready as a teacher, the school was ready, families were ready, and the eight sixth years of the 2019-2020 school year were more than ready. The students were assigned

the countries and pairs of students worked together to research Malta, Khazakstan, Eritrea or Argentina. Months of in-depth research ensued. The elimination of racism and xenophobia, the advancement of women, efforts toward eliminating human trafficking, and global food security were the topics to cover... and not from their personal perspective, rather from the perspective of the country they represented. Yes, the students were able to understand the heaviness of these topics, formulate opinions about them, and discuss them openly with one another. It was incredible to witness. The younger students observed them in wonder and admiration.

Two fully annotated position papers later, the sixth years still had to condense their most critical points into two-minute speeches before completing a tri-fold display board on their assigned countries. This was before they created country flags, which they carried for all to see during the MMUN Opening Ceremony. We rehearsed, rehearsed, and rehearsed proper decorum during committee sessions, and the students practiced their speeches exhaustively.

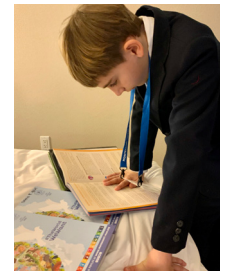


The actual MMUN process is difficult to put into words. Two adults, eight sixth years, four days, three nights. Hours of committee sessions over the course of three days. Students having their voices heard. Students leading discussions on worldwide issues. Students brainstorming on how to synthesize individual ideas. Older, more experienced students guiding. Adult supervision, yet no adult interference. By the end, students reaching consensus on how to respectfully solve the most intense problems faced by our world. The world's leaders should come and take notes; they would learn valuable lessons.

Each of our sixth year students disembarked from that Greyhound bus at the end of the trip feeling- besides tired from their passionate work- empowered, and endowed with a new sense of self and civic responsibility. During the course of the following week, they would overwhelm their parents with stories about lunches in the hotel room, the best New York style pizza they ever had, navigating the relentless city streets, and ending the trip in Bryant Park watching a most serious bocci ball tournament between four elderly folk.

What they took from their experience, though, were lessons unmatched by those of the simpler classroom- knowledge of cultures beyond their own, how to capitalize on each other's strengths, how to navigate cooperative work with unfamiliar personalities, how to operate under strict time constraints, how to dress the part to feel the part, how one's actions can drastically influence the greater good and the list goes on.

The most impactful lesson - realizing their voices could be heard well beyond the MSGH walls, reverberating for the world to hear.



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MSGH Adolescents: Growing Up in a School Garden

By Caren Ross, Adolescent Teacher



The Millstream vegetable garden is a centerpiece of the MSGH Adolescent Program. It is a science laboratory, a source of culinary inspiration, a place to journal or sketch, and an opportunity to wonder at the marvels of soil and life, from microscopic fungi and bacteria, to pests and pollinators, to voles and rabbits. It is a place that calls for both physical exertion and the creative, collaborative energy to transform nature's harvest into jams, jellies, pickles, and sauces to sell at market. In essence, the garden supports a young adolescent's developmental need for movement, social endeavor, intellectual growth, and emotional well-being. It is a place to grow up.

From the quiet, chocolate-brown garden beds of winter to the abundant, tangled greens and colorful fruits of summer, the garden provides year-round work and inspiration. In late winter, when blotches of snow still dot the garden beds, the students pore over seed catalogues, planning with precision where and what to plant in the garden. They must consider best practices of crop rotation and natural fertilization, and what plants are companionable and grow better in proximity to their friends. Beans don't like to share beds with onions, for example, tomatoes thrive alongside basil, and cucumbers are happy when nasturtium patrol their border, keeping pests away. What will sell at market is also part of the calculation, and the students review sales from the previous year to know what they'll need to grow to make and sell pickled beets, dilly beans, tomato sauce, or rhubarb jam.

In the spring, the students start seedlings in the greenhouse, test nutrient and acidity levels in the soil, and amend the soil with compost. They experience the cyclical nature of matter as they move manure from the goat pen and chicken coop into the compost pile, where it mixes with leaves, egg shells, apple cores, and lots of other organic matter rich in carbon, nitrogen, and minerals. Students work the aged compost into the garden beds, enriching and fortifying the soil. They know the minerals in what they eat from the garden came from the soil they nurtured.

