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Montessori on the move in Denver

Putting Montessori on wheels and sowing seeds



BY **MONTESSORIPUBLIC** WITH **EMILY MADISON** AND **TATENDA BLESSING-MUCHIRIRI**

Last fall, *MontessoriPublic* spoke with Tatenda Blessing-Muchiriri and Emily Madison about a new PreK program at Stedman Elementary in Denver ("Adding Montessori primary to a District K-5", *MontessoriPublic*, October 2021). Since then, the two have been putting together a pair of linked initiatives focused on expanding awareness of, and access to, public Montessori early childhood programs in the Denver area. We caught up with them again to hear more about their work.

MontessoriPublic: So what's happening in Denver?

Tatenda Blessing-Muchiriri: What's happening in Denver? It's a good question! We're on fire! Where to start? So last fall, as you know, we launched the Montessori primary classroom at Stedman Elementary.

MP: How's that going?

TBM: It's going great! The kids are happy, the families are happy, and other teachers in the building are noticing our kids in the hall, seeing them rolling rugs and counting beads, and wanting to know more.

MP: And the new projects?



Montessori comes to you

TBM: It really goes back to the year before last, when Emily and I were piloting and planning for the classroom at Stedman. We were offering weekend classes on Montessori for families, to help them learn about Montessori and what to expect, and we had some Montessori materials in storage that we would push around on a cart. One day we were pushing the trolley back to the closet and we said to each other, this is Montessori on Wheels! That's where the name and the idea came from.

Then last summer, during an Iterative Space Residency Fellowship with Embark Education here in Colorado, I shared and developed the idea for a "mobile Montessori" outreach program. What would it look like if we could bring Montessori to the people rather than bringing the people to Montessori? Montessori on Wheels, the non-profit, was born.

Emily Madison: My project, **Montessori Collective**, also came out of our experience at Stedman. Getting Montessori PreK started there was so popular and successful that I thought about doing the same thing but on a larger scale. Montessori Collective was formed to help public schools with existing Early Childhood Education (ECE) classrooms convert them to Montessori classrooms by removing barriers such as funding for training,

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materials, and ongoing professional development. Our goal is to partner with schools that are already doing ECE, but are interested in doing it differently. Our focus is underserved communities as measured by more than 50% BIPOC population and/or more than 50% Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) eligible—that covers most of Denver Public Schools anyway, which is where we will be concentrating.

MP: How will that work?

EM: We're working with schools that have expressed interest, one classroom at a time, and making a lot of time and space for community input and feedback. If the response is anything like it's been for Tatenda's classroom, they're going to want more Montessori! So the idea is to start with one classroom and expand from there, if that's what families want.

The funding model is for Montessori Collective to offer $25,000 to a school to help with materials and training, to reduce the barrier of that initial investment.

MP: Denver has some public Montessori ECE already, correct?

EM: Yes, the four DPS public Montessori programs have primary that starts at three years old. But of course those are most available to families who live in those areas or who can manage transportation.

TBM: This makes us ask, "what does access and equity really mean?" In DPS and at Stedman, Montessori is a "choice" *[Ed: DPS is an "all-choice" district]*, allowing all families the choice of a school if they lottery in and if they can drive to it. But not all parents have access to transportation, or can get their kids to a distant school on time. Montessori on Wheels asks, "what if we brought the Montessori to them?"

Emily has really helped bring access into the design process. Right now, our schools are localized to neighborhoods, and we haven't really expanded Montessori beyond brick-and-mortar school locations. What if we could bring Montessori to families in their communities, in their homes, in their churches, in their local schools? Part



of the program is targeted intervention through Montessori experience. We acknowledge that opening a Montessori classroom can be expensive, and not all schools can afford it. But with Montessori on Wheels, we can come and do some math, some language, something Montessori-related. It gives some exposure to how we think of education and learning through the Montessori method.

MP: So children will benefit, but so will families, and they might see Montessori and like it and advocate for it themselves?

TBM: Emily really helped us think about parents and families, and to bring data from Stedman into the design process. The children in my class at Stedman are involved in Montessori, of course, but not so much the parents. We have to think about what this means? So how can we involve parents? We need to focus on partnership, which increases engagement. The proper way to think about parent engagement is through partnership, as we educate parents. We want then to understand Montessori practice so they can participate, and understand their role as their child's first teacher.

MP: So there's a bus...

TBM: Yes, there's a bus! When I was doing the fellowship, and sharing the big idea of sharing Montessori with families, I was thinking about a school. There is a mobile mental health organization that brings counseling and services to high schools in DPS, and they had a bus. But the bus didn't offer them the privacy they needed for counseling, so they were excited to give it to us to provide a learning space as we bring Montessori to DPS and Aurora communities.

The focus is not a classroom on a bus, but a space for kids to have fun, to dream of what education could look like—and then we as Montessorians can show them some Montessori. The bus is named Rungano, a Shona word meaning "our stories", because we are using the power of storytelling to bring our stories together—ours as Montessori educators, theirs as parents—to empower parents to be advocates for their children.

MP: Has the bus been out yet?

TBM: Not yet—we've engaged an architect to design the bus as a learning space, and we're working with a funder to help us build it out, so we hope to have the exterior done by this summer and have the interior done for fall to move out into communities and schools.

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EM: We're hoping to be in DPS this summer. The district is revising its summer school program to offer more hands on, "STEM-focused" enrichment, and we are workings. The bus will make its first venture out this summer, visiting 15 sites twice each, overlapping the end of the school day so children can experience it and families can engage at dismissal.

MP: So—architect, funders, a contract with DPS—this is starting to sound serious!

TBM: Yes, when we met with DPS, they were very positive. And we've had good success talking to funders—I'd like to mention and thank the Black Montessori Education Fund, the Margulf Foundation, Moonshot EdVentures, and the JML Foundation in particular.

MP: Is this primary or elementary aged children?

TBM: These are "lower el" children—entering 1st through 3rd grade in September, so as young as six. We offer a space where they can have exposure to some Montessori materials, where we can observe their interests in a space where they have ownership of their own learning. What happens when they see sandpaper letters for example, or other materials different from what they've seen in their classrooms? We'll use the power of storytelling, collecting stories of what they think learning should look like. We won't just introduce Montessori right away, but learn about the children first, who they are, what they think about their learning. Then we can introduce Montessori in a way that's respectful and responsive to these kids, to their communities, and they can learn about Montessori on Wheels, and our story. And hopefully we can help them learn what they want and how they want.

MP: Are you two the staff? Do you have elementary experience in the mix? I'm thinking of the importance of storytelling for the elementary child.

TBM: We are the staff, yes, and we have a non-Montessori educator to bring in that perspective. And we will tap into student teachers from the Montessori Education Center of the Rockies (MECR)—they can do some of their practice teaching with us.

