

# Follow *the* Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



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## ÚNA'S CHAT

Dear Families and Friends,

I'm taking this opportunity, my last chat with you as MSGH Head of School, to share what I think a child, our children, the universal child would ask of you as a parent, an adult. This is a compilation of some of the elements that I have gleaned over my career, so far, that I consider are the keys to supporting children's optimal development as happy, engaged human beings. I know there are many I will fail to include, so apologies before the fact.

Many of these elements I've written and spoken about before, so you are familiar with them already. I'm just putting them all in one place and offering them as reminders. I will speak as the child, earnestly requesting your guidance, support and facilitation.

### On Love, Respect and Belonging:

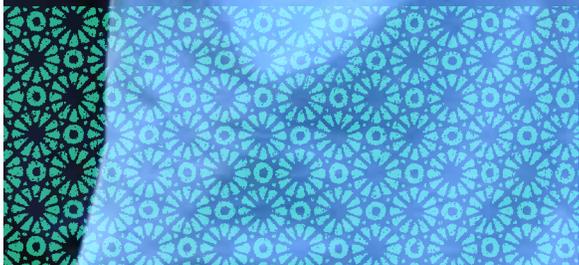
Love me, make me feel that I belong, and that I'm part of a unit that works, plays and lives together. That doesn't mean fawning over me and catering to my every need. It means respecting and appreciating what I have to contribute to the unit of the family, the community, the world.

Love and respect me unconditionally. Do not make me feel that my achievements have anything to do with how you feel about me. Acknowledge my effort and the process as much as any success. (Úna speaking: "My Dad once asked me when I came home crowing about something I'd achieved, 'Did you do your very best?' When I responded, 'yes,' he replied, 'Then that's all that matters. Congratulations on your hard work.'")



Be my model. Do what you want me to do. I will be you, but my version of you. The stuff learned from parents, particularly in early childhood, is somewhat indelible. You can scrub and scrub and there's always a mark left.

Please be kind and respectful with each other. Your relationship is my blueprint for relationships. Of course, you will have differences of opinion. Please resolve them in a manner that helps me to learn how to listen to others, consider



“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

the opinions of others and still express my feelings and opinions, respectfully and kindly.

Treat me and others with respect and I will learn to be respectful to you and others.

Speak about others with respect so that I will do the same.

Tell me your life stories; I love to hear them. They give me a sense of history, continuity and belonging. Then, I'll tell you my stories. Listen curiously, please.

### **On Capability:**

You cannot change who I am at my core- extrovert or introvert. Facilitate my acquisition of the skills that do not necessarily come naturally to me but will be important to my success as a happy human being. Focus mostly on discovering and nurturing my gifts. Please do not do for me. Please let me do for myself whenever possible.

Set me up for success. Give me small challenges. Let me overcome them and so experience success, and then give me more. Every little success will compound to build my sense of capability.

Do not interfere when I am persisting at a challenge. Please help me to build a sense of tenacity around problems, obstacles and challenges by allowing me and, if necessary, encouraging me to persist.

Support my sense of capability, and allow me to contribute. Tell me how my contribution made a difference. Genuinely thank me when I have made a contribution and a difference that benefits you.

Show me how and then let me make my own mistakes. Only help me if necessary or if I ask and then only do what is needed to get me started again.

Help me to see error as my friend. Say things like, "Hmmm! Let's see what we learned from that mistake." Let me hear you admit to your own errors, particularly those that have to do with me. Let me know that we can start over and try again.

Brainstorm solutions with me. Think through each one with me and help me decide on its practicality and efficacy. Then, facilitate me in trying the chosen solution.

### **On Talking and Listening:**

Please do less talking and more listening. Ask me open ended questions, and ask for my opinions, my ideas, and my solutions.

### **On Choices and Decisions:**

Don't give a choice if I do not have a choice. Make sure my choices are developmentally appropriate in circumstance and scope. If you give me a choice, be prepared to accept my choice graciously. And, only give me choices that you can live with graciously.



Let me practice making decisions. I will really need this skill as an adult to have any chance of success. Allow me to make age appropriate decisions, often. Let me fail and allow the (age appropriate) natural/logical consequences of my decisions play out.