All the spring labor is rewarded in the fall, when students return to school to find that what they left behind as tidy rows of evenly-spaced little plants have burgeoned and flourished, their foliage dense and green, their vines crawling along the ground and climbing up posts, and their fruits and vegetables dangling from their stems. The students weed, feast on raw and cooked fresh vegetables, and preserve the harvest for sale to the community. Cartloads of greens go to the goats and chickens, whose excreta then goes back to the garden. In this way, nothing is wasted, as nature's elements and minerals just cycle from manure to soil to plant to animal, with detours through air and water.

In the garden, it's never a surprise to bump into our honeybees slurping nectar, or to stumble upon native bees, busily exchanging their pollinator services for fuel. It is in the garden where nature's balance and beauty become abundantly clear and where students develop a synchronicity with the



The Millstream vegetable garden is a centerpiece of the MSGH Adolescent Program. It is a science laboratory, a source of culinary inspiration, a place to journal or sketch, and an opportunity to wonder at the marvels of soil and life, from microscopic fungi and bacteria, to pests and pollinators,



Artist in Residence at MSGH

ART PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

By Priscilla Marshall, Art Teacher and Artist-in-Residence

The spring semester of the adolescent art program began with enthusiasm. The students had a variety of creative projects in the works before the pandemic abruptly changed everything in mid-March. They were designing a permanent wooden sign for the barn at Millstream Farm, and creating trompe l'oeil designs for a newly painted area of the classroom floor. They also had an opportunity for a spontaneous session of life drawing of a recently deceased, but beautiful, Tufted Titmouse.

When the pandemic required all school programs to be held online, the adolescent students quickly

adapted to the new routine. Descriptions of art assignments, quotations, visual images, and other materials were placed on Google Classroom ready for the students to delve into. Art classes began meeting weekly via Zoom, sustaining the visual art curriculum in a virtual community. This continuity of the arts was essential to maintaining a robust distant learning program for our adolescent students.

All of the students were sent sets of watercolors, brushes, pastels, and a mixed media pad. They were given the assignment to thoroughly explore

one color in any of the available mediums, and were encouraged to explore the variations in values, density of pigment, and all of the nuances and gradations of washes. They then wrote a poem about their chosen color that tied the lesson back to their creative writing curriculum.

One of the first art assignments that the students were given while learning from home was “The View From My Window.” This assignment was interpreted in various ways. It allowed the students to explore the actual view from their windows, through a doorway or outside, in their yard or down the road. It was also interpreted as a metaphorical view; a view into how each student felt about the nature of physical distance – like having to complete lessons online and the impact on daily routines. The students explored their own unique visions and were offered a glimpse into the view of their peers as well.

At the beginning of April, the students began a scientific phenological study of a tree or shrub in their yards. They began documenting bud burst, leaf out, and flowering dates for budburst.org, an online science project they were working on with Caren. They were simultaneously doing a “Bioblitz” on a measured patch of environment in their yards in which they observed and documented the genus and species of all flora and fauna they found there. The close scientific observation dovetailed nicely with another art assignment where each student drew or painted a specimen of plant, shrub, tree, or animal they found in their yards. The students were also encouraged to draw each phase of unfolding bud, leaf, and flower as part of a journal entry.

The last art assignment the students were inspired to complete was to imagine what it would be like to enter inside something that they wouldn’t ordinarily have access to. A flower, a tree trunk, a loaf of freshly baked bread, a book, a fruit or vegetable, or a mechanical or electrical device. They were to draw or paint from the perspective of what the inside would look and feel like.

The art program at Millstream Farm required all of the students to use all of their senses. They’ve painted what a favorite piece of music looks like



in their minds. They’ve explored how a particular color makes them feel. They’ve imagined a scene in history and documented it in moving clay and video – all of which have allowed them to sharpen their critical observation skills to draw or paint the natural environment around them.

