Dear Families,

My husband occasionally helps our next door neighbor’s children with their homework. Recently their 14 year old, let’s call him Alan, asked for help with geometry. My husband, the math lover/wiz, was gung-ho to help. The homework was two pages; the first page, a ditto sheet with questions related to the second page which was filled with random intersecting horizontal and vertical lines creating multiple and varied angles. The task was to answer the questions while referring to the second page.

Alan’s body language throughout the encounter was telling. He slumped in his chair, ran his hands through his hair agitatedly and generally gave the impression that the dentist would be fun compared to what he was enduring.

After Alan left, my husband asked how he could encourage him to go beyond the minimum, as Alan was only interested in getting the right answer and in being finished as fast as possible, and not at all in the process. He seemed to know some rules, but only in a rote sense and didn’t demonstrate any real understanding of the concepts. This was a purely academic exercise for Alan, with no concrete

**Personal challenge:** A math problem the length of the floor. Having the opportunity to challenge oneself yields amazing results.
Under the Montessori educational philosophy, the child is encouraged to take on new tasks and make discoveries, guided by the teacher's role as a facilitator rather than a traditional lecturer. The teacher observes the child’s natural curiosity and interest, often through a process called "follow the child." This approach allows the teacher to understand the child's unique interests and developmental needs, thereby tailoring the learning environment to foster personal growth and independence.

The Decanomial Square, a sensorial material at the Primary Level, plays a pivotal role in developing the child's understanding of multiplication and algebra. The square is comprised of 100 square units, each increasing in size by 1 square centimeter, allowing the child to visualize and manipulate geometric shapes and their properties. Through the act of "building the square," the child engages in a multi-step process that requires concentration, spatial awareness, and the ability to follow instructions. This hands-on approach not only enhances the child's discrimination of shape, size, and color but also promotes concentration in the organization and execution of the multi-step work.

The excitement and drive for work are intrinsic to the child, as they fuel their desire to master their environment; they take charge of their own learning through a process of exploration, tinkering, playing, and exploring. The child's ability and interests are recognized by the teacher, who acts as a guide rather than a director. The teacher respects the child's autonomy and allows them to learn through discovery, mistakes, and self-correction. This approach is supported by the mixed-aged classrooms and the Montessori classrooms, which provide opportunities for real work and rich learning experiences.

As our children live in their Montessori communities, they are encouraged to learn through exploration and discovery, guided by the teacher's role as a facilitator. This method of true learning and education, characterized by trial and error, is said to be the essence of the Montessori method. The teacher's role is to "follow the child," observing and supporting the child's natural curiosity, allowing them to make discoveries, and make more mistakes, recognize patterns, and discover new knowledge. This approach is supported by the mixed-aged classrooms and the Montessori classrooms, which provide opportunities for real work and rich learning experiences.

Binomial Cube

Originally, this material was designed by Dr. Montessori for use at the Elementary Level, but seeing how the younger children were drawn to it, she included it in the Primary Sensorial materials as a puzzle. This material represents the cube of the binomial. It is made up of eight small prisms to represent the formula \((a+b)^3 = a^3 + 3a^2b + 3ab^2 + b^3\). In working with this material, the Primary child not only builds the cube within the structure of the box and using the map on the lid as support, but will build it free standing on the lid or even while blindfolded. As the child progresses onto Elementary, she will use the cube to explore both the geometric, arithmetic, and algebraic aspects of the binomial.

Extending a lesson

Recently, a few Upper Elementary students took their area & volume work to a new level by constructing towns using the Geometric Solids material. The students calculated the surface area and volume of the different buildings they had constructed.
outdoor environment contains materials that, when manipulated, demonstrate key concepts. It offers real things and real work and a real, living, and dynamic community. In this milieu the child has the opportunity to touch, manipulate, explore, make mistakes, etc. An essential element of the Prepared Environment is the community of mixed aged children, who bring the concepts inherent in the materials alive as they manipulate and explore, thus exciting their peers to learn and master. Overlaid on this special environment is the trained adult who is knowledgeable in child development, and who provides the link between the environment and the child. Last and most important, the child is offered time. Time to explore and repeat at a pace that is unique to each one of us, and cannot be rushed without losing something precious, and that something precious is deep and meaningful learning. The kind of learning that changes who we are and enriches our lives and our experiences. The kind that lives in our bones forever and can be taken out and polished up whenever we need it, just like riding that bike.

So, my husband has his work cut out for him to help Alan, in that he has to give geometry back to him. I know it won’t be with paper and pencil, but with wood, nails, tools, and with fun and engagement, as they build something together that has been chosen by Alan.