### **On Security, Boundaries/Limits:**

Please provide me clear, consistent boundaries/limits. I need them to feel secure because I'm just learning and I need your knowledge of the world to guide me.

Please make your no's and yes's consistent. Clarity helps me understand expectations and sets me up for success.

### **On Behavior and Connection:**

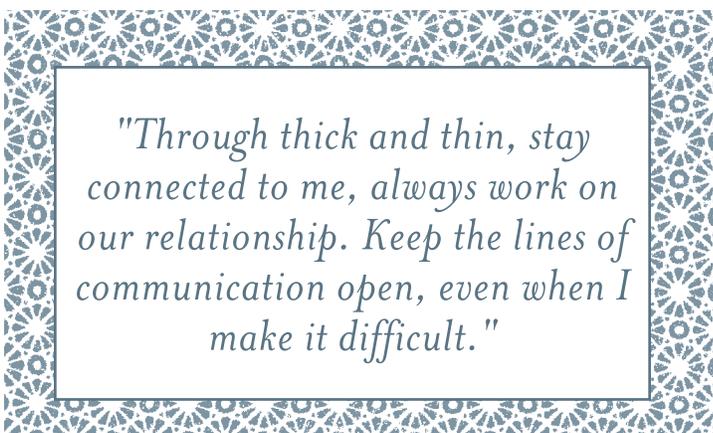
Through thick and thin, stay connected to me, and always working on our relationship. Keep the lines of communication open, even when I make it difficult.

Nurture our relationship by providing clarity in your expectations of me, by modelling and being respectful, by listening, by giving me the benefit of the doubt, by focusing on finding solutions together and by leading with the positive. Listen. Listen. Listen. You will be grateful you did this when the going gets tough (dare I mention my inevitable adolescence).

Every crisis, no matter the size, is an opportunity. Please be thoughtful about my part in the crisis. What does it tell you about my needs, my tendencies and my skills? Use this knowledge to help me develop the skills to be successful in the future.

If you see a pattern of behavior that will get in the way of my success, please look behind my behavior and attempt to figure out what I'm trying to tell you. I may be overwhelmed, under challenged, over scheduled, or have problems with food, a friend, or an adult. I may feel that I don't belong, or that I'm not included. I may feel hurt, insecure, or disempowered. Your expectation or that of others may not be appropriate for my age, my personality, or my developmental pace. I may not feel capable. Talk to me. Don't punish me. Tweak/change what you do and my behavior will change when I trust that you are on my side and that you have my back and are focused on my success.

When you recognize a pattern of behavior,



*"Through thick and thin, stay connected to me, always work on our relationship. Keep the lines of communication open, even when I make it difficult."*



please find a quiet time to connect positively and warmly with me. Having made sure that we started with a positive conversation that created connection, gently and calmly say, “You know I’ve noticed…” and then “I was wondering what’s going on for you…” and “would you like to talk about it… maybe we can figure it out together.”

Please do not blame me or shame me, or force me to apologize. That will only serve to make me resentful. Instead, let me see the effect of my actions and help me consider what I can do to effect resolution.

Every day is a clean slate. Do not bring up my past behaviors in the throes of another or out of context. Move ahead and expect the good.

Please don’t try to address a problem when you or I are angry, upset, tired or frustrated. Please let me know that we can both take time to cool off and come back to talk later. (This obviously cannot be done with children under four, as when it’s over, it’s over for this age.)

Do not let bad feelings fester. Be the adult. Be gracious. Model how to make the first move; own your errors, reconnect with me warmly and move on.



*"Focus on my gifts, facilitating many opportunities for me to utilize them in my life, as you simultaneously support me in meeting and overcoming my challenges."*



Be aware of your body language. I’m an expert at recognizing when you’re faking it. Make sure your body language matches your words.

If I’m looking for attention by unproductive means, catch me doing good stuff and acknowledge it. Focus on the process and not the product e.g. “You worked really hard on that drawing. I could tell you were concentrating. Tell me about it.”

Focus on my gifts, facilitating many opportunities for me to utilize them in my life, as you simultaneously support me in meeting and overcoming my challenges.

Please do not compare me to my siblings, my cousins, or anyone else, not even in your head. Recognize me as a completely unique human being who has gifts to offer to my family, my friends, and the world. Help me discover and nurture those gifts.