MP: How does family engagement work in the summer?

TBM: When they come to pick up. It's very intentional. In the summer, they get to know us and the program. Later they may want it in their schools. We're also working on a healing space for this 50%+ BIPOC, 50%+ FRL population, sharing this history of education in Denver, and in the US, and their stories of how this has affected them.

MP: So this prepares the soil, so to speak, for Montessori expansion?

TBM: Part of this is giving families access to the Montessori materials and the ideas behind them. Materials are very costly. How can we dissect and extract the elements of the materials and share that with parents, so they can access the ideas without buying a Pink Tower? Help them learn the principles so they can apply them at home.

MP: And then the Montessori Collective's work comes into play in the fall?

EM: If all the stars align and the funding comes through, the goal is to send four teachers to training this summer. So right now we're working on building partnerships with schools which have teachers who are willing to give up their summers, and are excited about Montessori.

MP: You have four schools lined up, that want to convert their ECE to Montessori?

EM: We have five right now! Well, the principals are excited—but they're not the ones who have to go to training all summer. But if everything comes through, the goal is four new classrooms opening in September.

MP: Four new Montessori primaries in DPS—that's a big deal!

EM: Yes! And the hope is to drive that demand for Montessori. Once they see it, they'll want more—like what happened with Tatenda's classroom. Had we gone to families and asked, "do you want Montessori?" they might have been lukewarm. But now that they've seen it and experienced their kids loving it, they love it too. So the idea is to share Montessori with families, hear from them what they want, and hopefully offer something they're attracted to.

Emily Madison is the founder of The Montessori Collective.

Tatenda Blessing-Muchiriri is the founder of Montessori on Wheels.

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Erdkinder in public Montessori schools

How does Montessori's radical land-based model work in public settings?



BY **HANNAH EWERT-KROCKER**



Erdkinder—children of the soil

Dr. Montessori's vision for the prepared environment for adolescents was a farm on which the *erdkinder* (children of the earth), as she called them, would live together, care for themselves, their community, and the land, and run income-generating businesses. The land, residence, and micro-economy provide integrated opportunities to learn about all areas of human knowledge: science, math, history, reading and writing, language, and even division of labor and collaboration between human groups.

The work of the physical prepared environment necessitates deep understanding in all these traditional subject areas. In other words, students need to know their historical context, understand natural and human-made systems (including mathematical ones), and global languages in order to communicate with international communities. Dr. Montessori called for, above all else, sharing with adolescents the understanding that human beings and the natural world are interdependent, that we must utilize and critically evaluate our technology, and that each individual being has a valuable contribution to make.

As with so much of Montessori's work, her assessment of the needs and characteristics of adolescents could not be more relevant in our contemporary, interconnected world and, in many ways, could not be further from our existing public education standards and systems. Despite the challenges present in marrying Montessori pedagogy and the American approach to public education, there are innovative public schools working to implement a land-based approach to adolescent education, according to the vision Dr. Montessori described in the "Appendices" of *From Childhood to Adolescence*.

Compass Montessori School is a PreK-12 charter program in Golden, Colorado founded over 20 years ago. Compass' Farm School (grades 7-9) has a working farm that includes a productive vegetable garden and animals including chickens, alpacas, goats, and an aquaponics system. The operation of the farm is wrapped into the study of biology, marketing, data collection and analysis, and product and cost analysis for produce. The adolescents at Compass also operate an active "microeconomy" (small business) both collaboratively and independently as Student Business Operators. Products in the microeconomy include vegetables, cut flowers, and honey for the Farm Stand and the Farm School CSA, canned goods (pickles, jams, and relishes), baked goods (breads, cookies, granola, and dog biscuits) and handmade craft items (jewelry, soaps, candles, wreaths, greeting cards, t-shirts, etc.).

Compass has a unique approach to guiding students in an understanding of their participation in the economy: students perform "shift work" in the income-generating sale of goods. These shifts are recorded over the course of their three years in the program and paid out as wages to 9th year students to fund school-related travel opportunities, Valorization Projects, and to purchase products for sale through the Farm School Microeconomy.

Also in Colorado, **Denver Montessori Junior/Senior High School (DMHS)** is an innovation school in Denver Public Schools (DPS) whose population, much like many DPS schools, is primarily composed of students of color. DMHS has two programs: a Farm School (grades 7-9) and a High School (grades 10-12). DMHS is in central Denver and operates a small, flourishing urban farm that includes raised beds for vegetables, cut flowers, and herbs and chickens, angora rabbits,

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and an aquaponics system.

Students in the Farm School rotate through a series of four Science Occupations throughout the course of the school year, each of which focuses on a different area of middle school science: Horticulture (botany and ecology), Animals (biology), Culinary (chemistry), and Structures (physics). Students take on small group projects in each occupation, depending on the needs of the farm and community and student interest. In the Animals Occupation, for example, some students might plan the repair or upgrade of the chicken coop, another group researches and develops a proposal to purchase goats, while another group cares for the rabbit and learns to spin wool. Students in the Culinary Occupation study the chemistry of food or light and waves, all while assisting in the kitchen to prepare lunch for the entire school community and generating their own Culinary projects, such as a solar dehydrator or a Chef's Table competition. Each Occupation focuses on the same sub-discipline of science from year-to-year but the specific topics and standards change, allowing for students to experience a broad range of middle school science lessons.

Great River School, a charter school in St. Paul, Minnesota, also operates a small urban farm with gardens, an orchard, goats, chickens, and fish, integrating the study of traditional disciplines into Occupations. One of the Occupations at Great River focuses on the school's active bicycle shop, which is a significant contributor to the school's Microeconomy. The bike shop provides tune-ups and repairs and raises $4,000 annually to help fund a 6-day, 100+-mile, end-of-year bike and camping trip. The students also run a robust theater program and operate the business of ticket and concessions sales.

In all three programs, students integrate chores and care of the environment into daily life. Students also participate in studies that fit into more traditional discipline categories, such as math and foreign language. Students also experience opportunities for self-expression in the study of History and Humanities and in the visual and performing arts. Given the interconnected nature of our world, studies in the *erdkinder* program design are as integrated as possible. When studying history, for example, students must also study climate and the environment, economics, language, and scientific and technological innovation.

The *erdkinder* design is possible in the public sector, and it is growing

Public Montessori adolescent programs, regardless of innovation or charter status, face a number of challenges. As publicly funded institutions, public Montessori middle and high schools are required to administer state-required standardized testing on at least an annual basis. Montessori curriculum at the adolescent level, like in other planes of development, is not linear but rather spirals over the course of a 3-year cycle and, as a result, students may not engage in learning or integrating standards in the linear way that these standardized tests measure. Additionally, public funding in many states presents structural challenges. Maintaining student teacher ratios that fully meet the needs of adolescents in a project-based, community-oriented program is challenging, particularly in states where per pupil funding is low, like Colorado and Minnesota.

