Prosch: Unexpected benefits **Lillard:** New research **Miranda:** Puerto Rico

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Distance learning in a Primary classroom

A tiny program does everything it can to connect

BY **DAVID AYER**
WITH **KATY FONTNEAU**
AND **ROSA ORTIZ**

"When this started in March, we didn't know what was going to happen." Katy had a smile on her face when she said this, but it was rueful one. "We just sent home some stuff—library books—some never came back, those books are gone, but that's OK."

Katy Fontneau is a Primary teacher at Alder Montessori, a two-classroom Montessori early childhood program embedded in Alder Elementary, a public school in the Reynolds school district on the edge of Portland, Oregon. (MontessoriPublic profiled Alder in our very first issue, *I Have A Dream Oregon Dreams of Montessori*, Winter 2016.) Reynolds is a heavily inequity-impacted district and Alder Elementary is a Title I school serving a marginalized and minoritized population, mostly Hispanic but with 27 languages spoken at the school and a community including immigrants, undocumented residents, and families experiencing homelessness.

Alder Montessori, like all Oregon schools, pivoted to distance learning last spring and hasn't yet been back to face-to-face school. MontessoriPublic spoke with Fontneau and classroom assistant Rosa Ortiz about the Montessori approach to distance learning for young children over the past nine months.

The program worked with the school district to get technology needs met, but resources were limited in the spring. Kindergarten-age children were loaned tablets, but three- and four-year-olds didn't get them until later. The Montessori team did not set up a virtual classroom right away since not all the children would have access, but continued to stay in contact with children and families with "lots of phone calls" Fontneau said. Staff made one-on-one video calls and set up a website hosting videos of read-alouds and short lessons including letters written on a chalkboard and yoga routines.

The way it used to be, and will be again soon

Ortiz, as a Spanish-speaking member of the school community and mother of a six-year-old girl in the class, found her role expanded right away, making videos and providing support. "I was on a lot of phone calls from moms, answering questions, trying to explain things to the mom or whoever was home."

In the fall, as distance learning resumed in Oregon, support from the district ramped up. Every kindergartner got access to a loaned tablet and staff were issued laptops. Children and families got accounts on Zoom, Seesaw, and other apps, and were given login badges for Clever, a "single sign-on" learning management platform the district used. The district gave out hotspots to expand internet access. Three- and four-year-olds were included in the technology

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Equity conversations in Montessori

Reflections from two Black Montessori leaders

BY **MAATI WAFFORD**
AND **JASMINE WILLIAMS**

Equity conversations and real work are happening throughout the Montessori movement (*Equity news in the Montessori movement*, MontessoriPublic Fall 2020). Maati Wafford was formerly Race and Equity Advisor for NCMPS and is now Director of Anti-Bias, Anti-racist Education for AMS. Jasmine Williams has taken over Wafford's role as well as serving as a Montessori Teacher Residency Instructor and Coach for NCMPS. They sat down (virtually!) over the winter break to reflect on the work that's happening in the movement.

Our work in our respective organizations

Jasmine Williams: I am new to race and equity work on this scale and sometimes that feels daunting. Transitioning into this role with NCMPS carries huge responsibility. However, my growing association of Montessorians who have dedicated themselves to education for social justice reminded me that they all started in a similar position at some point.

My predecessor, mentor, friend and sister, Maati Wafford, laid down powerful transformative roots with educators as well as the organization of NCMPS. I've had conversations with Betsy Romero and Steve Mejia-Menendez of Lee Montessori Public Charter School, Amelia Allen Sherwood of Elm City Montessori, Trisha Moquino of Keres Children's Learning Center, Sakeenah Franzen of Denver Montessori Jr/Sr High School, Allison Jones of Breakthrough Montessori, Iana Phillips of Seward Montessori and Marta Donahoe.

A throughline in these conversations for me has been the concept of ubuntu. *Ubuntu* is a Zulu term meaning humanity. As a philosophy, *ubuntu* means "I

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For up-to-the minute news and discussion

Face-to-face with special needs

What the pandemic taught me that I didn't expect to learn

BY **DAKOTA PROSCH, M. ED, NBCT**

"I love school! I don't ever want to leave!" said Robin in the middle of October. I had never heard him say anything like that before.

Denver Public Schools, where I teach upper elementary at Academia Ana Marie Sandoval, a school serving 420 children from ages three through sixth grade, opened remotely in August, then opened up in September, and then closed again in October. At that time, my principal agreed that we could invite a few of our highest-needs students to stay. Robin, for example, had struggled with online learning, and was now one of a handful of students with me in person. These students had never achieved anything like "normalization" before COVID-19, and during remote learning, they were practically absent. Besides, the schools were open, using the building to provide child care and free meals. It was worth a try.

My Montessori journey

I had started teaching in 2000, the same year No Child Left Behind was signed into law. I quickly understood that this was a euphemism for a strict testing regime—all stick and no carrot. But the phrase did capture the essence of the teaching heart. Drawn in by this essence, I had joined Teach For America (TFA) in my hometown of Chicago. I had always wanted to teach and really wanted to "make a difference.".

After two years in TFA, I moved to a public charter for seven more, lured by the promise of more autonomy and child-centered learning. But I was disappointed to find out that, as our CEO said every fall, "We live and die by the test scores." By 2008, I felt I had become part of the school-to-prison pipeline. I was told to enforce more and more authoritarian rules about hallway behavior, uniforms and a student's personal expression. I wanted education to offer students economic mobility, but our methods were creating followers not leaders.

When I finally found Montessori, I felt like a partner with students and families all working together towards opening future possibilities. I worked in public Montessori in Chicago for six years at Richard J. Oglesby Elementary School (a conventional elementary school housing three Montessori classrooms) and Suder Montessori Magnet School (a magnet school serving more than 400 children from three years old through eighth grade) before moving to Denver to teach at Sandoval, a dual-language public school.

Montessori in a pandemic

Back in March of 2020, when we started teaching remotely, children with high academic and social needs had become the students I kept worrying about after I shut down the computer for the day. This fall, teaching these very students in person, while the other twenty-one come to class online, has taught

Today, they are concentrating and working with pride and vigor

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In this issue: Technology

As the pandemic continued this fall, barely abated, schools turned increasingly to technology such as Google Classroom, Seesaw, and Zoom to meet their students' needs. This issue looks back at how that went, and reports on other public Montessori developments.

Alder Montessori in Portland, Oregon, is featured in an interview with Katy Fontneau and Rosa Ortiz.

Kalinda Bass-Barlow, Principal at Harold Holliday Montessori School in Kansas City, Missouri, returns to tell us how distance learning went in the fall.

Katie Brown, **Angela Murray**, and **Patricia Barton** return with more research on how pandemic adaptations shaped teachers perceptions of technology in the classroom.

Katie Mosquera gives a detailed account of distance learning adaptations at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School.

Katherine Miranda reports from Puerto Rico on their pandemic adaptations

Dakota Prosch describes unexpected discoveries she made face-to-face with her highest needs students.

David Ayer reflects on the Medical Model for Inclusion work coming to the U.S. from Germany, and on special education in general.

Dr. Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell, a new member of the NCMPS Board, shares her insights for Montessori from her academic work on systemic change.

New research from **Dr. Angeline Lillard** and her team suggest that public Montessori schools can outperform schools in their districts on standardized tests.

Maati Wafford and **Jasmine Williams** share reflections on the equity work taking place in Montessori organizations.

Prosch: Unexpected benefits Lillard: New research Miranda: Puerto Rico

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editor@montessoripublic.org

Your deadline is **Mar 29, 2021.** More guidelines on page 23.

More pandemic lessons from Kansas City

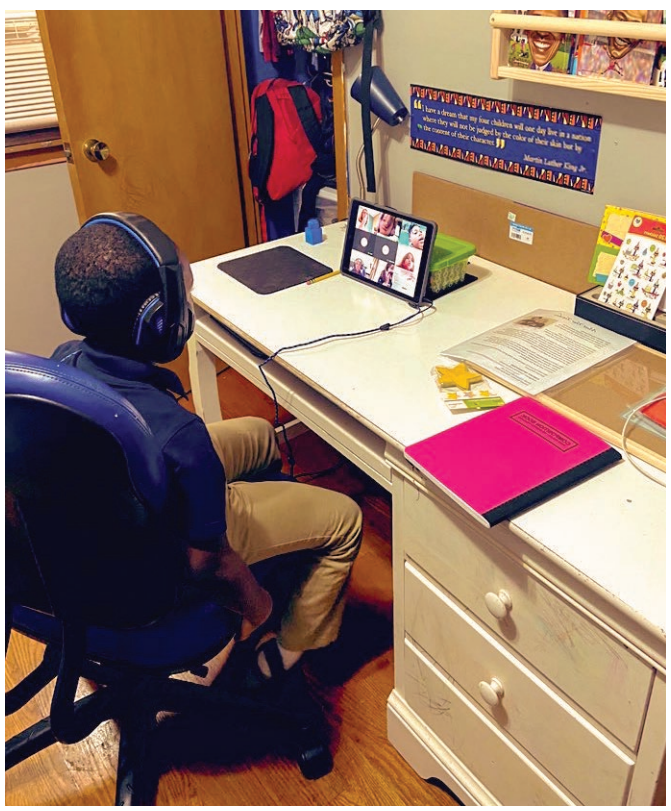
***MontessoriPublic* checks back in with Holliday Montessori**

BY **DAVID AYER**
WITH **KALINDA BASS-BARLOW**

Last fall MontessoriPublic spoke with KaLinda Bass-Barlow, the principal at Harold L. Holliday, Sr. Montessori, a district school in Kansas City, Missouri, about the school's pandemic response in the spring and her plans for distance learning this fall (*Kansas City Montessori adapts*, MontessoriPublic Fall 2020). We were fortunate to catch back up with Bass-Barlow for a look at how things went.

MontessoriPublic: So, it's mid-December now—how are things going? Are you still in school or have you shut down for winter break?

Bass-Barlow: We're back in school; our students have continued with distance learning with the exception of our high needs students. Students with IEPs in self-contained classrooms had the option to come back to school.



The prepared environment at home

MP: How did that come to pass, and how did it work out?

BB: Unfortunately, we were not able to sustain the option due to staffing issues. Subs are hard to come by during this season. Our teachers did the best they could.

MP: There's a piece in this issue of the paper about a teacher in Denver who found that having a small group of higher needs students face to face was the best thing she'd ever done with them—was it like that for you?

BB: It depends on the community, and how much COVID is present—staffing and logistics-wise.

MP: Last time we spoke, we talked about your plans for the fall, with full class sessions, breakouts, and teacher-made binders of materials distributed to families. How did all that go in practice?

BB: In comparison to the spring, our services have improved! My staff is very resilient, "showing up and showing out" as I like to say. The binders are really paying off in terms what we are able to give children.

The biggest issue we're having is the children we're not able to connect with. It's a small population at Holliday, but across the district it's a larger sum. There are many variables. For example, families have to go to work, and they're not able to get their children connected.

MP: So what can you do about that?