Art permeates everything we do as human beings. Art is interwoven into everything we touch. The consistent practice of drawing and painting various aspects of our environment helps us to not only sharpen our sight, but hones all of our other senses too. It slows us down and creates a pause in our routines long enough to really see, hear, touch, feel, and think about the world around us.

“Seeing/Drawing is a way seeing, a meditation, a way of getting into intimate touch with the visible world around us, and through it ... with ourselves.” **Frederick Franck**

OUR JOURNEY WITH MSGH

INTERVIEW WITH A NEW TODDLER FATHER, JAMES SCARPA



How is being a dad?

James: I am a dad who tries. I make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. Parenting can be hard, but I really love being a dad.

What kind of work do you do?

James: I was a Certified Personal trainer and licensed massage therapist. Now I am a stay-at-home dad.

How has being a licensed massage therapist helped you with being a dad?

James: It has definitely helped me look at a situation for what it is. I would help people assess a problem they had, e.g., they weren't moving as well as they could and I would suggest protocols for them to get them to where they needed to be. The majority of my clients were people 65 years old and what I learned was how capable they are. They can grow, they can run, and they have so much to offer. This job helped me have an open mind about situations and see the positivity within those situations. There is no book for parenting. With my skills from my job, I was able to understand what I can do and assess my situation with my kids.

How many kids do you have?

James: I have Annie, who is 10 months. I call her "My Little Annie." I have Leo who is just about to turn 3 years old. He is in Ms. Kathy's and Ms. Monika's Toddler Classroom. I can still remember so clearly the drive home with my son when he was born. My world instantly changed. I was never scared, but it was a learning experience.

How did you make the decision to go to MSGH?

James: My son was going to day care and you had the opportunity to see their webcam to

watch the kids in the room. All the kids had different behaviors. Some kids would run around and Leo just wasn't like that. He wasn't like the majority of kids. He was fine at day care. I just had mentioned to my wife, maybe Leo could do more. She had said, "What are you talking about? It is a loving environment." It was a loving environment, but I was just saying that he might do better in an environment with more opportunity for him to learn more.

What did you see at MSGH that brought Leo more opportunity?

James: We got to MSGH and it has been perfect. I was almost crying when I went into the observation room to see the kids walking around using the sink, cleaning up after themselves, how the teachers interacted with the kids. We love Ms. Kathy and Ms. Monika. I mean, my son sings in Spanish in the shower! I can't even sing in Spanish and here he is now, absorbing all of this knowledge.

What is the most rewarding part about being a dad?

James: One of the most rewarding parts is that [kids] reshape your world. It is great in ways and challenging in ways. I now see the potential in kids and I see the potential in my son. He will be successful in whatever he wants, in whatever he sees fascinating. He will be a leader and help shape the world into what it should be. I feel MSGH has opened up opportunities for my son to grow and be confident in himself so he can be independent.

What challenges are you finding with being a dad?

James: For me, I struggle finding a balance between giving the love, teaching and discipline. In my life, negativity was not



something I wanted. People responded differently to negativity, which made things tougher for me. I choose to be more positive and look at the possibilities in situations. I think MSGH's pedagogy shares those same values.

How has it been being a dad during the pandemic?

James: Right before the lockdown, Kathy sent us a daily schedule. That schedule definitely shaped Leo's day and my day, which helped curb behaviors. The schedule helped us understand what he needed for the day. Jacki was the best and helped me during some of my most challenging times. She confirmed what I was going through was normal. Having Jacki



explain things was so helpful. These are just some of the ways MSGH has helped our family get through parenting and be there for our kids. We are so grateful.

What do you think MSGH offers families?

James: Finding MSGH gives you hope. MSGH provides a place for optimistic people who are striving for the best for their kids. We were so fortunate to have found MSGH. MSGH provides a great community and safety. MSGH has helped us see what our kids are capable of. It is easy to say the Montessori way is the right way. I can say as a new parent and now a current parent, I am comfortable, safe, grateful and appreciative for MSGH and the community.

