

# Follow *the* Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



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### ÚNA'S CHAT

*"That humanity which is revealed in all its intellectual splendor during the sweet and tender age of childhood should be respected with a kind of religious veneration. It is like the sun which appears at dawn or a flower just beginning to bloom. Education cannot be effective unless it helps the child to open up himself to life."*

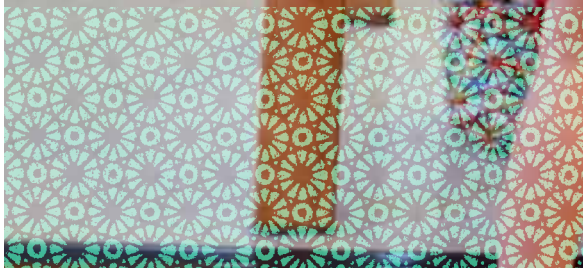
These days we hear a lot about 'mindfulness.' Sounds like a new-age fad, right? Well, 'Psychology Today' defines mindfulness as, "a state of active, open attention on the present. When you're mindful, you observe your thoughts and feelings from a distance, without judging them good or bad. Instead of letting your life pass you by, mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to experience." So mindfulness is about being in the present, being aware and allowing yourself to truly experience the now. Not such a fad really, more like, "Well, of course!"

Infants are born mindful. They are experts at being in the now, for after all they have little past experience on which to dwell and a future is not yet within their comprehension. Also, they are so driven to learn through experience that biological imperative doesn't allow them the time to dwell anywhere but in the present. However, we are animals, and throughout evolution, in order to survive, we developed the habit of storing and retrieving memories of past experiences so that we could learn to recognize and anticipate threats. This was extremely useful when we were roaming the plains and, you may argue, as useful in a lot of modern cities today. This tendency to be alert to threats combined with an increasingly complex and competitive world keeps our brain so busy we forget to pay attention to what's happening in the present. Have you ever had the experience of driving and realizing that you don't remember some or all of the journey? It happens to me often while my brain is working on sorting out my latest conundrum.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, professor of Positive Psychology and author of the book *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, asserts in that book that "happiness, in fact, is a condition that must be prepared for, cultivated, and defended privately by each person. People who learn to control inner experience will be able to determine the quality of their lives, which is as close as any of us can come to being happy."

Part of that inner experience to which Csikszentmihalyi refers is our preoccupation, in our heads, with the past and the future. We dwell on actual or perceived slights, we think of brilliant witty come backs to past conversations, and we worry about future failures or conflicts. Perception is reality and many of us are creating realities that make us very unhappy, guarded and scared. A big part of the problem is that while we're creating this





“We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself; this is the art of those who aspire to serve the spirit.”

-Dr. Maria Montessori

alternative reality, we are neglecting to experience life, the reality that's in front of us. So, mindfulness has come along none too soon. It's been around for a long time, practiced most notably by Buddhists, but it has finally made its way into the mainstream. A few months ago, the father of one of our students, Basant Dagar, came to speak to me about mindfulness. He asked if we could somehow incorporate it into the children's experience in the Montessori classroom. My response to him was, "No problem. We have that covered, Montessori in practice is an exercise in mindfulness." Let me explain.



Dr. Montessori recognized that the human spirit was a fundamental and critical part of the nature of human beings. As such she saw that, if we are to support the child's optimal development, above all the child's spirit must be nurtured, respected and developed. She said, "We must help the child to act for himself, will for himself, think for himself; this is the art of those who aspire to serve the spirit."



So let's talk about some of the ways we practice mindfulness in our Montessori environments every day. (If I were to tell you all the ways, this would be a book!) Consider how each of the following exercises promotes engagement in the now.

## The Silence Game:

*"Children are not only sensitive to silence, but also to a voice which calls them ... Out of that silence." Dr. Maria Montessori*

The Silence Game, practiced in the Primary (3-6 +) environment, is perhaps the most overt evidence of mindfulness training in action. It goes like this. Each classroom has a sign with the word 'silence' written on it. It hangs in the classroom and for most of the day is turned around so that the blank back side of the sign is seen. At random times, the teacher will quietly turn the sign over so that 'silence' is visible. This is a sign to the children (who have all had a lesson on this game) to quietly gather together in a previously designated spot. When all are gathered, the teacher will remind the children how to make silence (ceasing all movement). The teacher will hold the silence for a time modelling listening very carefully. Then, very quietly she will ask, "What did you hear, when you were silent?" The children will respond quietly. Next, the teacher quietly calls each child's name, inviting him/her to return to work. Then the class continues.