BB: To resolve that, we're thinking outside of the box— For example, we're considering working with children during the evening hours. For a young child, it might be two 30-minute sessions per week. I have three staff members who have volunteered their time, so we're considering creating a schedule for next semester. All children need support, the caregivers need support, so we continuing to challenge ourselves by thinking outside the box to meet those needs

Face to face with counting work

MP: Was there a demographic that was harder hit by these challenges?

BB: This is difficult for working families. If caregivers have multiple children in the household and they're balancing when they need to be on, that's an issue, but even more, those families have to go to work, and the flexibility isn't there for them to coordinate the demands of online school.

MP: Are you seeing differences in effectiveness with distance learning across the age levels?

BB: The interactions are better across the board, compared to the spring. Children are learning. Most interactions are engaging. The staff at Holliday are giving their all!

MP: How did the various software platforms work out?

BB: We have acclimated to Microsoft Teams and Seesaw. Zoom is not an option for instruction with students. Teachers crowdsourced a lot of lessons and activities for Seesaw, and everyone—children, families, and teachers—are getting more fluent with the different tools.

MP: Are you continuing with distance learning through the end of the year?
BB: We're anticipating a March return, contingent on vaccinations.

MP: That's great! This takes us to something I think we'll be talking about a lot over the next year—what will children need after this year to get back "on track", whatever that means?

BB: I think you're being generous saying just one year—I think we'll be feeling the impact of COVID for years to come. But I'm optimistic, as children are resilient.

Our district is working to become trauma-informed, and our board has approved accelerating that process. When children do return, we plan to focus on their social-emotional wellnesss in addition to academics. Of course, as Montessorians, we know that when we do that well, everything else falls into place. Therefore, we want to be proactive as a school and a staff to have the proper tools in place. And this applies to all homes—resourced and under-resourced. We're doing that now, offering "Caregivers as Partners" programs, one of which was on recognizing and responding to the signs of anxiety. Families have appreciated these types of sessions.

MP: We may see the effects in high school graduation rates twelve years out.

BB: Definitely, especially in urban districts, where we know some children will be impacted more than others. The longer we're out, the more tremendous

the loss is for our children. With a child who was already a year "behind", now that's almost two years.

MP: So will you be jumping back into testing and test prep this year, or do you have waivers from the state?

BB: No, no waivers! As for spending a lot of time on prep, that's not something we would do or have ever done at Holliday. What we have been doing is being very intentional about interventions and exposing children to grade level content. Holliday is fortunate to have assistants with great experience and credentials, so we've been able to meet one-on-one with children who need it. In our RTI system we have Tier I, Tier II, Tier III but we're beyond that—we have a Tier IV now where we give very direct support remotely, one-on-one or in small groups.

Next year, we plan to start interventions in the fall. Prior to the COVID slide, those might have waited until spring. As a public Montessori school, we've figured out how to navigate state standards without taking away from the Montessori.

MP: What else are you thinking about for the fall? Are there "lessons learned" from this experience that will inform your work for the future?

BB: We will continue to honor Montessori principles as we did prior to COVID. One thing we have come to appreciate is how we've shared students. Doing so has allowed for shared responsibilities and ownership of student learning. Teams are working more collaboratively.

With a child who was already a year "behind", now that's almost two years

MP: So it validated the mixed-age grouping, but at the same time opened up some flexibility and brought more adults in contact with more children?

BB: Exactly.

MP: OK, one last thing—what can we do for teachers who have been through this? You speak so highly of your staff—how can we all recognize them:

BB: I really hope that as a society, that one of the learnings that comes from this is respect for what educators do. We're not always respected or appreciated. Our work is often times taken for granted. Educators deserve to be respected and honored.

KaLinda Bass-Barlow is the principal at Harold L. Holliday, Sr. Montessori, and serves on the AMI-USA Board of Directors.

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Virtual Montessori: A lesson in adaptability

We went all in, and learned a lot along the way

BY **KATIE MOSQUERA**

Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School (CCMPCS) is a public charter school in Frederick, Maryland, founded in 2012 and now offering Montessori primary through 8th grade as well as Spanish instruction for just over 300 students.

Spring 2020

This March, along with schools across the country, CCMPCS was thrown into virtual instruction with little notice. With support from the district, and a lot of virtual collaboration, teachers began building virtual learning platforms, working tirelessly to provide resources for learning and supports for scaffolding. We also knew we could rely upon Montessori students' familiarity with independent work. Teaching remained asynchronous for most of the spring.

Preparation for Fall 2020

Anticipating a return to virtual learning in the fall, teachers used personal time throughout the summer to collaborate and to learn the district's learning platform, Schoology, where we created a resource hub with pre-recorded lessons and virtual material. Our school improvement team met in August to reflect on our spring experience, refine online practices and create sustainable, developmentally appropriate plans for instruction. The team built and shared procedures, expectations, and routines for students, teachers, and families/caretakers. Teachers collaborated on a schoolwide schedule, and teams at each level identified and created Montessori materials such as golden beads, the checkerboard, the stamp game, grammar symbols, and sandpaper letters, for students to work with at home. We purchased, downloaded, and copied some materials and created others from scratch.

When school began, teachers held virtual classroom orientation meetings with students and parents. We held tutorial sessions on the virtual learning platform, and set up a Google Meet resource center, open daily to support students, teachers, and parents as they adjusted to virtual instruction. Classroom assistants prepared to serve as online meeting monitors, helping with technical issues, freeing up the teacher to instruct.

We also added to our counseling staff to boost social-emotional support for students, teachers and families. Alongside the county, we worked to ensure that all students had access to computers or tablets and reliable internet connections. We set up tutoring for those students who showed areas of need based on standardized testing in math, and set up in-person instruction for students we considered at risk in the virtual learning environment.

The CCMPS staff was prepared to do whatever it took to implement Montessori pedagogy successfully online. Teachers spent a great deal of time learning about online tools and practicing using them. At team levels, teachers collaborated and brainstormed ways to foster hands-on, individualized learning, and student choice and independence via the virtual platform.

Obstacles

Staff members who had used virtual tools in other educational settings found that teaching virtually was not a huge leap. For others, who had spent much of their career in Montessori classrooms, just the thought of creating another account, setting up student passwords, or relying on the internet was daunting. They helped one another, taking one step at a time.

Another platform, another account, another password to remember

Still, as instruction got underway, we faced one challenge after another. Chromebooks we purchased were backordered until early 2021. Students using tablets or smartphones lacked the same access to learning materials. Internet interruptions regularly blocked students and teachers from accessing the learning platform or Google Meets.

Scheduling lessons by grade level constrained individualized instruction—we lost our ability to be spontaneous, to follow the child and their interests. Individualized instruction now took place when helping students complete their work, not when presenting new lessons.

Gauging the amount of assistance to provide a student online was challenging. Providing guidance without jeopardizing a student's independence, or taking away their ability to complete the work themselves, takes a careful balance. Hands-on demonstrations or presentations for multisensory learning (such as letter formation) are hard when teachers can't really see what the students are doing. Instead of practicing each letter independently with a control of error, teachers found students relying on the parent and the teacher, holding up every single letter for reassurance. Students can also see each other's work and want to compare. During small group lessons, teachers found it challenging to provide a quick redirection, support for a struggling student, or alternative materials if needed.

There was less scaffolding for students who did not complete work. In the classroom, they are present for a conversation or to help create a work plan, and other students are available to mentor and support. In synchronous virtual small or large group lessons, or with asynchronous follow-up work via Schoology, there are not as many supports.

Eye contact is critical to in-person learning: teachers make adjustments based on students' nonverbal feedback. Without a physical presence, it is easy to keep instruction generalized and not adjust to responses. In Spanish classes in particular, students and the teacher listen intently to find the meaning of each speakers' words, and gestures, visual supports, and movement are critical.

Parent support varied widely, from too much to not enough. While some parents supported independence in their children at home successfully, others have the impression that once children have materials, an area to work, and an internet connection, they need no more support. Teachers work with the students, present new ideas, and provide time for synchronous practice, but they are not in homes to observe follow-up work. Parents need to be an extra set of eyes. And many students are trying to complete school work in an environment not suitable for learning.

Yet some parents assist too much, helping with work or answering a question in class, when the child should build that skill on their own. Parents naturally tend to teach the way they learned instead of encouraging the

Parent support varied widely, from too much to not enough

child to use the materials we sent home. Parent presence in Google Meets can be daunting for teachers, who feel they are being observed or that they are teaching both the student and the parent.

The staff struggled to get to know students new to the school and to their classrooms. Getting acquainted during a Google Meet or a small group lesson is not the same as in person. Younger students come to the Meets, but it is often difficult to gauge if they are absorbing the instruction. Students in middle school often kept their cameras and microphones turned off or did not attend at all. For the students who don't come to class or turn in work, teachers had no input and no data. We worry about the students with their cameras and microphones off: What about their well-being? Do we really know if they OK? In some cases, teachers or school counselors have been able to talk with parents, but not all.

Students also do not have much of a chance to get to know one another. They are missing social and interactive

Hands-on learning at home

aspects of schooling. And so are the teachers. Teachers miss the connection with the students.

What we built

We used the virtual platform to provide most of the Montessori lessons students would receive in the classroom, and the materials we sent home were used daily. Teachers used tools such as Pear Deck, Kahoot, Quizlet, Scratch, FlipGrid, Screencastify, Gimkit, Padlet, and Code.org. We used breakout rooms and simultaneous Google Meets to observe students working in small groups. Several teachers used a flipped classroom where students view a pre-recorded video and then use synchronous class time to practice new skills in small groups.

One primary teacher differentiated a small group lesson by giving two students one word to form and two another, giving a new word to the group that finished and supporting the children taking longer. Lower elementary students identified research topics of interest to their families and created presentations with their parents. Elementary students used Pixton to design their own avatars and include themselves in comics with sentences containing a subject, predicate, and direct object.

During community meetings, students responded to social-emotional learning prompts weekly in Pear Deck, and took part in whole class activities and lessons about voting and the electoral process, service learning, and practical life skills. Upper elementary students designed movement break videos for their classmates, took a virtual field trip to explore Ancient Egypt, and hosted a virtual visit from a scientist.

A group of elementary students identified a practical life activity they want to learn how to do at home, shared their ideas with the class on FlipGrid, and documented the process of learning and carrying out their tasks on Google Slides. As a culmination to this big work, the students wrote a script, created and edited a movie in WeVideo, then presented their video to the class. The videos are now on display in their Schoology classroom for others to view.

Middle school art students explored land art, with its reliance on natural and found materials. They created earthworks from lower petals, seeds, leaves, rocks, light, shadow, time, and change in various natural spots throughout the county and took photos of their endeavors.

Middle school students read and annotated text in preparation for text-based, student-led seminars. After the first one, a student exclaimed, "That was actually kind of fun!" Although teachers could not see all of their students' faces, students used the hand raise feature in Google Meets. Students encouraged one another to participate and there was more engagement than usual.