Una

This Follow the Child is in loving memory of John & Rita Chakalos.

Box of Geometric Sticks: This material allows students to construct and experiment with lines, angles, and shapes.

Constructive Triangle Boxes: This material explores the equivalency of shapes at a sensorial level.

Daily Rhythms

Thank you, to our wonderful Parent Panel during our Parent Information Series. You were fantastic!

Save the date:
Alumni Night and Panel
January 9
Mystery History

MSGH Visits Montessori Middle School

The weather and atmosphere were bright and sunny as some of our MSGH Students arrived at the Montessori Middle School at Millstream Farm. Our students quickly fell into step with the veteran students as they explored the barn and learned the responsibilities of a working farm. After sampling some fresh made goat cheese, made by the Middle School Students, our students participated in a lesson on the scientific principle of half-lives or the time required for half of a pesticide or radioactive element to break down in the environment. They graphed exponential decay to see how substances with known half-lives decay predictably over time. M&M’s & Twizzlers were used to deliciously model this concept.
Toddler Language
By Toko Oodorczuk

It is a human tendency to communicate with others. Dr. Montessori realized this, declaring, “To talk is in the nature of man.” Children, therefore, are programmed to take in and master the language of their culture. Infants have an innate ability to recreate language, simply by hearing it in their natural environment. The child becomes a sponge, soaking up everything around him.

During the very early years, children use their senses and movement to get to know themselves and the world. When they learn to give a name to each piece of information they receive, they begin making the transition from the concrete to the abstract. Language transforms sensory-motor reality into symbols and images of words. This is really a qualitative leap in the development of human intelligence.

Experiences create the foundation for the images of words. Images and words expand as the child matures and encounters more experiences; we gain a better basis on which to communicate based on our personal experiences. A young child can only understand deeply what s/he has experienced.

When building language, it is important to begin with experiences; thus, building the foundation for language. To accomplish this we must provide concrete materials the child can manipulate and label. The more senses we involve in the foundation, the stronger the language base. We encourage you to explore the outdoor environment, visit your local pet store, observe other community settings; all experiences encourage language development and a better understanding of your child’s surroundings.

Along with providing rich experiences, it is important to consider your interaction with your small learner. Keep in mind, “the more language in, the more language out.” When toddlers are immersed in language, they tend to use language earlier and more efficiently. During this period of life, toddlers are ripe for language learning, soaking up every word presented. Toddlers who are exposed to more stimulating language environments in the first two years tend to have a larger vocabulary and more complex sentence structures when they are three years of age. Children learn language by hearing language.

Eye-gaze. When communicating with your child, make sure you are at his/her level (whenever possible), facing your child, and giving him/her your full attention. This will let your little one know s/he is a part of the conversation, his/her thoughts are important, and s/he will not feel rushed to communicate his or her needs or feelings.

Pause during the conversation. Remember, we are models for what is expected. Creating pauses during the conversation and allowing for others to speak when you are done will give the toddler the appropriate cues for when to communicate.

Observe your own voice. It is necessary to consider what your toddler is actually hearing when you communicate. Is your voice at an appropriate volume? How is your tone and pitch? When does it flux during conversations? Are you careful to use proper articulation? Are you modeling kindness when speaking to or about others? Children observe everything around them, even when we think they aren’t listening.

Slow down. Often times we are in a rush to quickly...
Setting foot in a Montessori classroom, it is hard to miss the bells. Children and adults alike are drawn to their beautiful appearance and melodic sound. This sensorial material works directly to help refine the child’s auditory discrimination of pitch, tuned to demonstrate the pitches of the C Major Scale. The child first works with the bells playing one, then two, noticing the difference in pitch. Once he has explored variance in pitches, he begins to work with matching like pitches, and grading pitches. With this material, the Primary child begins to learn the names of the pitches, how to notate those pitches on a musical staff, and is given the freedom to write and record his own music. So, next time you’re in a Primary Classroom, listen not only to the sound of concentration, but to the sound of the bells.

Tone Bars
On the heels of the bells, come the Elementary tone bars. This music material gives the child exposure to two octaves of pitches, allowing him to continue his exploration of music. The Elementary child plays scales from around the world, begins to read music, and begins to compose her own music with this material. At the heart of the elementary curriculum is the interconnectedness of all subjects; this is no different with the tone bars. The child is able to connect studies of various cultures to the scales used as the basis for music in that culture or play melodies on the tone bars written by historical composers.

Material Spotlight:
The Bells

Benefits of a Bilingual Classroom

The young child possesses an awesome power: the ability to absorb all around them, including multiple languages and their complexities. Between birth and the age of six is the optimal time to introduce a second language and allow your child to effortlessly master the language and native-like pronunciation. Studies have shown that children who learn other languages before the age of five experience them with the same part of the brain used to speak their mother tongue.