**Thank you, James, for all of your time!
Happy Father's Day!**



2020 MOVING-ON CHILDREN

We gathered virtually to celebrate all our students and to honor those students who are completing their cycles, most especially our ninth year graduates. We are so proud of their hard work, dedication and passion for learning and creating.

3RD/4TH YEAR PRIMARY CHILDREN



3RD YEAR ELEMENTARY CHILDREN



6TH YEAR ELEMENTARY CHILDREN



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2020 GRADUATES!

WE LOOK FORWARD TO WITNESSING WHERE YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE TAKES YOU.



"The last 3 years, I have been lucky enough to go to the Farm Program, a school with incredible supportive guidance and a liberated approach to learning like no other. I have been a part of a close knit circle of friends that our class has always been. This experience could hold no water without the personal dedication of the teachers ... thanks for making these last 3 years not only infinitely rewarding, but years I'll miss for the rest of my life, and for making the Farm not only a school but a home."

-Alex L.

"I still remember my first day here. My parents walked me to the door of primary three, and I went inside to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Lockhart. That was the start of my now ten year journey with MSGH... I have so many people to thank for my experience here, but I want to start with the most important people, my parents. They have supported me and loved me unconditionally for my whole life, and they have made it possible for me to have so many amazing opportunities to succeed... Especially thank Caren, Jack, Steve, Pape, and Everett at the farm, for teaching me so much during some really formative years in my life. You helped me to mature and gain valuable skills that I need to be happy and successful... MSGH has helped me to improve, grow, and flourish as an adolescent." **-Elliott L.**



"My time at MSGH began in 2016, as a shy, nervous, and awkward 6th grader, unaware of everyone and everything around me. After a year of homeschooling, being thrown into a school again was quite daunting and although I made some good friends, I really became myself at Millstream ... At times, I felt that I didn't fit in but with the help of the amazing teachers and students by my side, I quickly found my footing ... Finally, going into 9th grade the fear and uncertainty from my 7th grade had transformed into confidence ... This year, we spent a lot of time in the kitchen which led to some pretty memorable moments ... It may sound as though when attending Millstream Farm, you are solely met with fun experiences. However, while attending the farm, I have learned so much from all of my teachers. They are the reason I got into my high school of choice, and I appreciate everything they have done for me." **-Noah C.**

"My time at the farm school has truly been special. Our small environment is perfect for learning. It was small enough that I got help whenever I needed it, but there were enough of us to share our different views and opinions when it came to discussions. The best thing about learning at the farm is that we do everything hands on...I learned so much ...and was able to bring all the information with me to discussions with others inside and outside of school... The farm has been everything and more that I have hoped for. It gave me a safe, comfortable and happy second home to grow up in. ...provided me with a place where I have discovered who I am, my love of the outdoors, learning, music and friendships." **-Nadine S.**



More Than a Walk in the Woods By Gina Wangrycht, current parent

My son Bryce has never been short on imagination. Everyone who knows him marvels at how capable he is of fully entertaining himself with the simplest of things. Within seconds of sitting down at a restaurant table, Bryce will have an entire script playing out in his mind with a sugar packet and a straw in starring roles, while the antagonistic villain (in this case, a shiny silver fork) readies to destroy their planet (which just so happens to be a table for four at a local diner). Cue the mandatory sound effects of various explosions, and you have a boy who is completely engrossed in play and at the mercy of his very active and very strong imagination.

The other thing he's never been short on is his love of nature — of trees, in particular. As a toddler, he was happiest playing with downed sticks in the yard that still had some leaves left intact. While a child playing with sticks and leaves might be easy to dismiss for some, Dr. Maria Montessori believed that play in nature is an integral part of the cognitive, physical, and emotional development of the child. By connecting to the part of nature that so mesmerized him, Bryce was absorbing the sights, sounds, smells, and feels of the environment around him and, in doing so, slowly beginning to understand his place in the universe.