## The Lesson



*"The instructions of the teacher consists then merely in a hint, a touch, enough to give a start to the child, the rest develops of itself." -Dr. Maria Montessori*

Each lesson given to a child is carefully chosen and delivered in a manner that speaks to that particular child's interest, stage of development, sensitive periods and ability. The teacher practices with each piece of material many times in order to analyze the most efficient and effective movements required to convey the key to the use of the material and to set the child up for success. This clarity and precision promotes engagement, concentration and purposeful activity. Consider the difference between the assignment given by a boss that provides you with a clear goal or one that leaves you wondering and unsure. Which one energizes and engages you?



## Concentration

*"Free choice is one of the highest of all mental processes." Dr. Maria Montessori*

Concentration is highly respected, protected and promoted in the Montessori environment. As such, one of the first lessons that each child receives is how to watch others work without disturbing concentration. Concentration (or engagement, or focus - call it what you will) is mindfulness in action. Concentration requires our entire physical, spiritual and mental attention on the task at hand, i.e. the present. Concentration in a Montessori community is spontaneous, as all the elements required are available to the child, setting him up for full engagement and success:

Work freely chosen from interest.

Comfort and clarity of purpose, provided by a clear and precise introduction.

Challenge provided by a material not yet mastered.



## Time

And, no interruptions. Montessori tells a wonderful story of a child who was sitting on her chair doing one of the cylinder blocks (a piece of Sensorial material). Montessori picked up the chair -- with the child still sitting on it -- and set the chair, and the child, down at another table. The child continued her activity throughout, without ever breaking concentration.



## Point of Interest

*"As soon as children find something that interests them, they lose their instability and learn to concentrate." Dr Maria Montessori*

The point of interest in an activity is designed to focus or refocus the child's attention. During a lesson, the adult will draw attention to a detail, a movement, a sound, etc. created by working with the material. For example, when pouring from a jug she will watch with rapt attention as the last drop hangs on the lip of the jug and finally plops down. Or, when a bell is struck, she will wait, obviously listening intently for the last sound to fade away. The child mimics the adult's attention, drama and joy, in the lesson and afterwards as she follows up independently.

## Distance Activities

*"When mental development is under discussion, there are many who say, 'How does movement come into it? We are talking about the mind.' And when we think of intellectual activity, we always imagine people sitting still, motionless. But mental development must be connected with movement and be dependent on it. It is vital that educational theory and practice should be informed by that idea." -Dr. Maria Montessori, the Absorbent Mind*

Many of the materials in a Montessori environment are designed for distance work. This means that the activity requires the child to travel, holding information in his head as he moves to another part of the environment to complete an action. One of many, for example, is the iconic Pink Tower, known and loved by all. The Pink Tower is a part of the Sensorial materials and is composed of 10 cubes, ranging from 1cm cubed to 10 cm cubed. Once the child has mastered building the tower,



he is ready to add a little difficulty. He sets up two rugs, one on either side of the classroom, and brings the cubes to one rug placing them randomly. He brings a set of IO cards to the other rug. Each card in the set depicts a two dimensional base matching one of the cubes in the tower. Our intrepid traveler or a friend chooses either a cube or a base and marks it with an object (a stick). He commits the size of the card or cube to memory, travels through the classroom, passing friends, navigating rugs and tables, resisting the snack table etc., arrives at the other rug, chooses the matching material, makes the return journey and checks to see if his memory served him well. He repeats this IO times. This is the work of a child anywhere between 3 ½ to 5 years old. It requires a herculean effort in attention, visual discrimination, visual memory and control of movement. The Elementary child navigates a similar path as he gathers the materials, required for a scientific experiment, from all over the environment.



## Walking on the Line

*"Movement, or physical activity, is thus an essential factor in intellectual growth, which depends upon the impressions received from outside. Through movement we come in contact with external reality, and it is through these contacts that we eventually acquire even abstract ideas." -Dr. Maria Montessori.*

The ellipse, another iconic Montessori activity, engages the child's whole being. It provides the child with a continuous line on which to move. Dr. Montessori thought of it when she saw children walk and balance on the lines of a sidewalk. "The line" is designed to refine the child's equilibrium and is used for running, jumping and skipping as well as heel-toe walking (harder than you think), and walking with objects on your head or in your hands. A child will choose an object - a bean bag (less difficult), or a cube (more difficult) - place it on her head and heel-toe around the line. Another option is carrying 3 or 4 stacked cubes of the Pink Tower without letting them fall. A favorite is carrying a bell without letting it ring. These challenges engage the child physically and mentally, focusing attention and awareness.