Power struggles are destructive. If you find yourself in one with me, stop, reset, and move on.

Be conscious of your own baggage. Please try hard to put it away in the interests of my optimal development. And, when in doubt, give me a hug.



## On Staying the Course:

Don't let other people's opinions or the pressures of the prevailing culture steer you off the path you know you want to walk with me.

Look at me. See me. I am not you. I am me. My job is to become the best adult me I can be- a positive, happy, productive, capable, responsible human being, who engages with life passionately, compassionately and joyously. I can't do this enormous task without you. You are my blueprint, my mentor, my model, and my guide. I look to you.

## In closing:

Wow! This parenting thing is tough and as soon as you feel you've got it all worked out, you're faced with a new problem. But the good news is that the rules really don't change. Keep the big picture in mind and it will guide you in the toughest moments. What's the big picture, you ask? Well, of course it's your adult child as a positive, happy, productive, capable, responsible human being who engages with life passionately, compassionately and joyfully.

Have as many of your actions as possible feed into that goal and you can claim to have done your very best. Then you can say (like my dad would), "Congratulations on your hard work."

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your kindness and trust over the years. I admire you all greatly for your tireless passion and advocacy on behalf of your child(ren) and it has been my honor to partner with you.

Thanks to all of you who gave to the fund that was so kindly created in my name (see next page). I cannot imagine a more wonderful gift. I know your generosity will serve our children well in the future.

*"And, when in doubt, give me a hug."*



*Mina*

# The Green and Gold Gala



Alumni families, friends of MSGH current parents, members of the Montessori Schools of Connecticut community, current students, and Trustees all gathered to honor Úna's unyielding dedication to education for peace and her life-long commitment to families and children.

Úna's influence has set the cultural standard for our community and her wisdom is felt throughout. As such, to appropriately honor her influence on our school and how she has shaped our community was quite the undertaking. And, the Green and Gold Gala, on May 5th, delivered in honoring every aspect of Úna's 30-year commitment to the Montessori School of Greater Hartford.



The night "kicked off" with a rousing performance of traditional Irish dance with students from the McArdle Irish Dance School. This was followed by a moving performance of one of Úna's favorite Irish ballads, "Danny Boy," performed by MSGH Alumn, David Black, who left not a dry eye in house. Our Live Auction, under the humorous and humble guides of MSGH current parents, John Barresi and John Bourdeaux, yielded the highest grossing Live Auction in our school's history. Our Fund-the-Need Paddle Raise, in honor of Úna, established the **Úna Barry Fund**. Seeded with \$20,000 from our Board of Trustees, the **Úna Barry Fund** will directly support the mission that Úna so passionately supported in her tenure.

Thank you to all those who supported this event: **our Sponsors, Fund-the-Need Contributors, Gala Patrons, Volunteers, and Live Auction Bidders**. All your contributions directly support the MSGH Mission and Association Montessori Internationale standards of excellence that Úna has stewarded in her tenure. We thank you!





**Thank you to our Sponsors!**

**The Great Lessons**  
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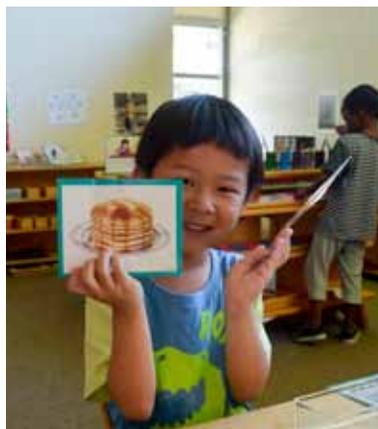
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Jennifer Van Scoter  
Kevin Vicha & Gloria Addonizio

## Daily Rhythms







*“Never help a child with a task at which he feels he can succeed.”*

*–Dr. Maria Montessori*

# Art In the Toddler Classroom: Process Over Product

## By Toko Odorczuk

Art, in the Montessori classroom, is used for self-expression and experimentation with a variety of mediums. On the shelves in the Toddler Communities, we offer an array of tools with which children may create their own form of art. Many of the activities include: coloring, working with clay, cutting, sewing, and gluing. The adult demonstrates how the material is brought to a table and the different ways the tools can be used. The child is then allowed the freedom to explore on his own.