Despite the challenges, these three programs are leading the way in demonstrating that, with some creative structuring and innovative thinking, the *erdkinder* design is possible in the public sector, and it is growing. With the newly approved AMI diploma at the adolescent level and the first cohorts of trained teachers completing the diploma course in 2022, new schools are being envisioned in several states across the country. With the commitment to expanding Montessori into adolescence growing and the establishment of training centers in multiple states, we can expect more collaboration and connection between programs, regional conferences, and increasing professional development opportunities for Montessori guides.

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Who cares about Maria Montessori?

Montessorians do, for good reasons. But do we make too much of her?



BY **DAVID AYER**

Who is Maria Montessori to the Montessori movement, and what does that mean for Montessori as a movement in the 21st century?

Three articles in this issue of *MontessoriPublic*, and some conversations I've been in lately with non-Montessori observers, take on aspects of Maria Montessori herself, her life, her achievements and influence, and her written works.

In "Go to the archives," (see page 16) Paula Preschlack urges Montessorians to go to Montessori's written work for inspiration and advocacy. She points to the "rich library of work to dive into and derive information from," and she's right, that's an incredible resource.

In a conversation with education reformer and NCMPS Board membe Jared Joiner (coming to print this fall), he pointed out that Montessori's 100-year body of proven practices and materials are a strength in a world of untried innovations.

And in "Global (Re) Entry..." (see page 8), Sarah Stephens takes personal inspiration from Doctor Montessori's life story, her vision of children and their potential, and her work with marginalized children in her early years.

"Maria Montessori and the Nobel Peace Prize" (see page 15) takes on one of the oft-cited details of Montessori's life: Her three nominations for the prestigious award. (Although the story may not go quite the way you expect.)

And it's understandable to draw inspiration from Montessori's words, her work, and her spirit. It's fair to rank her as a genius in the field of education and human development: she saw something that had never been seen before in the nature of childhood, and acted to bring her ideas into the world.

But let's face it: Montessori fans can at times get a little overheated about her personal story and her writings, treating them with a reverence that people we might call "non-Montessorians" can find a little suspect or even off-putting.

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But let's face it: Montessori fans can at times get a little overheated about her personal story and her writings, treating them with a reverence that people we might call "non-Montessorians" can find a little suspect or even off-putting.

But there's a third problem that may be even more critical when we're talking to the rest of the world: No-one cares about Maria Montessori! And why should they?

For Montessorians, it's great to be inspired and refreshed by the depth of Montessori's work. It's deep and inspiring! And it's fine to share that depth and inspiration with others as they come to know and understand the method.

But to the education world, the fact that this is a 100+ year old pedagogy with deep coherence based on the scientific observations of a trailblazing early 20th century feminist, physician, and educator—is not the most important thing about Montessori, or the first thing they need to know.

This has been a hard lesson for me to learn. I've been speaking and writing about Montessori for decades, mostly in private schools, and the way I've talked about the woman and her work has changed a lot over time.

Here's where I was when I joined the public sector in 2016:

Montessori education is named after its founder, Maria Montessori, an Italian scientist, medical doctor, and educator. First developed with low-income

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Montessori wasn't actually the first female doctor in Italy

When we're outside of the "Montessori world," speaking to people who don't know much about the method, there are several problems with this approach.

First, some of the received lore isn't necessarily true. Montessori wasn't actually the first female M.D. in Italy, although she was among the first. And as for the Peace Prize, well, see page 15.

Second, some of the things she said and wrote haven't aged that well, scientifically or in terms of how we relate to our fellow humans. You don't have to dig too deep to find some squishy science or outright offensive worldviews and language. Knowledge has expanded; Montessori was a person of her time and place, and times have changed.

This doesn't mean anyone should reject the core of her work, or the concrete results we see as it is practiced with hundreds of thousands of children

and special needs children in 1907, Montessori is practiced in public and private schools all over the world, serving children from birth to age eighteen.

There's a lot of what we love about Montessori in here. But does it maybe make it sound a little...old-fashioned?

Here's a recent revision:

A theory of human development, a pedagogy, and a curriculum, Montessori is a holistic approach based on scientific observations of human development. First developed in 1907 with low-income children...

This is better, and gets a lot of philosophy into one sentence. But is the philosophy—so important to us—the first thing people want to know?

Here's a recent paragraph, specifically aimed at public school leaders without a lot of time or patience for theory and philosophy:

Montessori is a time-tested curriculum and pedagogy used in more than 560 US public schools and around the world. Research shows that Montessori supports academic and developmental outcomes and can elevate and equalize outcomes for low-income children and children of color. School districts in Washington DC, Houston, Denver, Milwaukee, and many more offer Montessori programs to the families they serve.

I'm hoping that's a paragraph that catches their attention and makes them want to learn more—just like a Montessori elementary story! Then I can tell them how we do it—the spooning, the great lessons, the three-hour work period. Freedom and responsibility. The development of the will. Cosmic education! (But don't get carried away.)

It's fine—it's more than fine, it's critical—for us to study deeply and draw inspiration from Montessori's work, following Preschlack and Stephens. Her discoveries and experiments are profound, multi-layered, and richly interconnected, always showing us something new, and I'll never stop re-reading and observing and learning.

But as Montessori herself *may or may not* have said, "*I keep pointing at the child; they keep staring at my finger.*"

Let's show the rest of the world what Montessori means for children. That's what matters, and that's what will open their eyes.

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

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Credential recognition for Montessori training

Nine states offer a pathway, with six more in the pipeline



BY **DENISE MONNIER**

A bill to support teacher licensure for Montessori credentialed teachers in the state of Maryland has been approved in the legislature and is expected to be signed into law. The bill will create a pathway to licensure for Montessori teachers with bachelor's degrees in any field who hold credentials issued by MACTE accredited programs, or by AMI or AMS.

The Maryland bill is a great example of the persistence it can take to get these policy changes over the finish line for our Montessori communities. This is the third time this legislation has been proposed in the state. The first time it did not make it out of committee and was opposed by the Maryland Teacher's Union. The second time the COVID crisis closed the legislature and the bill died after having passed the senate and being heard in committee in the house. Third time for the win! Montessori Schools of Maryland has been working closely with the Montessori Public Policy Initiative (MPPI), Maryland House Delegate Julian Ivey, and Maryland Senator Will Smith to assess the best path to passing this bill for Maryland Montessori schools.