The school choir created a virtual ensemble in place of the winter concert. Each student recorded him/herself several times to ensure the piece came out the way they wanted it to. They discovered how important it is to blend voices and how difficult that can be when they are not together in the same space.

The set schedule allowed for students to receive a lot more lessons than they would have in school. Students are progressing through the curriculum at a faster pace. With more lessons scheduled, students receive more direct instruction daily and teachers have found they are presenting an even wider range of content.

Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School

Teachers collaborate weekly, sharing resources, strategies, and professional learning. They reflect on the Montessori mindset and identify ways to implement freedom and responsibility, and to support independence. Special education teachers are team teaching with classroom teachers for the first time. School counselors join team meetings to collaborate on ways to support students emotionally and socially.

We hosted a parent night on student independence, emphasizing the importance of student freedom and responsibility at home, and another one for parents to ask questions and learn more about the virtual tools their students are using. Our school counselors hosted an evening explaining Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III supports and how parents can provide emotional support during the pandemic. We posted links on our school website to resource pages for parents covering these topics.

Parents and teachers worked together to identify the right amount of independence and parent support for individual students. With both parent and teacher guidance, one student who was struggling to complete work started using sticky notes for reminders and meeting with the teacher more often for academic guidance. Parents of primary students set up a clearly defined spaces for their children to work with accessible materials and supplies for learning child's environment at home with materials. Older students shared strategies for staying organized, completing work, and remembering to attend classes during class meetings.

Teachers intentionally built relationships with students. Designated time for office hours and 1:1 meets provided space for students to delve deeper into content, ask for assistance, have a casual conversation with the teacher, or simply work side by side. Just knowing an adult is present creates a sense of connection.

Teachers also provide space for classroom community building and for students to connect with one another during informal class meetings at the beginning of each day. Sometimes, students prefer to talk about what they are learning in class. Other times, they prefer show and tell, games, or songs. Students love to join "social hours" facilitated by the school counselors, to see and have fun with friends.

Older students lead community meetings, give lessons to their younger classmates, initiate problem solving, and model the use of materials and work completion. Middle school students completed a survey about their interests, then the teacher connected students based on common themes. They took this even further, creating dream boards and presenting them to the class. This not only built on the community's theme of identity, but helped students to get to know one another, as well as the teacher.

The school counselors have a virtual classroom set up so that students can easily find resources and submit requests to meet with the counselor. They give lessons to each classroom every other week, rotating amongst social skills, diversity,

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Virtual Montessori: A lesson in adaptability

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online learning skills, and mental health topics. Upper elementary and middle school students fill out surveys about the topics they would like for the counselors to cover in future lessons, give feedback about the lessons they received, and share any personal concerns.

What we learned

We learned that we can stay true to Montessori principles as long as we remain mindful and willing to follow the child. We began the fall semester with open office hours, where students get support online. As time went by, office hours turned into one-on-one meetings with students, small group lessons, and time for students to simply connect with an adult, depending on student needs.

In the virtual environment, we have to be intentional about things that would happen spontaneously in the classroom. Instead of relying on the child to initiate the next lesson, or for a one-on-one conversation to gauge what the student needs to learn next, teachers need to have lessons planned and materials ready to go before the week begins.

In the virtual setting, we also cannot assume that our relationships with the students, and their relationships with one another, will grow naturally over time. We need to facilitate this connection. The teacher's presence makes a difference. We have seen students who were high performing in school doing little work at home. Once the teacher reached out and let the student know that she was there for them, but also expected them to do their part, these students then engaged.

How will student progress be assessed?

Teachers have developed a greater awareness of themselves as teachers. They can see what they look and sound like to the students, asking questions such as, "Am I making sense? Am I talking too fast? Am I making a weird face when a student responds? Do I look like I am grimacing?" Teaching virtually allows us to see ourselves from the student perspective. And, in a similar way, the students can see what they look like as learners.

What will we continue when we return to "normal?"

During virtual learning, we found it necessary for teachers to be intentional about connecting with students and supporting them socially and emotionally. While this is a strong aspect of Montessori, many of us want to continue being intentional with our relationships with students. If we can naturally get to know students in person over time, why not be intentional in getting to know them better and become able to meet their needs even more?

Families are essential partners. We can reinforce the home-school connection by keeping the parents more in the loop with their child's education and provide explicit expectations for parent, teacher, and student.

Teachers do not want to lose the gains from the use of digital tools. Virtual tools have provided student choice for ways to present their work. They can demonstrate their learning with paper and pencil in their work journals, or with slideshows, videos, Jamboard, and other digital products. Curated internet research tools are more extensive than

Stamp game by any means necessary

Now that we are familiar with the tools and resources available, why not continue virtual learning, such as activities on Seesaw, for students who need to stay at home for extended periods of time due to an illness or accommodation?

During virtual learning, we noticed many upper elementary students using digital tools to convey their learning with ease. Using digital tools is natural for upper elementary students, as they make the move to middle school. This raises the question, "Are upper elementary students at a sensitive period for using technology as a mode of learning?"

We also realized the need for our students to develop good digital citizenship. When the students move to college and career, they will be expected to use digital communication, and to use it responsibly.

Moving into 2021, with the possibility of starting a hybrid model and later back to "normal," we recognize the need for adaptability and intentionality. We see the power of connection with children and families. Each of us grew as educators and Montessori practitioners. We experienced implementing Montessori practices in ways we could not have predicted. Although we have plenty of room to grow, we know it is possible to adapt Montessori pedagogy to the 21st century.

Katie Mosquera, M. Ed, is the Montessori Teacher Specialist at Carroll Creek Montessori Public Charter School, a teacher educator and field consultant for the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies in Maryland, and the Course Leader for the University of Delaware Montessori Teacher Residency.

Staff struggled to get to know students new to the school and to their classrooms

The online platforms and tools the students are using online have become the virtual environment. Preparing follow up work is preparing the environment. What materials are available for the students to work with in order to discover new concepts? Is the follow-up work something meaningful that the students can access? Is there a choice in the way students can practice the skills? classroom resources, allowing students curious to know more up-to-date information about the topics they research to explore. The online reading platform we use in Spanish enables students to further knowledge at their own pace, mimicking the instructional process in the classroom. Our Spanish teachers hope to continue this individualized learning when we return to school.

Distance learning in a Primary classroom

continued from page 1

program after some administrative tangles were unwound (in Oregon, as in many states, younger children are under different agencies and funding streams). Seesaw in particular was popular with staff and families, seen as the most "kid-friendly" of the apps.

As fall progressed into winter, the routine settled into a daily Zoom class for the whole group, featuring finger plays, stories, and other "circle time" activities, followed by breakout sessions. The two small classrooms joined into one group of about 40 children, for efficiency's sake and also some mixing that wasn't possible before.

Teachers and assistants dropped off handmade and improvised materials every week

The five staff—two teachers and three assistants—took on shared roles leading breakouts, breaking down some of the conventional "guide/assistant" division. Breakout activities included lessons, conversations, "bring me" games, and even work with materials. Teachers and assistants dropped off handmade and improvised materials every week. "It's amazing what you can do with Play-Doh," Fontneau said. "The kids made letters and numbers—it's more interactive, not just staring at a screen." One week every family got a bag of constructive triangles cut out of paper. Another week, older children made their own bead bars with beads and pipe cleaners. Class time was about an hour a day, although some younger children stopped sooner, while older children sometimes wanted to go longer. Staff supplemented these sessions with one-on-one video calls, as needed or by parent request. These might be regular weekly meetings or one-offs, often driven by a child's need for more language development and exposure to conversation in English.

I asked if this brought families "inside the classroom" in a way, showing more of what happens at school and maybe even engaging them in Montessori activities when the camera was off. "Well…maybe," Ortiz told me. Sometimes the families were large or in shared living spaces, "with nine kids in one room. There might be an adult in there somewhere…" The reality of this community was that many parents were "essential workers" in agriculture, health care, and service jobs. Children might be with older siblings or other relatives during the day, in a somewhat noisy environment, often wearing headphones to attend class.

Ortiz said her six-year-old daughter enjoyed virtual school, and liked to interact with the apps and with other children on video calls. At the same time, she missed school, and especially the physical and social interactions with other children and adults. For three- and four-year-olds, it was a little harder to tell how effective online learning was, but overall Ortiz felt that families felt connected and that the district was responsive to their needs and concerns.

I asked Fontneau and Ortiz about next year, assuming face-to-face school resumes. Will there be "dropped stitches" that need to be made up for these children in this intense stage of development? "We plan to just meet the children where they are and I'm not going to worry about what they're missing—just keep them moving along and get then what they need," Fontneau said. The biggest deficit, if there is one, may be around social-emotional learning, or grace and courtesy. Children haven't needed to manage their personal space around a larger group, and there will be norms to be learned or re-learned.

Finally, I wanted to know what the "lessons learned" were, or how things might be different moving forward because of the pandemic. Both teachers appreciated the support and collaboration from Reynolds School District. This is still a new and developing relationship, with the program housed in the school but not yet a fully integrated element.

And there have been some discoveries around team collaboration as well. With all five staff running the two classes as one group, the interchange among adults and children has opened up new possibilities. There have been some insights into the mixed-age group as well. The youngest children did not get the bead-and-pipe-cleaner activity, as it was deemed too challenging. Because it took place in breakout groups, they also did not see older children doing the work, a hallmark of Montessori mixed-age practice. On the other hand, every child received the set of constructive triangles—a lesson that might not ordinarily have been given to everyone. But what's the harm, really? Especially when put against discoveries that might be made.

Both Ortiz and Fontneau have also become fans of Seesaw, and could see continuing to make use of the tool. After all, many of these children probably already interact with screens in their home lives. This year, children made short recordings of themselves singing a song, telling a story, or striking a yoga pose, that Fontneau described as "amazing." And Ortiz appreciated the connection to children from the other classroom and the potential for family engagement.

Alder hopes to be back face-to-face, maybe before the end of the year, and to get back to doing hands-on Montessori. But if there's anything to be learned and gleaned from this experience, this team seems ready to take advantage of it.

Fuzzy math

Katy Fontneau is a Montessori-trained and Oregon-licensed bilingual teacher.

Rosa Ortiz started at Alder as a part-time volunteer with an early childhood parent group and is now a credentialed classroom assistant and a key community liaison and translator.

Equity conversations in Montessori

continued from page 1

am because we are." I have grown to understand and love *ubuntu* in these conversations because none of us can do this work alone and we didn't arrive at these phases of our lives and work alone.

Awareness and action for equity is a spectrum of growth and progress ... to bring about liberation

What does "true" equity work look like in your role and space at your organization?

JW: I think NMCPS is in a special place right now. Maati's work with the Center laid a healthy foundation where employees and the Board are working towards equity being at the core of our work. Being the person who has now come into the role she left definitely takes shape in seeing previous work through and having compassionate accountability for myself and others in and out of the organization in living that out.

One way I would like to realize this is with our Montessori Teacher Residency (MTR) program. Montessori teacher education programs (TEPs) have been well-intentioned for decades. However, those good intentions haven't placed the Montessori community (including all stakeholders) in a better position of actualizing diversity, equity, and inclusion in proactive ways. The occasional add-on of equity content hours has the potential to do more harm than good.

