Montessori School of Greater Hartford

Follow the Child THE MSGH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



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Montessori Now & for the Future

Policy makers in conventional education, federal and state, are scratching their heads trying to find a solution to the education dilemma that besets them. What is that dilemma? Simply put, dramatic and rapid changes in the realities of life, i.e. how we manage and navigate life, and the qualities and skills required to do that, have caught the conventional education world flat-footed and without a response.

The reason for that flat-footedness is also simple. The current conventional educational approach was never designed to address the fundamental question

of education. That question has to be, "How do we best develop each child's gifts and potential to create individual self-fulfillment in service of the greater good?" Instead we have a factory style design created in the mid 19th century. Its original mandate was to create



efficiency, i.e. to create a standard product (the educated adult) that would meet the needs of the newly industrialized world. It did not have as its intention to develop innate gifts or create individual fulfillment. It was intended to serve the common good only in as much as the common good was prescribed by those in



power. It was not designed to produce innovators and individual thinkers. Many such thoughtful and creative individuals balked against the system and opted out as soon as they could, e.g. Einstein, who said, "The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education."

Obviously, this system has evolved to accommodate some newly discovered facts on child development, but at its core it remains a process designed for efficiency. We know that this limited, strictly prescribed and directed educational approach will no longer prepare our children for the new landscape. Daniel Pink, author of A Whole New Mind and Drive,



clearly articulates this notion when he says, "This era doesn't call for better management. It calls for a renaissance of self-direction." (Drive, p. 92)

Back to those head-scratching policy makers: What has been their response so far? Where is their refuge from this dilemma? Standardized testing, more and more and more of it, has been the overwhelming response. It offers control and assurance that something is being done. However, for standardized testing to produce reliable results you must have a rigidly controlled standardized process, the results of which you test. This process meets the needs of policy makers and is very neat and orderly. However, for the teachers and students who must walk in lockstep with the rigidly prescribed standard curriculum, (teaching to the test), the pervasive culture of testing creates an enormous obstacle to real learning and surely a death blow to joy in learning.*

*(There is of course a place for testing, when it is designed to help the educator determine how to best support the child, and done in the context of a relationship and in such a way as to allow the child to make his/her best effort.)

Is there a solution to be found? There have been volumes written, and many, many research studies including brain research, to determine how children best learn. These studies point the way towards necessary and enlightened changes. One thing is clear; we can no longer afford to impose an approach on our children that meets a narrow need and is founded on gathering information. We must focus on developing the whole child, his character, passion, tendencies and gifts. It is only in this way that we



can prepare our children for the unknown landscape ahead.

In determining the skills required for this new world, great minds in education and the business world have collectively shown us a clear path, albeit a high level one, in the guise of the 5 C's. Pat Bassett, National Association of Independent Schools' Director for many years, writes in his blog.

"The Five Cs + One, the universally agreed-upon expectations that quality schooling teaches not subjects so much as a handful of essential skills and



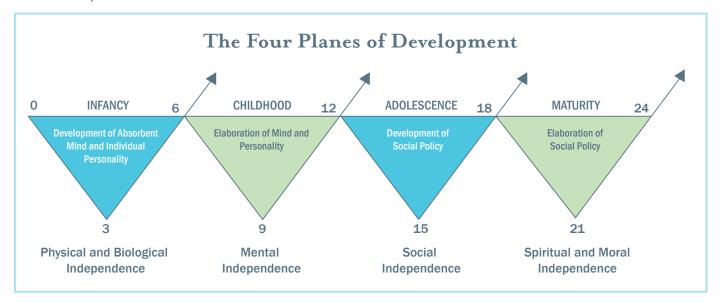


values that when they stick result in graduates who are ethical and successful contributors and leaders in their families, their communities, the workplace, and the world. Five Cs of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, character and the bonus "Sixth C" I've recently added: cosmopolitanism (crosscultural competency)."

The 5 C's + I offer goals but do not provide the route to these desired outcomes. In other words what are the nuts and bolts of daily 'instruction' that will support children in gaining these 5 C'S +1? The investigative process in progress is using up to date research and has come up with several "new" concepts, the more prevalent of which are: differentiated learning, experiential learning, mixed aged groups, extended classroom periods and collaborative learning. Sound familiar? I admit to finding it very difficult to listen to these concepts being described as "new" when they have been core principles of Montessori for over 100 years.