## The Prepared Environment

*"Only practical life and experience lead the young to maturity." -Dr. Maria Montessori.*

One of Dr. Montessori's gifts to mankind, the Prepared Environment, is nothing short of genius. Each Montessori environment is designed to respond to the needs of a particular stage of development. In the first plane of development, 0 to 6 years old, Dr. Montessori recognized, among many other things, the need for the child to develop self-awareness, refine and control her movement, and lengthen and deepen concentration. As you can see, there are many opportunities for the child to do this with the materials but Dr. Montessori went further and made the environment itself a guide for the child's development in these areas. So, the floor is tile and most of the materials are natural: glass or wood. The materials fall on the unforgiving floor, they break, are damaged and it makes a loud noise. Something spills. It is not absorbed and needs to be cleaned. The children get a lesson on how to walk carefully, carry carefully, clean up carefully. They begin to pay attention when they get feedback from the environment that they need to change a behavior and respond as needed. They walk more carefully when carrying a tray with tall objects, they carry the water jug with care, and in fact they soon figure out that filling the jug too much is not a good tactic and instead make multiple trips. Self-awareness, control and refinement of movement and concentration, all come together and develop because the child acts on the environment and the environment provides feedback. That's paying attention to the now!



## The Teacher

*"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 glue that holds it all together, the Montessori teacher, is trained to model self-awareness, thoughtfulness, concentration, attention to detail. She is trained to support the child's development of these skills in every lesson, in every action and every word she says. She constantly demonstrates and challenges the child to extend himself, "Can you put that down on the table without making a sound?" "Can you carry that chair all the way across the room without bumping into one person?" "Can you be silent, without making one sound while you wait in line to go outside?" "Can you watch someone work without touching the table or making a sound?" You get the idea, the children rise to the challenge and in the process engage their whole being in meeting the challenge.



## In the Home

Let's talk a little about what you can do at home to practice mindfulness on your own and with your child. The aforementioned father, Basant Dagar, gave me some very simple but wonderful suggestions to share with you:



- First and foremost, model mindfulness. Basant said that as he practices his breathing and exercises every morning, his daughter joins him for a short time.
- Listen to yourself speak as you speak. This makes you slow down and be more aware and in the moment.
- Tap something, leave time, and then tap again. Did you stay in the moment in between taps?

Christine Blais, our Lower Elementary teacher, is currently training to teach yoga. She works with the children in the classroom and has the following suggestions to offer:

### Mindfulness Mantras:

Mantras are helpful for times when we need to calm ourselves. Short, calming phrases can help children when dealing with anger, frustration or nerves. Use visualizing activities to support the child in letting go of all the negative energy and breathing in positive energy.

### Exercises:

Guided relaxations (some are available from [www.greenchildmagazine.com/guided-relaxation/](http://www.greenchildmagazine.com/guided-relaxation/)) can help you and your child at rough moments, e.g. when settling at night is difficult.

Grounding exercises are calming and settling e.g. name 3 things you see, smell, hear, feel; breathe in and out slowly three times

Breathing can be powerful in any situation. Explore breath a little more by becoming aware of the breath of another.

Use visualizing strategies to allow the children to become aware of the breath and how their emotions can be controlled through their breath.

*"We then become witnesses to the development of the human soul; the emergence of the New Man, who will no longer be the victim of events but, thanks to his clarity of vision, will become able to direct and to mold the future of mankind." Dr. Maria Montessori*

Your child is learning, growing and developing every moment. Grounding him in a rich and experiential reality that supports mindfulness, joy and happiness is a gift for life beyond measure.

*Mna*



# WINTER SING-ALONG









## Aiding Optimal Development at School and Home for the Toddler-Aged Child. Montessori IOI

By Toko Odorczuk

Children learn from everything around them. Dr. Montessori understood this, urging adults to refrain from “teaching” the young child, and instead to create an environment that fulfills their need for discovery. In the Montessori classrooms, careful attention is placed on the organization of the entire room. The teacher’s responsibility is to create an environment that is both accessible and beautified specifically for the child. Everything within the room has been considered: the furniture is size appropriate, pictures and art are displayed at Toddler level, and attention is given to how the lighting may affect the environment. The teacher becomes a guide, demonstrating how the environment and material in the room may best be used. The active learner is then set free to explore.