Awareness and action for equity is a spectrum of growth and progress which should mean constantly educating oneself and the cohorts one teaches in order to bring about liberation for Montessori communities. Incorporating critical theories such as critical disability studies or critical race theory and its many offshoots in an MTR or a TEP creates space for this. Again, this isn't meant as a supplement or a complement. It should have equal time, effort and attention as the Montessori pedagogy itself.

Power is always an obstacle. I view it as an obstacle because people with power keep a tight grip on it or feel threatened when it seems like control will be taken away. This power struggle can show up just as much for people of the global majority as much as it does with white/white presenting people because we have been socialized to perpetrate these behaviors. In education, this serves as the antithesis of service, justice, peace and liberation.

Toward the end of 2020, I attended a virtual training with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond which focused a lot on socialization and power analyses. Our socialization feeds structures and institutions that hold power. The more we, NCMPS, work towards personal and professional ABAR lifestyles, I believe we have the potential to influence other organizations, schools and communities to also work towards dismantling power structures.

NCMPS continues to move into brave spaces reanalyzing tools, literature, coaching, residency instruction, and courses. Our Board and staff are currently working with Embracing Equity as a starting point. We are crafting an equity page stating who we are with equity in action and what we are working towards.

I hope this page is also seen as an inward and outward form of accountability where our partners feel we have fostered a space to be honest—where we are not just talking the talk, and that they see that we always have the head and heart posture to be open to that feedback.

Maati Wafford: From my perspective and based on my personal experiences with racism and bias, I would say that the most critical impediments to this work lie in our individual and collective lack of understanding of the ways in which we are all negatively impacted by white supremacy culture.

There are varied and particularly nuanced ways through which this culture is designed to infiltrate our minds and hearts. We have all been socialized to either prop up inequity or to be squashed by it. We gain experiences and practice in acting these roles out any time we participate in our health care system, the justice system, our educational systems, etc. We then turn around and socialize children to either be oppressors or to play the role of the oppressed.

On deeper levels, we also design systems that offer rewards and accolades to individuals who are most skilled at playing their role and for research, social media posts, music, products, businesses, etc. that have the most success in promoting these subtle messages to society as a whole.

Our work lies in stopping this cycle in its tracks.

On some level, we all have a skewed sense of reality and our true nature as liberated human beings. Herein lies the point of anti-bias anti-racist work, and I want to be very clear, this work is needed and valid whether you label it ABAR or not. In my role, I am constantly asking myself how can we ground ourselves at a spirit level in this work and take that level of clarity, truth and justice out into everything that we do?

The more we can work collectively to create spaces for this level of liberated living the more success we will have in seeing the reality of the situations that we're in. This is where it becomes so important that we consider our socio-political contexts through an intentional lens of critical consciousness and justice.

As Montessori educators and leaders we all have the power and ability to liberate and at the same time—the ability to cause repression, perpetuate harm and be complicit in the erasure of culture, of personal narratives and the erasure of people.

It's our responsibility to choose every day where we stand. We don't get to attend a conference workshop and then say, "I got it. I'm now an ally. I'm now an ABAR educator." We don't get to participate in training and say, "I got it. I am a culturally responsive or culturally competent researcher." It's not something that we can just proclaim. We can't simply speak justice and liberation into existence. It's something that we live, that lives through us and it's a choice that we have to consciously make every single day.

Maati Wafford, MSW, is the Director of Anti-Bias, Anti-racist Education for the American Montessori Society.

Jasmine Williams, M. Ed, serves as Race and Equity Specialist and Coach for the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

COVID-19 adaptations for special needs

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me a valuable lesson that I needed to learn.

The children I've been seeing in person this fall all receive "minutes" from the school counselor, speech therapist, occupational therapist, or special education teacher. They are all in our school's Multi-Tiered Support Structure (MTSS) and I often struggled to get to know them and meet their needs in the hustle and bustle of a Montessori classroom. In a method where independent practice is often required in order to master a skill and short lessons are the norm, my students who needed multiple reviews or constant reminders would often engage in many disruptive or avoidance behaviors because they simply needed more of me.

Since 1975, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act has mandated that "students with disabilities should be placed in least restrictive environments (LRE) in order to allow the maximum possible opportunity to interact with non-disabled peers." In implementing this mandate, we wanted to raise expectations and allow most students with disabilities to have access to the general education curriculum in the regular classroom.

However, in my 20+ years teaching, as more students with disabilities were included, I did not receive more training on how to help them. Students received an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) but did not receive an individualized educational environment. Caseworkers and special education teachers with huge caseloads offered their 20 to 45 minutes per day of intervention, but my students still got less attention than they needed and experienced painful rejection from their peers. As a Montessorian, I hoped that my classroom—with its de-emphasis on comparison, freedom of movement, and individualized teaching—could meet their needs. But it didn't.

Before COVID-19, in my busy face-to-face classroom of 28, my students with ADHD rarely stayed focused without being distracted by the myriad other activities vying for their attention. Today, in our small group, they are concentrating and working with pride and vigor. We have mask breaks at least two or three times per morning where they run races, play games, and have snacks. For those with social issues, those breaks allow them to strengthen social ties and showcase other talents.

In the past, students far below grade level in reading and math rarely enjoyed or willingly attended remedial lessons. Now, I see those same kids relieved to finally learn basic skills, as well as being willing to try harder grade level work, unhampered by comparisons to peers. This has buoyed me in a year that has often threatened to drag me down.

But what will happen next year? For the first time, I have received the message from the district that teachers should focus on the emotional well-being of students, on the social aspect of school, and not on tests. This is what we *always* knew we needed to do for our students with high needs...if not for all of our students. However, I know how public school systems crave and feast on the data we keep on our children, and while the beast may currently be sleeping, it will awaken after COVID-19 and become ravenous for that data.

It is ironic that such a tragic year has become an educational and learning opportunity for my most at-risk students. I am currently considering ways to keep this experience alive in post-COVID-19 life. I don't want to let this progress be gobbled up by business as usual schooling. I feel like I finally have a chance to make good on that promise from 2000 to actually leave no child behind.

Now, I see those same kids relieved to finally learn basic skills

Dakota Prosch, M. Ed, NBCT, teaches in Denver, Colorado where she and her son love Academia Ana Marie Sandoval. Her school is hiring for all levels.

Masked and concentrating

Hands-on, face to face with our ancestors

Pandemic adaptations in Puert

The public Montessori network has been strengthened

BY **KATHERINE MIRANDA**

How has the public Montessori movement in Puerto Rico responded to the enormous challenge of adopting Montessori curriculum to distance education?

The Montessori public school network consists of 48 schools in 31 municipalities that offer all levels of instruction from pre-school to high school. It is administered by the Secretariat of Montessori Education (SAEM by its Spanish acronym) in the Department of Education and supported by the non-profit organization Instituto Nueva Escuela (INE) that certifies guides and provides ongoing professional development support.

Public schools in Puerto Rico closed in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and classes for all grades have been offered virtually since then. In the summer it became clear that the physical reopening of schools would take a long time, and the public Montessori movement jumped into action to prepare for distance education during the 2020-21 school year.

The *Montessori en casa* (Montessori at Home) project (**montessoriencasapr.com/que-es-mont-en-casa-ga**) responds to the need to provide materials and guidelines for distance education with the creation of a digital archive of curricular materials, educational guidelines that offer explanations for the use of these materials from home for both guides and families, and support groups to accompany them during the implementation of the curriculum from home. Led by the librarian Marlyn Rodríguez from the Juan Ponce de León school, groups of volunteer guides from schools across the network met during the summer to create the digital archive of curricular materials and accompany them with photos of how to assemble and present them. Assistants from all levels then prepared *cajas viajeras*, sets of these digital materials that were printed and prepared for families to use at home.

The project is intended to function parallel to Department of Education efforts to facilitate distance learning. Although the process has been highly critiqued and hampered by delays and disorganization, Microsoft Teams was designated as the central teaching platform and accounts were created for all students and teachers in the public system. The Department of Education has also provided devices to teachers and students along with stipends to pay for Internet service. Nevertheless, the connectivity and technological access of students, families, teachers and school communities across Puerto Rico varies enormously. Using Teams to facilitate their interactions and class dynamics with students and supported by the *cajas viajeras*, educational guides, and additional resources from the *Montessori en casa* digital archive materials, guides are organizing their distance instruction according to the needs of their students and environments.

Regina Silva, an Elementary II guide at Juan Ponce de León and INE teacher trainer, explained that she tries to recreate the routines and structures of her environment the best way she can through the virtual platform Teams and with the Montessori en casa materials. Assemblies and whole group time are scheduled synchronously during normal school hours, and she offers live presentations of materials in addition to sharing pre-recorded videos with students and families. To follow-up with students on their individual progress she uses a combination of Teams, the cell phone app Whatsapp, and phone calls, depending on students' technology access. She also tries to leverage and integrate students' home environments into their work routines. For example, learning how to use the washing machine can be integrated as a practical life material, and introducing their pets during live assemblies allows students to integrate their family members into school routines in an innovative way.

Through collaboration between all parties—SAEM, INE, schools, and families—*Montessori en Casa* has served as a unifying tool in the construction and strengthening of the Montessori public school network during the pandemic.

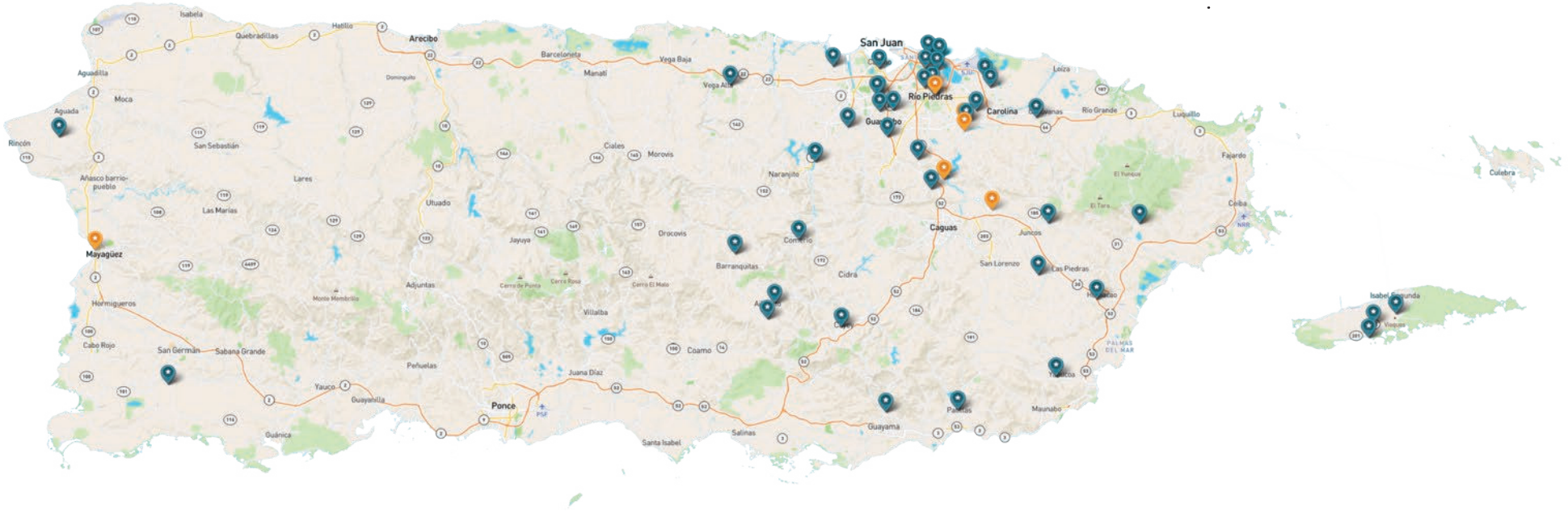
Se ha fortalecido la red de Montessori en el sector públicio

POR **KATHERINE MIRANDA**

¿Cómo ha respondido el movimiento público Montessori en Puerto Rico al enorme reto de adaptar el currículo Montessori a la educación a distancia?