The Maryland project is part of an MPPI initiative of intensive work on passing these types of Montessori credential pathways to state teacher licensure that has been funded by a grant from the Trust for Learning. The project spans two years and involves seven states at this point, with each state at a different phase of the work.

Colorado and Texas are at the beginning of this work, creating models for building coalitions to cultivate relationships both within their Montessori communities and with state legislators and policy makers, as well as potential stakeholders such as teacher unions. They are researching existing licensure pathways and looking for potential opportunities for Montessori credential holders to be included.

Pennsylvania and Illinois are deep into the work but have not been able to bring about policy reform yet. These states have established coalitions, and have a clear understanding of the existing licensure pathways in their state as well as challenges to their requests for a Montessori pathway. They also have established relationships with legislators and have legislative language prepared. These states are still in the process of garnering support and addressing concerns of potential opposition but are persisting.

Michigan, and Virginia are close to having pathways to state teacher licensure established. As in Maryland, ad vocates have persisted for years to keep legislative proposals alive and to build support for legislation. Here is a breakdown of work in the other 6 states:

Colorado: Our MPPI Advocacy lead in Colorado has been hard at work for the last year negotiating an increase in the number of hours of college credit that Montessori credentialed teachers are given towards their child care director credentials. The number will hopefully be officially increased soon, and that increase will lay the groundwork for a pathway to state teacher licensure. Relationships are being cultivated with the various state offices involved and a request will be made soon.

Texas: Advocacy leads in Texas have been building a coalition of advocates to share the work as several policy issues are being approached for the state. The pathway to state teacher licensure is the focal point of the work that is beginning for Texas.

Pennsylvania: Here, the work has been ongoing for a few years. Considerable work has been done, including submission of a crosswalk to the Pennsylvania learning standards and multiple public testimony events. Transitions in state government and roadblocks in terms of administrative requirements for teacher preparation have been challenging, but our advocates have persevered, and are exploring multiple avenues to keep all of the options open as more executive and legislative transitions are expected.

Illinois: This is another state where considerable work has been done, but our desired outcome for a teacher licensure pathway has not yet been achieved. Illinois advocacy representatives have also submitted a crosswalk to early childhood educator standards and have been working with both the board of education and legislators. They have draft legislation, are cultivating a legislative sponsor, and have reached out to teacher union representatives and the Chicago Public Schools to seek support from them as well. Illinois has established a network of

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superintendents from the four public school districts that have Montessori programs, who will support legislation when it is proposed.

Virginia: While legislation was proposed in 2019, it was not passed as originally intended and was incorporated into an alternative teacher licensure bill that allows individual districts to apply for district specific licensure pathways to meet their needs. The Arlington school district is home to the only district Montessori program in Virginia, and they have been collaborating with the Virginia Montessori Association and MPPI, as well as with state officials, to create a VA Department of Education approved licensure pathway for their Montessori teachers. When the pathway is approved, other Virginia districts should be able to replicate the process allowing them to move forward with expanding Montessori to their districts.

Michigan: Michigan has been making great progress after years of working to establish relationships in the state. Over the last couple of years, they have really concentrated their efforts and have been able to build a strong relationship with a state senator who is willing to propose legislation. The Michigan Montessori Education Advocacy Network has been working closely with MPPI to organize support within their Montessori community and be prepared for outreach to legislators whose districts have Montessori schools to make sure they understand the value and importance of passing the legislation.

Pathways to state teacher licensure are key to the growth of quality public Montessori programs. MPPI and our state advocacy leads are deep into this work, in these seven states above and in others as well.

In addition, we are also focusing some of this grant funding on work to

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States with Montessori credential pathways



Connecticut: An AMI diploma + twelve additional credits qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Georgia: A MACTE-accredited credential + three special education credits + content area assessment tests and an ethics test qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Hawaii: A MACTE-accredited credential + practicum + two elementary method courses from Chaminade University of Honolulu qualify for a PK-3 teaching certificate.



Indiana: A MACTE-accredited credential + a level-specific exam qualifies for a full teaching certificate with no restrictions.



Maryland: A MACTE-accredited, AMI, or AMS credential + a state test qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Minnesota: A MACTE-accredited credential + pedagogy and content exams qualify for a three-year renewable certificate.



Montana: A MACTE-accredited Montessori credential qualifies for a full teaching certificate with no restrictions.



Ohio: A MACTE, AMI, or AMS credential qualifies for a four-year provisional certificate, during which time additional requirements must be met.



South Carolina: A MACTE-accredited credential + the PRAXIS exam qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.



Wisconsin: A MACTE or AMI credential + 3 additional courses + EdTPA/PRAXIS qualify for a teaching certificate in public Montessori schools only.

make sure that Montessori programs are able to participate and be appropriately recognized for their quality within state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems. Michigan and Illinois are two states that have been making excellent progress in this area.

Currently, MPPI advocacy representatives in Michigan are negotiating an increase in the recognition of the Montessori credential within their Great Start to Quality system that would enable Montessori teachers to serve as lead teachers in preschool for all classrooms. In Illinois, a committee working on a pilot for ExceleRate 2.0 has proposed that Montessori classrooms will be allowed exemptions from certain items within environmental assessments that are not in line with quality Montessori classrooms, enabling Montessori programs to score at the gold circle of quality in the state. These are very important policy wins for Michigan and Illinois and help lay the groundwork for Montessori programs in both public and private schools to access public funding including universal preschool dollars.

MPPI and our state advocacy leads are constantly at work amassing details and experience working on these important state policy issues. So many of the issues overlap with or influence each other, so every time another win is achieved, we become so much closer to the goal of making quality Montessori programs available to every child.

Denise Monnier is the Director of State Advocacy for the Montessori Public Policy Initiative.

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BRINGING MONTESSORI INTO THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION IN PRINT AND ONLINE • EXCERPTED FROM: **SPRING 2022 (VOL. 6, #2)**

Montessori may promote adult well-being

A new study suggests powerful long-term effects



BY **DAVID AYER**



Self-determination and meaningful activity promote well-being

Dr. Angeline Lillard and her team at the University of Virginia are out with another study showing the benefits of Montessori (*An Association Between Montessori Education in Childhood and Adult Well-being*).

Montessori education, public or private, was found to be strongly associated with "general well-being" and significant components of the construct: **happiness, meaning, and self-confidence**; **engagement and seeking challenge**; and **social trust and sense of community**.

The study has seen some coverage in *Forbes* and *Psychology Today*, among other outlets. "Childhood Montessori Associated with Adult Well-being" is essentially the headline, and for many in the Montessori world it was just one more confirmation of what we feel like we've known all along

But perhaps you are wondering just what is meant by "well-being", how researchers could possibly measure it, and what it is about Montessori that could be driving the association. MontessoriPublic took a look under the hood of this dense and statistically complex study to find out what's going on.