Children are often required to exist and learn in an environment that is not suited for them; a world that is too large and inaccessible. To gain a better understanding for the young child’s daily struggles, we would need to put ourselves in his/her shoes. There is a very large rocking chair on display in a nearby town, and after several attempts, I was able to climb successfully into the seated portion and sit in the giant-sized furniture. As you can imagine, my legs dangled and I wasn’t able to sit back; the chair’s size made it difficult to be comfortable. You may have experienced something very similar if you have been in a home improvement store. If you’ve needed an item from a high shelf, you know there is no way to retrieve the item without going to the customer service desk. Now, consider your home environment. How far off the ground are your light switches? Or, on what shelf do you store your water glasses? Where in your pantry are the afternoon snacks? For the child (of any age), it is like having everything you regularly use on the high shelf - out of reach without assistance. Children struggle in an adult-sized world, so it is understandable that they may become frustrated.

There are simple, practical ways of implementing the “Prepared Environment” in your home. Appropriately sized tables, chairs, stools, and shelves should be placed throughout the house. A stepstool for the bathroom sink will help with brushing teeth at bedtime or washing hands after using the toilet. A small pitcher of water or milk placed on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator will allow your child when thirsty to successfully pour his or her own drink. Installing a peg rack (at child’s level) by the front door is a great place to hang a coat, bag, and other personal belongings. To create a beautiful environment for your child, I encourage you to hang artistic prints and mirrors at your child’s eye level along with small plants he or she may care for.

It’s important to consider your child’s daily routine. Is he able to access things he needs regularly? Creating little nooks within each room helps with your child’s desire for independence, concentration, and sense of belonging within the family. The more accessible things are to the child, the fewer frustrations your child will experience. Overall, you’ll see a much happier and more settled child.







*“Of all things love is the most potent.”*

*-Dr. Maria Montessori*



# MSGH HAPPENINGS







# Classroom Observations

Observation of your child's classroom is a wonderful way to get a glimpse of your child's daily routine at school. To guide you in your observation, we have created some reminders that can help you get the most from your time observing:

- When you begin your observation, remember that your child may be so preoccupied with your presence that he or she may find it difficult to continue usual activities. In this instance, if you focus on children of similar age to your child, you will get an understanding of his/her mode when you are not there.
- Observing your child's classroom is not the opportunity for you to quiz your child on what "he/she knows." We ask that parents (and other family members) not prompt a child to choose specific materials or areas of work, rather to take the opportunity to observe his or her independent work choices during the work-cycle.
- While observing, please remain in your observation seat and refrain from engaging with the children. We realize that this is challenging. If they talk to you, just smile and remain quiet, or just tell them that you are here to watch them work. Our children are used to near-daily visitors, but they still get very curious about who is in the room. If each visitor engaged the children, the rhythm of the classroom that you have come to observe would be difficult to maintain. Thank you for your support in this area.
- Unless otherwise specified by the teacher, classroom observations are 30 minutes long. We ask that you respect this time limit so that others may have the opportunity to observe.

When you are observing your child's classroom, it is important to remember that you need to view it through the right lens, so you know what you are looking at. If you have never seen a Montessori classroom in action, much of what you see will be different from a "traditional" school setting. Here are some things you may wish to note during your observation:



1. The Prepared Environment: The Prepared Environment is the sum of what your child experiences while in the classroom. This includes the staff, the other children, the materials (appropriately sized and accessible), and the space. Note the orderly arrangement of materials—that each has its own place. Note the classroom, it is aesthetically beautiful and welcoming to the child. You may notice artwork at the child's eye-level. Every element is carefully prepared for your child's experience.

2. Variety of Work: Note the possibilities within the environment for working alone, working with others, assisting others, or merely observing others working. It may appear that the child is "just sitting there." However, just as you are learning through your observation, observing peers is a big part of how children learn, and it is a calming part of the Montessori classroom.