Debido a la pandemia de COVID 19, las escuelas públicas de Puerto Rico han permanecido cerradas desde marzo del 2020 y las clases de todos los grados se están ofreciendo de forma virtual. La red de escuelas públicas Montessori consiste en 48 escuelas localizadas en 31 municipios de Puerto Rico y entre ellas ofrecen todos los niveles del currículo desde infantes hasta Taller IV. Regido por la Secretaría Auxiliar de Educación Montessori (SAEM) en el Departamento de Educación y apoyado por la organización sin fines de lucro, Instituto Nueva Escuela (INE), que certifica guías y provee apoyo de desarrollo profesional continuo, el movimiento público Montessori vislumbró en verano que la reapertura física de las escuelas se iba a tardar y se preparó para la educación a distancia durante el año escolar 2020-21.

El proyecto *Educación Montessori en Casa* (**montessoriencasapr.com/que-es-mont-en-casa-g-a**) responde a la necesidad de proveer materiales y guías claras para la educación a distancia con la creación de un archivo digital de materiales curriculares de todos los



to Rico

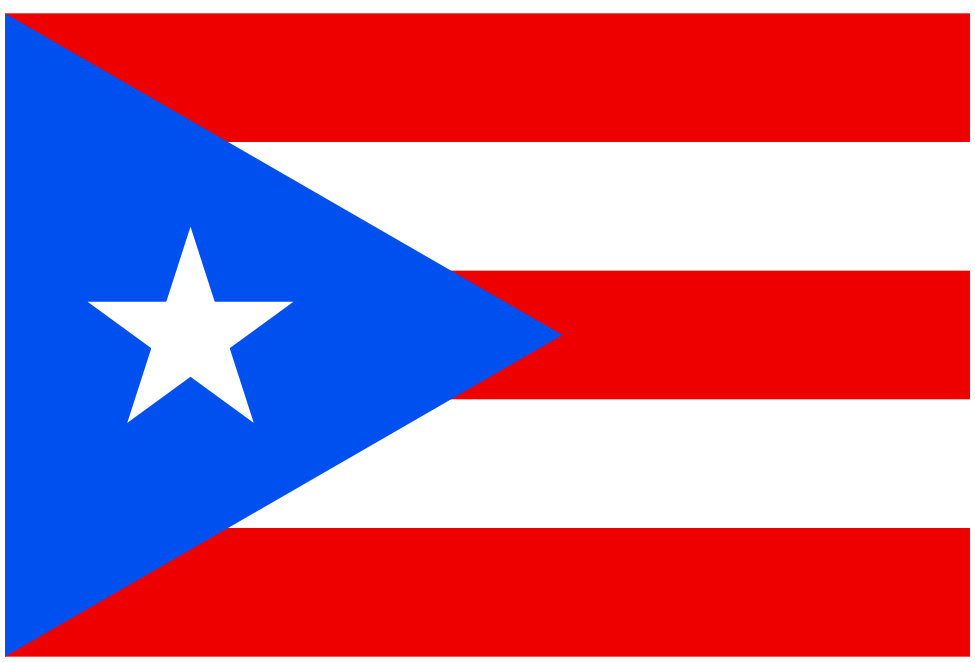
niveles- desde infantes hasta Taller IV; guías educativas con explicaciones sobre el uso de los materiales desde la casa para los guías y las familias; y grupos de apoyo para acompañarlos durante la implementación del currículo a distancia. Liderado por la bibliotecaria Marlyn Rodríguez de la escuela Juan Ponce de León, grupos de guías voluntarias de varias escuelas se reunieron durante el verano para crear el archivo digital de materiales curriculares y fotos de cómo montarlos y presentarlos. Luego los asistentes de todos los niveles se dedicaron a crear cajas viajeras con los materiales impresos y preparados para entregar a las familias.

El proyecto intenta funcionar en tándem a los esfuerzos del Departamento de Educación para facilitar la educación a distancia. Aunque ha sido un proceso atropellado por retrasos y falta de organización, todos los estudiantes y maestros del sistema público tienen cuentas en la plataforma Microsoft Teams para dar clases y el Departamento de Educación realizó entregas de dispositivos a maestros y estudiantes y subvenciones para acceso a servicio de Internet durante el primer semestre. Sin embargo, las realidades particulares de cada familia, guía, ambiente y escuela con respecto a su acceso a la tecnología varían enormemente. Utilizando Teams para facilitar la interacción y las dinámicas con sus estudiantes y apoyados por las guías educativas, las cajas viajeras y los recursos del archivo digital de Montessori en Casa, los guías organizan su instrucción a distancia según las necesidades de sus grupos.

Regina Silva, una guía de Taller II en la escuela Juan Ponce de León y capacitadora docente del INE, explicó que intenta recrear las rutinas y estructuras de su ambiente a través de la plataforma virtual Teams y con los materiales Montessori en casa de la mejor manera posible. Las asambleas y otras dinámicas del grupo completo se programan de forma sincrónica durante el horario escolar normal. Ella ofrece presentaciones en vivo de los materiales además de compartir videos pregrabados con sus estudiantes y familias. Para darle seguimiento al progreso individual de sus estudiantes, utiliza una combinación de Teams, la aplicación celular Whatsapp y llamadas telefónicas, dependiendo del acceso a la tecnología con que cuenta cada estudiante. También intenta aprovechar e integrar los entornos de cada estudiante en su casa al trabajo que realizan. Aprender a usar la lavadora se convierte en un material de vida práctica y presentar a sus mascotas durante la asamblea en vivo permite que los estudiantes integren los miembros de sus familias a las rutinas de la escuela de forma innovadora.

A través de la colaboración entre todas las partes -SAEM, INE, escuelas y familias- Montessori en Casa sirve como herramienta de unión en la construcción y fortalecimiento del colectivo de las Escuelas Públicas Montessori y sus comunidades durante la pandemia.

Katherine Miranda has worked in education for over fifteen years, including teaching at the middle school, undergraduate, and graduate levels, and designing and implementing professional development programs.



Montessori teachers adapt to distance learning

The pandemic reshaped Montessori views on technology

BY **KATIE BROWN, ANGELA MURRAY,** AND **PATRICIA BARTON**

Montessorians have long resisted the integration of technology into teaching and learning that has characterized conventional schools in recent decades. Though attitudes toward technology among Montessori educators have not been widely studied, anecdotal evidence suggests a limited embrace of digital learning, particularly for very young children. However, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in the spring of 2020, many educators had little choice but to leverage electronic resources to continue teaching students as schools across the country closed their doors and moved to distance learning.

A team of researchers from the University of Buffalo, the University of Kansas, and the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector quickly came together to document and study this move to distance learning for Montessori schools, asking, "How are Montessori educators interpreting and applying Montessori principles during distance learning?" We wrote about the international survey results in the Fall 2020 issue of MontessoriPublic (*Hands-on learning goes virtual*).

For the study, we also collected social media data to capture the conversations Montessorians were having about distance learning in real time. Data from these posts, as well as from the 55 public school Montessori educators who completed the survey, suggest that the experience of distance learning in spring of 2020 reshaped and illuminated teachers' relationships with technology.

Though "distance learning" is as old as the correspondence courses popular in the 18th and 19th centuries, our data indicate that digital technology was a key component of distance learning for Montessori students during the spring 2020 school closures. 90% of survey participants reported using Zoom (or similar platforms) to interact with children. Teachers reported using Zoom to "zoom in and zoom out," to parallel the classroom work time. Almost as many (85%) reported using an electronic learning management system (LMS), such as Google Classroom, Schoology, or Seesaw. Over three-quarters of participants indicated that their schools provided electronic devices to families for use in distance learning, though almost as many (71%) reported distributing packets and/or physical materials. Other digital tools and resources such as FlipGrid and Khan Academy were also employed to support learning, as well as the much older and more familiar technology of the phone call.

According to our survey, children's time was spent approximately balanced between screen-based engagements like Zoom meetings and online activities, and hands-on activities such as practical life exercises. Almost half of survey participants provided digital versions of Montessori materials for children to manipulate electronically through apps or websites, while about a third used electronic resources like Natural Geographic videos to facilitate experiences with nature. Technology was also used to facilitate observation at a distance; 40% observed students working via videoconference, while 65% relied on parent-reported data, including narrative and photos.

"Distance learning" is as old as the correspondence courses popular in the 18th and 19th centuries

In reviewing the qualitative data from open-ended survey questions and social media posts, several themes emerged. For one, Montessorians came to think about learning the various instructional technologies (Zoom, LMS, etc.) as part of the preparation of the adult. Survey participants "had to learn how to use technology to teach concepts taught in the Montessori classroom," an "overwhelming" experience that one participant said "reminded me we are learners first." The speed with which this learning had to occur undoubtedly contributed to the sense of overwhelm palpable in social media conversations among Montessori educators.

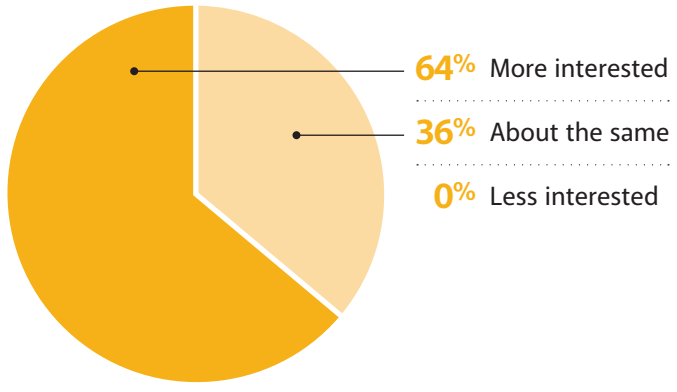
Online learning also created the need for new grace and courtesy lessons. Survey participants described how they had to establish norms and procedures for navigating online spaces as a learning community. This included muting oneself when not speaking, raising a hand to speak, and appropriate use of the chat feature. In a social media post, one teacher described helping students "practice muting and unmuting themselves," a procedure that must be taught and reinforced like so many others in the face-to-face classroom.

