

Follow *the* Child

THE MSGH COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



Dear Families,



UNA'S CHAT

Many parents wonder about how evaluation takes place in a Montessori environment. Before discussing evaluation we must know the desired outcomes.

Outcomes for Life

We focus on the intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual development of each student. At MSGH we want to help your child develop skills to become adults who are fully engaged in life.

Your Child: a Natural Learner

Dr. Montessori understood that human beings are natural learners. Throughout history, (much of that time without 'formal education'), we have worked and learned, adapting to our time and culture. She observed that this innate ability to learn is driven by universal tendencies and 'sensitive periods' that steer us to specific activities in a clear sequence and on a particular



time line. This understanding of child development is factored into both the organization of the child's Montessori classroom environment and how assessment is approached.

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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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The Prepared Environment

Dr. Montessori created the “Prepared Environment” offering;

- Choice and the freedom to act on choices. These opportunities develop the child’s independence, capability, and decision making skills.
- Access to the keys to the world. The sensorial, math, language, cultural materials and the practical life activities specific to the child’s culture.
- Membership in a mixed age community. This supports the development of the subtle and complex intelligence necessary to manage the freedoms and responsibilities inherent in membership of a diverse community.
- Uninterrupted time for intellectual work to be chosen and repeated. This develops a child’s concentration, intelligence, and tenacity.



Assessment

Within this milieu of the Prepared Environment, the trained Montessori teacher has several tools and many techniques to assess the child’s development and progress in all areas of his or her personality. Here is a look at some of these tools.



Observation

Much of Montessori training is dedicated to developing the skills of observation. As they observe, teachers are constantly assessing a child's ability to:

- Demonstrate kindness, empathy and support for others. Show respect toward the needs, ideas and opinions of others and demonstrate willingness to resolve, or attempt to resolve, conflict independently.
- Balance freedom of movement and choice with the responsibilities of the community.
- Get his or her needs met appropriately.
- Apply learned skills to his or her life in the environment.
- Complete a full work cycle. This indicates a level of self-regulation to control movement and impulses, while harnessing one's own focus, memory and persistence.
- Converse. Conversations provide insight into a child's joys, fears, anxieties, and how they affect his or her daily life and work.
- Notice a need in the environment and respond. This demonstrates responsibility for and connectedness to the community.



The Materials

Montessori materials are the teacher's ultimate diagnostic aid. Their genius lies in the fact that a concept and skill is isolated to reveal a clear path to mastery. The child's work with materials illustrates his or her understanding of and ability to work with a concept, as well as any limits of understanding. The materials are designed to test the child and allow him or her to self-correct. For example, the reading folders test the child's recognition and application of phonograms; the key to reading. The math finger charts and test boards evaluate mastery of math facts.

The child's use of the materials allows the teacher to assess more general skills and abilities. For example, his level of care, attention to detail, fine and gross motor control, pincer grasp, etc. The length, depth, and quality of the child's concentration is revealed through the child's use of the materials. His or her choices indicate interest, confidence, skill level, motivation, and tendency to perfectionism. Furthermore, the desire for or resistance to challenge is a demonstration of the child's tenacity and problem solving skills. The child's work with the materials also exhibits his or her ability to:

- Organize and apply logical sequencing. This indicates a capability to plan, anticipate, order, categorize, and recognize patterns (all essential advanced math and language skills).
- Retain, integrate and apply information, and see connections.
- Express information.
- Apply a concept to the environment.



Lessons

During a lesson, a child is introduced to a new concept or new aspect of a concept. Lessons are guided by the teacher and tailored to the needs of the individualized student. The teacher can determine how much support a child will require, and the pace and technique she must employ to engage a particular child fully.

Lessons also provide a window into the child's general level of patience, interest, ability to concentrate and take turns, as well as the ability to engage in collaboration with the teacher and others. Lessons reveal the confident, impulsive, reticent or thoughtful child.