3. The Teacher: The role of the teacher in a Montessori classroom is different than in a traditional classroom. Observe his or her voice and interaction with each student. Observe how the teacher presents a lessons and what age group the lesson includes or if it is an individual lesson. Note if the teacher is

*While I sat upon the chair,  
I simply watched, I gave some care,  
To see what happens in the room,  
In the morning, before noon  
I saw people working on some math,  
And some with light hearts and a laugh,  
Some people knitting with their hands,  
And others studying faraway lands,  
That is called geography,  
Though some prefer biology,  
Biology as in the study of lives,  
And organisms that live and die,  
Some people bear wide smiles,  
Others look like they're very tired,  
In our classroom of diversity,  
There can be some absurdity,  
Like doing an assignment in the form of  
a poem,  
Or making animals with some foam,  
What I saw as the time passed,  
Are the things that happen in our class.*

By Alex Loudon  
Upper Elementary Student



addressing the child from her own height or down at the child's level. Observe the language and precise movements the teacher models.

4. Freedom of Choice: What tasks are available to the students? Note the kinds of materials they are drawn to.

5. Time: How long does the child stay working with a material? Note the different lengths of time the children are involved in their work.

6. Freedom of Movement: How do the children navigate their classroom? What types of movement does access to an outdoor environment provide? How does the material incorporate movement?

7. Variety of Ages: Observe the older children's interactions with the younger children. What differences in work do you notice among the children? Do you notice any work that spans all ages?

8. Concentration and Flow: Note the children's ability to concentrate and be absorbed in work, how this varies from child to child, and how certain exercises serve to focus their attention on an isolated stimulus.

9. Collaboration: Do you notice a non-competitive atmosphere? This allows the child to set his/her own goals at an egocentric stage in his or her development. The work is collaborative so that each child can contribute his/her utmost to the activity.

10. Conflict Resolution: Note children making an effort to use their words to solve their own problems, before, if at all, the teacher steps in to assist and negotiate.

We hope that every parent takes the opportunity to observe! Observations often spark questions and discovery so we encourage you to schedule observations before conferences. To schedule an observation, please contact the Main Office.



## Summer Programming Registration is Open!



Summer for New Englanders is a long awaited treat, and for children, it is a time of relaxation, play and wonderment. Our Summer Programs offer children a joyful summer experience. This year, we are providing three Summer Programs: Toddler, Primary, and Elementary. Toddler and Primary will be located at our West Hartford campus, whereas our Elementary Summer Program will take place on Millstream Farm.



Our Toddler & Primary Summer Programs are open to all MSGH students or outside students enrolled in a Montessori School. Our Elementary Program at Millstream is open to all children, 1st through 6th grade.

To register, please visit our website or stop by the Main Office.

# A Matter of Motivation

By Leslie Wetmore

One of the common keywords that catches parents' ears is motivation. As caregivers, we want our children to be motivated – motivated to do well in school, motivated to improve themselves and their skills, motivated to live the best lives they are capable of. It's no surprise, then, that the big question many parents end up asking is, "How do I motivate my child to [fill in the blank]?"

Traditionally, the answer to this was some sort of reward or punishment: the proverbial 'carrot and the stick' method, where treats are given out for something 'good,' and privileges revoked or unpleasant consequences doled out for something 'bad.' Promises of candy or toys for good behavior and threats of grounding or 'time out' are some common versions parents fall back on. Traditional schooling also certainly follows this method – sticker charts or scolding for the younger crowd, and the letter grade system (A+ to F) for the rest. This method certainly seems to work – after all, most of us were raised under it, and we all remember putting in that extra effort for that A or that lollipop, or trying to avoid any misbehavior that might merit being held in from recess or being sent to our rooms. So on the surface, yes, this slightly Orwellian behavioral conditioning (because that's what it is, folks) seems like it should be enough to motivate a child to get decent grades, keep out of trouble, and do what his parents tell him.

But think back: what sticks out most in your memory in those situations? Did you read that book because you enjoyed reading, or to get that A to raise your GPA? Did you help with all those chores because you wanted to contribute to the house you lived in, or because you wanted your week's allowance?