Our data indicated that digital learning created new considerations for the prepared environment for learning. In a physical classroom, teachers might devote considerable time to ensuring that the array of materials out on the shelves was appropriate to the age and developmental level of their students; the materials available at the beginning of the year might be different from those put out at the end of the year, for example. Similarly, survey participants discussed their quest to "find age and developmentally appropriate activities online to share with my families." Given the wealth of options available on the Internet, and stark variations in quality, this can be a daunting task.

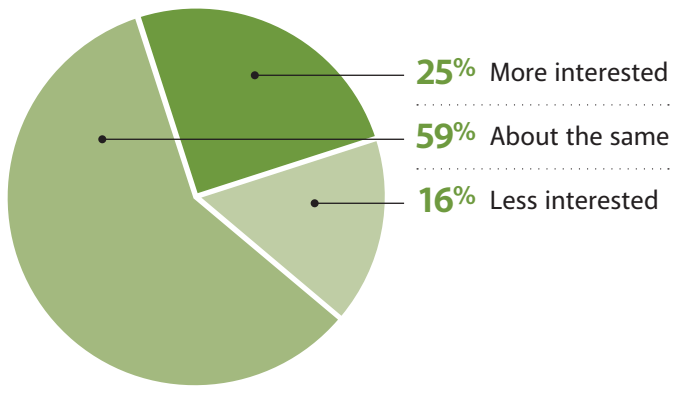
Teachers also expressed concern with ensuring that the digital environment was easily accessible for students—and families. Survey participants and social media posters were acutely aware that many children, especially younger ones, relied on older family members to access Zoom, LMSes, email, and other digital tools. Participants strove to "make directions for logging in, zoom meeting schedules, etc. clear and simple for parents and children." Comments like these suggest that although technology created a critical connection with children, it had the potential to create obstacles as well. Our data suggest that in this sense, teachers were preparing the digital learning environment not just for the child, but for the family. Still, though some assistance may be necessary, especially for younger learners, teachers in our sample clearly tried to promote independence by explicitly teaching digital navigation skills, actively selecting resources and tools that children could engage with on their own.

In preparing the digital environment, teachers devoted considerable energy to providing choice and access to hands-on activities. Though many survey participants and social media posters described

Interest in engaging families more in the future

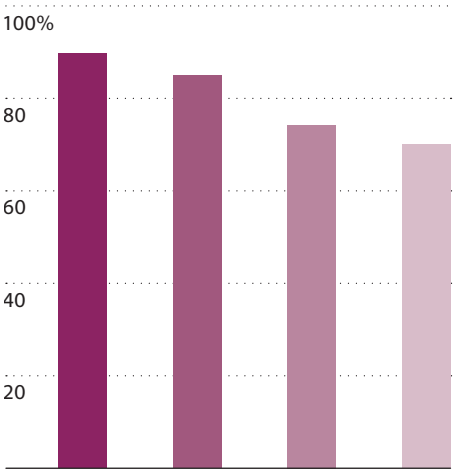


Attitudes towards technology, compared to before the pandemic



providing options for children, they wrestled with how to do this in the absence of their Montessori materials: students "needed very clear definitions of what to do and seemed overwhelmed with too much choice, especially with no materials there." Many teachers expressed the need for children to have some physical manipulatives at home in order to fully engage in online lessons; this probably explains why a substantial portion of survey respondents (over two-thirds) reported providing families with packets and/or physical materials.

Distance learning strategies employed



Videoconferencing (e.g. Zoom)	90%
LMS (e.g. Seesaw)	85%
Provided devices	76%
Distributed packets and/or materials	71%

Survey participants and social media posters alike also discussed the use of digital versions of Montessori materials for students to manipulate electronically. In terms of choice and hands-on learning, teachers were doing their best to give students a learning experience that provided some continuity from their time in the physical classroom.

One of the most pervasive themes to emerge from our data, however, was the way in which virtual learning impacted teachers' relationships with families. Supporting optimal human development has always been a joint endeavor between schools and families, but virtual learning made this partnership more salient than ever before. One survey respondent described families as "part of the prepared environment," while another reported, "I felt like even more a part of the child's family as I was in their home daily (via computer)." Many survey participants and social media users reported that nurturing their relationships with families and supporting their efforts to implement distance learning programs at home constituted a large part of their work: "The better connection we have with the parents, the better we can work together to help the child." Though the traditional Montessori triad consists of the child, the adult (usually thought of as the guide), and the environment, one survey participant suggested that in distance learning, this becomes more of a quadrilateral: families "are the intermediary between teacher and student."

Teachers seemed to have mixed feelings about this reliance on families in distance learning. One participant described the difficulty of promoting independence when children were dependent on family members to access their virtual learning materials: "having little or no parent intervention with a student's work...was the hardest." Another participant expressed concern over the lack of limits around screen time for children. Collaborating with parents who had more conventional schooling experiences themselves wasn't always easy, and philosophical differences between teachers and families were sometimes apparent: "Some parents want to teach the work how they learned (math rules, etc.). It is important for us to educate parents as to why our method is being used for the children to gain understanding." This quote reflects a change in the power dynamic between teachers and families, with teachers now sharing control over a pedagogy that was once exclusively their domain. Though these disconnects between home and school have long been a topic of discussion for Montessori educators, many found them even more apparent during distance learning.

In another sense, however, this closer partnership with families also seems to have led many teachers to a place of greater understanding of students' home lives and issues of equity in their school communities. For many, the move to distance learning highlighted disparities in access to technology, as many families lacked access to high-speed Internet, printers, and/or devices for virtual learning. Participants acknowledged that family capacity to support children with distance learning varied according to caregivers' own professional responsibilities. Teachers also bore witness to the ripple effects of the pandemic itself and the economic hardship it triggered: "Some families are struggling just to get through each day (with work or unemployment, illness, childcare) while others are more involved in their kids' education than they ever had been." Technical knowledge also varied from family to family, and many teachers alluded to the stress of their newfound role as "tech support." Nonetheless, almost two-thirds

Teachers seemed to have mixed feelings about this reliance on families in distance learning

of survey respondents indicated that as a result of distance learning, they are interested in engaging families more in the future. The remaining one-third of participants planned to engage families at about the same level they had before the pandemic; none reported a desire to work with families less.

Virtual learning brought some new roles for Montessori teachers (like tech support), but many reported that in other ways, their role as a teacher remained fundamentally unchanged. Some indicated that their role as a guide was clearer than ever, with an "increased sense of the teacher as guide/facilitator, [and] students as agents of their own learning." Conversely, the absence of peer support meant that learners were in some cases more reliant on the teacher: "One of my biggest frustrations of remote learning was that classroom norms around peer teaching and helping disappeared, so students came to me, their teacher, with problems, rather than seeking a peer first." Still, teachers leaned into their role as builders of community and connections. For some, maintaining these connections required more conscious effort in the virtual environment. For others, virtual learning brought new opportunities, like increased one-on-one time with students.

Overall, survey respondents seem satisfied with their ability to "do Montessori" digitally in spring of 2020. When asked how well they felt able to uphold Montessori principles and values during distance learning, 64% responded with "moderately well," "very well," or "extremely well," with "moderately well" being the most common response (50%). Only 36% of respondents selected "not well" or "slightly well." Perhaps more surprising, one-quarter of participants indicated that they had more favorable attitudes toward the use of technology in learning than they'd had before the pandemic. Only 16% reported developing less favorable views, while the majority of participants (59%) said their attitude toward technology was unchanged. Perhaps this reflects a growing acceptance of the centrality of technology in modern life; as one participant put it, "our AMI trained guides [had] to wrestle with the fact that technology has a role (currently) in all our lives. And that the way that our new world is tethered to the internet it is becoming just as integral as electric lights and HVAC." What remains to be seen is what lasting impact these digital tools will have on the Montessori movement once children are back in classrooms.

Notably, our data collection ended at the end of the spring 2020 semester and does not capture how Montessori distance learning has evolved during the fall semester. Some challenges likely persist, while others have undoubtedly improved with time, trial, and error. New dynamics in the relationship between Montessori and technology may have emerged. Perhaps, though, the biggest takeaway from this strange and challenging time in Montessori education has been the resilience and robustness of the Montessori Method itself and its practitioners. As one social media user said, "what we found was the biggest components of this experiment had already been proven; the Montessori Method. Our guides are experts at the Montessori Method. We found it was only the use of technology that had to be perfected."

Katie Brown is the Director of Professional Learning at NCMPS.

Angela Murray is the Director for the KU Center for Montessori Research.

Patricia Barton is the Coordinator of AZ Montessori Teacher Education Program, Director of Desert Shadows Montessori, and a doctoral student at University of Buffalo.

A talk with Dr. Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell

How can we use research to tell the Montessori story?

BY **DAVID AYER** WITH
DR. EBONY BRIDWELL-MITCHELL

The National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector welcomes new board member Dr. Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell, Associate Professor of Education at Harvard University. Bridwell-Mitchell's expertise lies in leadership, management, and organizations, and her research focuses on organizational management and theory, public policy, and education, so we are excited about her contributions to our work expanding the reach of Montessori in public education.

MontessoriPublic sat down with Bridwell-Mitchell to learn more about her story and her thoughts on public education.

MontessoriPublic: Dr. Bridwell-Mitchell, you have an impressive résumé and a long list of educational and professional accomplishment. As a Montessorian, I'm always interested in how people got to where they are. Can you tell me your story?

Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell: Let me start with how I ended up in Montessori in the first place. I attended Mercy Montessori in Cincinnati from second through sixth grade because my mom, who had a doctorate and was a university administrator, did her research and sought out an educational model where I would thrive.

And it was a place where I thrived! But I think the largest benefits weren't just those few years I was in Montessori, but in the way those years shaped the way I approached my own learning and achievement. It took me a long to realize how much the way I thought about my own work, what was important to me, how I liked to learn, was a direct result of how I came to learn how to learn in a Montessori school.

MP: And after Montessori? What came next?

EBM: We moved to Cambridge when I was 13, and I attended Cambridge Rindge and Latin school—a huge sprawling high school where I had to make my own way. Being Black and a woman in that context is challenging, but having learned that you go to school to do things that feel important to you—having "learned how to learn"—helped me thrive there as well. But I didn't realize until much later in my career, researching and advocating for these kinds of outcomes for schools and children, how much Montessori had shaped me in that way.

MP: And then college? Was that always part of your vision for yourself?

EBM: For my family, there was never a thought that I wouldn't go to college. Both of my parents had. But for a lot of Black people my age at that time, they might have been the first in their family. For me, besides my family's vision for me, the environment at Cambridge Rindge and Latin, and the physical proximity to Harvard in Cambridge, probably helped foster that idea as well.

For my family, there was never a thought that I wouldn't go to college

MP: So where did that take you in higher education?

EBM: I went to Cornell for undergrad, and then got my Masters at the Harvard Kennedy School [the John F. Kennedy School of Government], and then my Ph.D. at NYU [the New York University Leonard N. Stern School of Business].