The Three-Period Lesson is particularly helpful in assessing children's grasp of a concept and retention of its language. The Three Period Lesson very clearly demonstrates the child's level of understanding, and exactly where, if applicable, understanding breaks down.

Stages of the Three Period Lesson

1. The Association Stage: The adult isolates each object and provides the name for the object/quality. “This is a....”



2. The Recognition Stage: The adult checks to find out if the name has remained associated with the object in the child's memory. The adult, using the name already given, repeatedly asks the child to isolate each object from the other two, thus fixing the association of name to object/quality in the child's memory. “Point to the..., pick up the ..., give me the ..., put the...here.”



3. The Identification Stage is a rapid verification of the first stage, testing if the child has retained the appropriate association of name to object or quality. “What is this?”

How is the Three Period Lesson Applied?

The Three-Period Lesson focuses on the extremes of contrasts within a concept. As the child's understanding becomes more sophisticated and refined, the contrast follows suit. The Three Period Lesson is a true diagnostic tool for the teacher and will often be used to determine the child's understanding of the scope and nuance of a concept before moving on.

Work produced

The emphasis in our classrooms is on process and not product. However, work produced that displays a child's progression, particularly in the area of writing, is a valuable evaluation tool. Work that is dated and kept over time, demonstrates both for the teacher and the child progress and growth.



Projects

Elementary student projects demonstrate the child's ability to apply skills in an integrated format. Research skills are easily assessed in the quality and depth of content, the variety of resources used, and the independence demonstrated throughout the process. The child's desires and ability to collaborate with others or lead is evident as they demonstrate the ability to think independently while working interdependently.

Meetings with the Child

Regular meetings reveal the Elementary child's view of his or her progress, the level of confidence, motivation, interest and challenge. These meetings allow the child to voice frustration, excitement, anxiety or enjoyment in a particular subject or an area of his life in the classroom. The teacher and the child collaborate, creating goals and a means to achieve these goals.

The Curriculum, Planning and Recording of Progress

All of these tools and techniques discussed are used in the context of the Montessori curriculum which is open ended, flexible and adaptable, depending on the needs of the individual child. However, at each level there is a very concerted catalog of lessons covering concepts, skills and applications in all subject areas applicable to that level. These lessons are the backbone of the teacher's planning and recording of the progress of each child.

Here at MSGH, these core lessons are tracked in an electronic planning and record-keeping system called Montessori Records Express (MRX). At the Primary and Elementary levels, the teachers, using MRX, continually track and document each child's progress through the curriculum. They can document and comment on a child's response to a lesson immediately following the lesson and make plans for their next contact with the child on that subject. The teachers document all the observations and outcomes from the many tools and techniques discussed to create a true picture of the child's intellectual, social, emotional, moral, and spiritual development. To ensure that our children are prepared to take on any curriculum they may encounter in other schools, MSGH is currently in the process of aligning our curriculum with the components of the new Common Core State Standards.



The Ultimate Outcome

Montessori curriculum allows for education that is academically rigorous and challenging within a nurturing environment. The journey through the Montessori cycles is carefully designed. The materials, the environment, and the teacher, are prepared to meet each child's needs so that nothing will inhibit a child from reaching his or her own unique potential. Ultimately, the final and most important evaluation method utilized in our community can be summed up in Dr. Maria Montessori's own words; "The true measure of success is the happiness of the child."



“The true measure of success is the happiness of the child.”



First Days





Garden Party



Family Association News

Hi Everyone,

It is so wonderful to be back to school and once again immersed in our community. Thanks to much planning during the summer months, we have gotten off to a great start with fun activities either already under our belt or in the works for the near future.

I hope you have already had an opportunity to take advantage of a FA-sponsored event such as the New Parent Receptions, play dates, and classroom socials. If not, mark your calendars for upcoming coffee talks, more classroom socials, and the much-loved Teas with Una.