The problem with this traditional method is that it only supplies a child with extrinsic motivation – in other words, the motivation comes from outside of the child. This is contrasted with intrinsic motivation, motivation that comes from within oneself, without the need of outside encouragement. Of course, extrinsic motivation does work on some level, at least short-term; the biggest issue with it is that when you're motivated by a reward or punishment, your motivation is entirely dependent on getting that reward, or avoiding that punishment. If that outside motivator is taken away, any motivation to perform the task also goes up in smoke. This is why, for instance, few adults read for pleasure – there's no test to study for, no paper to write, so why would they bother to read when they don't have to? It's easy to see how giving a child a motivation that is so reliant on outside incentives might be unhelpful in the long run. However, the harsher truth about extrinsic motivation is that it can actually destroy intrinsic motivation. In several studies run by behavioral scientists, it was discovered that children who were offered a reward for something they already enjoyed doing would become far less likely to choose that activity on their own once rewards were no longer offered. So a choice a child would have made on his own, for his own enjoyment, becomes dependent on a prize from the adult.



Maria Montessori, through her research in the early 1900s, also came to recognize that children become more motivated to learn – and remain more motivated to learn – when that motivation comes from within themselves, and is not supplied to them by their caretakers. Developmentally, a child is naturally driven to take in stimuli from the environment and make sense of the world he finds himself in. No extrinsic incentives are needed.

The Montessori Method relies on this natural enthusiasm, supplying the child with developmentally appropriate materials and allowing him to choose the work and





materials that his developmental needs and Sensitive Periods draw him to. There are no grades to let him know when the teacher judges he has done an activity ‘correctly’ – instead, most materials have a ‘control of error’ that allow him to see for himself if an error has been made, and to correct it. He is therefore not motivated to please his teacher by perfecting his efforts, but instead to please himself by seeing his own improvement and that triumphant moment when he can say, “I did it!”

There is another key distinction between activities driven by extrinsic vs. intrinsic motivation. A series of behavioral studies on motivation offered groups of children a range of puzzles to solve, and allowed them to choose what difficulty puzzle they would like; one group of children was offered a prize if they solved the puzzle, while the other was simply offered the puzzles to work on. The children who were offered prizes consistently chose less difficult puzzles (no surprise, considering they would only get a reward for solving them). The children who only received the puzzles not only tended to choose the most challenging puzzles to work on, but showed much more pleasure in completing them. When there was no other motivation beyond the puzzle itself, the children happily challenged themselves; when they knew some extrinsic reward would only be given out for success, they of course made sure to only choose puzzles they knew they could be successful with.

Montessori pedagogy often speaks of a ‘friendliness with error;’ making and self-correcting mistakes is where we truly learn and make connections. If a child completes a new lesson perfectly the first time he is presented with it, what that tells the teacher is that he was actually past that lesson, and needs something more challenging that will give him something to learn. Because of this attitude – that mistakes, rather than equating “failure,” are a natural and necessary part of learning – the extrinsic motivation of either praise or avoiding shame is removed, leaving only the intrinsic motivation to get better at the task at hand.

Outside of pure academic areas, motivation is of course still hugely important. But again, Montessori recognized that many





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





of the qualities parents wish for their children emerge naturally if they are given the chance. Children enjoy taking care of their environment and contributing to their community – they delight in helping with household chores, so long as it is presented as a necessary collaboration, not an arbitrary task assigned to them. Given the opportunity, children grow into consciously compassionate people who are motivated to go out and help others, volunteering time and effort for their chosen causes – not to pad out a college resume, but because they truly believe they are helping someone. And they remain motivated to think about, question, and examine new ideas they are presented with (used as they are to building on the connections they have already made), rather than taking them as rote, as more traditionally-motivated students tend to.

So it is definitely time to lose the carrot and the stick. While natural and logical consequences are always necessary for children to develop their will, the tradition of rewards and punishments do far more harm than good. The motivation we caregivers try so hard to instill in the children in our care cannot, manifestly, be something we give to them. If a child is to become motivated, and retain that motivation for the rest of his life, it must be allowed to emerge from within. So the question we should be asking is not, therefore, “How do I motivate my child?” but “How can I help him motivate himself?” Modelling how you motivate yourself is key, as your child will look to you first to see how you react to situations, especially situations that require perseverance or maximum effort. But most of all, allowing him the opportunity to be motivated is key, as is resisting the temptation to step in and provide that extra little incentive or push. Dr. Montessori emphasized again and again that it is the child himself who must ‘do the work’ of becoming his own person and growing up; we adults can only guide, providing him the roadmap but letting him walk on his own path.