Over one hundred years ago, Dr. Montessori said in her book, The Discovery of the Child, "We cannot educate anyone unless we have firsthand knowledge of him." She set out to know the child through thorough and indepth observation. From her observations, she extrapolated a fact that is the foundational premise of Montessori, that is, the child is not an empty vessel to be filled, but an active, engaged and voracious learner (watch a toddler for 5 minutes and this is undeniable.) This, she determined, is the key element we must forever keep in the forefront of our conscious work with the child. The child is imbued with all the innate tendencies required to self-construct. Our role is to facilitate, support and guide that process while making every attempt not to be an obstacle in its way.

"To help life: this is the first and fundamental principle. Who then can reveal the natural ways along which the psychic development of man proceeds but the child himself once he is placed in conditions permitting him to do so." Dr. Montessori, being the consummate scientist, conducted scientific experiments to



determine how children learn and the conditions required, at each stage of development, to permit them to learn. She identified 4 distinct stages or 'planes' of development. (See chart)

With these planes of development as the foundation, Dr. Montessori went on to give a very clearly articulated and detailed blueprint for facilitating the child's selfconstruction at each plane. Her blueprint called for a Prepared Environment, different for each stage of development, specifically designed to respond to the tendencies and needs of that particular plane.

The **Prepared Environment** contains several elements.

- Mixed aged communities consisting of children in the same plane, in which the child lives and practices the skills of community living.
- Freedom and discipline, the phrase coined by Dr. Montessori to describe the basic principles of successful community living i.e. citizenship. She provided trained teachers with a step by step guide to support the development of these principles in each child and in the community of children.
- Independent work periods in which the child had the uninterrupted time to do the work of self-construction: time for trial and error, repetition, self-paced and deeply meaningful learning.
- A highly trained Teacher well versed in recognizing and responding to signs of the developmental tendencies and sensitivities so as to optimize the child's learning opportunities. The teacher is trained to facilitate selfconstruction and to remove the obstacles in its way.
- Didactic materials that, when manipulated by the child, uncover the keys to, and the language of, the constants of our vast and ever increasing universe.

So, these are the basic elements of Montessori's poetically simple yet utterly complex blueprint for supporting the child's self-construction. It is as relevant today as it was IOO years ago at its inception, and it will be relevant IOO years from now. Why? Because it nurtures in the child, intrinsic human qualities and skills crucial to success across all times and cultures. It's the answer to the question, "How do we best develop each man's gifts and potential to create individual self-fulfillment in service of the greater good?"

Our head scratchers can stop scratching. The answer to their dilemma is here, now and for the future, and its name is Montessori.

Mna

"To help life: this is the first and fundamental principle. Who then can reveal the natural ways along which the psychic development of man proceeds but the child himself once he is placed in conditions permitting him to do so." - Dr. Montessori

Daily Rhythms









































MSGH beyond 5



We have so much to celebrate this coming year and even more to look forward to beyond 50 years! We hope that our past families, students, and friends will reconnect and participate in our 50th year celebration!



 Ms. Ana, in an archive photo with Ms. Kathy, will celebrate 18 years at MSGH this fall.



Nicole Beavers (far right) was kind enough to join our Alumni Panel this past winter. She just graduated from the College of the Holy Cross with a BA in Political Science. Here, archive moment of singing with her classmates Niki Rinaldi El-Abd & Kathleen Moore.

A Our 40th Anniversary Celebration

▼ Left to Right: Elementary circa 2002. Alumni Michael Gomez Hixson, Matthew Stevens, Adam Khan, & Sam Moffett. We were delighted to have Matthew work in our classrooms this past year and have Sam, now a student at Berklee, play saxaphone at our Annual Auction Gala.





 Current Director of Programs, Orla
Black, pictured here with her Primary
class, during at our
40th Anniversary
celebration back in
2004. Orla celebrates
her 20th year with
MSGH this fall.