Thank you to all of the volunteers who have already rolled up their sleeves and jumped in to help. For those of you looking for a place to make a contribution to our community, I look forward to talking with you. Remember, by being a member of the MSGH community, you are automatically a member of the Family Association. I hope that each of you will take advantage of all we have to offer and that the school year is a wonderful one for your family.

Rebecca London
Family Association Chair



Class Reps



Hyacinth Ellis
Upper Elementary



Lorraine Tobrocke
Lower Elementary
Staff Appreciation



Lynne Lofberg
Primary 1



Voula Coss
Primary 1
Staff Appreciation



Jennifer Augsberger
Primary 2



Ann Osoba
Primary 2



Krista Wells
Primary 3



Cynthia Alegre
Primary 3



Jennifer Hicks
Primary 4



Meg Keough
Primary 4
Treasurer



Meghan Fanning
Toddler 1
Family Support & Hospitality



Prachi Sanas
Toddler 1



Brook Kokus
Toddler 2



Jody Lewis
Toddler 2



Dhurata Margolis
Toddler 3



Tasha Chambers
Toddler 3



Rebecca London
FA Chair



Laura Miele
Welcome Table Manager



Kara Fenn
MSGH/FA Liaison

Hartford Marathon Foundation Fit Kids



This year, MSGH is proud to sponsor the Hartford Marathon Foundation Fit Kids program. Supporting a healthy lifestyle for our children is important, so to be able to do that while using our marketing dollars in a creative way and supporting a fellow non-profit is something we are very excited about.

This past June, we set up our tent in Elizabeth Park to kick off the series with the Red Dress Run for Women. Our 'test run' was terrific! We had visits from many alumni at our tent and had a chance to introduce ourselves to new people. We also gave MSGH cowbells to as many children as we could find, wore our MSGH hats, and cheered on all those running in the sweltering heat.

Please note the upcoming race on your family calendar and come participate. Our MSGH tent will be set up, and we hope that our families will come in droves to cheer on the kids who are running and modeling a healthy lifestyle.

Come. Run. Cheer. Have Fun. Help spread the word about MSGH.

To learn more, or to register for a race, visit www.hartfordmarathon.com/FitKids/FitKids.htm. If you choose not to run, please wear your MSGH spirit wear and come cheer on the kids!

Next race:

*Sunday, December 2, 2012 in Blue Back Square,
West Hartford, CT*

Start Times: Kids 10:00 AM
(5K 10:30 AM)



MSGH Alumnae enjoying the Celebrate West Hartford Race in Blue Back Square

Save-the-Date!

December 20
Join us for
our annual
Winter
Celebration
Sing-Along



Upcoming Dates

Thursday, November 15
Parent Information Night

Friday, November 16
Grandparent Visits Begin

Wednesday, December 5
Coffee Talk

Saturday, March 9
Heart of Montessori

Friday, May 10
Annual Gala

(Please refer to calendar for additional information)

Welcome,
Giulia Catherine Carrabba
& Eleanor Kathryn Holer



Thank you, Families



Thank you all so much for the generous contributions you made at last year's Auction in honor of my 25th anniversary at MSGH.

When I began my career at MSGH in 1987, I was a teacher, and though my role has evolved to one of an administrator, my heart remains steadfastly with the children and what Montessori has to offer them. It is with this motivation that I maintain my passion for identifying, training and nurturing strong teachers who can expertly and authentically implement Montessori's work of educating for peace.