What is well-being?

Well-being generally is "what is good for a person" at least according to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and as you can imagine, there's plenty of debate among philosophers about just what that means. But in psychological research, it's a well-studied and extensively defined concept, even while there are a range of mostly overlapping constructs and measures for the idea.

Lillard and her team use the definitions "how people think and feel about their lives" and "the felt experience of health, happiness, and flourishing". That is to say, people who feel pretty good about their lives, all things considered, have well-being. But it's not just subjective: Higher levels of well-being predict personal and professional success, increased creativity, physical health and longevity, and life satisfaction. So, it doesn't just feel good to feel good about your life—it's actually good for you!

Why Montessori?

So why (as a matter of scientific inquiry) did the researchers look at Montessori education in relation to well-being later in life? Well, as the paper succinctly puts it, on careful examination, *"Montessori pedagogy has features that enhance well-being contemporaneously and predictively, including self-determination, meaningful activities, and social stability."* That is to say, Montessori education has all these qualities we already know enhance and predict well-being. Maybe it's worth checking out?

The first feature is **self-determination**—a hallmark of Montessori education, in which children largely chose their own activities. Choice, sense of control, and agency have been shown to predict "intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, happiness, and sense of competence," all elements of well-being. The absence of external motivations, tests, and grades also supports self-determination. So, the authors tell us, *"We hypothesized that adults who formerly attended Montessori schools*

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would show higher general well-being, including self-confidence, and be more apt to seek challenge and be engaged with their work."

Montessori classrooms also feature **meaningful activities**. *"Montessori offers children meaningful activities, by which we mean activities for which the underlying reasons are clear, and thus give people a sense of purpose,"* the paper says. Obviously, self-chosen activities are inherently meaningful to the child choosing them, and this makes up a big chunk of a child's Montessori experience. Children also take part in meaningful community care and self-care such as cleaning, meal preparation, dressing, etc.

Academic materials embody meaning in the materials themselves: the object representing the number 1,000 is literally 1,000 times larger than the object representing a unit. Meaningful activities drive higher engagement, which also increases well-being. So, the researchers hypothesized that increased engagement in school would translate to increased engagement throughout life, and that *"meaningful activities in the school years could translate to a general sense of meaning in life and happiness, and thus be related to general well-being."*

The third feature of interest was **social stability and cohesion**. Mixed age classrooms with three-year groupings ("looping" in education jargon) keep children and adults together for long periods of time, fostering social-emotional development and sustained relationships. Looping has been shown to support positive relationships, self-confidence, and academic performance, and of course collaboration among students and with teachers is more prevalent in these classrooms. All of these factors are related to general well-being, so, the authors suggest, *"the strong social stability in Montessori schools could also predict higher general well-being later."*

Montessori drives well-being in children...

So. Montessori education has characteristics that very plausibly might predict well-being later in life. Is there any existing research to support this idea, and to disentangle it from the selection bias arising from the socio-economic characteristics of children in (mostly tuition-based) Montessori schools? It turns out that there is. Lillard and her colleagues have been able to conduct several "natural experiment" studies over the last two decades, comparing children who attended lottery-admission public Montessori programs with similar children who applied for admission but were randomly excluded. The results:

> *In terms of self-determination and its benefits, the studies showed better academic performance and mastery orientation. In terms of social skills, they showed better social cognition and behavior, and a stronger sense of community. They also indicated more developed executive function. Academic performance, mastery orientation, social skills, and executive function all predict higher well-being.*

... but what about after they grow up?

Montessori certainly seemed to have caused (and not just be associated with) well-being, or at least its components, in these children. But does it have an effect into adulthood?

Since well-being is an inherently self-reported characteristic, the next step was to ask people. The researchers assembled a sample of 1905 respondents to an internet survey, about half of whom had attended a Montessori school for at least two years, with the rest having attended conventional schools. Respondents answered questions on 18 established scales used to measure aspects of well-being. These included (with sample items):

- six *Psychological Well-being* scales, with items such as "I am good at managing the responsibilities of daily life" and "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far"
- two *Social Well-being* scales: "I can predict/make sense of the world", "I feel close to people in my community"
- a *Satisfaction with Life* scale: "In most ways my life is close to my ideal"
- a *Meaning in Life Questionnaire*: "My life has a clear sense of purpose"
- a *Subjective Vitality* scale: "I feel alive and vital"
- a *Short Need for Cognition* scale: "I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions and problems"
- a *Mindful Attention Awareness* scale: "I find it difficult to stay focused on what is happening in the present" (a high score means that is almost never true)

In addition, researchers gathered demographic and school history information from participants. Respondents were asked about what type of school they attended (Regular/Traditional, Montessori, Homeschool, Waldorf, Reggio Emilia, Other Alternative), but not until the end of the survey.

Factor analysis—four factors emerged

This is where the paper, and the research and expertise behind it, get quite technical. The raw data set consisted of nearly 2,000 responses on eighteen scales each comprising multiple items—hundreds of thousands of data points. How can psychologists make sense of this sea of information? The answer is factor analysis, a sophisticated statistical technique which finds correlations and associations within

the vast set of individual responses and can reduce the variables to a manageable number of unmeasured but statistically valid underlying factors.

Based on prior research, the team initially hypothesized three "latent clusters": one concerning **happiness, meaning, and self-confidence**; one concerning **engagement and seeking challenge**; and a third concerning **social trust and sense of community**." Factor analysis validated these clusters, and suggested a better fit to the data with a four-factor model, splitting the first cluster into **self-confidence** and **general well-being**.

This is to say, at the risk of massive oversimplification, that if you build a model where answers to questions on various scales "hang together" in this four-cluster way, it does a pretty plausible job of predicting the actual results. Using this model, every survey respondent was assigned a score on each of these four variables.

Does Montessori matter?

The next step was to compare scores on these four clusters with demographic and school attendance data from the survey. Demographic data enabled the researchers to control for gender, race, age, childhood socio-economic status (SES), and private schooling. The paper states the basic finding succinctly:

> *Montessori attendance significantly predicted higher scores on all four latent variables: General Well-being, Engagement, Social Trust, and Self-confidence. This makes theoretical sense, in that Montessori schools have features that are related to these aspects of well-being.*

Maybe it's private school parents

The team didn't stop there, continuing to ask questions of the data. Perhaps it's not at least two (and an average of eight) years of Montessori which predict well-being, but some other unmeasured variable, such as having parents who seek out alternative school. Since parents who chose private school could be assumed to have this characteristic, the team looked at just the private school respondents, of which some attended Montessori schools and some did not. Even in this group, and even controlling for age, gender, race, and childhood SES, "having attended Montessori for at least 2 years (and an average of 9 years) was significantly associated with higher well-being on three of the four factors: General Well-being, Engagement, and Social Trust."