Motivation in the classroom is something whose impact is not just felt while one is a student; learning, and the desire to learn, can persist into adulthood. However, what science seems to suggest is that in order for a person to remain motivated, the motivation must be intrinsic rather than extrinsic. This is a fundamental tenet of the Montessori philosophy, which is in contrast to the methods which traditional schooling relies on to give its students extrinsic motivation. With the firm belief in intrinsic motivation and the ability to encourage children in their personal interests to fuel further study, Montessori education can produce individuals who not only acquire skills and knowledge, but also find pleasure in acquiring them and are motivated to do so throughout their lives.

# Upcoming Events



Encourage your friends and family to take a closer look at our programming during our March Admissions Open House Week:

**Admissions Open House**  
**Mornings from 9:00-10:30 a.m.**  
**March 27th- March 31st**

Word of mouth is our most powerful form of marketing and we hope that you will invite your friends to come and observe our classrooms!

To schedule a visit and tour, please contact our Admissions Director, Mary McHale.

## *Green and Gold Gala*

The Montessori School of Greater Hartford's Green and Gold Gala will celebrate Úna and her incredible commitment to our mission and the children of our community.

**Save the Date:**  
**Friday, May 5th**  
**Farmington**  
**Gardens**  
**Farmington, CT**





# What's Cooking?

Our Afternoon Cooking Clubs were a sumptuous success! They boasted recipes that spanned the globe and challenged our youngsters' pallets. Next up on our Afternoon Club Series are **Aviation Club** and **Soccer Club**. To register, please contact Toko at [TokoB@msggh.org](mailto:TokoB@msggh.org).



# Montessori: Peace Education for Life

By Kathy Aldridge

During times when the world seems unsettled, I am reminded of how important Montessori education is. Maria Montessori, having lived through two World Wars, was a strong advocate for peace, for which she was nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize. She believed that world peace could only be obtained through the education of children: “Avoiding war is the work of politics, establishing peace is the work of education.” Peace education is a basic tenet of Montessori. But what does it look like in our classrooms?

It begins with respect –for each other and for the environment. In the Toddler classroom, empathy is modeled for the children, as well as a willingness to help each other when needed. With a mixed age group, children see that there are different skill levels and each contributes to the care of the classroom based on ability. A 15-month-old won’t be able to handle a dustpan and floor brush, but she can wipe up a floor spill. This interdependence of community members won’t be recognized until Primary, but an awareness that we all do what we can to help is beginning to take root. Learning to wait your turn, to take only the food you can finish, to return material to the shelf in the same condition as you found it...all help the toddler become less egocentric and able to see that others are equally important. This development of the will is the beginning of self-discipline.



In the Primary classroom, Grace and Courtesy lessons are introduced. When the Guide witnesses behavior or overhears a conversation that warrants a Grace and Courtesy lesson, she presents it to the group at a time when those involved will not feel spotlighted and embarrassed. The Guide will act out a skit with the Assistant or an older child, modeling the appropriate words and then having the children take turns. These life lessons refine social behavior and provide the language necessary for the child to feel confident and independent in the classroom, and the capacity to live well with others.



Two other important lessons are also introduced at the Primary level – The Silence Game and Walking the Line. Both require coordination of movement, refinement of social behavior, a strong will, and unification of mind and body. No small feat for this age group! In these lessons, the children agree to a cooperative social context in which they begin to assimilate the idea of collective order and what it means to work as a group. The Primary classroom is also where the children are introduced to the continents and countries of the world and where differences and similarities of various cultures are discussed.



Cosmic education is introduced in the Elementary classroom. The child sees the relationship between man and nature and that everything has a role in life. He learns that man is the only species that can make changes in the environment and therefore his moral role must be great. At this age, the child is no longer taking the adult's word as sacred. He needs to question and understand for himself what is right or wrong, just or unjust. It is up to the adult to see that moral teachings are reflected in the child's social experiences. In the elementary classroom, the students determine how to manage problems that arise by working cooperatively as a group. Meetings are called, possible solutions discussed and voted upon, and theories tested.



In Upper Elementary, the student needs to explore the world beyond his peer group and school environment. The Guide, having set up simple parameters to protect the child, gives him the freedom to act independently within them. The student takes on the responsibility for arranging these excursions to access information beyond the classroom. With this freedom, he develops a sense of responsibility for himself and for others within the group. Each child's strength, whether academic, creative or social, is recognized and contributes to the cohesiveness of the classroom.