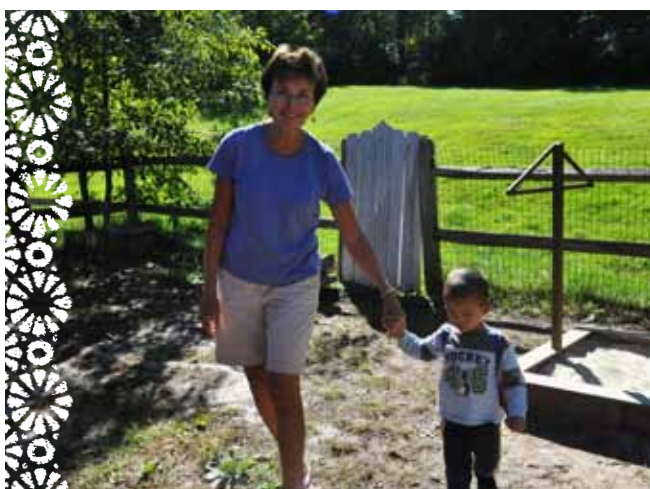
As most of you know, last year we had an unexpected surge in pregnancies and other life circumstances that required us to plan for more teacher trainings. While a bit stressful, we were prepared because truthfully we select our teachers years before they are visible to you.

We can quickly identify people with that "special something" and once they are on our radar, we begin training internally. Then, we send them off to complete their formalized training before they return to the classroom. It is in this way that we continue to get the best of the best, and those whom we know are the kind of guides we want to be here working with our children and nurturing the MSGH culture we hold so dear.

However, training the best of the best is a financial investment. Your very kind unrestricted gifts in honor of my anniversary went directly to support our increased training costs, which meant a great deal to me personally. Thank you!

I hope it makes you feel equally happy that your generosity has started several people on the road to being excellent teachers. What bigger contribution could you make than training people to influence future generations expertly and positively. A heartfelt thank you to all for your generosity!

Mua Daves



Thank you, Volunteers

Each year, we are fortunate to have a bevy of volunteers supporting our community, and this year that good fortune continues.



We would like to say a special thank you to MSGH parents, Craig Hebert, Doug Newhouse, and Billy Stremper, as well as MSGH grandparent, Tutch Shirane, for their immense support with facility improvements.

Craig Hebert donated all the cabinetry, and labor to install it, that you see in the new faculty space. Having the owner of a kitchen supply store in your community really comes in handy!

Tutch Shirane painted the old Faculty room downstairs and answered the handyman call of duty to help complete a tremendous number of chores on the teachers' lengthy to-do lists. Doug Newhouse and Billy Stremper sanded and sealed the extensive new cabinetry installed in Upper Elementary classroom.

Thank you, gentlemen! Your support is not only appreciated, it has allowed us to make cost-effective improvements to our school that enrich the daily life of our students and our community!



A Master in the Classroom



MSGH had the pleasure of hosting internationally recognized AMI trainer, Kay Baker, Ph.D.

Kay was excited to travel here and visit many of the teachers she has trained. Her stay at MSGH gave her the opportunity to see how the teachers are doing, and to engage in meaningful dialogue with them. We were honored that she chose to begin her national tour with us!

Kay spent the majority of her time in our classrooms mentoring our Elementary teachers. This intimate experience with such a renowned Montessorian was an

exceptional opportunity. As Lower Elementary teacher, Ms. Lis described, “I had Kay as a trainer during my own AMI certification. During my training, she focused primarily on presentations and philosophy in order to educate us as a group. Having her in my classroom was an honor because I got to watch her give lessons and answer questions about the classroom in the moment. As something was unfolding, I could ask her, “See that there? What do I do?” It was such a privilege to gain advice from one of the most respected Montessorians in the world. She offered advice on how to present, what to pay attention to, the purpose of the lessons, and how to address different situations as they occurred. I walked away completely inspired and with a clearer vision of how to plan and organize for a successful school year.”

In addition to working with our Elementary teachers, Kay facilitated a workshop here at MSGH for area Montessori educators. The workshop gave practical techniques and tools for effectively engaging Elementary-aged children in the classroom. As well as gaining Kay’s expertise, this workshop provided an opportunity for area Montessori teachers to come together to offer each other effective strategies and insights. This invaluable collaboration of experienced teachers enhanced our own program and strengthened the regional Montessori community.





“Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future.” ~ Maria Montessori

Spirit Wear

Thank you to all who already ordered your MSGH Spirit Wear!

We will take clothing orders until Thanksgiving! We do have a plentiful supply of Stainless Steel Travel Mugs, Stainless Steel Water Bottles and Jute Tote bags in stock.