If you speak a different language in your home, you are highly encouraged to do so with your little one. What a gift you’re offering them! Language is the key to culture and research shows it’s wonderful for brain development, along with all the benefits that come with speaking multiple languages. There is no need for formal “lessons” either, simply speak your native tongue and they will soak it up. It’s very important for the person who is speaking the alternate language to be native speaking and to be consistent; speaking that language exclusively when with the child. As they mature, you may notice they tend to converse in English. Don’t fret, as children often speak the tongue of their peers. They are still taking in both languages and will have the native accent and ability to use both.

Material Spotlight:

Follow the Child | Winter 2013
Classroom Moments

Follow the Child | Winter 2013
Interview with Ms. Kathy

Name: Kathy Aldridge  
Toddler 1-Head Teacher  

Degrees and Education: BA from the University of Connecticut; attended UConn School of Social Work  

AMI Montessori Certificates: Primary and Toddler  

How long have you been part of the MSGH community and in what capacities?  
I’ve worked at MSGH for eighteen years, sixteen in the classroom and two as Director of Development. Prior to my being employed at the school, my son attended and I served on the Board of Trustees.  

Before coming to MSGH, what other fields did you work in?  
Department of Children and Youth Services/Case Worker  
Insurace/ Methods and Procedures Analyst  
Retail/Owner of a Tennis and Golf Apparel Shop  
Property Manager  

What drew you to teaching and specifically Montessori education?  
My son drew me to teaching and specifically to Montessori. I had Daniel when I was older and felt that I had waited forever for him. After he was born, I wanted to spend as much time with him as possible. When he started school, I went into teaching so that our schedules would coincide. He attended MSGH and I was at a traditional preschool. When I compared the two programs, the differences convinced me that I wanted to be in Montessori.  

Describe your AMI training. What did you find the most challenging? The most exciting? The most rewarding?  
I received my primary training at the Maria Montessori Training Organisation in London, England and my toddler training at The Montessori Institute in Denver, Colorado. My son was 10 when he and I moved to London for the training. My husband was able to visit a few times a year. It was a challenge to return to school after so many years. It took a while to regain the skill of listening to a lecture while taking notes. I remember those first few weeks when Daniel missed his friends and wanted to leave - when I couldn’t make any sense of my lecture notes – when I was tired of lugging around groceries or laundry (we walked or took the tube everywhere). It was getting very old. I called my husband saying, “I can’t do this. We need to come home.” Fortunately, he convinced me to stick it out because the experience was very rewarding for both my son and me. London is a great city and living there was exciting in and of itself. The students in both of our schools were from all over the world and we learned a lot about various cultures. I loved the coursework, but did find it difficult to stay up half the night to fulfill the requirement to type and illustrate all the manuals. I realized, however, that you’re never too old to take on a challenge which was a help to me recently when I decided to go for my toddler certificate. This time I had the luxury of not having any family responsibilities during the two summers of training. I was familiar with much of the theory, so it made the coursework that much easier. The challenge was fulfilling the 250 hour observation requirement over the winter while working full time. Again, the challenge became the biggest reward. By taking that much time to observe the motor, verbal, and social development of children, the theory was brought full circle. It was a fascinating experience that couldn’t be duplicated in a book.  

How do your life’s experiences influence you as a teacher in the classroom?  
Over the years, I’ve grown more patient and fortunately I’ve always seen the humor in things – especially in frustrating situations. I’ve found both are invaluable when working with children. I’ve also learned that children will meet the expectation level you set, so you need to set the bar high and remind yourself that the child before you today is not the same as yesterday. You need to have faith in the child and treat each day as a new beginning.  

Why is the Prepared Environment so important to your classroom?  
When we say the environment (classroom) is “prepared” we mean that it is set up to meet the developmental needs of the child. The appropriate materials need to be well maintained, complete, attractive, and easily accessible to the child. The room needs to be organized in a way that makes sense to the child; the various areas (practical life, language, art, manipulatives) are separate and the material within these areas are either classified or color-coded. Organizing the materials in such a way encourages exploration and independence. Without a prepared environment, our job would be impossible.  

Anything else to share or add?  
Yes, I would like to thank everyone who’s contributed to the MSGH Annual Fund. Without this support, teacher training and development would not be possible. Every child benefits from a donation to the Annual Fund whether it’s designated for materials, cultural enrichment, teacher training, or financial assistance. It truly is a gift that continues to give to every child.