Montessori places emphasis on the process of creating art versus the product. The Toddler children are encouraged to explore with a variety of mediums without the pressure of completing a specific or universal project. Unlike traditional settings, the children have access to the materials at all times and may freely choose which skills to practice at any given time.

Since the child is not rushed to achieve the end product, his activity is not goal-oriented. For the child, work is play and play is work. For example, a child begins painting at the easel and forgets to place paper on the easel. What ends up happening? The child paints on the easel. And, when it comes time to clean up her work, she washes away her “artwork.” For this little one, she put on her art apron, stirred the paint, used the brush to make stroke patterns on the easel, and cleaned up her work. The process to create has multiple steps and each step in the process is equal in its importance. The paper represents the finished project and the children more often than not, at this age, don’t want to take the paper home. Toddler children live very much in the moment. Once the easel is cleaned, they are on to the next activity.

Focusing strictly on the product can stunt autonomy, the ability to be an individual, and change the urge towards the work in the first place. When your child is creating, rather than focusing on the quality or quantity of the end product, place attention on the process and the development of skills acquired through the process.





*“It is true that we cannot make a genius. We can only give to each child the chance to fulfil his potential possibilities.”  
-Dr. Maria Montessori*

## Upcoming Dates

Aug. 21-29	Faculty In-Service Days
Aug. 24-25	Professional Development
Aug. 27	F.A. Welcome/Welcome Back Picnic
Aug. 30	First Day of School
Aug. 30	Classroom and School Orientation Night
Sept. 4	No School- Labor Day
Sept. 14	Garden Party
Sept. 15	Garden Party Rain Date
Sept. 21	No School-Rosh Hashanah
Sept. 24	Adolescent Open House

## Upcoming Dates

Oct. 4	Parent Info Night
Oct. 9	No School- Columbus Day
Oct. 16-20	Admissions Open House Week
Oct. 27	No School- MSC Conference
Nov. 2	Parent Info Night
Nov. 10	No School- Parent Conferences
Nov. 15	Parent Info Night
Nov. 22	Half Day -Thanksgiving
Nov. 23-24	No School- Thanksgiving
Dec. 22	Noon Dismissal: Winter Sing Along
Dec. 25-29	No School- Holiday Recess

# Enjoy Our Fall Traditions



## Welcome back!

The MSGH Family Association will host an annual welcome back playdate and picnic at Fern Park on Sunday, August 27th from 1-3 p.m.

All MSGH Families are welcome.



## Orientation Night

Wednesday, August 30th, is Classroom and School Orientation night held at the West Hartford Campus for all families. The evening schedule is as follows:

Meet and Greet:

5:00 - 5:30p.m.

School Orientation:

5:30 - 6:00p.m.

Classroom Orientation Session

One:

6:00 - 6:45p.m.

Classroom Orientation Session

Two:

6:45 - 7:30 p.m.

More details regarding orientation can be found in the Summer Mailing.



## Garden Party

Let's boogie and celebrate together! Our Annual Garden Party is a favorite event among students, families, and faculty.

Join us on Thursday, September 14th from 5:30-7 p.m. at the West Hartford Campus for a night of music, food, and fun.

# Field Day!





# SPECIAL PERSONS' DAY





# Role of the Assistant in Montessori Communities

By Orla Black

Every August during our set-up week of school, I am afforded the pleasure and privilege of spending an entire day working with an amazing group of people. They are MSGH'S classroom assistants. They support the classrooms at the Toddler, Primary and Elementary levels. My role is to provide a comprehensive assistant training which for many is a review and for others is new.

When we gather together, I am enthusiastically greeting some seasoned assistants and some assistants who are new to our school. Our veteran assistants are a wonderful resource to the training and are always eager to share their wisdom and expertise with their new colleagues. Our MSGH assistants hail from a variety of backgrounds and they serve to enrich our classroom communities and our greater school community in so many ways.

While the role of the Montessori assistant can vary according to the level in which the assistant is working, Montessori assistants at all levels share a deep appreciation of the child and are committed to gaining a deeper understanding of the Montessori approach to education.