Contact Kara Fenn at karaf@msgh.org for more information.



Grandparents in the Classroom



From November 16 through December 17, we will be enjoying our annual Grandparent Observations!

Call us for information about how to schedule time to observe your grandchild's classroom. Although we hope to concentrate many of our Grandparent visits to this time of the year and the children really look forward to it, please know that you are most welcome at any time throughout the year; just make an appointment in advance with our Main Office by calling 860.236.4565.

Hope to see you!

Alumna Feature: Anna Everett

Just before MSGH alumna, Anna Everett, headed off to Wellesley College, she and her father, Tim, kindly took the time to speak to us about Anna's time at MSGH.

FTC: *Do you have any memories of your time here?*

AE: Yes, I have very distinct memories. I remember the feeling of being here. I remember the kids I was friends with and how I admired the third years. I can also recall some of the materials like the pink tower and the polishing.

FTC: *Looking back, do you feel you got a good education?*

AE: Absolutely! My time at MSGH was challenging and fulfilling. I was very imaginative, and the teachers gave me room to express this creatively. I especially remember writing stories. I liked the feeling of sharing them with my teacher, and I enjoyed when Ms. McHale would read aloud to us in Upper Elementary. Sometimes we knitted at the same time, and my interest in reading and writing really ignited my creativity. I have always gravitated towards reading and writing, so I appreciated that we could write our own stories and then illustrate them. But I also remember math and science, so it was balanced between creative and concrete work.

FTC: *Do you still enjoy writing?*

AE: I do. I went on to Watkinson, and there I completed a creative arts diploma program, concentrating in acting, in addition to the normal program. I still like to write now and just finished a play writing course.

FTC: *How was your transition to Watkinson?*

AE: It was good. We called it a "desk school," and it was a nice continuation from MSGH. I remember



being challenged and being on par with the other kids. It went perfectly fine, and I liked it because it was open minded like MSGH with a lot of creative thinkers.

FTC: *What made you pursue the creative arts diploma in addition to your regular course load?*

AE: I pride myself on being a good student, and I think I look at academics in an open way. That's one of the things I like about myself. In the creative arts program, the artists wanted to make goals for themselves. I don't necessarily want to be an actor or follow a specific artistic path, but the program explored the arts in general, so there was acting, drama, dancing, visual arts, art history, cultural history, etc. I liked that.



*Luisa Lestz, Anna Everett, and her sister Gwen Everett, all of whom attended MSGH.

FTC: *You sound like you are very motivated to learn.*

AE: I guess I just enjoy learning. I don't see stress in it and I got that here. I can honestly say that I do enjoy learning, and so does my sister Gwen, who also went here and is now at Miss Porters.

FTC: *Where are you headed now?*

AE: To Wellesley College.

FTC: *Congratulations! Any idea what you will study?*

AE: Not yet. In terms of academics, I'm just looking forward to my regular course work, and I plan on writing, but there is also a Shakespeare Society that I hope to audition for. I am still interested in theater, and I hope to continue with chorus and maybe audition for an accapella group.

FTC: *Tim, you must be very proud of Anna.*

TE: I am. I am proud of both of my girls.

FTC: *Anna has fond memories of being here. Do you have any that you would like to share?*

TE: Yes, one in particular comes to mind. It was during her first week and I remember that her

teacher told us that Anna focused on polishing something for about a week.

FTC: *Did that make you nervous?*

TE: I remember musing about that at the time, but it became quickly apparent that Anna was free to be herself here, and as the years went on, we began to believe implicitly that the method and the people at MSGH were going to be good for her. It was refreshing that adults could describe our children to us in ways that we might not have considered.

FTC: *What was Anna like then?*

TE: Anna would likely have been described as an introvert by nature, but she wasn't labeled as such here. She was free to develop academically and emotionally when she was ready, and while it was our temptation to compare where she was with others her age in public settings, we came to appreciate that there was no grid for what was age appropriate.