MP: The Business School you say? Were you studying education at that time?

EBM: I had always studied education. My undergraduate degree—I'm just now realizing, even at Cornell, probably as result of my Montessori education, rather than choose one of the 150+ majors available, I designed my own, called American Policy Studies, concentrating in education policy.

MP: And these days your academic work focuses on institutions, organizations, and systems., What's going on in American public education from that perspective?

EBM: Well, I went to the Kennedy school because I planned to doing public policy. But I went to work in schools after my Masters, at a middle school in Brooklyn. I quickly came to see that what mattered was not so much the policies that were set and the way they were enacted—or not!—by people on the ground, but how the organization itself worked—or didn't!

It turns out, in education research, there is a small—tinier then, but still small—community studying the organizational dynamics in schools. Most of that research on organizations goes on in business schools. This is not because only business are the only organizations that need to run well but because business schools figured out early on that if business organizations worked better, they could make more money! So that's where the most research on organizations has been cultivated. So, I went there to learn from that research to improve school organizations.

So what's interesting to me about organizations and what's happening in education is what I study, which is sometimes called institutional analysis. It's the idea of understanding how dynamics of an institution can make it more or less difficult for organizations in an institutional context to change.

And this is the public school story. Schooling and education is an institution, and my field shows that all institutions have certain dynamics that can be described, explained, and even predicted. My approach asks how much we can change public schools for the better, how fast, and what organizational conditions need to be in place for change to happen. How do we make that change especially since schools are institutions? Not by focusing on some niche program or reform, where every two years we have some new wonderful thing everyone should be doing. These all have to be implemented in an organizational context. What are the conditions for any reform to work, not just any niche reform.

MP: So you and I have talked before about Montessori as a reform, maybe even a "niche' reform, and how that could happen, and the role of research about Montessori in that. What role would it play? What are the issues with the research? It's hard (but getting easier) to come by good solid randomized controlled trial (RCT) research showing that "Montessori works." Or does academic research even do the job? What should our story be?

EBM: Well, first thing, Montessori might be trying to compare itself to the wrong standards of evidence. Very little research in the world comes from RCTs, so you don't necessarily need to hold yourself to that standard. If you want to have impact, you may not actually need to do that.

Second, you can start by developing a conceptual framework for the outcomes that might matter. So before you even go down the rabbit hole of how much does Montessori matter, there's a lot to be gained from a conceptual review of the literature of the kinds of outcomes that might matter. Not only different kinds of student outcomes—test scores, social-emotional learning (SEL), locus of control. There are other outcomes Montessori might mattered for. At the teacher level, there's a lot of conversation about teacher turnover, professional communities, their experiences in schools. Or think about outcomes at the organizational level. What's the culture and climate like in Montessori? What's the engagement with community?

So what are the categories of outcomes where Montessori might matter? Make an argument for that. That can come from the literature and from data we already have. Look at SEL, say, and articulate how people say SEL works and matters for kid's outcomes. What do we know about the Montessori model that suggests it might support that? We're basically making an argument for the role of those outcomes. That's the very first thing we should be doing.

MP: Like in Dr. Angeline Lillard's work, the Science Behind the Genius, where she lays it out: Here's what people say is good in education, here's what Montessori does, look at the correspondence. But she's careful in that work to assert correlation, not necessarily causation. Maybe that's enough?

EBM: Not even "enough"—you don't have to have to have causation to make an argument. Let's say you go to a superintendent with five big positive outcomes,

one organizational, one teacher-level, three student level, and you say, "Here's how Montessori would produce those." Not the demonstrated evidence that it does, just—here's the reasoning it would do it because of this or that. They care about, first, what are the outcomes, what does it do, and having a framework that makes sense. Then you assemble the evidence.

MP: This could be powerful for us. I've been telling the story for a while, but I've been a little hung up on proving the case.

EBM: People are persuaded by the reasoning, not just the proof. "Here are the five reasons Montessori would matter for teacher turnover. Because it creates conditions where teachers can set a learning agenda that lets them feel connected to kids, because it requires school leadership to be deeply engaged with the teachers…" So try and figure out reasoning for why Montessori would work, And then, you don't want every outcome, you want maybe five the field cares about. And that you could buttress as actually being somehow related to the Montessori model.

MP: We can get too hung up on measurements.

EBM: Measurement is important. Most of my research has been empirical. But the first step is, "What's the argument about the outcomes that matters?" And then now you have outcomes that let you do the research on that, organizational research around those outcomes. Under what conditions might we reach those outcomes? Do the research, assemble diverse case studies from existing research—large urban schools, schools with mostly Latinx students. Like that.

In short: Build a conceptual framework. Summarize research results. Show variation across contexts.

MP: So that's the framework that could drive change? What keeps Montessori from being the policy of the month?

EBM: That's a fascinating question! What's the context and conditions under which this might work? How much might we expect Montessori to have an impact given what we know about the institutional conditions of conventional public schooling? Institutional logics are bundles of beliefs and practices. The beliefs and practices at the core of Montessori are different from those at the core of conventional public school. What happens when there are competing logics? Can they be hybridized? If they can't, not completely, can Montessori prevail? I don't have the answer, but it's a fascinating question.

MP: Because Montessori is really different. It's content delivery vs human development.

EBM: Content delivery and consumption!

MP: So maybe it's doomed! Maybe we'll be lucky to have just one Montessori school in each district, like a STEM school or an arts magnet. Which would be better than what we have now, but not like 50,000 schools.

EBM: Maybe… but I also wonder…can logics diffuse in a different direction?- Jennifer Lin Russel, in her article *From Child's Garden to Academic Press*, talks about how kindergarten moved from play-oriented to academic-focused, as the external social environment moved in a similar direction.

MP: Which partly had to do with children in third grade not reading. Which always seems so astonishing to me, coming from private Montessori where third graders not reading would be a school-closing scandal.

EBM: Well, I'm not a learning theorist, but reflecting on what I've seen in schools—kids get to third grade and start having trouble reading because that's how long it takes them to figure out that they hate school! Kids might like to read! But they might hate school by third grade.

MP: Conventional school sometimes doesn't think of them as agents with desires and interests of their own.

EBM: That's part of why I'm excited to be involved with public Montessori. I think the time is right for rethinking how we bring more agency into schools, not just for students but teachers. And Montessori, based on my own experience and based on its design, is a package that enables that kind of agency in a way that the field wants and needs and is totally doable—we just need to fan the flames.

Build a conceptual framework. Summarize research results. Show variation across contexts.

Dr. Ebony Bridwell-Mitchell is an Associate Professor of Education with expertise in leadership, management, and organizations at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Montessori outperforms on standardized tests

Promising new research shows reduced gaps

BY **DAVID AYER**

A new paper from Angeline Lillard, Allyson Snyder, and Xin Tong suggests that public Montessori schools typically outperform their districts on standardized test scores on some measures.

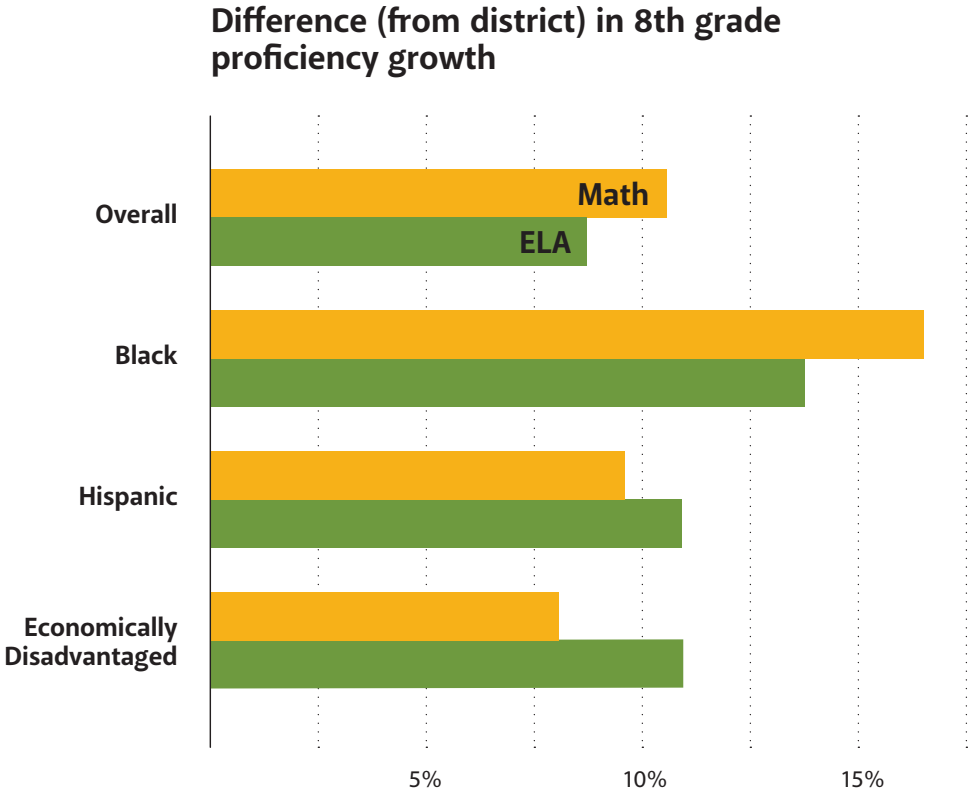
The paper, submitted for publication and discussed at the Association Montessori International/USA (AMI/USA) 2021 annual conference, compared test scores for 195 public Montessori schools with their surrounding districts and found that Montessori schools did better in reading at third and eighth grades. They did worse in math in third grade, but better in eighth, and low-income and Black students did better in Montessori schools overall.

As noted in the paper, whatever one may think of standardized reading and math tests, they are a fact of life in U.S. public school. Tests were mandated in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, at least in part as a measure to raise national standards and expose equity disparities in schooling. The 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act loosened many requirements, but nearly every school in the country tests students in reading and math at third and eighth grade. Scores on the tests are correlated with better life outcomes (such as educational achievement, higher earnings, etc.). Test scores have also shown a persistent gap across economic and especially racial groups, and it's hard to argue that this gap matters if the tests don't measure anything important.

For this paper, the authors used the Montessori Census and other sources to identify the ten states with the most public Montessori schools, and matched 195 schools with full Montessori programs including third and/or eighth grade with their surrounding districts. Because the Montessori schools tended to be slightly whiter and richer than their districts, race and income were controlled for in the analysis. The authors collected the percentage of students rated "proficient" on third and eighth grade English Language Arts (ELA) and math tests from publicly available data over a three-year period (2016-2019). While different states and even districts may use different standards for proficiency and change tests from year to year, making comparisons between districts difficult, this was a good measure for comparisons within districts.

Students in Montessori schools did better on ELA tests at third and eighth grade, and better in math at eighth grade—but noticeably worse in math. While potentially disappointing to Montessori advocates, this may be the second most important result from the study, as it presents a significant challenge to the criticism of selection bias. Because most public Montessori schools are choice programs, it's entirely possible that families with higher-achieving children choose Montessori schools. But it's a little harder to explain why families with strong readers but poor mathematicians would self-select in that way.