Classroom assistants in Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) programs provide integral

support to ensure that children have an authentic Montessori experience. Our assistants support the classroom teacher by:

- preparing and maintaining the environment;
- observing the environment;
- modeling grace and courtesy;
- preserving and protecting lessons and students' concentration; and,
- assisting in the development of independence

## PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Classroom assistants work with the classroom teacher to prepare and maintain an orderly, attractive, and joyful environment. They support the preparation of the classroom at the beginning of the school year, maintain order and cleanliness in the environment throughout the school year and close the classroom at the end of the school year.

An assistant's day begins by arriving early, often before the teacher, to begin the daily preparations. The Montessori environment is clean, beautiful, and, at all times, welcoming and inviting to the children. All preparation work must be completed before the children arrive so that they may start working as soon



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as they enter the classroom. In addition to preparing the environment, the Montessori assistant may be responsible for:

- \*preparing snack or supporting the children in preparing snack;
- \*assisting children with outdoor clothing or shoes;
- \*greeting children as they arrive;
- \*observing children's needs;
- \*observing the dynamics of the classroom and noting where to be most useful;
- \*ensuring safety indoors and outdoors;
- \*supporting children during transitions;
- \*supervising nap time;
- \*administrative duties-material making, making copies, filing, laminating and cutting materials, cutting paper, replenishing supplies etc.;
- \*checking the environment and ensuring that all materials are complete and in working order;
- \*and, in conjunction with the teacher, maintaining the cleanliness of the classroom furnishings and materials.



## OBSERVING THE ENVIRONMENT

Classroom assistants provide another pair of ears and observant, attentive eyes.

Assistants are keen observers and are knowledgeable about developmentally-appropriate behavior and practices. They are aware of the individual needs and interests of the children.

They assist the classroom teacher in observing, recording, charting learning or behavior, gathering behavioral & academic data, and making anecdotal records. They also play a role in behavior management and support of appropriate behavior having been given goals and management strategies by the teacher. They also tend to the physical needs of students when necessary.

The communication and trust between the Montessori assistant and teacher is vital to the success of the Montessori classroom. Often, the day is so busy that the only time to really communicate is before and after school. The classroom assistant becomes adept at nonverbal communication as a means of relaying information to the teacher. The Montessori assistant often makes clear, detailed observations of what happened in the classroom during the day and shares her notes with the teacher at the end of the day. Confidentiality is of utmost importance, and parent communication regarding student progress, behavior, etc. is the lead teacher's responsibility. Additionally, the Montessori assistant needs to observe the teacher and learn how best to complement her classroom style.



### MODELING GRACE AND COURTESY

Classroom assistants play a crucial role in modeling courteous and respectful behavior as well as contributing to the warm, supportive, and calm atmosphere that is the hallmark of our classrooms.

The classroom assistant's behavior has to be always exemplary and provide modeling for other individuals in the environment. They strive to work on modeling behavior without correcting behavior. Montessori assistants are aware of how to push in a chair, roll a rug, wait in turn, etc. so that they can model for the child and provide consistency.

### PRESERVING AND PROTECTING LESSONS



While the Montessori teacher is presenting lessons, the classroom assistant moves quietly throughout the classroom. She may be sitting down to observe or may move about the classroom if necessary. The assistant recognizes the importance of the uninterrupted work cycles and values the importance of the children's work as well as the necessity for concentration.

The classroom assistant will not interrupt a child who is working. If it is noted that a child requires some assistance, the assistant may crouch down to the child's level and quietly and respectfully ask if the child would like some help rather than taking over the task at hand and providing unwanted support. The assistant is always observing, determining how best to respond while keeping the child's ability and need to be independent at the forefront of her mind.

While it may appear that a child is struggling with a task, if the assistant offers support and the child declines, the assistant will always respect the child's wishes and will only assist if the situation seems unsafe. When classroom assistants have questions about specific materials, they will note it and ask the teacher at the end of the day.

Classroom assistants support teachers during work cycles by redirecting children and aiding children who need support. The assistant will step in to support the child who needs it or may direct the child to another an older, more experienced child in the environment.

They become adept at preserving the teacher's attention as she presents lessons to the students. The assistant will also strive to protect and preserve the students' attention as they work.



### ASSISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENCE

Our classroom assistants foster the development of independence in many ways. They provide encouragement to the children and let them know that they believe that they can do it. When a child is concentrating, they act as if they do not exist.

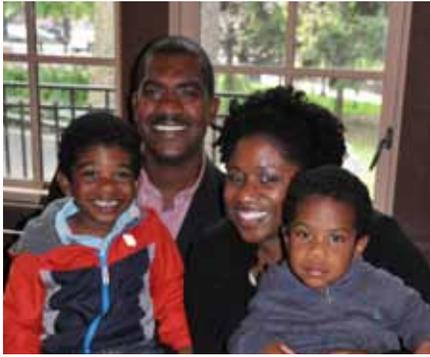
*"Our classroom assistants at every level at MSGH provide integral support in the classrooms and that serves to ensure that all children have an authentic Montessori experience."*

When a child appears to be struggling with an activity or a situation, they always stand back and assess the level of frustration. They determine what the difficulty is and observe to see if the child is persisting.

The assistant will only step in to offer assistance if the child is upset, angry, misusing the material or being unkind to another student. They will only help the child when he asks for help and if they know that he can be successful and will refrain from stepping in when they know the child can work through the situation independently.

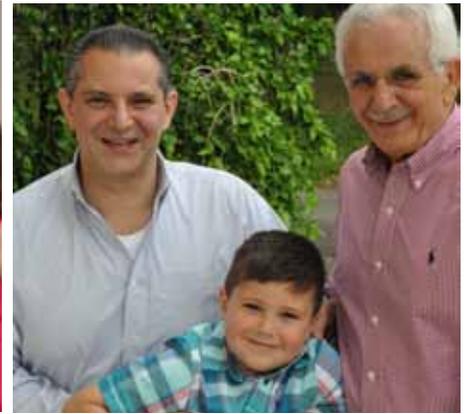
Our classroom assistants at every level at MSGH provide integral support in the classrooms which serves to ensure that all children have an authentic Montessori experience. They bring such a wonderful energy to our classrooms and to our school community as a whole.

# Bushnell Picnic





## Moving- On



*“In my three years at Millstream Farm, I learned so much. I gained the ability to speak up for myself and to advocate for others. At the farm, I found my place in the world and gained a better understanding of my surroundings.”*

*–Scott Black  
MSGH 9th year Graduate*



*“I recall a particular moment at the end of my Primary Cycle, when, with outstretched arms, I spun around declaring that I knew everything in that room. I was on top of the world and I fell in love with that feeling of confidence. I now know there is no end to learning, but that confidence and feeling of capability has been nurtured throughout my time here.”*

*–Emma Stremper,  
MSGH 9th year Graduate*





*"I hope to share the sense of community and inner peace I have experienced through Montessori with others in the world."  
—Waveris Thomas,  
MSGH 9th year Graduate*





*“One test of the correctness of educational procedure is the happiness of the child.”*

*–Dr. Maria Montessori*

# Upcoming Family Workshops

## SUMMER AND FALL PROGRAMS:

**Infant Massage Class: Wednesdays**  
9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. July 26th, Aug. 2nd, Aug. 9th, Aug. 16th, & Aug. 23rd.

Come and enjoy a relaxing, bonding hour with your child, while both of you experience the benefits of infant massage in a welcoming group setting. The rewards of your child participating in infant massage include improved sleep patterns and the ability to self soothe. It can offer your baby relief for digestion issues, including colic, and creates a beautiful space for you to bond with your little one. This class is open to all parents and caregivers of babies aged 0-6 months.



**Infant & Parent Class: Tuesdays**  
9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Sept. 12th, Sept. 19th, Sept. 26th, Oct. 3rd, & Oct. 10th



The Infant/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, 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.

**Music and Movement Class: Saturdays, 9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m. Oct. 21st, Oct. 28th, Nov. 11th, Nov. 18th, & Dec. 2nd.**

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 to develop 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 per 5-week course.  
Please call the Main Office to register.

*Enriching Childhood and Strengthening Families*



# Help us grow.

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 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 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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



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## 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.*

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Kara Fenn

#### **LAYOUT / PHOTOGRAPHERS**

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