“When children come into contact with nature, they reveal their strength,” Montessori so famously stated. And that was definitely true about Bryce. He wasn't enrolled at MSGH back then, nor did I really know anything about the Montessori pedagogy at the time, but it was clear to me that contact with nature *did* reveal his strength in a way unlike anything else did. And it still does. Nature sparks his curiosity, creativity, and his trademark imagination. It encourages his out-of-the-box thinking and inspires him to use items in unlikely ways — like the way he used to transform leftover grapevines into tiny “spooky” forests in his

Play-Doh as a little boy.

Come September, Bryce will be turning 12 and just getting his sixth year underway in the Upper Elementary classroom. Although a burgeoning adolescent, his imagination still goes into overdrive when he's in nature among the trees. Combine that with a strong sense of moral justice that's a key characteristic of the second-plane child, and it's the perfect storm to ignite his creativity. Just 15 minutes into a recent walk in the woods at Roaring Brook Nature Center, he had created a main character out of a small stick he found lying on the forest floor. “Man,” as the stick was so aptly named, was on a life-saving mission to dodge falling nuts (Bryce used his fists for these) by jumping (or being launched from a cannon) from tree to tree. “Man” had to overcome many other obstacles in his way, like steep stairs to climb and bridges to cross, and of course an evil villain to fight named “Rock.” And, let's not forget the sound effects. Lots and lots of sound effects.

Following closely behind Bryce was our younger son, Brooks, who will be entering Lower Elementary in the fall. He is easily swept up by his older brother's contagious passion for creating, and longs for his approval and acceptance. In the book “Montessori from the Start,” Paula Polk Lillard and Lynn Lillard Jessen discuss the notable shift in children from Primary to Elementary that Maria



Bryce, age 3, playing with downed sticks in our front yard.

Montessori so keenly observed and, watching my boys interact, I can't help but be amazed at the accuracy of the description. "Rather than being focused primarily on a sensorial exploration of the factual world about them, they now want to devote the main thrust of their energies to getting along with others and doing things together," the authors write. And thrust his energy he did, as he eagerly picked out his own "character" from the forest floor and joined in the playful dance of bouncing a tiny stick from tree to tree that emerged from something so much more than just a walk in the woods.



Bryce playing with "Man" on our recent trip to Roaring Brook Nature Center.



Bryce and Brooks playing with their forest characters.

Primary 3 Poem Project:

Bats

I hear squeaks
I hear wings beating
I see glowing red eyes
I feel soft wings
I see brown wings
What could it be?
It is little brown bats
By Atticus London



Spring

I hear a robin chirping
I smell fresh air
I see tulips
I feel the breeze
I taste asparagus
What could it be?
It's spring
By Sadie Callahan



I am Bella
I feel happy
I love my family
I need love
I want to see my friends
I dream about spring
I think about Livi
I am Bella

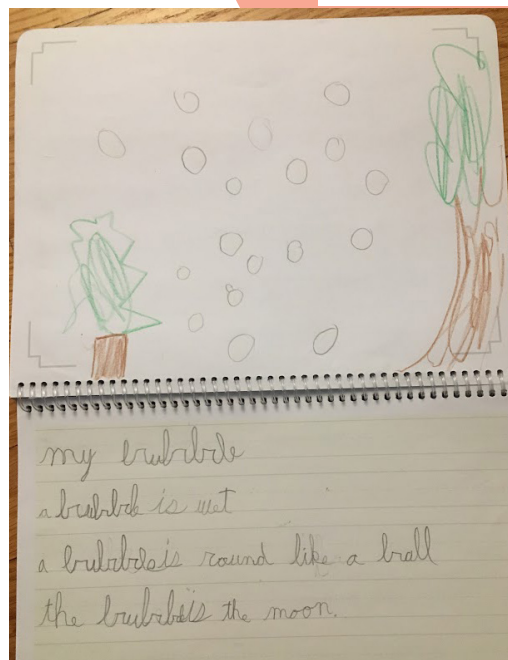
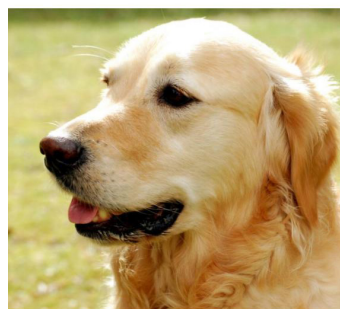
Yogurt