Mary McHale, now the current Director of Admissions, with her 2002-2003 Upper Elementary class. We just celebrated Mary's 15th year at MSGH!

▼ From the 2004 MSGH yearbook, Teresa Reynolds, Julia Rinaldi El-Abd and Una Barry. This year is Una's 10th as Head of School.



Teresa Reynolds, Office Manager; Julia Rinaldi El-Abd, Head of School; Una Barry, Program Coordinator



"Education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual."

Dr. Maria Montesori

The Montessori School of Greater Harford is dedicated to

> Pollowing the needs of the individual child in a prepared learning environment.

Encouraging self-reliance.

And allowing the child to explore, absorb and enjoy new concepts that will enhance the pleasure of both present and fature learning experiences.

We provide the keys. The children open the doors

Maria Monressori was born in the province of Ancons, Italy in 1870. Her parents encouraged her to become a teacher, one of the few careers open to wones of that eta. Reluctant to accept a mathional role, she sought and won admission to the University of Rome Medical School. In 1896, she became its first female graduate.

On staff at the university, she took a special interest in the process by which young children learn. She founded Gasa dei Bantbini (Children's House), an innovative child care program, to further study childhood learning. Her work led to a quiet revolution in educational theory and practice, the Montesson Method. Through her research, writings and lectures, Dr. Montessori became an internationally respected authority on education.

Today's worldwide network of Montresort Schools is the product of her insight, originality and untiring dedication.

25th Anniversary Publication, Fall 1989

We hope you will join us at our upcoming 50th events! Garden Party September 18th, 2014 5:00-6:30pm at MSGH

Winter Sing Along December 23rd, 2014 10am-12pm in ASD Gym

Beyond 50 Annual Auction Gala May, 2015



MSGH's 20th year in icing, 1984

Additions to the family, alumni news, or other announcements can be submitted to: karaf@msgh.org















This year, Keri Maijala, a friend of MSGH, lent us her talents and wrote an original script for our Elementary Play. This production was filled with creative twists on popular songs and side-splitting humor. The performance transcended the galaxy, traveled the globe, and got the whole audience moving to the music. The students worked collaboratively with each other, Mr. Jonathan & Ms. Yummie, along with faculty, staff and parent volunteers, to create this humorous, musical, and energetic production. Bravo!







"I want to be somewhere where I learn by... experience. I . . . I think I belong at this school, this Montessori Farm School. I want to stay here."







Salmon Release

This is our 9th year working on the salmon release project. The Upper Elementary demonstrated tremendous responsibility and leadership, as they monitored the development of the salmon eggs over the winter months. Caring for these fragile vertebrates, until they are released, is complex work. As we continue repopulation efforts of salmon to Connecticut's rivers, we look forward to more of our students enjoying this unqiue challenge.

















The Crowning Year

All Montessori classrooms are multi-age environments. This is not by chance. This is an essential aspect of the prepared environment (See Una's Article). Through her observations, Dr. Montessori examined the benefits and opportunities a mixed-aged environment offers children. For the sake of this article, let's examine this at the Primary Level. The 3-year-olds have the benefit of many role models for behavior in addition to the adults in the environment. They are surrounded by opportunities to observe and absorb the more advanced work that will someday be their privilege to explore, laying the foundations for it without even realizing they are doing so. And when they stumble, or forget a classroom procedure, or encounter an obstacle they cannot overcome, there are dozens of older helping hands to assist and guide them along the way.

What is perhaps not so intuitively obvious is how they will benefit when they in turn are third-year students, but in fact, the benefits are even greater then.

It is in the third year that all of the academic preparation of the first two years comes to fruition. The work they did with the numbers I through IO, the teens and tens, and then the categories of the decimal system through 9,999 only come to a full expression in the third year as they count the squares and cubes of numbers, move toward an abstraction of the processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and memorize math facts.