FTC: *She doesn't seem shy at all now.*

TE: No, but I do remember one moment when I realized that her shyness didn't stop her from being expressive. During her Elementary years, she

participated in an opera about Hansel and Gretel. No one would have pegged her as one to stand up in front of others and sing, but that was what was so nice about MSGH. No one made her feel as if she shouldn't—so she did.

FTC: *Did you ever worry about the next step?*

TE: We quibbled a bit from time to time about little things, but we learned to quiet ourselves and be patient. When I think back to my fellow Elementary parents, sometimes there was worrying being done, and that's understandable, but we have found that it wasn't really necessary and the transition to conventional atmospheres went fine. Neither of my daughters has ever had to be asked to do their homework. They learned to like learning, and in Anna's case, she very much owns her education and she sees it as a venture.



FTC: *How did her transition go when she left for Watkinson?*

AE: Anna went to her next step brimming with curiosity, interested in following through on things and very perceptive. It's entirely likely that she would still be who she is today if she hadn't been here, but I think MSGH and her overall Montessori education had a lot to do with building her foundation.

FTC: *Can you share more with us about that?*

TE: My wife and I appreciated that in their first learning experience, our girls didn't have to worry about comparing themselves to anyone else on a daily basis. That sends a good message, and I think is a good way to go about an adult life, too. To keep your eye on your own purpose and not be worried about how you compare to others. Ideally, if a child can grow up not worrying about the competition when she is young, when she gets older her natural attributes stand out because she really likes what she is doing.

We felt that we'd rather invest in our children's education when they were young, because in that way their education could become an ongoing gift to them. I can be a bit of a romantic fool, but it was some of the best money I could have imagined spending. I truly believe that it is more important to invest in a child's solid foundation when she is young, because then she is sturdier and can handle what life sends her way. When children have those great competencies, they carry them through things.

“We felt that we'd rather invest in our children's education when they were young, because in that way their education could become an ongoing gift to them.”

And academically, if you say, “there will be time to be curious later,” then you might have waited too long.

FTC: Thank you, Tim. And thank you, Anna. We wish you both well and hope to see you at one of our Alumni Dinners!



MSGH Annual Fund

MAKING AN IMPACT, ONE CHILD AT A TIME

An MSGH education impacts children in profound ways that stay with them forever. *"I was like a dry sponge in a pool,"* Joel Reuning-Scherer, 6th year 2012, reflecting on his first days at MSGH.

Contributions to the Annual Fund support the MSGH experience in important ways like providing for the materials and programs that create a unique and amazing environment for our students every day, supporting the training and professional development of the faculty to produce expert, caring and nurturing teachers and making the MSGH experience more accessible through financial assistance. Please support the Annual Fund and help inspire our students to reach for the stars!





Montessori School of Greater Hartford Annual Fund Campaign 2012/2013

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*

I/We pledge a total Annual Fund gift of:

\$5,000 \$2,500 \$1,000 \$500 \$300 \$250
\$200 \$150 \$100 \$50 Other Amount: _____

Indicate method of payment:

Check enclosed for full amount Check enclosed for partial amount, \$ _____ to be paid on _____

Pledge to be fulfilled by June 30, 2013

Charge my gift

in one payment now

\$ _____ per month through June 30, 2013

_____ Installments on _____ dates

Payments must be completed by June 30, 2013

Card Number: _____ Expiration date: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

My employer, _____, will match my gift.

(Please enclose your employer's gift form)

Gift of Stock (Development Office will send information)

(over)

Please designate my gift to the following fund:

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

Please apply \$ _____ to the Endowment

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:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Alumni | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents of Alumni | <input type="checkbox"/> Trustee |

To give online visit:

www.msgh.org → Support MSGH → Give online

For questions, please
call Susan Rich-Bye,
Director of Advancement
860.236.4565 ext.28

Thank you for supporting the Montessori School of Greater Hartford!