Finish the sentence:  
Favorite food: I love to eat so that is a difficult question. I guess if I were to choose a last meal it would be pasta with pesto.  
I can’t start my day without: Breakfast and the news.  
Last book I read: Goldfinch by Donna Tartt  
Last movie I watched: The Butler  
Favorite color: Blue  
If I could have dinner with anyone, living or dead, I would have dinner with... My son and my father so that the two would have the opportunity to meet. My father loved to tell stories over dinner about his life growing up in New York and the escapades of his very colorful family. He had a hearty laugh that drew you in and was he great fun to listen to. Through these stories you not only got an appreciation of life in a different era, but you got a real sense of his values. I wish Daniel had his own memories of this loving, generous man instead of having to rely on mine.
Under the tutelage of the talented MSGH Artist in Residence, Michelle Thomas, the Elementary and Primary Teachers (and Administration) have gotten a little artsy. Allow us to explain. We are dedicated to our classrooms, our teachers, and our students. To better support these budding artists, we have enlisted Michelle to lead a series of art workshops for our faculty. In this way, the teachers can incorporate these learned techniques and mediums into the framework of the existing classroom curriculum. This integrated approach has truly caught fire in the classrooms and the children have greatly benefited. In outings to the New Britain Art Museum, the children witness multiple examples of introduced mediums and techniques.
MSGH out in the Community

We are a proud member of the Greater Hartford community. As we extend our reach further into that community, we continue to enrich our students’ education. Through our Spanish program and the passionate dedication of Señora Rivera, Elementary students volunteer, hone their Spanish conversational skills, and embody the best practice of Montessori Grace and Courtesy in their trips to the Hispanic Senior Center in Hartford. Our Primary Students practiced their Winter Sing Along song-set for the residents of the Hughes Health & Rehabilitation Center in West Hartford. Their songs and smiling faces brought so much joy to those at the facility recovering from surgery. As we continue to grow our relationships with area organizations, we look forward to continuing to give back to the larger community.

Welcome
Alexios Coss and Susanna Winship Lane!

Congratulations
Amanda & Dave and Kathy & Carlos!

Our own special arrival:
The baby salmon have arrived! Stay tuned...

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

KEEP IN TOUCH!
Thank you to our Faculty, Staff, and Board in joining together in support of our Mission by contributing to our Annual Fund! Your generous support of MSGH means so much to our students and our community. Thank you for your leadership and advocacy.

A tax deductible gift to the Annual Fund supports our Students’ love of learning, our Teachers’ passion for teaching, and our Mission for a peaceful world.

Thank you for supporting the Montessori School of Greater Hartford!

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It is our mission to prepare them to inherit the world.

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**Montessori School of Greater Hartford**

**Annual Fund Campaign 2013/2014**

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<tr>
<td>The Pink Tower Circle</td>
<td>$2,500-$4,999</td>
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☐ Classroom Materials and Programming
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Should any fund become oversubscribed, MSGH will use the gift where it is most needed.

My gift is:

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To give online visit:

www.msgh.org ➔ Support MSGH ➔ Make a Donation

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

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Follow the Child | Winter 2013
Hi Everyone,

It is amazing to think we are already halfway through the school year, my how the time flies! First and foremost, I would like to thank all of you for making this year so successful thus far. Whether you volunteered to host an event or attended one it has been great to see so many faces at coffee talks, play dates and classroom socials! Building on the success of the fall we have many more fun things to look forward to in the upcoming months. New this year the Family Association and the school will be combining resources and collaborating on the much loved Heart of Montessori event. We will honor the Family Association’s skating social tradition and the Heart of Montessori’s child centered community day with a combined (Warm your) Heart of Montessori! Look for fun family activities and a new community service component so that we can spread some of the warmth of our community to others. We are looking for a few volunteers to help out with this event. Please contact Kara if you are interested. All members of our community (parents, grandparents, older children) are welcomed volunteers. Also, something new to look forward to in the spring are some improvements to the lobby. The FA has taken on the project, with the help of some fabulous family volunteers; we hope to give the lobby a modest facelift. Last but not least, mark your calendars for the much-loved Primary and Elementary Teas where we seek advice and inspiration not only from Una and Mary but also from each other.

As always, the successes of all FA projects are a direct result of family involvement and participation. Not only do I encourage you to volunteer at whatever level you can, I also encourage you to take advantage of all the FA has to offer. We have such a wonderful community and every time you volunteer or participate in the FA our community becomes more vibrant and beautiful, thank you!

Rebecca London
Family Association Chair

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities
Heart of Montessori Committee is now forming!
Be Inspired.

MSGH Annual Gala & Grandparents' Day

Friday, May 9

Save the Date!