All of the steps of indirect preparation of the hand and the mind that came together in their second year as they began building phonetic words with the cut-out letters of the moveable alphabet, open

the entire world of reading, writing and grammar to them in their third year. As they learn phonograms (2-letter combinations) and nonphonetic "sight" words they round out the mechanics of reading and apply these new skills by labeling the names, parts and qualities they've learned verbally in the previous two years. Their writing moves beyond words to phrases and then sentences, and ultimately to stories and their first reports. It is also in this third year that they begin to develop reading comprehension and lay the groundwork for creative expression through work with the parts of speech, exploring the functions of the article, adjective, noun, verb, adverb, conjunction and

Third year students still do practical life exercises, but less for the sake of the process as when they were 3 or 4. Now they do them for the good of the group, taking pride in the health of the plants and animals, the beauty and cleanliness of their classroom environment. They gain a profound sense of accomplishment by applying these skills to the benefit of all.

preposition.

Having worked with music on a sensorial level in their first two years by matching and then grading the diatonic and chromatic scales, the third year student can now begin to recognize note values and their position on the musical scale, taking the first steps toward reading and music.

Although children would eventually work with the decimal system, the parts of speech, and even perhaps musical notation at some point in a traditional curriculum, it probably wouldn't be for several years.

But, they are ready for it now. What a waste to make them wait for years by which time their interest is blunted and the context of two year's of careful preparation is lost. It's as if they had spent two years preparing a sumptuous feast but have to wait for years before they satisfy their hunger.

But all of these academic gains pale in significance to the character development that comes together in the third year. When they were 3 and 4, they counted on the 5-year-olds to show the way and to help overcome obstacles. Now the 3 and 4 year-olds look to them!

The teacher relies on them to set the standard and to help the younger ones out of respect for their competence and accomplishment. The position they hold in their community is a crucial component in the success of the living organism of their classroom. They are, by virtue of their history and experience, irreplaceable.

They not only have the opportunity to develop empathy for the younger, newer and less capable students but to act on that empathy in a positive and responsible way. Third year students literally carry themselves differently, with the sense of self-esteem and self- assurance that comes with being the leaders of the class.

This feeling of self-confidence, self-worth and responsibility is perhaps the greatest benefit and accomplishment of the third year, and is a nearly irreplaceable experience. This explains why a teacher looks so stricken when one of her students leaves too soon, missing their crowning year, for she knows better than anyone what a remarkable experience the community and the individual have lost.









MSGH: Now Serving Toddler through Adolescence



As we sit on the cusp of our 50th year serving the Hartford community, we will have one more reason to celebrate. In addition to our existing Toddler, Primary, & Elementary programs, our new Adolescent program opens in the fall! Over this past winter, the Boards

"The child should live in an environment of beauty." - Dr. Montessori

of Trustees of the Montessori School of Greater Hartford (MSGH) and the Litchfield Montessori School (LMS) announced the transference of the administrative structure of the Montessori Middle School at Millstream Farm to MSGH. The 30 acre

setting at Millstream Farm will provide the optimal environment for MSGH's program that is carefully designed to specifically engage and challenge the adolescent, as academic work is initiated through real and meaningful experience. MSGH's adolescent program will be a model of a "school of the future," providing students a global education through a landbased, integrated curriculum. In addition to the coursework, this program builds entrepreneurial skills as students manage their own business and micro-economy. Concurrently, they develop environmental expertise as they run an organic farm and monitor area water sources. The work includes all conventional, academic subject areas including Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Language Arts, Physics, and Spanish fluency. Subjects are presented in a way that is meaningful and immediately applicable to the environment, while demanding critical thinking, problem-solving and great personal responsibility. This announcement heralds the long awaited opportunity for MSGH to provide its families an authentic Montessori education from Toddler through Adolescence. MSGH Head of School, Una Barry, offers, "Our families have consistently requested that we provide a Montessori option for their adolescent children on completing our Elementary program. We are delighted that we are able to honor that request in the best possible way with the addition of the Millstream Farm Adolescent program." The MSGH Middle School at Middle Stream Farm will include all seven of our matriculating sixth year students, along with students from surrounding schools.



Wares from the students' micro economy.

▼ Many of our families enjoyed their visit to Millstream Farm during our Spring Open House tour.