Or maybe it's Montessori parents

But maybe there's something about parents who chose Montessori specifically (public or private) that drives well-being. This is a tricky variable to isolate. However, since Montessori is less available in elementary and higher grades, the length of time spent in Montessori could be used. Parents who chose Montessori for young children, but were not able to continue through higher grades would presumably be similar to Montessori parents who were able to keep children in Montessori for longer, so comparing across number of years in Montessori could isolate just the Montessori effect, if there was one. The result here (again controlled for SES, etc.):

> *the duration of Montessori was significant for two of the four factors (General Well-being and Engagement). For all four factors, the direction was positive:* ***being in Montessori school for longer was associated with at least slightly higher scores on all factors****.*

The company we keep

At the end of the day, even a study as comprehensive as this can only show an association between Montessori education and adult well-being, and the authors are at pains to make this clear. To establish causality, it would be necessary to randomly assign children to Montessori and non-Montessori conditions and follow them through to adulthood. No study with such a broad scope is likely to be undertaken in the foreseeable future. Although, the handful of randomized "lottery-control" studies do show positive immediate outcomes for Montessori children, and a larger national study is currently under way.

Still, considering the associations that are piling up between Montessori and academic achievement, standardized test scores, executive function, and outcomes for children of color, among others, it makes sense to ask if Montessori is more than just a fellow traveler with these outcomes, and might in fact be the driving force.

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

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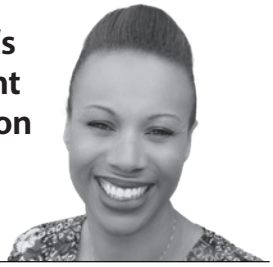
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Global (re)entry to post-pandemic reality

Let's honor Montessori's commitment to adaptation



BY **SARAH STEPHENS**

I type this article to the beat of my brain-stereo, playing Gloria Estefan's "Coming Out of the Dark." Released in 1991, the song was tattooed to my soul at the tender age of eight. I often match my head music to my moods and musings, and I'm grateful for these encouraging lyrics as our world peels back the next layer of social re-entry. Like the rest of our global community, I waiver with the stress of the acceleration while taking the lemons —social injustice, COVID, political polarization, global despair, and all my personal traumas— to make lemonade, for Dr. Montessori's "whole of mankind."

Our Montessori community has dramatically felt the impact of our snowballing societal sensitivities. Our common denominator is a lingering pandemic with a potential beginning to loosen its reins. No matter the level, directly and indirectly, we have all been impacted. Staggering data on the long-term societal effects of COVID alone is surfacing, revealing its negative impact on our most precious resource: our children.

As a Montessori teacher, consultant and parent in Littleton, Colorado, I have observed the data first-hand: child/adult social and emotional trauma, disenrollments, burnout, staff turnover, mistrust of public and private systems of education due to lack of (or poorly supported) inclusion, and so on. The developing results portend a decrease in the quantity and quality of exceptional Montessori education for all. But don't lose hope quite yet. I believe the antidote, and therefore the key, to a successful and lasting re-entry lies in the wisdom of our namesake: Dr. Maria Montessori.

Montessori's path to an innovative system of education was solemn as she was a female who broke the mold of tradition. She fought to become one of Italy's first female doctors (and let's recognize this prestigious accomplishment by using her title, *Dr.* Maria Montessori). She viewed children as worthy and capable of leading their own development in a world that marked them as empty vessels dependent upon adults. The children she served were discarded by society due to their economic status and unconventional abilities. She had the courage to turn her back on her own country–the same one that highly celebrated her accomplishments at great lengths–because she refused to change her beliefs for the advancement of the dominant ideology. She used what could have been an oppressive punishment of house arrest on a different continent to practice humility with a foreign group of civilians, exchanging (rather than absorbing) cultures and wisdom for the advancement of all.

My personal, unforeseen challenges as a long term guest of *Hotel Pandemic Bubble* brought my 13+ years as a Montessori educator and administrator to a screeching halt. I wish I could blame these "unprecedented times" alone, but I saw the complexities of my being layering one on top of the other like the lamination process of a croissant–there was a lot going on. This state of paralysis led to a personal exploration of my why.

Why had I chosen to be in a field that on paper extended peace, belonging and acceptance to all but in practice delivers to a specific individual who fits in a microscopic box? Why would I continue to thumb through my training manuals night-after-night, spending countless (unpaid) hours to add more global perspectives and depth to match every member of my school community (including myself), the surrounding cities, and world? Why had I chosen to take on the anxiety of teaching children and adults outside of the typical *heroes and holidays*, refusing to deliver the same content on specific dates for the sake of tradition while simultaneously and unintentionally isolating myself? And why, when my courage to step outside of these norms proved successful on a larger (business) scale, did I allow myself to

I humbly list Dr. Montessori as the answer to my questions

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be tokenized for the groundbreaking work I did in my school communities?

I humbly list Dr. Montessori as the answer to my questions because I am her. I empathize and deeply connect to the parallels of her challenges as I, myself, am outside of the box as a Black, female educational leader in the U.S. I have considered letting the door be slammed on my passion because of the mistreatment (and misunderstanding) of this jewel in education and those who are chosen as its "dignitary" participants, but I will decide whether or not I choose to close this door. In fact, I am taking every part of my Montessori life and spiritual experiences (a.k.a. my cosmic development) to re-open this door by working with Denver Montessori schools and teacher education programs to increase awareness of and pursue a genuine, lifelong relationship with the global community. Together, we are connecting the foundations of Montessori with the evolving needs of the child, the adult (who involves the educator AND the child's caretakers), and the environment.

It is clear that our Earth is experiencing various levels of PTSD, from our distressed natural resources all the way to the top of the chain. I've accepted that there's no herd-immunity from the challenges of our pasts, presents, and futures. On the other hand, we have watched the mysteries of survival through adaptation. We (or at least my family) marvel at the picturesque documentaries narrated by David Attenborough, watching the miraculous evolution of species–it's a natural perk to our cosmic design.

Dr. Maria Montessori adapted to her conditions, and we are blessed, a century later, with a growing system of education. In fact, despite the continuous decline in almost everything educational, Montessori has gained strength and more exposure throughout the debilitating global circumstances by catching the eyes of traditional educational practices. As more individuals courageously walk through this slowly (re-)opening door, those who have already gone through are being challenged to thrive in a world no longer capable of co-existence. Beyond the abstract of fear, anger and intolerance, lies a concrete human race in dire need of relationship. The quality of our relationships will depend on the quantity of meaningful interactions. Montessorians have a duty to adapt our practices of Peace Education to meet the equitable needs of our global citizens through authentic relationships.