This disparity has been observed in other research, and several explanations have been proposed: Perhaps Montessori's emphasis on materials puts students at a disadvantage when taking pencil-and-paper or computer tests. Maybe there is a vocabulary mismatch—we say "units" but the test uses "ones". Or possibly the non-linear Montessori curriculum doesn't match up to what's taught, and tested, in third grade. As the authors suggest, more research is indicated. In any event, by eighth grade the disparity goes away, with the Montessori students performing modestly better than their conventional peers.



By 8th grade, Montessori students grew more in proficiency

The biggest result for Montessori overall was in the change in proficiency from third to eight grade, controlling for proficiency at third grade. This means that, to use a simplified example, if the district's average 3rd grade proficiency level was (let's say) 50%, and their average 8th grade level was 60%, they would be assumed to be raising scores by 10% between those two grades. If the Montessori school went from 55% to 75% (again, let's say), that would be a gain of 20%, or twice as big. The students in Montessori schools gained more between the two grades than the district schools overall and across all race and income subgroups.

The most important results, however, are in the scores of those subgroups. Black students did unequivocally better with Montessori in ELA and math at 3rd and 8th grades. Hispanic and low-income students did the same, albeit with much smaller effects in 3rd grade math. The so-called "achievement gap" between Black and white students, while still present, was significantly smaller in the Montessori schools at 3rd grade (with insufficient data for 8th grade). The gap for low-income students was smaller in Montessori schools on both tests at both grades. This finding corroborates Lillard's 2017 work in Hartford public Montessori schools which has become the springboard for a much larger national study currently underway (but delayed by the pandemic).

It's hard to overstate the importance of these subgroup results. The paper's authors put it in typically reserved academic language: "The present data suggest that children of color enrolled in Montessori often outperform district children in math and ELA at both grades." For one thing, there is a documented (and perhaps understandable) perception among some families of color that Montessori "isn't for us," or lacks academic rigor perceived as necessary in a world already stacked against children of color. This study, and further research, should help to dispel that impression. But beyond that, the persistent disparity of educational outcomes across racial and economic lines, tied to the disparity of resources and opportunities provided to marginalized and minoritized groups has rightly been described as a "national embarrassment" or even a "national disgrace." Research such as this can help public Montessori be a resource or intervention we can apply to that injustice.

Black students did unequivocally better with Montessori in ELA and math at 3rd and 8th grades

David Ayer is the Communications Director for the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector

Medical Model for Inclusion returns online

But can it make inroads with U.S. special ed?

BY **DAVID AYER**

The provision of education for children with disabilities or special education needs in conventional U.S. public education, and in Montessori, remains a complex and contested topic, down to the use and definition of terms such as "disabilities," "special needs," and even "education."

The Montessori world continues to grapple with these concepts and with finding the best approach for children who, for whatever reasons, seem to need "something more" than what works just fine for others. It's widely known and even celebrated in Montessori that Dr. Montessori's first work with children centered on so-called "idiot children" (then a medical classification, now having gone the way of other euphemisms become slurs) as early as 1897.

The Montessori world continues to grapple with these concepts

Since that time, Montessori expanded mostly into private schools, with notable exceptions to be sure, such as the 550+ public programs in the U.S. alone. In private schools, and so in the Montessori consciousness generally, it's fair to say that the provision for children with special needs has developed somewhat differently than it has in public education. For one thing, we see fewer special needs children in private schools. Some of us recall from our training being told that Montessori worked well for these children, as long as your class wasn't unbalanced by more than one or two. Many public school teachers will outright roll their eyes at this. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 7 million disabled students in the U.S. make up 14% of national public school enrollment, and many teachers feel that "that only counts the ones with a diagnosis."

Why would that be? Several possibilities come to mind. First, given the extent that health correlates with race and income, it seems plausible that there is truly a lower incidence of special needs in the richer, whiter population served by private schools. Second, private schools are not bound by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), leaving them free to exclude children under cover of, "we're not able to meet the child's needs" or "they just aren't a great fit." This may be done in all honesty and with the best of intentions, but it still happens.

This is not to discount decades of significant work done within Montessori in this area. The Shelton School in Dallas, a private school founded in 1976, offers

Help her to do it by herself

Montessori-based special education for "intelligent students with learning differences" as well as American Montessori Society (AMS) teacher training and inclusion courses. The Association Montessori International (AMI) offered an Inclusive Education Course for several years but does not have a current offering. Montessori Now offers consultation and professional development, and Montessori Education for Autism in the U.K. focuses specifically on that developmental disorder. A recent anthology, *Montessori Inclusion: Strategies and Stories of Support for Learners with Exceptionalities*, discussed in an interview appearing in MontessoriPublic (*Montessori Inclusion: An Interview*, Fall 2020), gathered perspectives from across the field.

Another program, previously covered in *MontessoriPublic* (*Foundations for Montessori Inclusion*, Fall 2019) is the work of the Hellbrügge Foundation in Germany, recently shared in the U.S. by Montessori Medical Partnerships for Inclusion (MMP4I, online at Montessori4Inclusion.org). The course was presented in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the summer of 2019, and a reprise was planned for the summer of 2020, but the pandemic made this impossible.

The Foundation's faculty were at first reluctant to consider an online program, but they have been persuaded to reconsider. As a result, two new offerings have been announced: A three-part online course from MMPI staff, and the comprehensive Hellbrügge Foundation course focusing specifically on the elementary. The course runs online for two weeks this summer and continuing throughout 2021-22 with eight six-hour Saturday online sessions.

continues on page 20 >

Medical Model for Inclusion

continued from page 19

MontessoriPublic spoke with the organizers of the course and several previous participants.

The essence of the program, according to MMP4I co-founder Catharine Massie, is "a comprehensive vision of inclusive Montessori education that connects medical, health, social and educational aspects of development for a more holistic approach." The 2019 course featured intensive lectures and presentations from physicians and specialists on the medical aspects of disabilities in the mornings, followed by explorations of adaptations and modifications of Montessori lessons and materials in the afternoon.

Participants found the medical information and holistic approach very powerful if perhaps overwhelming at times. "The part about the brain function was more challenging for me—it was definitely a lot of science, and the vocabulary was unfamiliar," one teacher said. The idea of convening a team including (for example) a pediatrician, a counselor, specialists, the teacher, and the parents was also powerful.

But perhaps the most compelling aspects were the modifications and adaptations. Several participants reported that their training had left the strong impression that Montessori materials should never be adapted or changed, either from a pedagogical standpoint—once you start adding and changing, are you still doing Montessori?—or from a sense that the materials, emerging as they did from a 19th century special education context, were already inherently adapted for special needs. This may not be the message trainers intend to deliver, but more than one person came away with this feeling. Participants felt the course granted then permission and justification for, e.g., changing the colors on the number rods or even adding physical texture such as sandpaper, to heighten contrast for visually impaired children. The Hellbrügge Foundation has been developing these and other adaptations for decades. Reducing the number of steps in an activity, or limiting the number of pieces—both common adaptations in the non-Montessori special education world—were also revelatory suggestions for some.

And all of this raises the most vexing question for Montessorians working in the public sector: How will this and other approaches translate to the special education establishment in public schools, where interventions are often highly targeted and measured in "minutes"? On the one hand, adaptations and differentiation are already standard tools in the conventional special educator's toolbox and aren't likely to be seen as innovations. On another hand, it's true that conventional special ed is constrained by limited budgets and an at times narrow (or "targeted") approach. "In the U.S.", Massie said, "the therapists or medical people, such as OTs, are only allowed access to the *educational* program. This model goes way beyond that, looking at all the needs of the child and how they can be met in the educational environment." It's easy to imagine public school special educators bristling at this description, but it's a little harder to imagine a team including a doctor and a family therapist being put together for each of those millions of children qualifying for services. In the end it comes down to how holistically we as a society are willing, and able, to see the child, and what level of investment we are willing to provide.

Once you start adding and changing, are you still doing Montessori?

David Ayer is the Communications Director for the National Center for Montessori in the Public Sector.

For up-to-the minute news and discussion

We need your story!

Write an article for *MontessoriPublic*

MontessoriPublic shares the stories of the public Montessori world, but we can't do it without you. Here's how you can contribute.

What should I write about? For the next issue, we're asking contributors to take a bold look at **the future**. How far in the future? It's up to you:

- What will students, families, teachers, and schools need in September?
- What will Montessori look like in a year? Five years? Ten years?

Research? Opinion? Well-reasoned, clearly stated positions are interesting even if they're controversial. Say something strong and from the heart, backed up with a few strong statistics.

Experienced writers only? No! First-time writers and published authors alike have appeared in these pages.

How long should it be? 1,100-1,200 words is great: Enough room to say something worth saying, but not so long that readers lose interest. Plus, it fits nicely on the page, with room for an image or an ad. You can get a feel for pieces of that length from the ones in this issue

What's the deadline? The final deadline for the Winter issue is **March 29th, 2021**, which gives us a little time for editing and communication with writers. Submitting even earlier is fine! That gives us even more time to get your work just right.


Prosch: Unexpected benefits Lillard: New research Miranda: Puerto Rico

MontessoriPublic.org

Distance learning in a Primary classroom

A tiny program does everything it can to connect

BY DAVID AYER WITH KATY FONTNEAU AND ROSA ORTIZ

Equity conversations in Montessori

Reflections from two Black Montessori leaders

BY MAATI WAFFORD AND JASMINE WILLIAMS

What about pictures and a short biography? Every article looks better with a nice, high resolution photo helping to tell the story. We also need a high resolution "head shot" for the author images. "High resolution" usually means a file size of 1MB+. Add a short (50 words or fewer) biography and we're all set.

Will I get paid? Unfortunately, no. On our limited budget, we can't pay writers at this time. Ad revenue covers some costs, and our fundraising is directed as much as possible to supporting public Montessori programs. We can only thank you for adding your work and your voice to that support.

Send your submissions to David Ayer: editor@montessoripublic.org

The public calendar

February 12–15	**Association Montessori International/ USA** THE MONTESSORI EXPERIENCE *ONLINE*
February 19–21	**Association of Illinois Montessori Schools 2021 Conference** *ONLINE*
March 5–6	**American Montessori Society** THE MONTESSORI EVENT *ONLINE*
March 19–29	**Montessori Model United Nations** *LIVE ONLINE CONFERENCE*
October 15–17	**Montessori Adolescent Practitioners Symposium** *ONLINE*
October 23–24	**Opera Nazionale Montessori** INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF MARIA MONTESSORI *ROME, ITALY*
November 5	**New Jersey Montessori Association Corporation** *LOCATION TBA*
February 18–20	**Montessori Educational Programs International** HANDS FOR PEACE CONFERENCE *LOCATION TBA*

If you'd like your Montessori event featured here, send it to us!

Deadline for the next issue: **March 29, 2021.**
Be sure to include the date, organization, event title, city and state
Email to: editor@montessoripublic.org