MSGH in the Community

To lend a new perspective, (see photo below, Primary students take in the beauty at the New Britain Art Museum of Modern Art), to lend a helping hand, (see photos below, Elementary students volunteer at the Hispanic Senior Center in Hartford), to hands on experiences that challenge and complement classroom curriculum (photos below, Primary students visit the Connecticut Science Center and Upper Elementary manipulate the exhibits during their overnight trip to the Boston Science Museum); Fieldstrips and classroom outings are a purposeful and exciting opportunity for our students to be ambassadors to the community at large.

















Moving On Ceremony



"Montessori has given me an extremely good balance of working independently and in a group setting. It has also helped me in finding my strengths and weaknesses and in giving me the opportunity to improve. Montessori has been a home away from home for me, I have always felt welcome here and I have never gotten bored of it.

In my mind I won't really be graduating I will be 'moving on' to the Montessori Farm School on Millstream Farm. Happy 50th birthday Montessori School of Greater Hartford. Thank you."- Youssef

In their own words...







"According to Senora Rivera, the lesson I did most in primary was opening and closing. I'm still doing just that. I'm opening the door to my new school at Millstream Farm and closing it to my old one at Elementary." - Madison

"This school is wonderful. In another school, | wouldn't be able to perform a speech in front of 100 or so people like I'm doing now. Being at MSGH has not only made me smarter, but more confident and braver than | ever was before." - Emily





"My entire time at MSGH I have looked up to the sixth years. They have always seemed so tall and old, but I don't feel that tall or old. I do feel ready for the next step in my education at the Millstream Farm School. I will never lose the drive for work and learning that Montessori has given me. The Montessori material helped me to understand not only the how, but also the why. I was able to see, touch and feel the material. And, that converts the experience into knowledge. I will bring this with me through my middle school years and throughout life."-Emma







"MSGH helped me in many ways. I got smarter, duh, but it also helped me feel more confident about myself, and about friendships. I became more mature. I learned what to do and say in difficult social situations."-Kati

"MSGH has allowed me to follow my interests and learn at my own pace. Being in a classroom with mixed age groups has helped me in many ways. It has enabled me to learn from older friends and become a role model for my younger friends."- Scott









"Things have really come together for me in Upper Elementary and this has been an exciting year. Ms. Marsha is an awesome teacher, who has taught me what I need to know to move up to Middle School. She has helped me to do many complicated things. She also supported me with successful projects and lessons, like a geometry city, a plane report, an island made of salt dough, and a story about wolves that is so long that I will keep working on it during the summer. It might become my first published book."-Waveris

Why I Give: By Lorri Chapman, Alumni Parent



Leah Chapman, top row, with her Upper Elementary classmates in 2002.

I look back with great appreciation on the MSGH community that, from 1994 to 2009, for our family, was more of a second home than we ever imagined a school could be. When our third and youngest child graduated from the upper elementary in 2009, our fifteen-year affiliation with the Montessori School of Greater Hartford entered a new phase as an alumni family. "Affiliation" is from a Latin word that implies adoption, and we do consider our association with MSGH to be familial.

Through the Annual Campaign, we remain interested in and supportive of our extended family at MSGH, which includes you and your children. For us, annual giving honors the happy years of our children's primary and elementary education and expresses our continued belief in the mission of the school. What method of

education is better designed to meet the varied and individual needs of your child as she changes and grows? What other school so perfectly fosters a child's need to work according to his inner drive?

Maple sugaring is the current interest of our sixteen-year-old son who has a budding passion to be an outdoorsman even though "stranded" in the suburbs of Connecticut. As a student at MSGH several years ago, he was free to learn and experiment with his hands. Our twenty-three-year-old daughter employs her hands and mind in textile design and production. As a child she was notorious for her crafty messes at home and her determination to learn by reading and doing. In a parent-teacher conference her teacher, Ms. McHale, remarked that this student could make alarming, far-flung messes while creating but, fortunately, at the project's completion she was able to bring chaos back to order in a flash. At MSGH she was able to work in a way that honored her inner drive for learning by reading and creating.



Keith Chapman, bottom row and third from right, with his Lower Elementary Classmates in 2002.



Peter Chapman, bottom left and bottom row, with his Primary Classmates in 2002.