As we recover from our pasts both collectively and individually, we must do more than simply absorb and robotically repeat Dr. Montessori's timeless words: "The whole of mankind is one and only one, one race, one class, and one society." We must take ownership of our elegant positioning in Montessori and action to intentionally re-enter society as one body of endless beliefs that thoughtfully adjusts its behaviors with, of course, grace and courtesy. We must collaboratively reconstruct this Montessori lemonade stand, creating flavors to match the cravings of ALL who come… *my personal favorite is strawberry lemonade.*

Sarah is a Montessori early childhood educator and PAMS teacher trainer. Her current mission is Montessori for All via her project, Montessori Moves Mountains (3mforall.com).

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Maria Montessori and the Nobel Peace Prize

Nominated three times but that might mean less than you think



BY **MARCY KREVER**

For many years, I cherished the fact that Maria Montessori had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, equating it with an endorsement by the Nobel Foundation itself.

No matter that she never won—it was honor enough that this illustrious organization, tasked with selecting "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses," had identified her as a contender—and not just once, but three times: in 1949, 1950, and 1951.

When I mentioned this to my son, himself the product of a Montessori education, and now an adult working in the field of news production, he gave me a wry smile.

"Let's face it," he said, "those nominations are 'nice'—but it's not like she was nominated for an Academy Award."

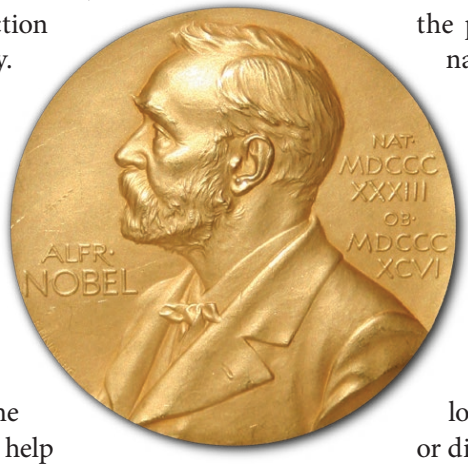
I asked him to clarify.

He handed me a laptop.

(Sometimes Montessori alums can be so annoying.)

The first step of my investigations took me to the Oscars website; specifically, to the section on rules and eligibility.

That they are dense and detailed came as no surprise to me—as a movie lover, I follow, with interest, the news about Oscar nominees and winners; including reports, in recent years, about the efforts being made to help ensure diversity and inclusion.



Surely, the rules and regs for the exalted Nobel Peace Prize had to be at least as exhaustive.

A hop over to the Nobel website revealed they are anything but.

For one thing, any living person or active organization can be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize—including you, me, or the associations to which we belong—regardless of who we are or what we've accomplished. The only restriction is that we can't nominate ourselves.

"What?" you may ask. "How could I nominate myself, or anyone, for that matter, if I'm not on a Nobel Committee?"

Well, here's the kicker: for the most part, it's not "Team Nobel" that makes the Peace Prize nominations, but rather, anyone who cares to throw a name in the hat, provided the person isn't nominating themself and belongs to at least one of several categories specified by the Foundation: for example, university professors of history, social sciences, law, philosophy, or theology; or directors of peace institutes. While the Norwegian Nobel Committee has the option to add names to the list, their primary role is to make the selections, based on the nominations that have been submitted from individuals worldwide, with the intent to ensure that a great variety of candidates are considered.

In 1949, Montessori's nominators were Helena Stellway and Martinus J. Langeveld (also spelled Langved, depending on the source), both professors at Utrecht University in the Netherlands; Viscount George Lambert, a member of the British Parliament; and Maria Jervolino, a member of the Italian Parliament (and eventual president of the Association Montessori Internationale, according to at least one source, which I am still investigating). The same Maria Jervolino nominated Montessori in 1950, and again in 1951.

As detailed by their statutes, the

continues >

Nobel Peace Prize overview

Nominations 1901–1976: 4,425
Most nominations in one year: 375, in 2016
Nominations in 2021: 329

Nobel Foundation keeps information about nominators under wraps for 50 years, along with the names of the nominees.

Thus, if you nominate someone for a Nobel Peace Prize—or if someone nominates you—you'll need to be patient about seeing the information go public. It may not even occur in your lifetime.

I'll admit that knowing that in any given year, the pool of potential nominees is equal to the number of people living on the planet and all functioning organizations, with no specifications about qualifications; and that the nominator pool may not be particularly discriminating, took the shine off the apple for me, and caused me to reconsider the gravitas of Maria's three-time nomination, despite the eminence of the nominators.9

2021 Winners

Maria Ressa and Dmitri A. Muratov, journalists in the Philippines and Russia, respectively, "for their courageous fight for freedom of expression, which is a precondition for democracy and lasting peace."

I in no way mean to cast aspersions on Dr. Montessori, whose renown as a leader in the peace movement is indisputable. Rather, it is a reminder that information published in the media should not be taken at face value, as even if it's accurate, it doesn't necessarily tell the full story. Therefore, though we might not like what we learn, going to primary sources, when possible, is the best route. Unless, of course, the journalist is my son—in which case you can rest assured that he's scrupulously done all that legwork for you.

Marcy Krever is a freelance writer and editor, and the former senior director of communications for the American Montessori Society.

Much of the information in this article was sourced from the Nobel Peace Prize website: www.nobelprize.org

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Going to the archives

Montessori's written work can unite and inspire



BY **PAULA LILLARD PRESCHLACK**

"Go to the Mattresses"

You may have heard people use that Godfather quote, "go to the mattresses." While this wording admittedly may carry a connotation of violence from its use in movies about the mafia, the expression ultimately means to prepare. It is derived from Italy, where families would rent empty apartments for hiding out during wartime in safer areas. "Going to the mattresses" was a way of hunkering down at the fullest measure. Because of the way people use it most often to mean, "getting serious about getting something done," I'm going to use a play on words to explain what I think we now need to do to spread the word about Montessori education.

Montessori is the answer

In these pandemic times, we're witnessing a crisis with our conventional education models; parents are looking for alternatives. This is the moment for Montessori enthusiasts to act! Americans are calling for change both in justice for how people treat one another and how we treat our natural environment. The problems we face in the world today demand more strongly than ever, the benefits that Montessori's approach to children's development offers. The best way for the next generation to prepare themselves to face a world of rapid change, increasing complexity, societal strife and environmental disruption, I believe, is through this exceptional education.

You and I have seen the results first hand: the graduates of Montessori programs are usually more empathic, confident, effective, collaborative, aware and self-aware than most young adults who experienced the rigidity of conventional education or the disorganization of other progressive programs. Montessori graduates are poised to make a positive difference in the world. The education they've had works because it is balanced and based in discoveries about children's natural developmental needs and characteristics––no matter the time, place or culture they are born into.