Adolescence is a time for responsible citizenship. At Millstream, the students are given meaningful, collaborative work on the land, with the animals, and in their business ventures. Their decisions have very real consequences and impact everyone within the group. Students are offered a safe environment where social issues and values can be discussed and criticized. The adolescent is aware of societal injustices and is coming to terms with what role or influence he might have. At the end of this 3-year cycle, the adolescent emerges as someone who has collected lots of information, established a set of moral values, explored his society and how it functions, and has developed confidence in his abilities.

To become peaceful citizens of the world, Montessori believed that children need to be independent, critical thinkers who will not blindly follow the dictates of others, that their behavior needs to be controlled by self-discipline and not by an authoritarian figure, that they value the contributions of others, and that they understand the interdependence of all living things.



*“Within the child lies the fate of the future.”*

*-Dr. Maria Montessori*



# Upcoming Family Workshops

## Music and Movement

Bring your dancing shoes! The child's natural love for music will be fostered in this very fun and active class. These already naturally musical beings will experience bonding time with their caregiver as they are exposed to activities that will assist with understanding rhythm, melody, body awareness, language, self-expression, and motor development. Social skills will be developed and fine-tuned as they perform in the group class. The classes will focus on taking a Montessori approach to offering musical opportunities for toddlers in which they will expand their vocabulary, build self-confidence, listening abilities, self-discipline, memory and recall skills, and spatial-temporal reasoning. This class is designed for children aged 9-15 months.



Fee: \$100.00 for 5 week course

Saturdays: 9:00 to 10:00 a.m.

March 18th, April 1st, April 8th, April 15th, and April 22nd

## Toddlers' Mathematical Mind

Tuesday, April 4th 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.



Children, from the day that they're born, are mathematicians. Toddlers have the ability to understand concrete forms of math long before counting and traditional mathematical symbols are introduced. Join us as we focus on the unique ways which toddlers process information and methods which we can use to assist small children in the development of their mathematical mind. This seminar is free and open to the public. Participants must register in advance. With the exception of newborns (so that you may fully enjoy this seminar) this event is appropriate for adults only.

## Infant and Parent Class

The Infant and Parent class is designed for non-walking infants and their caregivers. Adults will have the opportunity to observe and interact with their children as they explore an environment prepared to support their natural curiosity and developmental needs. Informal discussions will allow caregivers to share their successes and challenges regarding topics such as breastfeeding, weaning, toilet learning, issues regarding sleep and how to encourage freedom while maintaining limits. The Montessori trained teacher will facilitate these discussions as well as discuss ways to promote language, movement, independence, and self-discipline at home.



Fee: \$100.00 for 5 week course. Free for currently enrolled MSGH Families.

Wednesdays: 9:00 to 10:00a.m.

May 10th, May 17th, May 24th, May 31st, June 7th

*Enriching Childhood and Strengthening Families*



# Help us build.

Contributions made to our Annual Fund benefit each and every student, family, and teacher at MSGH.

Your gifts will underwrite classroom materials, provide cultural enrichment programming, fund professional development opportunities for faculty, and sustain MSGH's financial assistance program.

All members of the MSGH community--parents, board members, staff, alumni and alumni parents, grandparents and friends--are asked to participate in supporting the Annual Fund: We seek to attain the highest participation rates possible, and we encourage every family to give at the level that best suits them.

We hope you will take a moment to reflect on how a Montessori education benefits generations of children and families, as we invite you to join our staff and Board of Trustees in making a contribution to our Annual Fund.

**The Annual Fund runs annually from July 1st through June 30th. Many local businesses will match contributions made to our school. To see if your company has a matching gift program, check with your company's HR department or ask Kara at [karaf@msgh.org](mailto:karaf@msgh.org).**

**Thank you for supporting our Mission.**





# Montessori School of Greater Hartford 2016-2017 Annual Fund Campaign

## Categories of Giving

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

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

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
(as you wish to appear in the Annual Report)

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

- Classroom Materials and Programming
- Faculty Professional Development
- Financial Assistance
- Where MSGH needs it most**

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

## My gift is:

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

## Affiliation:

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

## To give online, visit:

[www.msgh.org](http://www.msgh.org) ➡ Support MSGH ➡ Make a Donation

For questions, please contact Kara Fenn, Director of Advancement at 860.236.4565 ext.27.



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

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860 236 4565 | f 860 586 7420 | Tax I.D. number: 06-0804807



## Montessori School of Greater Hartford

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*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**

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