Our middle child, now a junior in college, is of a different temperament entirely. His work style appears relaxed to the extreme and he has always been impermeable to external pressure from parents, teachers and peers. He moves and works at his own steady pace and succeeds in this way. He is quiet and affable and thrives on calm social company and interaction. In his elementary years, he was known to listen nearby to lessons being given to other students and he quietly fed his mind this way.

Tell me about your child, for I would love to hear! Is she an extrovert who enjoys talking while working, or possibly a kinesthetic learner? At MSGH, children interact and move about according to these needs. Is he in a phase seeking intense collaboration? He is free to collaborate

at MSGH. Or is her preference to work solo? In the Montessori classroom, she is free to follow solo pursuits. Is your child currently inclined to observe and absorb the lessons other students receive? At MSGH, he is welcome to do so. Is your child more comfortable with either older friends or younger friends rather than peers the same age? At MSGH your child may make choices according to these inclinations.

Only the Montessori classroom honors the individual and evolving inclinations of a child at each age and every stage. Maria Montessori said "Teachers should no longer be mostly imparting knowledge, but must take a new path, seeking the release of human potentials." Like you, this is what we chose for our children and, in gratitude, we pledge our support to MSGH's Annual Giving Campaign.

Lorri & John Chapman MSGH Alumni Parents

| | Catego | ries of Giving | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| The Maria Montessori Circl | • | Sustainer | \$500-\$999 (Leadership L | evel begins |
| The Pink Tower Circle | \$2,5000-\$4,999 | Patron | \$250-\$499 | |
| The Director's Circle | \$1,500-\$2,499 | Supporter | \$100-\$249 | |
| Benefactor | \$1,000-\$1,499 | Friend | up to \$99 | |
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Special Persons' Day!



This year, we re-established a favorite MSGH event: Special Persons' Day! Our students invited a guest into their classroom and enjoyed a treat in our Family Association Bistro. It's such a special day! Next year's Special Persons' Day is May 8, 2015!









































Family Association News

Dear Families,

This past year proved to be another fun and successful year for the Family Association, due in large part to all the wonderful people who volunteered in so many different ways! While the beautiful updates to the lobby may be the most obvious product of volunteer efforts, I also want to highlight the many activities such as coffee talks, play dates, and classroom socials that continuously help to strengthen the community fabric of our wonderful school. In addition to providing opportunities for our families to come together, the FA also does its best to support our teachers and staff and to try and make sure they consistently feel appreciated. To this end, all of the classroom representatives went above and beyond and the monthly teacher appreciation gestures, capped off by the annual teacher appreciation luncheon, were truly enjoyed by all! While the past year was full of successes, I can't help but look forward to next year with great anticipation. We have lots of new volunteers joining the FA in different capacities including in support of the new MSGH Middle School at Millstream Farm! As always, the FA is here for you and made possible by you. There are so many ways to be involved from supporting your child's teacher, as a classroom representative, to providing a dish for the annual teacher/staff luncheon, to hosting a play date at the park to however you would like to be involved. In the FA, there is a place for everyone! As we move into planning for next year, please don't hesitate to get involved, our school is made stronger by your creativity and involvement! Have a wonderful

FAMILY ASSOCIATION UPCOMING FALL EVENTS

| 8/17 | 2pm | *New Family Picnic at Fernridge Park |
|--------------|---------|--|
| 9/2- 9/12 | 9am | *New Parent Morning Receptions in MSGH Lobby |
| 10/3 | 8:30 am | *Grandparents' Tea |
| 10/6 | 3:15pm | FA Meeting at MSGH |
| 10/8 | 9:00am | Toddler Tea with Úna |

*Fall Events Needing Volunteer Support

summer and I look forward to seeing you and working with you in the fall!

Sincerely,

Adecca E Lordon

Rebecca London Family Association Chair





FOLLOW THE CHILD

EDITOR/WRITER Kara Fenn LAYOUT / PHOTOGRAPHERS Kara Fenn, Amanda Pergola CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS Ana Aquilar, Toko Blais-Odorczuk, Jennifer Ford, Nancy Rivera & Nancy White For copies of FTC photos or articles, please contact Kara Fenn

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