One voice

To let people know about this wonderful educational approach, it is imperative that Montessori educators are clear about what Montessori is and what it means. We've got to stand together as a harmonious group and find one language to explain Montessori's benefits to the public. The factions between Montessori groups and the variation in interpretation and implementation of Montessori's work has historically held us back from bringing Montessori to the forefront of education in the United States. To get past this obstacle and move forward, we must "go to the mattresses," or I would say, "go to the archives," and come out with one clear message.

Denise Monnier of MPPI (the Montessori Public Policy Initiative), stresses that when approaching the public, Montessori educators must unite as one group and speak with one voice. MPPI sets a good example of uniting perspectives, as it was formed jointly by the leaders of two leading Montessori organizations, AMS and AMI/USA. MPPI continues to invite all Montessori practitioners to work together as one team to address issues of public policy using a common language.

The value of having archives

One major difference between Montessori education and any conventional or progressive approaches is that we have a rich library of work to dive into and derive information from. Dr. Maria Montessori explained her discoveries in her writing and her speeches––discoveries that we find relevant and repeatable. The Montessori training courses offer foundations for learning about, studying and understanding this body of work. But now, to "go to the archives," we each have our own individual journey. We must continue to read Montessori's books, as our "archives," and to study children's behaviors and reactions to the materials in the classrooms. By doing so, our understanding of this approach will continue to grow. The more every educator reads and reflects, observes and interacts, the better prepared we are to articulate what works about Montessori's approach.

Finding the authenticity

As we join efforts to communicate to the general public, we've got to agree on what authentic Montessori is. Our common material to work from is Dr. Montessori's writings. It is very easy––and incredibly tempting––for adults to get caught up in their own, separate agendas. Dr. Montessori pointed out that children are very different beings from adults; what we think and what we want can get in the way of children's healthy development as the next generation.

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Sources

Some suggestions of my favorite sources, (all available on Amazon or other on-line resources):

By Maria Montessori:

Maria Montessori Speaks to Parents (2017)
I recommend this to everyone! It is short, has lots of colorful photographs of young children working, and explores major ideas and themes of Montessori's approach both in the classroom and at home.
The Absorbent Mind
London Lectures (2012)
Rome Lectures 1913 (2013)
Discovery of the Child
To Educate the Human Potential
The Citizen of the World, Key Montessori Readings (2019)
The Formation of Man
Education and Peace

Montessori materials and presentations in them:

The Advanced Montessori Method, Vol I and II
Psychogeometry (2011)
Pyschoarithmetic (2016)
The Montessori Approach to Music (2020)

For accessible books about Montessori's approach, read:

The Montessori Toddler, and *The Montessori Baby*, by Simone Davies and Junnifa Uzodike
Montessori A Modern Approach, or *Montessori Today*, by Paula Polk Lillard (available in many languages)
Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work, by E.M. Standing

If we don't want to perpetuate negative cycles in our society, then we must follow Montessori's call to remove obstacles, prepare environments, model inclusive, respecting behavior, and offer the healthy balance of choices and boundaries to the children. She wrote it out clearly for us, and through the lens of her work, all topics can be addressed in healthy, child-friendly ways. But we have to know the lens well and use it consistently. To do that, we must read and reflect on her writing, our "archives." This body of work gives us the authentic Montessori approach.

Certainly, while sifting through Dr. Montessori's writings, you will find some tangential information, (she loved to tell stories to illustrate her points) some outdated ideas, (no, we no longer give credence to head and body-measuring, an anthropological interest in her day) a lot of repetition, (many quotes need editing to get to the point) and phrases that require explanation when taken out of a discussion's context. But if we take the time to build or borrow our libraries of Montessori books, and then to read, study and reflect on the valuable content we find there, we will strengthen ourselves for the task ahead.

Working together

"Going to the archives" can also encourage us to get together and form reading discussion groups as teachers to connect Dr. Montessori's descriptions with what we observe in our classrooms. A discussion group can be a source of support, where members can be vulnerable to share worries, doubts and struggles, and to find the answers to guide work back in the classroom. There is always more to learn in Montessori's writings, always more ideas to try. By "going to the archives" in this way, we can prepare ourselves to articulate this wonderful educational approach, and to ultimately get it out into the popular culture to reach more children.

In our quest to support all children with the Montessori approach, let's "go to the archives!"

Paula Lillard Preschlack is a writer and a speaker, and former teacher and head of school at Forest Bluff School in Lake Bluff, Illinois.

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Montessori programs sprout and blossom

New schools and new growth across the country

BY **NCMPS STAFF**

Public Montessori continues to grow, both in terms of new programs and in existing schools adding new levels. Did we miss your school? Add your program to the Montessori Census or drop us a line at communications@public-montessori.org!

MONTESSORI public

Opened in 2021

- **Bezos Day One Academies** opened their pilot PreK program in Des Moines, Washington in 2020. Four more programs in Washington launched in 2021, and 15 more are slated for 2022 (in Washington, Florida, and Texas).
- **Harlem Village Academies**, a network of charter schools in New York City, added Montessori PreK this year.
- **Mi Escuela Montessori**, a bilingual (Spanish-English) charter school in Lakeland, Florida, opened last fall, serving children from age three through 4th grade with plans to grow to 8th grade.
- **Montecito Community School**, a district school in Phoenix, Arizona, added a 3-6 program with subsidized tuition and fees for three- and four-year-olds and no tuition for kindergarten.
- **Montessori Elementary at Highland Park**, a charter school in Chattanooga, Tennessee, opened in the fall, serving children from three years old through 5th grade.
- **Pullman Community Montessori Charter School** in Pullman, Washington, opened last fall serving grades K through 5, with plans to grow to 9th grade.

Opening in 2022

- DC Wildflower Charter School received charter approval for **The Riverseed School**, the first of up to six microschools serving PreK through K.
- **Eugene Field Elementary** will be the third district Montessori school in Tulsa, Oklahoma this fall, beginning with PreK and K classes and growing year by year.
- **Monacacy Valley Montessori Public Charter School** in Frederick, Maryland, received approval to add grades 9-12 this coming fall, becoming the first charter high school in Frederick County.
- **Parkside Montessori**, a magnet school in San Mateo, California is expanding to middle school, adding 7th grade this fall.
- **Premont ISD** in Premont, Texas, is adding a Montessori program to its elementary school this fall, beginning with PreK through 1st grade and growing to 5th grade.
- **Prestonwood Montessori** at E. D. Walker, a Dallas, Texas middle school, will add PreK through 3rd grade to the school, growing to 5th grade.

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