I hear nothing
I smell milk
I see white
I feel slime
I taste vanilla
What could it be
It is yogurt
By Quinn Oneglia



Dog

I see a dog
I feel fur
I hear footsteps
I smell stink
What could it be?
It's a dog
By Miriella McCauley



ALUMNI CORNER

Interview With Katie Glaudemans

KATIE, WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

Right now I'm an ER nurse living in Colorado, but my hospital sent 34 of us to Newark, NJ, to help some of the hard-hit hospitals.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR SERVICE DURING THIS PANDEMIC. WHAT CAMPUS DO YOU REMEMBER ATTENDING?

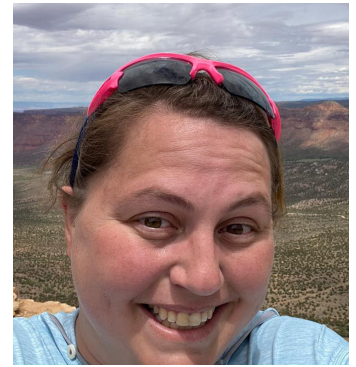
I was there at the old campus and for a year or two at the ASD campus.

WHAT TEACHERS DID YOU HAVE AT MSGH?

I do remember Una, I had Ms. Roncolo, she was a lovely Irish teacher, and Ms. Reynolds.

WHAT WERE YOUR FONDEST MEMORIES AT MSGH?

Some of my fondest memories were playing doctor (go figure!), the Thanksgiving parties, and being encouraged to just be who I am. After my family moved away from Connecticut, I went to a school in Tampa, FL, that didn't encourage individuality.



Message from Teresa to Katie:

"Aww! How can I forget?! Katie was strong, fearless, and with an infectious laugh! And she has the best smile, just like her mother."

Message from Una to Katie:

"I do remember Katie. This is fantastic. Tell her I said, 'Hi and that I hope she feels very proud to be doing this for everyone.' Tell her I said, 'Stay safe!'"

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

We wish to include your "news" in our next Follow the Child Newsletter. Current and "back in the day" pictures and 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.

WELCOME BACK TO MSGH!

Thank you for saying "Hi," alumni families.



Jennifer Van Scoter, former MSGH Board Chair and mother of Audrey and Owen, came to visit us at our Light and Laughter event.



Brenda McVerry, pictured here hiking with her three sons, Christian ('06), Stephen ('03), and Ryan ('02).

Stephen Frenkel, former Board member and father to Kiva and Scarlet, joined us for an MSGH gathering.



Kyle ('08) and Haley Madigan ('11), alumni students.



Scott Black, ('17) entering the honors program at the UCONN School of Engineering. David Black, ('12) will be entering his junior year at UCONN as a Psychology Major, pictured here in front of Kilkenny Castle last summer.



Margaret Richardson, mother of Stanwood (Peter) Dolph ('03), with Una Barry, former Head of School, at our Light and Laughter event.

With Gratitude

The close-knit community of MSGH is what makes us so very special, 55 years strong! In unique times such as these, we are even more grateful to have such dedicated teachers, staff, and the support from our parents, grandparents, friends, and alumni. Generous gifts to our Children's Fund make an immediate, tangible difference in the lives of our students and their families. On behalf of every student, past and present, thank you for supporting the entire MSGH community and our mission towards enriching childhood and strengthening families.

Warmly,
Toko



Your love for MSGH
shines through.
Thank you!





Montessori School of Greater Hartford

2020-2021 Children's Fund

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Education for Peace	\$10,000+	Benefactor	\$1,000-\$1,499
The Maria Montessori Circle	\$5,000 - \$9,999	Sustainer	\$500-\$999
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Should any fund become oversubscribed, MSGH will use the gift where it is most needed.

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

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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 Newsletter?
Let us know by emailing ericak@msgh.org.
We would love to hear from you!



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.

FOLLOW THE CHILD

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Erica Killer

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Erica Killer, Toko Odoreczuk, Alex Pape
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